

DECLASSIFIED
Authority WSP 735074
By W NARA Date 4/18/66

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF, G-1, WDGS (1)

CONFIDENTIAL

WAR DEPARTMENT
Army Service Forces
Office of the Commanding General
Washington

SPINT 291.2

16 February 1945.

RACIAL SITUATION IN THE UNITED STATES, 20 January to 3 February 1945.

I. Estimate. DOCUMENTATION OF THIS ESTIMATE IS IN "TAB A" ATTACHED

Anticipation of post-war racial violence increased according to the Service Commands and other contributing agencies. Coincident with Russian military successes, Communists accelerated agitation among Negroes while conservative Negroes praised what they believe is Soviet racial equality and condemned what they charge is American racial inequality. Military group violence declined slightly while individual violence remained constant, marked by Negro soldiers challenging white Army officers' authority. Civil racial relations deteriorated with increased group violence, individual crime and vigilante organizing activities.

II. Summary

1. Trends. Evidence of expected racial violence accumulated in expressions by resentful Negro soldiers, by white overseas veterans incensed over mixed intercourse and estimates by conservative sources. Communists increased their exploitation of what they charge is court persecution of accused Negroes while Negroes themselves hailed what they believe to be Soviet equal treatment of races.

2. Military. Group racial action decreased. There was no change in the rate of individual acts but there were increased, reported instances in which Negro soldiers were insubordinate to white officers. Intended and tactless provocation by both races continued.

3. Civil. Racial acts by groups and individuals increased. Negro and white vigilantes were more active.

4. Army Criticism. Negroes continued to assail the Army for not using more Negro nurses when it admits a nurse shortage. Negroes generally opposed peace time conscription because of Army "Jim Crowism".

5. Labor. The CIO is praised for racial equality practices.

6. Housing. Inadequate Negro housing in war production centers continues to be a major source of racial irritation.

7. Preventive Action. A white officer who commanded Negro troops gave

DECLASSIFIED

Authority WR 735074

By we NARA Date 4/14/86

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

CONFIDENTIAL

SPINT 291.2
(continued - pg 2)

6. Jim Crow Attitudes. Indicative of the attitude of many Negro soldiers who resent transportation segregation was the remark of a Negro soldier who sat down beside a white man on a Chattanooga, Tennessee bus and remarked that he would "like to get all white people on a rock pile and mow them down with a Tommy gun."

III. Discussion.

1. Group disturbances involving military personnel.

a. White Paratroopers objected when Negro soldiers entered a service club at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, 5 October 1944. They rioted. Negro officers and soldiers were in unauthorized possession of Thompson Sub-machine guns and rifles. Prior to the riot a weapons carrier had been seized by Negro soldiers and a weapons store house had been broken into. Paratroopers had no firearms. One white soldier was killed. One Negro soldier was shot in the leg. Two Negro soldiers were hit by rocks. (C) ✓

b. The Commanding General, Camp Sutton, North Carolina, was hissed by Negro soldiers whom he attempted to quiet during a disturbance at a Service Club dance, 25 September. When the General stepped down from the rostrum and seized one Negro heckler, the Negro did not give his name and either broke away or was torn away by other soldiers. They were finally dispersed without violence. They had been drinking beer.

c. A Negro company at Camp Sutton, North Carolina, refused to go on a work detail because military authorities had released a Negro soldier to civilian authorities. They resumed work when the situation was explained by their officers.

d. At Durham, North Carolina, approximately fifty Negro soldiers from Camp Butner, North Carolina, rioted in the Negro business section, threatened Negro store proprietors whom they accused of overcharging them and were finally brought under control when their officers arrived and returned them to camp in trucks.

e. Approximately 500 Negro soldiers rioted in the Tallahassee, Florida, Negro section. Bloodshed was avoided by action of the civilian police in holding Negro soldiers at bay without firing until reinforcements arrived. Tear gas was used in dispersing the crowd. The Negro soldiers had been brought on pass from Camp Gordon Johnston, Florida, in Army trucks.

f. The Mayor of Jefferson, South Carolina, was shot in the leg when a group of Negro soldiers from Camp Sutton, North Carolina, fought a white policeman and deputies who were attempting to suppress unruly conduct.

g. Approximately 200 Negro soldiers at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, on 2 October 1944, threw bottles and other missiles in a Post Exchange, damaged the building and fixtures and stole merchandise. The manager of another Post Exchange said he was robbed of \$2356.56 in cash and \$178.20 worth of bus tickets.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority WSP 735074

By W NARA Date 4/14/66

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

CONFIDENTIAL

SPINT 291.2

(Continued - pg 2)

h. Negro soldiers in a theater at Camp Livingston, Louisiana, exploded a CN gas grenade, damaged a projector and injured a Negro postess.

i. Belligerent, armed Negro civilians chased a white soldier from the Negro section of Spartanburg, South Carolina, 24 September 1944, a representative incident of reverse segregation showing that Negroes resent the intrusion of whites.

j. At Fort Benning, Georgia, 7 October 1944, approximately 40 Negro soldiers seized a drunken Negro soldier from Negro military police who had arrested him at a service club. They fled when the Post Provost Marshal and seven white military police arrived.

k. A group of Negro soldiers fought Negro civilians in the street in Richmond, Virginia, on 3 October.

l. Fifty-six Negro soldiers staged a sit-down strike against work details on 23 September 1944 at Marana, Arizona, Army Air Field.

2. Individual Racial Action by Military Personnel. Racial actions of this type are too numerous and repetitive to merit individual attention. Incidents typifying certain situations follow:

a. Sex

- (1) A white WAC received a love letter from a Negro soldier at Camp Gordon, Georgia. A Negro soldier offered white women civilian employees money for dates at Fort Devens, Massachusetts.
- (2) A Negro soldier was surprised bending over a white WAC's bed in WAC quarters on Fort Benning, Georgia, at night. He ran when the lights were turned on. He had taken no action. Negro soldiers were found prowling the WAC area at Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.
- (3) A Negro soldier raped a white woman civilian in Sacramento, California.
- (4) A Negro soldier confessed the two rapes which preceded the riot at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, 16 August 1944.
- (5) A white civilian youth who had attempted to date a Negro soldier's sister in Philadelphia was knifed by the soldier.

b. Provocation by Whites.

- (1) A shine boy in Miami, Florida, knifed a white soldier when the latter called him "Nigger",

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

I. Trends

1. Post-War Racial Potentialities

a. New York, 2 Feb. Negro veterans will not accept racial prejudice, according to the Federal Council of Churches of Christ. It said the situation is "tense". "The non-white races who constitute the vast majority of the human race are rightly tired of the attitudes of superiority of those who, though a racial minority, control the governments x x x, the Council declared, adding that American Christians were a "conspicuous failure" in building equality. "It may be that for our land the testing ground of the vitality of the Christian faith will be in the area of race relations and that test may come soon", the council said.

b. Cincinnati. Race discrimination is on the increase and the world will grow worse because "peoples of color are in motion", said the national sleeping car porters' president. Only "retreat of the colored groups or removal of barriers against them" will prevent bloodshed and Negroes will not take the former course, he declared.

c. White Soldiers Comments. Summaries of comments by white overseas veterans follow:

(1) One soldier said that the Ku Klux Klan type feeling is growing because whites have seen Negro soldiers associate with white girls in England and France. He remarked that the Negroes had behaved with more respect and courtesy than the whites displayed to the girls.

(2) A veteran said trouble would occur in the U.S. when Negro soldiers return because they like white women.

(3) An enlisted man said the white soldiers could do nothing about Negroes overseas but would act when they returned.

2. Attitudes Towards Russia and Communism

a. Topeka. Only one of the "Big Three" is clear on democratic treatment of all peoples because of Britain's record in India and America's treatment of Negroes, declared a Langston University dean.

b. Atlanta, 21 Jan. Russia is the only allied nation not facing a race war, a Negro columnist wrote. He stated: "If other soldiers had half the odds which the Negro has to fight against, it is doubtful if their record could equal the Negro's x x x With all its faults, this country is worth fighting for and the Negro fights on!"

c. Seattle, 16 Jan. In a new society built on collective ownership progress through collective effort would end "prejudice-breeding economic strife", a suspected Socialist wrote.

d. Pittsburgh, 27 Jan. Russia demands a peace race equality clause

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

"lynch that Negro" when three white sailors beat a Negro civilian. While the Negro was being held for police, the sailors cursed him, threatened violence and resisted Army and Navy officers.

e. Opa Locka, Fla., 19 Jan. White and Negro sailors fought on a b after a white called a Negro sailor "Nigger".

f. Petersburg, Va., 17 Jan. About 175 Negro civilians and five Negro soldiers met in a USO to protest the killing of a Negro soldier by a civilian man.

2. Weapons

a. Seattle. A confidential source reports that all of the soldier "who lost their knives in the camp shakedown of last October have again sect and are carrying knives".

b. Hampton Roads. Soldiers have boasted that ammunition has been ly buried around Camp Hill Barracks.

3. Provocation, Segregation and Discrimination

a. Auburn, Calif., 21 Jan. "You black sons of bitches should not in here", a white soldier told Negro soldiers in a cafe and threw a cup of in one's face.

b. Louisville, 20 Jan. A Negro flight officer was humiliated by punished in front of enlisted men while a white sergeant was not punished for refusing to salute a Negro captain, according to the Defender (Negro).

c. Scott Field. Three Negro soldiers told the main service club they wanted to use the club. It is too small to accomodate the 4000 whites. There is a separate club customarily used by 360 Negro soldiers who are not hibited from using the main club.

d. Holabird Signal Depot, Md. A Negro soldier complained that a officer called him "Nigger". The officer was transferred.

e. Boca Raton AAF, La. Three Negro soldiers complained that the pital mess table for Negroes was at the back of the room and never serviced was moved.

4. Resistance to Army Officers

a. Oakland, Cal., 16 Jan. An Army officer was pulled to his knee a Negro private who refused to entrain for Florida.

b. Langley Field, Va. A Negro soldier cursed a white lieutenant told him to move to the rear of a bus.

c. Gulfport, Miss., AAF. A Negro soldier walked off a detail with

others when a white lieutenant told him how to hold a shovel.

d. Oakland, Cal., 11 Jan. A Negro soldier cursed before a WAC lieutenant when she barred him from a white dance.

e. NYFE, 25 Jan. A confined Negro soldier refused twice to halt. His captain told a Negro guard to fire. The prisoner was shot in the leg.

5. Conflicts with Civil Police.

a. Port Tampa, Fla. Negro civilians have been threatened by a white town marshal for talking with Army officers investigating his shooting a Negro soldier who has sued him.

b. Shreveport, La., 21 Jan. When a Negro soldier said "All white girls in California like Negro men", the Public Safety Commissioner attacked him in a restaurant and threatened to shoot MPs. A civil policeman threw one MP out.

c. McAllen, Tex., 27 Jan. A civil policeman knocked a Negro soldier down because he resisted coming to the station after a traffic accident.

d. Valdosta, Ga., 25 Jan. Two Negro soldiers snatched a Negro girl from civil police.

6. Transportation

a. Charleston, S.C., 13 Jan. White passengers threw a Negro serviceman off a bus after he struck the driver.

b. Midland AAF, Tex., 25 Jan. Three Negro student officers complained to the provost marshal that a bus driver had ordered them to sit on the rear seat rather than the second and third from the rear. The bus company was told to caution its employees to be more tactful.

c. Monroe, La., 29 Jan. A Negro soldier accosted a white soldier's wife at a railway depot.

d. Dayton, O. A Negro soldier intervened in a fight between two Negro civilians (allegedly blind veterans) and a trolley conductor.

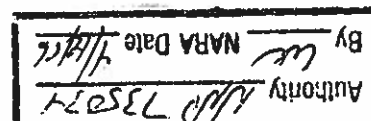
e. Fairmont AAF, Geneva, Nebr. A Negro soldier struck a white bus driver when asked to change seats. Later they exchanged apologies.

f. Valdosta, Ga., 24 Jan. One of eight Negro soldiers in a white waiting room said: "I am being sent overseas and I will sit where I damn please". MPs moved them.

g. Meridian, Miss., 17 Jan. A white bus driver hit a Negro MP with a crank, cursed other Negro MPs and ordered them away when they asked him if Negro soldiers were giving him trouble.

h. Tampa, Fla., 26 Jan. A Negro soldier struck a white bus driver and r

- 6 -
- CONFIDENTIAL -



DECLASSIFIED

Authority

WAP 735074

By

W NARA Date 4/14/86

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

- CONFIDENTIAL -

were unheard of until recent numerous aggressive acts by Negroes. About 30 Negro boys threw rocks at white boys and beat them.

b. Cleveland, 18 Jan. Negro and white (largely Jewish) high school students, fought after a basketball game.

c. Oakland. "Zoot-suiters" attacked white sailors.

d. East Chicago, 27 Jan. Negro youths beat white students after a high school basketball game.

e. Mishawaka, Ind. Three Negro women factory workers attacked a 16-year-old white girl.

5. Vigilantes, Agitating Groups

a. Conyers, Ga. A "Gentile political party block to combat the Jew and Negro Racial Blocks" is the objective of the Commoner Party of the USA. (Some of its literature was found in Lawson General Hospital).

b. Cincinnati, O. A Negro has organized the Carrier Pigeon Club and said he wants enough men "to get justice for the Negroes" and men "who won't talk.

c. Chicago, 31 Jan. The director of the Gentile Cooperative Association whose charter was revoked by a judge who compared it to the Ku Klux Klan, Silver Shirts and other subversive groups, has filed a new statement with the county clerk certifying that he is the sole owner.

d. New Orleans, 29 Jan. A Jamaican Negro is reactivating the Universal Negro Improvement Association, militant Negro group.

e. Chattanooga, Tenn. Post-war action will be necessary to insure white supremacy and keep the Negroes from equal recognition, a head Klansman told the Ku Klux Klan 'day group'.

6. Civilians on Military Installations

a. Wright Field. A Negro employe, under investigation for assaulting a white man at a bus dock, pushed a white female bus employe.

b. Wright Field, O. Squeezed between two Negroes on a bus, a Southern white girl protested loudly.

c. Maywood, Cal., 17 Jan. After seeing war films at the AAF Specialized Depot a Negro woman employe said the "Japs were no enemies" that "it was a white man's war and let him fight it".

d. Tuskegee AAF, 16 Jan. The starting time of some work shifts was advanced an hour and the Negro side of the PX restaurant

n. Seattle, Wash., 19 Jan. A white woman let a swinging door hit one of two Negro sisters. One knifed her.

o. Wilmington, Cal., 17 Jan. A Negro and a white workman fought.

p. Chicago, Ill. Three Negro workmen have assaulted and threatened three white foremen who discharged or reprimanded them.

q. New York, 11 Jan. Two Negro NYFE MPs challenged a civilian for parking in a restricted area. He abused them and one struck him.

r. Brooklyn, N. Y., 20 Jan. A Negro transit operator was beaten by four white sailors who said "niggers have no business operating trolleys".

IV. Army Criticism

1. Segregation and Discrimination

a. MacDill Army Air Base, 31 Jan. After German war prisoners in a hospital objected to serving Negro patients, the Negroes were segregated, the National Negro Congress has complained to the Secretary of War remarking that "it is incomprehensible and indefensible to us that American Army policy should be subject to the dictates of German fascist prejudice".

b. Cincinnati, 27 Jan. "Slaps in the face" to Negro soldiers are: being told that Air Corps technical schools are closed to them; being told that not much except general duty is open to them except, in some cases the Medical Corps; and being given menial tasks, according to the Voice (Negro).

c. "Indiantown Gap (Pa.) camp is most democratic in nation. Colored and white personnel eat, sleep, work, play and dance happily together. But recently units from Reynolds (Ohio) (sic) moved in with a general who naturally ranked Indiantown's colonel. The general has a white special services officer x x x At his advice, general has ordered that white and colored personnel now have separate Jim Crow President's Birthday Balls. Now at Indiantown where everybody used to love each other, everybody hates each other, and the general has the nerve to wonder why. Army sure loves to spit in the wind". This quoted paragraph appears in the Chicago Defender (Negro).

d. Additional criticism contained in the column quoted above follows: "Colored personnel from North stationed at Orlando, Fla., actually fear for their lives and safety Huachuca is trying to balance its books by charging colored soldiers highway robbery prices for necessities ... San Angelo, Texas AAF post mixed students and regular personnel until Negro students came and now everything is separated into 'Student officers' and post personnel (but white students qualify as post personnel)".

e. New York, 27 Jan. A Negro war correspondent told the newspaper gull that Army racial conflicts reached such proportions in England that in one riot 75 soldiers lost their lives. Two other Negro war correspondents said Army racial discrimination harmed American prestige in Europe.