

August 23rd, 1918.

CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: James L. Johnson, Special Agent.

Mr. James L. Johnson, Special Agent of this Office, was recently called to New York in order to testify before general court martial against Paymaster John L. Chatterton, Major Sidney W. Brewster, U.S.M.C., Retired, Judge Advocate, General Court-Martial, Navy Yard, New York, in a letter to the Director of Naval Intelligence dated August 13th, 1918, stated that it was ascertained, through Major B. F. Rittenhouse, U.S.M.C., Retired, attached to the Office of the Judge Advocate General, that upon returning to Washington, Mr. Johnson stated that after having testified before the general court-martial at New York, an effort was made on the part of the Judge Advocate and the court (or by the Judge Advocate), to create an atmosphere favorable to the accused in the case, and that an endeavor was made to color the testimony of Mr. Johnson in order that it would appear favorable to the accused.

After reading a copy of the testimony forwarded to this Office under date of August 14th, it is my opinion that the accusations made by Mr. Johnson have no basis. It is my opinion that grave indiscretion was used by Mr. Johnson in making statements as to what had transpired during the trial in New York, and especially in making accusations against the Judge Advocate and the court. Mr. Johnson, as Special Agent of this Office, should use more than ordinary precaution in giving out statements concerning cases which might come to his attention through his connection with this Office.

In view of the above and other facts and information which have come to my attention concerning Mr. Johnson, I am of the opinion that Mr. Johnson should not be connected with the Office of Naval Intelligence, and it is hereby recommended that his services be dispensed with at once.

W-Gy

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY,
OFFICE OF THE JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL,
WASHINGTON.

6 September, 1918.

MEMORANDUM FOR ADMIRAL ROGERS WELLS.

Upon the return of Mr. James L. Johnson from the general court-martial, New York, in which he was a witness in the case of Paymaster Chatterton, he informed me that the judge advocate of the general court had told him that he was sorry to see Paymaster Chatterton get in trouble, especially in time of war, when all experienced officers' services were urgently required, and that this remark led him, Mr. Johnson, to believe that he might desire him to temper his testimony.

I called up Major Brewster on the telephone, and told him the impression that Johnson had gotten, and told him that when the next witness for the Government appeared to get everything possible out of him, as this office desired a conviction if the evidence was sufficient.

