

19 September 1944

No. America

MEMORANDUM FOR Lt. Comdr. Belin

Subject: Exclusion of Persons of Japanese Ancestry from Military Areas of the Western Defense Command.

1. Capt. Compton of Op-30-3, representing the Assistant Director of Base Maintenance, visited B-7 this date to advise that the Navy Department had been asked to concur in a plan proposed by the Western Defense Command for the return of some Japanese-Americans to the West Coast. He talked with Lt. Comdr. Belin and the undersigned.

2. Capt. Compton stated it was his understanding that the Navy Department had been requested to give an "informal" approval of work done so far in the plan of Gen. Bonesteel, Western Defense Command, for the return of subject individuals and that the Navy would receive within the next few days a written request for an expression. Capt. Compton offered the opinion that there seemed to be no good military reason for opposing the plan, but that the racial and legal angles<sup>1</sup> involved were another matter. He stated that he understood the Western Defense Command would want file records on subject individuals, including those of ONI, moved physically to the West Coast. The purpose of his visit apparently was (1) to give us notice that ONI might be called upon for a large amount of information on file, and (2) to advise that the Navy Department would be asked to express an opinion on the policy matter involved. He did not know about the some 40,000 cases of Japanese-Americans checked through the files of B-7-0 in connection with the work of the Japanese-American Joint Board in the period ending last May.

3. On 18 September 1944, B-7-0 was made cognizant of a secret dispatch sent from Cominch (F-141) to ComWesSeaFron directing the addressee to forward by air mail comments on Western Defense Command letter O14.31CS of 8 August on subject matter. The dispatch added that the Army advised a copy of this particular letter had been delivered to addressee. The originator of the dispatch to ComWesSeaFron was sought out in an effort to obtain more specific details of the Western Defense Command proposal than Capt. Compton furnished, and in an effort to obtain a copy of the proposal if one could be found. (No copy has been furnished the Navy Department in Washington)

<sup>1</sup>Footnote: Gen. Bonesteel is said to take the position that something must be done soon to allow for a start on the return of evacuees; so much of his time has been claimed by legal tangles of this problem that he has had little time for his other duties. Particularly harassing are the cases of a Japanese-American soldier wounded in Italy and the widow of a Japanese-American soldier killed in Italy who want to return to their homes in California. Racial riots are feared when returning Japanese-Americans claim homes now rented to defense workers who would have to be evicted.

4. The originator of the dispatch was found to be Capt. H. O. Larsen of Sea Frontiers Section, Cominch. Capt. Larsen advised that he, for COMINCH, and Capt. Compton, for VCNO, had been named as a committee to look into the proposal on subject matter as it affected the Navy. In reply to Capt. Larsen's dispatch, ComWesSeaFron had written a full approval of the Western Defense Command plan. The recommendation of ComWesSeaFron closed the matter insofar as COMINCH side of the two-man committee is concerned, said Capt. Larsen; matters of security ashore are the concern of the VCNO representative.

5. Capt. Larsen made it clear that all that had been asked of the Navy Department was that it give "unofficial" concurrence in the Bonesteel plan -- the entire responsibility for the area, except within naval establishments themselves and in fishing rights, is the Army's. The answer to this oral request was that the Army should submit it officially and in writing. Capt. Larsen and Capt. Compton were named to consider a reply to the request.

6. The background of the new Western Defense Command's proposal, as gotten this date (some of it confidentially) from an Army representative in an excellent position to know, is as follows. Gen. Bonesteel, who assumed the Western Defense Command in July, carefully worked out elaborate plans for name checking and screening subject individuals. This plan was presented to the higher echelons of the War Department about thirty days ago. About two weeks ago it reached the Japanese-American Section of the OPMG here, and about that time Gen. Bonesteel came to Washington to try for approval of it. Gen. Bonesteel apparently was given the green light to feel his way about Washington among all interested agencies, the War Department having taken the position that the Navy, War Relocation Authority, the Justice Department and probably others should be consulted and, insofar as possible, pleased all along the line. It is reliably reported that Gen. Bonesteel did not succeed in "selling" Dillon Myer, War Relocation Authority's Director, but did sell Mr. Fortas, Assistant Secretary of the Interior; thus it would appear that in the case of the Interior Department, Mr. Myer may have to submit to higher authority.

7. The upshot of Gen. Bonesteel's visit here was a decision to send out invitations to a conference on subject matter to be held in Washington. The conference, it is understood, will be Gen. Bonesteel's conference, not at this point that of the War Department (Assistant Secretary McCloy).

8. The high spots of Gen. Bonesteel's plan call for the return of the first contingent of Japanese-Americans sometime next spring (any explanation for delay being the checking process involved) and a gradual return of others at unspecified intervals. The nebulousness of the time element, it appears, would afford the advantage of making the general plan involved one which would stand for the duration -- six months or six years could be spent in the process and the flow of returning individuals could be turned off and on at will. Another point of the plan calls for the exclusion of individuals whose loyalty is open to doubt, from areas along the coast wherein important war industries are located. This inner, forbidden zone is to be gradually narrowed as the war progresses.

9. The impression was received that the Japanese-American Section of PMG approves of the plan and applauds in particular the time leeway allowed.

10. The representative of OPMG here, through whom all information to be sent to Western Defense Command from Washington would clear, assures us that there would be no duplication of work already done for the Japanese-American Joint Board. If the Bonesteel plan is adopted, and it appears it will be, B-7 will be asked to check only on the names of those persons who were not in the Western Defense Command at the time of the exclusion order, but who may want to go there if the ban is lifted. It has been estimated that only about 5,000 Japanese-Americans were outside the Western Defense Command at the time of Pearl Harbor. Of these, about one-third would be minors. This leaves the possibility that B-7 may be asked to check two-thirds of 5,000 names.

11. There has been mentioned the possibility of having in future initial checks on Japanese-Americans made in the files of the District Intelligence Offices in the districts in which the individuals formerly resided. These same names would not be submitted to ONI in Washington for a check unless frequent movements of the individuals indicated a need for same. The PMG officer contacted was quite definite on the point that there would be no duplication. He said that we could be assured that all concerned would profit from the experience of the Joint Board in this respect.

12. It is understood that the Western Defense Command's proposal may have been discussed, at least informally, with the DIO's of 11, 12 and 13ND's.

Respectfully,

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