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WAR DEPARTMENT  
War Department General Staff  
Military Intelligence Division G-2  
Washington

July 17, 1942.

MEMORANDUM TO THE ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF, G-3:

Subject: The Negro Problem in the Army.

There follows herewith a study of the Negro problem in the Army, together with certain conclusions which have been reached, based upon an examination of eighteen official reports directly relative to the subject. This study is being forwarded for your information.

I. Introduction.

1. Basic Nature of the Problem.

The induction of Negroes into the United States Army presents problems which demand, not only attention, but certain military adjustments. At the beginning of a study of this type, it is important to establish that such problems really exist; that unfortunate racial differences, which have been a source of trouble in the past, have at the present time persisted and become intensified in the necessarily concentrated areas of military training. It should be recognized also that these problems, although essentially broad, sociological ones, susceptible to the slow remedy of time, education, and common-sense human adjustment, are now focused into critical spots of actual and potential trouble, with the characteristic wartime demand for rapid solution. The problems are now more military than sociological, dominated by the imperative of victory.

II. Review of Past Racial Disturbances in the Military Establishment.

To obviate trouble in the future, it is well to study incidents of the past. Race riots and cases of Negro disaffection have occurred at Fort Bragg, Fort Benning, Camp Davis, Fort Dix, Mitchel Field, and in Alexandria, Louisiana, which is near Camp Livingston, Claiborne, and Beauregard. With the exception of Camp Davis, where only colored troops were involved, it should be noted that most of these disturbances have been between Negro troops and white soldiers or civilians.

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1. Fort Bragg.

The incident at Fort Bragg, which occurred August 6, 1941, involved the killing of a white M.P. by a Negro private, who was in turn shot and killed by another white M.P. The shootings occurred on a bus containing thirty Negro soldiers, and resulted in a melee in which four other soldiers were wounded by bullets and nightsticks. The affair was played up spectacularly by the radical and liberal press, under such headlines as: "Color Line Stands Out Everywhere at Army Shooting Scene", (PM, 8/9/41, 8/11/41, 8/12/41); "Ft. Bragg's Night of Terror,"; "Army Plays MP's" (PITTSBURGH COURIER, 8/16/41).

The report of General Davis on this incident recommended the following corrective measures: Employment of an experienced officer, trained in police work, to be Provost Marshal and to train white and colored M.P.'s, the establishment of M.P. headquarters separate from civilian police, and a unified force of Military police with white and Negro personnel, with equal equipment and authority.

2. Fort Benning.

The incidents at Fort Benning were of a minor racial character, not believed to have been subversive. The PITTSBURGH COURIER, carrying numerous articles which might possibly foment discord between the races, is reported to have a large circulation in this camp.

3. Camp Davis.

The Camp Davis incident has been described as an early morning free-for-all between Negro soldiers and Negro civilians, starting in a beer parlor when a bartender refused to serve a soldier. It involved approximately 300 soldiers and as many civilians, and resulted in hospitalization of six civilians and five soldiers. One of the soldiers died in the hospital.

4. Alexandria, Louisiana.

The trouble in Alexandria, Louisiana was of riot proportions, involving hundreds of soldiers and civilians. It occurred January 17, 1942, and is alleged to have started when a white military policeman clubbed a colored soldier in front of a theatre located in the heart of the Negro district of Alexandria. The affair has been given a thorough investigation by military agents, who have rendered an intelligent and consistent analysis of the situation.

5. Fort Dix.

The disturbance in Fort Dix on April 3, 1942, was a gun battle between white military police and Negro soldiers. It developed

from a dispute over the use of a phone, and resulted in the death of one white M.P. and two Negroes.

6. Mitchel Field.

A melee on the night of May 2, 1942 developed in Hempstead, New York from a fight between two Negro soldiers from Mitchel Field. Civilian police and colored civilians were involved.

These unfortunate cases will serve as examples of inter-racial conditions, smoldering beneath the surface, which have now flared into deadly activity. There are sufficient common factors of these cases, and the reports which have developed from them, to enable an observer to make certain generalizations as to underlying causes.

III. Internal Causes of the Situation.

Investigation has revealed that the primary causes for the situation have been created by the Army policy in handling Negro troops. Reports submitted to this office agree that the responsibility for Negro disturbances lies in certain phases of Army control.

The essential points brought out in the investigations of riots or lesser difficulties are as follows:

1. Policing Methods.

Investigators have found that the use of white military policemen in combination with Negro military police has been resented by the Negro troops they control. Both civilian and military Negro personnel have been slow to accept the fact that white military policemen are armed, while Negroes must do their policing unarmed. The reason for the unarmed status of the Negro M.P. may be indicated by the claims of instances occurring in Alexandria which indicated that the Negro is incapable of assuming the responsibilities of an M.P. without becoming overbearing.

Friction has been created by placing military policemen from one section of the country over colored troops from a different location in the United States. The reason for the friction has been the lack of understanding, on the part of the military police, as to the type of treatment and police discipline to which the colored troops under their control are accustomed. At the same time, the Negro troops have either taken advantage of lenient or lax policing, or have resented strict police supervision.

2. Transfer of Negro troops.

Negro troops have been transferred from one part of the country to another. Reports agree that this has been a contributing factor toward friction. A wide gulf exists in the treatment of the

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Negro in the several sections of the United States. This has not been understood, particularly by the civilian population among whom the Negro troops have been stationed. Resentment of the manners and habits of the Negroes from the North has been vigorous in certain areas of the South. At the same time Negro troops from the South, stationed away from that area, have been allowed to misinterpret the tolerance shown them as a privilege to indulge in excess.

The contact and exchange of views of Negro troops from different sections of the country has led some, coming from areas of stronger discipline, to the belief that they had been subjected to intolerance to which they no longer need pay respect.

Reports from southern cities indicate that a serious condition exists in localities adjacent to camps where large numbers of Negro troops are stationed.

Investigations bear out the belief, however, that in general, Negroes from the North are well-behaved, and, while used to liberties which the population has not been accustomed to allowing local Negroes, have as yet been the cause of little actual disturbance.

3. Lack of Discipline.

It has been the opinion of agents in the field that lack of rigorous discipline has been responsible for the tendencies leading to disturbances. Investigators have found that the Negro troops were not properly trained. It has been pointed out that much of this can be laid to the fact that at the time of the investigations most of the Negro troops were freshly inducted. The investigators at Alexandria, Louisiana, were in agreement that strong discipline and vigorous training were lacking in the Negro troops, but that such action would probably remedy the situation. One of the agents quoted a local resident to the effect that the troops appeared to receive an undue number of passes, and were allowed in town continuously, whereas, when the resident had been in training in the last war he had been able to get to town only on Saturday night. On the contrary, well-disciplined Negro troops appear to be orderly enough.

4. Lack of Recreational Facilities.

Reports have been received that the lack of adequate recreational facilities has played an important part in the unrest encountered in areas wherein Negro troops have been stationed.

In these cases the difficulty has lain, not in the lack of post or camp recreational provisions, but in the fact that most of the towns adjacent to the camps were small, and had very limited areas provided for Negro facilities. With the tremendous influx of Negro troops into the town, the area habitually used by the Negroes became

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too congested. Bars, "juke joints", pool halls, etc., were taxed beyond their capacity, with the inevitable result that the attendant confusion led to trouble.

At least one of the reports has pointed out that the U.S.O. establishment in Alexandria received small patronage prior to the difficulty there. The Negro troops who came into town appear to have greatly preferred the bars and "honkey-tonks". This report makes no mention of the provisions made at the camp.

#### IV. External Causes of the Situation.

Thus far, reports received by this office have consistently denied the existence of any known subversive influence active among Negro troops. The investigators have been aware of the several types of subversive groups at work among the Negro population, but have been unable to discover evidence of action by these groups in the Armed forces, by actual agents. The Negro is, however, subject to various influences before his induction into the service which may influence his behavior as a soldier.

In the opinion of a canvass of Negro troops carried on by one of the investigators, whose identity was unknown to those queried, only 85% of the Negroes were agreed that they should wholeheartedly support the war effort of the United States, and a surprisingly large percentage were of the belief that they would be better off under German, Japanese, or Russian rule. Of these troops, 12.9% believed the Russian system would improve their lot; 6.5% would rather be under the Japanese; and .91% under the Germans. Thus, more than twenty percent of the nearly 500 Negro troops questioned admitted their sympathies were with other governments.

A brief review of the influences to which the American Negro is being subjected may be set out here as follows:

##### 1. Communist Agitation.

The Communist is the predominant subversive influence at work among the Negro groups. The methods and aims of the Communist Party are too well-known to need elaboration here. The Communist Party has made every effort to secure the support of the American Negro, and if the statistics in the above paragraph may be taken as a criterion, has succeeded remarkably in the group eligible for induction into the Army.

Reports have been received in the past that the Communist Party has been making efforts to infiltrate the U.S.O. to further its plans for subversive work among the Army personnel. However, from the reports of investigations, there appears to be no reason to believe that this infiltration has been responsible for the disturbances involving

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Negro troops. While endeavoring to continue their efforts to enlarge the membership of the Party, the Communists for the present appear to be supporting the war effort and instructing their members in the forces to be "good soldiers".

2. Japanese Agitation.

No evidence has been found of Japanese responsibility for any of the investigated cases. The Japanese made wide efforts prior to the outbreak of war to influence the Negro population. Working on a slogan of "this is a white man's war" the Japanese succeeded in gaining many converts among dissatisfied groups of Negroes. These actions have been the subject of a previous report of considerable thoroughness. The 6.5% of the Negroes who favored Japanese rule in the above-mentioned investigation is not necessarily representative of the success of this campaign, for many of these Negroes doubtless have never actually been subjected to Japanese propaganda. However, it is an indication of the fertility of the field in which the Japanese have been working.

3. German Agitation.

The German government has subjected itself to such stigma by its treatment of the Jews and nationals of other countries that it cannot appeal to the Negro. In particular the violent German racial propaganda of Nordic superiority has killed its ability to influence the Negroes. However, working through agents, the Germans can labor to create dissension among the Negroes. The success of this effort has been negligible in reports to this office. It is possible that provocateurs may cause disturbances among Negro troops, but there is no evidence that this has been done in the cases so far examined.

4. The Negro Press.

Certain sections of the Negro press in the United States have seized the opportunity provided by the need for unity in war to press their demands for greater equality and the remedying of alleged injustices. The Negro press wields a tremendous influence among Negro troops. In the above reference to a statistical investigation, 76% of the troops read a paper of the Afro-American chain, while 56% read the Pittsburgh Courier.

It would be impossible to associate this newspaper contact with any disturbances so far investigated. Yet, the highly inflammatory articles published in some Negro papers go beyond the normal agitational behavior of the press.

Some influential papers as the Pittsburgh Courier, the Chicago Defender, and certain members of the Afro-American chain, have published articles caustically criticizing the Army and its administration. Under the guise of agitation for better conditions for Negro troops these papers at times have been extremely bitter, and

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could not be considered as influencing their readers toward high allegiance to the Army. As long as these papers carry on their efforts for the purpose of racial betterment they cannot be termed as subversive organs. They do, however, at times appear to achieve the same result as outright subversive publications.

V. Conclusions.

1. Military Police, both white and colored, should be more highly trained and employed in more intensive supervision of localities frequented by negro troops.

2. Added emphasis should be placed upon the necessity for prompt, rigorous, continued disciplinary training of negro troops from the moment of induction with the idea of perfecting self discipline and greater regard for proper individual behavior as well as a realization that severe disciplinary measures will follow misbehavior.

3. Movement and stationing of negro troops in areas where racial relations differ from their prior home environment should be reduced to a minimum.

4. Racial tolerance and respect for the uniform, irrespective of the race, color, or previous condition of servitued of the wearer should be increasingly emphasized in the initial training of all inductees and insisted upon throughout the service.

5. All possible steps should be taken to reduce and control the publication of inflammatory and vituperative articles in the colored press.

GEO. V. STRONG,  
Major General,  
A. C. of S., G-2.

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