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WAR DEPARTMENT  
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**RACIAL SITUATION IN THE UNITED STATES.**

I. General Estimate. The racial situation, particularly within the Army and in the relations of Negro soldiers with white civilians, is becoming increasingly grave. During the three weeks period from September 4 to September 23, 1944, there were marked increases in mob violence and in the intensity and number of incidents involving small groups or individuals, according to reports from the Service Commands and other contributing agencies.

II. Discussion. Responsible, conservative military sources express increasing apprehension of large-scale racial violence. The general types of situations and examples of incidents that cause this concern are discussed below:

1. Indications of preparation for racial violence.

a. In Chicago, Illinois, a sporting goods store which normally sells hunting season ammunition to two or three Negroes reported that this year shot gun, high powered rifle and .22 calibre ammunition was purchased by approximately two hundred Negroes. There is no report of a corresponding increase in Negro duck hunters.

b. A Negro speaker at an open meeting in Hearne, Texas, advised Negroes to procure arms and ammunition, practice shooting and be prepared.

c. The Klu Klux Klan is being reactivated and is holding meetings, according to reports from Dallas, Texas.

d. Some Southern white civilians threaten to "take things into our own hands" because they believe the military is too lenient with Negro soldiers who violate civilian segregation laws.

2. Disturbances Involving Military Personnel.

a. Mob Violence. Instances of mob violence at Army installations or in nearby civilian communities were as follows:

(1) A Negro sailor was shot and another Negro sailor and a white soldier were hurt when Negroes and civilians rioted over a two-block area in Lake City, South Carolina, following a fight between a white soldier and a Negro soldier.

(2) Indiscreet action by a white officer in helping subdue a drunken Negro soldier precipitated mob action by 800 Negro

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soldiers at Fort Francis E. Warren, Wyoming, with the result that three commissioned officers were threatened and assaulted, two sets of guards were disarmed, a military policeman was kicked, and orders of commissioned and non-commissioned officers were disobeyed.

- (3) Approximately 900 Negro soldiers threw rocks and beer bottles at a Post Exchange at Camp Beale, California. ✓
- (4) At Springfield, Illinois, near Camp Ellis, an all-Negro riot occurred between 250 Negro soldiers and a number of Negro civilians because the Negro soldiers on pass could not find housing. (Preventive action has been taken. See IVC below.)
- (5) An estimated 2200 Negro and white soldiers were in a post exchange area at Camp Beauregard, Louisiana, when the whites drove the Negroes away. Several hundred Negroes retired to their quarters, organized a group of about 300 and started back towards the whites. They were halted by their own officers but not before a number of bottles had been thrown.
- (6) At Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, scene of a riot on 16-17 August 1944, 100 Negro soldiers harassed a white post exchange manager until he hit one of them on the head with a hammer. The Negro was not hurt. ✓
- (7) At Alexandria, Louisiana, near Camp Claiborne and Camp Livingston, 300 Negro soldiers on furlough pass angered because of transportation delays and inadequacies, rioted on a railroad depot platform until officers arrived and lined them up to await transportation. ✓
- (8) On a train going from Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, to Fort Huachuca, Arizona, forty-three Negro soldiers fought among themselves and got so beyond control that they were removed from the train at El Paso, Texas. They were members of two units involved in the Camp Claiborne riot of 16-17 August. ✓
- (9) Declaring that they were hunting for white sympathizers among Negroes, a group of Negro soldiers in fatigues stopped a bus at Camp Livingston, Louisiana, beat the driver and discharged carbines.
- (10) A post exchange at Camp Plauche, Louisiana, was taken over by a large crowd of Negro soldiers who scattered merchandise on the floor, refused to admit any one not in fatigues and then proceeded to a dance to perpetrate similar depredations. ✓

3. Apparent Underlying Causes.

a. Recreational Facilities. Typical examples of incidents provoked by Negro soldiers in testing the application of the War Department letter ordering non-segregation in recreational facilities were:

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WACs at Camp Forrest, Tennessee, insisted on sitting in a post theater section reserved for officers rather than in a section reserved for enlisted personnel.

- (2) Again, at Camp Forrest, Negro WACs attempted to attend a dance for non-commissioned personnel at which only whites were present.
- (3) At Cochran Field, Georgia, and at Camp Livingston, Louisiana, Negro soldiers attempted to sit in post theater sections reserved for officers.

b. Transportation. Efforts of Negro soldiers to extend their fight for non-segregation to Southern, white communities resulted in numerous instances, typical of which are:

- (1) A Negro soldier insulted and abused a white woman conductor on a New Orleans trolley because she wanted three Negro soldiers to pay their fares.
- (2) A drunken Jewish soldier deliberately attempted to provoke a racial incident on a Macon, Georgia bus when he invited Negro soldiers to leave the Jim Crow section and come to the front with him.
- (3) Holding a knife on a bus driver's neck, four Negro soldiers forced him to pass stations in Fayetteville, North Carolina.
- (4) Four Negro soldiers assaulted a white bus driver when he refused to let one of them sit in a white section.
- (5) In Tallahassee, Florida, civilians reluctantly surrendered a Negro soldier to Camp Gordon Johnston authorities after he had refused to obey bus segregation laws. The Fourth Service Command reports the belief that this incident was deliberately provoked by Negro commissioned officers as a result of publication of the War Department letter on recreational facilities.

c. Individual Crimes. Racial crimes occurred in the Army as

DWS:

- (1) A white lieutenant shot and killed a Negro private at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, after the private threatened three officers with an axe.
- (2) White soldiers struck another white soldier after accusing him of associating with Negro soldiers who actually were Puerto Ricans.
- (3) A Negro soldier attempted to rape a white telephone operator in Greensboro, North Carolina.
- (4) A Negro soldier raped a white soldier's wife at Camp Robinson, Arkansas.

- (5) In a New Orleans hospital, a Negro soldier attempted to rape a white woman patient in her bed.
- (6) A white girl at a post exchange on the Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, Pennsylvania, was assaulted by a Negro soldier.
- (7) Two Negro soldiers stabbed and beat to death a white soldier who entered a Negro civilian store at Columbus, Georgia.

### III. Civilian Disturbances. Civilian racial incidents.

1. Increased unrest was evident in reports of incidents involving civilians only. Ordinarily, such incidents merit only police blotter attention. However, with the increase in racial tension in the Army, the corresponding increase in civilian communities has caused anxiety. Typical civilian incidents involving race follow:

a. At Flint, Michigan, a gang of young Negro hoodlums is stirring racial unrest with nine racial incidents reported in six days. One of them involved white and colored children at a sandlot baseball game. It was described in a white community as a riot involving 500 persons.

b. Negro civilian employees of the Chicago Quartermaster Depot are causing racial unrest without any discoverable provocation. The depot practices strict non-segregation and the difficulties apparently are caused by Negro agitators.

c. Chicago, Illinois, Negroes are protesting the Army's purchase of the Pershing Hotel, located in a Negro section, as a Redistribution Center for Negro soldiers. The civilians who oppose the purchase charge that it is an example of segregation and, moreover, will force 400 Negro families to find housing in an already overcrowded district.

d. A white 16-year-old boy was stabbed to death by a Negro 17-year-old in Fairmont, North Carolina.

e. White juveniles in Shreveport, Louisiana, broke up a Negro church meeting and stoned Negro school windows.

f. A band of white men beat a Negro to death in Cuthbert, Georgia.

g. A white deputy sheriff was stabbed and shot to death by a Negro in Tampa, Florida.

### IV. Preventive Measures.

1. In addition to the continuation of preventive measures previously reported, the following steps were taken:

a. The Third Service Command has adopted and enforced post regulations against possession of knives more than three inches in length; has

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ordered special spot checks for weapons and ammunition; and has invited the Negro press to visit and photograph Negro soldiers.

b. The Eighth Service Command reports that the Commanding General, Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, has held conferences with Negro chaplains, has instituted educational measures, and is alleviating the congested transportation situation, the cause of many disturbances.

c. The Sixth Service Command reports that a system has been instituted at Camp Ellis, Illinois, under which housing facilities are arranged in advance for soldiers going on pass.

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