

Geary, John T. U.S. Army, Western Defense Command.

1945

C-B 510: 4

Geary, John J.
U.S. Army. Western Defense Command

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3 letters

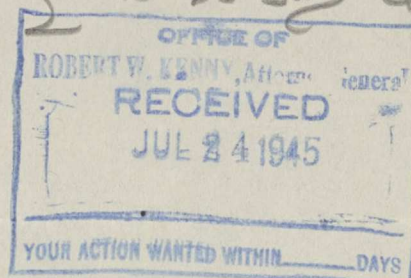


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HEADQUARTERS WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND
REVIEW AND HEARING BOARD SECTION
PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

23 July 1945



Honorable Robert W. Kenny
Attorney General of California
State Building
San Francisco 2, California

Dear Mr. Kenny:

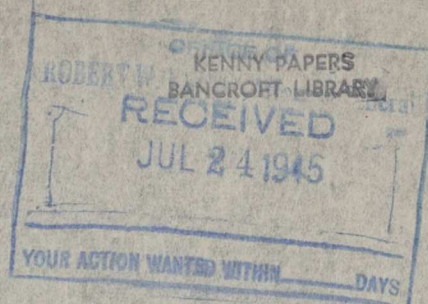
At General Pratt's direction, I am enclosing a copy of the report submitted to him following the Santa Ana trip.

Sincerely yours,

John T. Geary
JOHN T. GEARY
Colonel, CAC

Enc. 1

C-13510
60436



21 July 1945

MEMORANDUM TO: Commanding General

FROM : Colonel John T. Geary
Lt. Colonel Lyle E. Cook

SUBJECT : Report on Interviews in Santa Ana, California

On 16 July 1945, the above named officers proceeded from the Presidio of San Francisco to Santa Ana, county seat of Orange County, California, for the purpose of carrying out the verbal instructions of the Commanding General. The following report is submitted:

1. We first called upon Sheriff JESSE ELLIOTT. Mr. ELLIOTT has been sheriff of Orange County for the past eight years and is a well-informed and influential figure in this locality. Sheriff ELLIOTT advised us that while there was opposition to the return of the Japanese evacuees to Orange County, there was little, if any, real bitterness against them. He said that he knew of no attempts having been made to offer physical violence to their persons or property.

2. Sheriff ELLIOTT informed us that he was trying through his organization to give protection to all persons in the county, regardless of race. He said that District Attorney Davis of Orange County has advised him that he is anxious to afford all possible legal protection to the returning evacuees. He said that so far as he knew, only fifteen or twenty of these evacuees had returned to Orange County up to the present time, out of a total Japanese population before the war of about 1000. He said that he had learned of some groups of Caucasians within the county who had staged a campaign of verbal intimidation against the returning evacuees and that he had investigated the circumstances very carefully. He believes that these groups are well advised from a legal standpoint and are confining themselves to such actions and statements as would not involve them in criminal prosecution. For example: One of their number goes to call upon a Japanese and tells him how glad he is to see him again. He then asks him how long he plans to remain. When the reply comes that he plans to remain permanently, the visitor shakes his head and says, "Oh, I wouldn't do that. Some

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of the people here in the county are planning trouble for you Japanese. The visitor goes away and in a little while another member of the committee calls and repeats this performance. The result is that an atmosphere of fear is thus built up. Sheriff ELLIOTT says that this sort of thing is very difficult to cope with and that so far, there have been no prosecutions because of the lack of evidence to secure a conviction.

3. The Sheriff told us that he had conducted a personal campaign to discourage anti-Japanese literature and to induce owners of penny-arcade shooting galleries to remove Japanese faces from the targets. He feels that in this way he may keep down the cause of friction and avoid violence and disorder. He feels that if a case should arise in the county warranting prosecution, it would be very difficult to obtain a jury which would render a verdict convicting Caucasians. He said one case had arisen in Orange County involving a Filipino and a person of Japanese ancestry. He said that the first reports were that the Filipino had assaulted a young Japanese soldier, by the name of Matsuda, with a monkey wrench. The story reached the newspapers in an exaggerated form and received nationwide attention by the press. Investigation by his office disclosed that the difficulty arose between neighbors out in the farming community of Talbot but he had been unable to find any evidence of actual or threatened violence, newspaper reports to the contrary, notwithstanding. He said that he called the soldier and his sister into his office and explained the whole situation to them and that they appeared to be satisfied that his office had done everything possible.

4. Sheriff ELLIOTT expressed himself somewhat critically of the W.R.A. He wishes that the local representative would be more cooperative with local law enforcement officers. He said that he had requested the local representative to contact his office in the matter of the returning Japanese, giving him their names and property location. He feels that by working together they would be able to iron out many of the problems of resettlement. He said this was not a general criticism of the W.R.A. because he understood that in other communities such arrangements had been made. In Santa Ana, however, he said that the W.R.A. representative has told him that he should institute a campaign of "belittling" the opponents of the return of the evacuees, which policy he feels would be very bad for a law enforcement officer to adopt. Mr. ELLIOTT said he wished that there were less newspaper agitation. He complained that minor incidents were magnified by the press. He cited instances of returning Japanese attempting to regain possession of property which they owned. Sometimes their property is currently occupied by a war worker or a soldier's family. These items reach the newspaper and, regardless

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of the legal merits, tend to arouse strong feeling against the Japanese. He says that he sometimes fears that these relatively small and unimportant incidents may, as a result of amplification by the newspapers, result in some type of "vigilante" action.

5. We told Sheriff ELLIOTT of the interest which the Army had in the problem of the returning Japanese and he said that he appreciated very much our taking the time to call upon him. He said that he desired to cooperate with the military authorities in every way and had had frequent contact with Army and Navy Intelligence officers operating in Southern California. He received us very cordially and spent about an hour in discussion with us. We concluded that he is earnestly and sincerely trying to deal with the situation in Orange County and that he is not only prepared to make arrests and prefer charges against violators of the peace in these matters, but is trying to head off and eliminate the cause of friction before any overt acts are committed.

6. We next called upon Mr. R. C. HOILES, editor of the Santa Ana Register. The Santa Ana Register is an old-time newspaper in Orange County and has a circulation of between 10,000 and 15,000. It has been owned and edited by Mr. HOILES for the past 10 years. Mr. HOILES advised us that his paper has given more support to the returning Japanese than any other in the state. He said that he felt very strongly on the subject of racial tolerance and that, regardless of public criticism in the community, his newspaper was pursuing that objective.

7. Mr. HOILES told us of a speech which had recently been made in Santa Ana by a returning Army officer in which he had given high praise to the Japanese-American soldiers in the European theatre and had strongly criticized the attitude of many Americans at home in their refusal to give proper recognition to the sacrifices made by the Japanese-American soldiers. Mr. HOILES said that he wished the Army would send out more speakers of this type. He feels that they will be listened to respectfully and cannot be successfully challenged by the "Jap baiters". Mr. HOILES stated that he felt that if a large group of the middle class of the population was properly influenced, the effect of the small minority which opposes the returning Japanese evacuees, because of economic and other reasons, would be neutralized. He feels that law enforcement officials would be spurred to greater action if they felt that their efforts were going to receive encouragement from a large element of the population. He feels that it is a relatively small group which is "making all the noise" in criticism of the relocation program and that this group is composed of those with economic interests to be served and a few

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others who approve of racial discrimination. He feels that this small group should not be allowed to gain the upper hand in public opinion on this question.

8. The impression which we gained from these interviews is that reports of disorder in Orange County have been considerably exaggerated. It may be that the return of only fifteen or twenty Japanese is a result of a carefully planned campaign to discourage or intimidate them but it is, nevertheless, apparent that there are fewer opportunities for violence in view of the small numbers who are actually in the county. The attitude of the newspaper editor and the sheriff indicates that acts of violence will be discouraged and that there is no present danger of a break down of law enforcement in this county.

John T. Geary
JOHN T. GEARY
Colonel, GAC

Lyle E. Cook
LYLE E. COOK
Lt. Colonel, JAGD



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HEADQUARTERS WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL
PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

14 Aug 1945

The Attorney General
State of California
State Building
San Francisco
Calif.

*Japanese
T.C.*

Dear Sir:-

I enclose a copy of
a report covering a meeting
with a citizens committee
at Visalia.

General Pratt directed
that I send you this copy.
Very truly yours
John T. Seary
Col. U.S.A.

13 August 1945

MEMORANDUM TO: Commanding General

FROM : Colonel John T. Geary
Lt. Colonel Lyle E. Cook

SUBJECT : Report on Meeting at Visalia

On 9 August 1945, the above named officers proceeded from the Presidio of San Francisco to Visalia, Tulare County, California, for the purpose of carrying out the verbal instructions of the Commanding General. The following report is submitted:

1. By previous arrangement with Mr. A. B. BOSWELL we met with representatives of the communities of Ivanhoe and Woodlake in the office of Mr. J. A. CHASE in Visalia at 0900, 10 August. Spokesmen for this group were Mr. BOSWELL and Mr. E. B. HOMER.

2. We asked Mr. BOSWELL to begin the interview by stating to us the questions which were dominant in the minds of his group. He stated frankly that the farmers of Tulare County do not want former Japanese residents to return there to resume farming operations. Their opposition, he said, is based on their view that the Japanese do not make good citizens and that they will not cooperate with Caucasians in farming and marketing policies and are a constant threat to the American standard of living because of their practices in selling their products for lower prices than white men must obtain in order to operate at a profit. He stated that the Japanese multiply rapidly and that the farmers feel they will eventually be out-numbered if the Japanese are permitted to resettle now. They fear, he said, that there will be a problem similar to the negro situation in the south, if prompt action is not taken at this time. The Tulare County farmers, he said, do not believe that any of the Japanese are loyal to the United States but prefer the ways of life practiced in Japan.

There was no suggestion that local opposition was based on a fear that the Japanese were engaged or would engage in practices tending to endanger the military security of the Pacific Coast.

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3. We then explained to the committee the Army's function with reference to Japanese evacuation. We called attention to the recent press release of the Commanding General and explained the mission of this headquarters with reference to the protection of the Pacific coastal area against enemy action. We tried to make it very clear to this group that the Army did not and could not base its evacuation of persons of Japanese ancestry on any other consideration than military necessity. We stated that with military necessity as a criterion the Army could not legally continue the exclusion of any person from this area once the danger from his presence ceased to exist. We told them frankly that they would have to look to some agency other than the Army or W.R.A. to bring about the permanent exclusion of their unwanted neighbors.

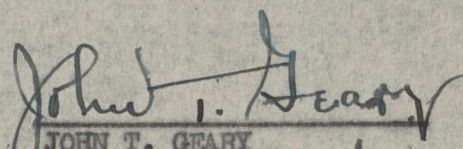
4. Our explanation of the situation appeared to be satisfactory to those with whom we talked. Mr. BOSWELL said that they had already prepared a petition to Congress asking for authority to take a vote by communities on the question of permitting unwanted persons to reside in their midst. Mr. CHASE, who is an attorney, stated that he had advised the group that their only hope for remedial action rested with Congress and that it would probably require a constitutional amendment. We advised them that that was a matter entirely out of our sphere and one about which their own counsel should advise them.

Mr. BOSWELL stated that they had all taken an oath to refrain from violence and to proceed in an orderly and legal fashion. He and his associates appeared to be honest, forthright and intelligent gentlemen, strong in their desire to be rid of the Japanese elements in their community, but desirous of avoiding violence -- at least so far as they, personally, are concerned.

5. The members of the group expressed their appreciation for our visit and stated that they had a better idea of the Army's responsibilities than before. We noted no tendency toward argumentative or contentious disposition on their part and the meeting was marked by a friendly and hospitable atmosphere. We did not attempt to dissuade these gentlemen from their racial prejudices. Such was not our mission, and in any event would obviously have been futile. They are determined in their purposes but are not unreasonable about the Army's action. They had hoped that the Army might provide a solution to their problem, but were neither disgruntled nor discouraged by what we told them.

Commanding General

13 August 1945


JOHN T. GEARY
Colonel, CAC

LYLE E. COOK
Lt. Colonel, JAGD