

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

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WAR DEPARTMENT  
 Army Service Forces  
 Office of the Commanding General  
 Washington

SPINT 291.2

5 June 1945.

RACIAL SITUATION IN THE UNITED STATES, 12 May to 26 May 1945.

I. Estimate. DOCUMENTATION OF THIS ESTIMATE IS IN TABS "A" AND "B". Unprovoked violence by Negro soldiers continued but individual military violence declined. Negro criticism of the Army discharge plan was widespread. Violence by white and Negro youths increased civilian unrest. Communists continued their efforts to gain Negro support. There was no change in FEPC agitation.

## II. Summary

## 1. Military

a. Group violence, as evidenced by disturbances at Drew Field, Fla., continues to reflect lack of restraint of Negro soldiers immediately prior to overseas shipment. A disturbance at Memphis, Tenn., also showed an increased tendency on the part of Negro troops to cast off restraint while changing stations (See TAB "B", page 1).

b. Negro criticism of the Army's demobilization plan charged discrimination against Negro soldiers because of their limited combat service.

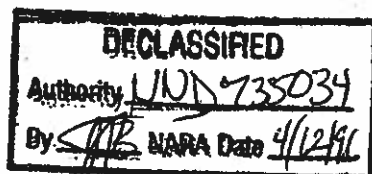
2. Civil. Violence by juvenile gangs in Chicago, Ill., and Columbus, O., increased racial unrest. Civil race relations, generally, remained unimproved.

3. Housing. An improved situation followed efforts of civilian authorities to provide additional Negro housing projects in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Toledo, Ohio.

4. Legal. State action generally was against efforts to establish anti-discrimination laws in employment.

5. Communists. Communists continued their efforts to identify themselves with matters of primary interest to Negroes.

6. Miscellaneous. Widespread Negro newspaper accounts of an atrocity in which a white bus driver was alleged to have killed a Negro baby and in turn was killed by a soldier were found to be false.



/s/ J. M. Roamer,  
 J. M. ROAMER,  
 Colonel, GSC,  
 Director of Intelligence.

Incls TABS "A" and "B"

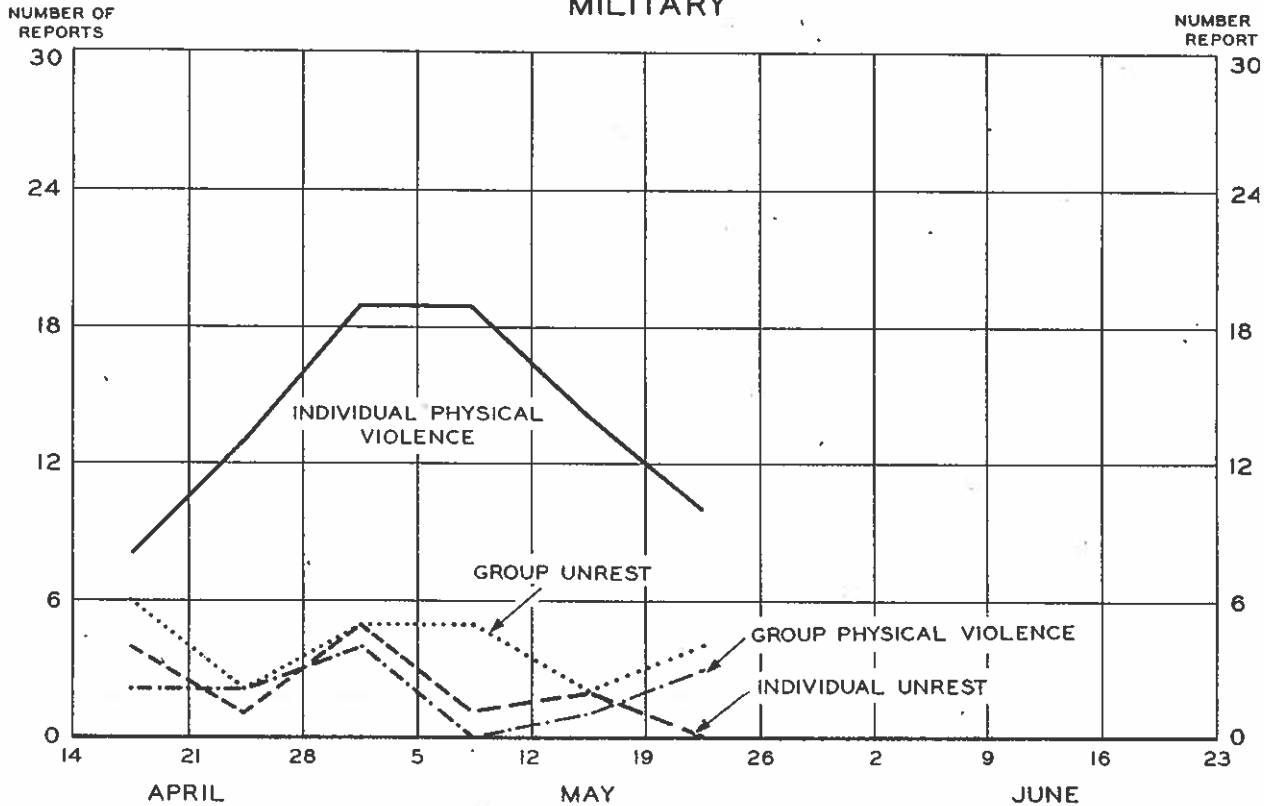
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TAB

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RACIAL TENSION IN THE UNITED STATES  
FOR PERIOD 14 APR - 26 MAY 1945  
MILITARY



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Definition of Terms

Individual Physical Violence: Interracial fights and all other crimes :  
flecting racial animosity between individu  
within the Army.

Individual Unrest: Verbal conflicts including letters and sta  
ments which show unrest.

Group Physical Violence: Race riots, rebellious fights, defiance  
authority, etc. involving six (6) or more m  
bers of the military.

Group Unrest: Group action by six (6) or more persons  
which definite agitation or racial tens  
falls short of physical violence.

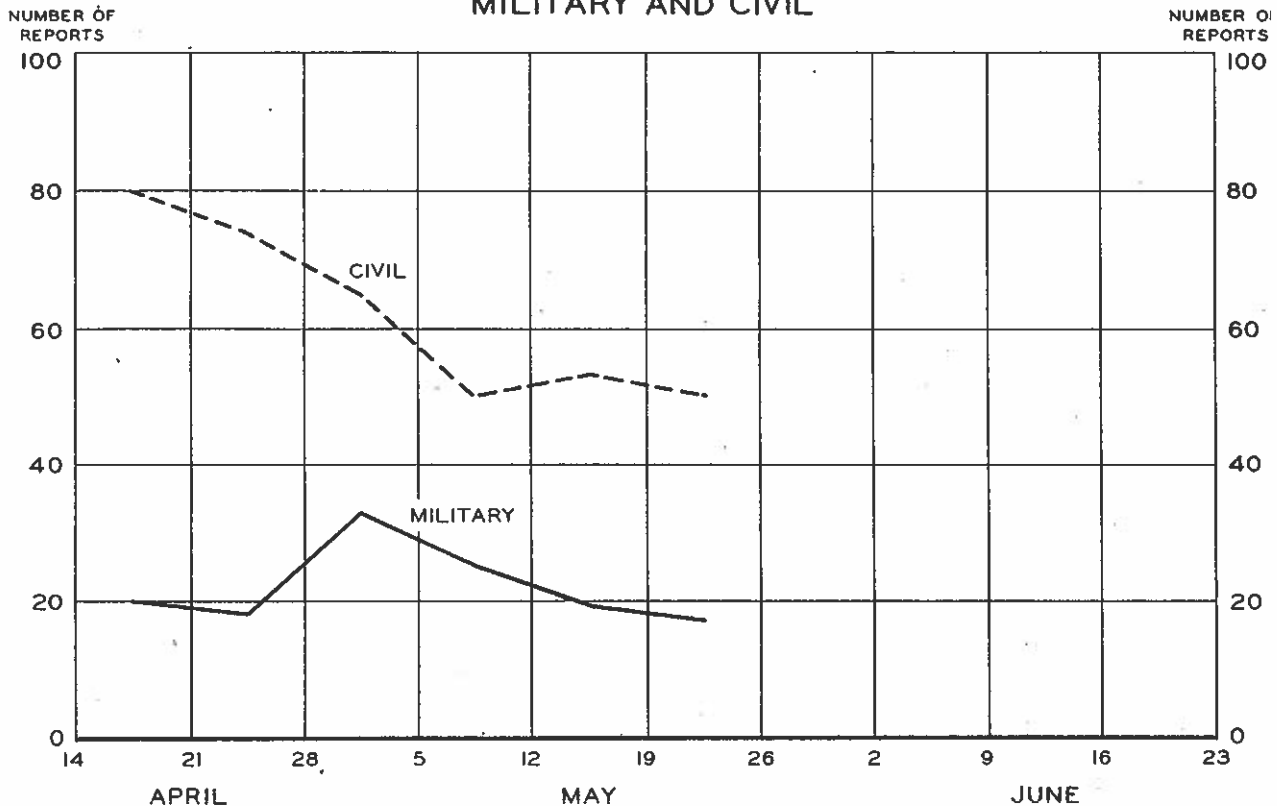
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TAB 1

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RACIAL TENSION IN THE UNITED STATES  
FOR PERIOD 14 APR - 26 MAY 1945  
MILITARY AND CIVIL



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Racial trends plotted on the attached chart and those which follow are based upon reports from Service Commands and other contributing agencies.

Each trend is shown according to the number of reports reflecting that particular trend.

These charts do not reflect all racial incidents but are based on those believed by reporting agencies to be significant.

A qualifying factor in consideration of these charts is that the total number of Negro troops within the United States declined approximately 36% from July 1944 to 31 January 1945.

Criminal incidents which involve the two races have been included only when they were caused by racial antipathy or incited unrest. (For example, where Negro assaults and robs a white man, the incident would not be included unless occurred during a wave of violence or provoked racial ill feeling).

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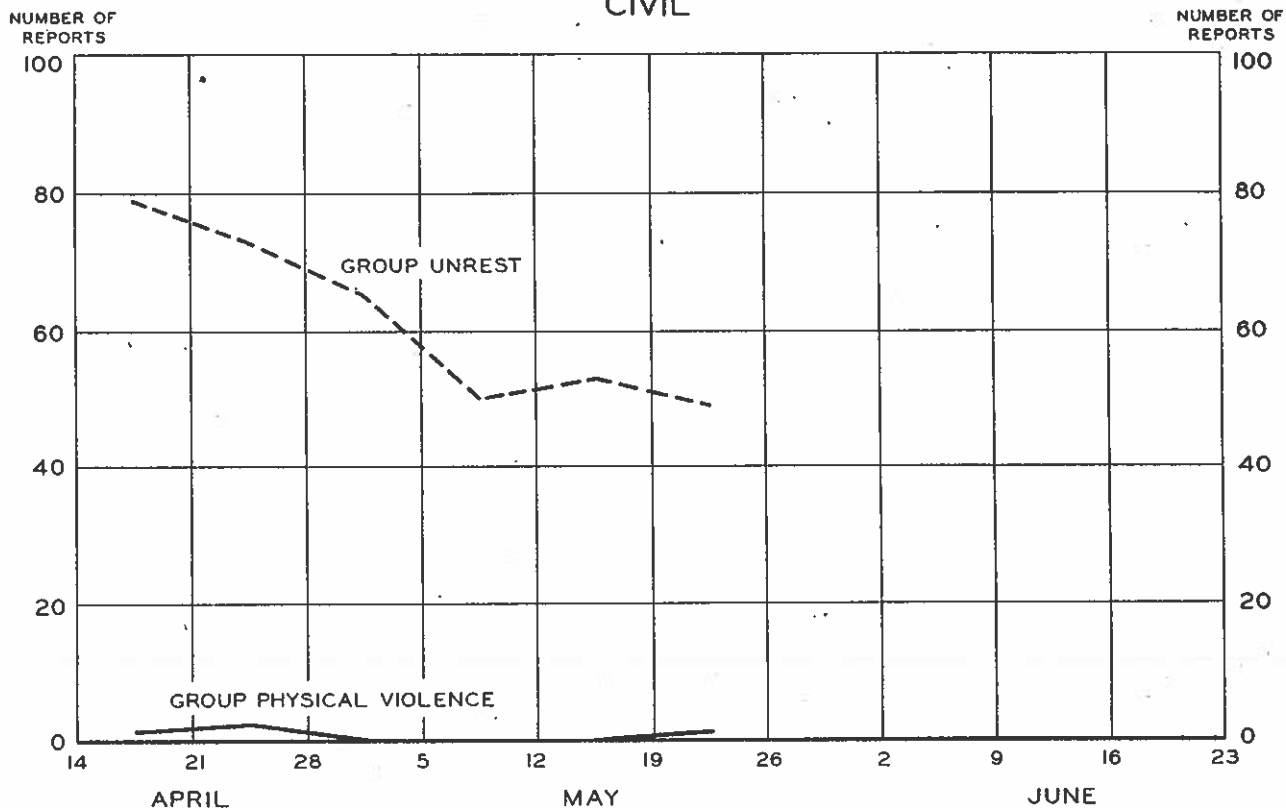
TAB A

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### RACIAL TENSION IN THE UNITED STATES

FOR PERIOD 14 APR - 26 MAY 1945

CIVIL



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#### Definition of Terms

Group Unrest

All reports which reflect racial unrest within the civilian population (agitation, legislation, organizational activities, etc)

Group Physical Violence:

Activities of groups involving six (6) or more persons accompanied by physical violence (vigilantes, gang feuds, etc)

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TAB "B"

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ncidents and Situations

. . Drew Field, Fla. Unprovoked violence by Negro soldiers occurred  
asions as follows:

(1) 21 May. Approximately 350 Negro soldiers rioted in a  
rice Club after returning from a hike. When two white attendants  
serve them fast enough the soldiers crowded behind the counter,  
bles, broke windows and overturned tables. Unit white officers  
MPs dispersed the crowd. Several officers were struck by bottles  
e was seriously injured. The club was badly damaged. No action  
aken against any individual but steps have been initiated to pre-  
currence.

(2) 11 May. When a group of Negro soldiers were stopped by  
P for driving through a stop street an argument ensued and the Negro  
s struck by the MP. The Negro returned to his company area and re-  
bout 75 Negro soldiers who then pelted MP patrol wagons with rocks.  
rbance was quelled by white officers of the Negro organization and  
Negro soldiers involved are assigned to a unit destined for overseas

b. Memphis, Tenn., 19 May. One white soldier and five Negro soldiers  
ged with disorderly conduct, inciting a riot, and carrying concealed  
ollowing a disturbance at a railroad station while enroute to Camp  
iss. They were rowdy, used profanity and molested white women. When  
ted two Negro soldiers and a white soldier, three other Negro soldiers  
free them. Long bladed knives, some open, were taken from the demon-  
All were released the next morning to report to their new station  
plinary action.

Sensitive Areas. Racial tension at military installations has  
change. Sensitive areas as listed in the periodic summary for 14 April-  
remain the same.

Preventive Action

a. Gunter Field, Ala. Military authorities have announced an ex-  
f the recreational and athletic programs for Negro soldiers.

b. Hendricks Field, Fla. A Negro Service Club building has been  
by the installation of fluorescent lighting and the club program  
expanded.

c. Tyndall Field, Fla. The Negro track team, outfitted with new  
, participated in a meet at Xavier Negro College, New Orleans, La.

Army Criticism

a. Typical Negro reaction to the Army discharge plan follows:

(1) Patterson Field, O. During a showing of the film "Two Down and One to Go" Negro soldiers indicated dissatisfaction because lack of overseas service denied them eligibility under the Army point system for discharge. One soldier remarked "Damn the points", got up from his seat and left the theater.

(2) New York City, 19 May. An Associated Negro Press release stated that Army segregation policies and the limited use of Negroes in combat will prevent the early release of large numbers of Negroes under the recently announced War Department discharge plan.

(3) St. Louis, Mo. Negroes feel that the Army point system for troop demobilization represents a new kind of discrimination against Negro soldiers.

(4) East St. Louis, Ill. Many Negroes criticized the Army's point system for discharge as discrimination against Negro soldiers because most Negro soldiers are in service units and will not have the necessary points for discharge despite 'long and faithful service'.

b. Significant criticism by Walter White, Executive Secretary of the NAACP, who recently visited the Pacific theater as a war correspondent, included:

(1) Boston. The NAACP secretary stated that he witnessed attempts by some American troops to force the social pattern of the South into overseas Army installations.

(2) Chicago. 21 May. Approximately 2500 Negroes heard the NAACP secretary criticize the War Department for its treatment of Negro troops. The speaker said that in far too many cases inefficient and weak white officers had been assigned to Negro divisions and that as a result of faulty leadership many Negro fighting units had been destroyed and numerous Negro soldiers killed.

(3) Cleveland, O. 20 May. The NAACP executive secretary criticized the War Department for its "reprehensible and deplorable" practice of assigning "incompetent white officers to Negro organizations".

## II. Civil

### 1. Crimes and Situations Reflecting Sensitivity

#### a. Sensitivity in industrial centers was reported as follows:

(1) Chicago, Ill., 21 May. An unidentified white gang, numbering 15 to 35, shot and killed one Negro youth and injured two others near the Chicago Mail Order Company, located in a predominantly Italian neighborhood. There had been evidence of racial tension at the plant because of alleged incidents in which Negroes molested Italian girl employes. Communist front groups

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the city may publicize the incident as a race issue.

(2) Detroit, Mich. The rapid increase of the Negro population Mich. has brought Negro efforts to expand their residential area. Recently a Negro purchased a home outside the so-called Negro area. On the first night of occupancy the house was set afire.

(3) Gary, Ind. Widespread rumors that the mayor intends to close off the Gary bathing beach to Negroes this summer have caused comment. Many predict that racial trouble will result. One source says if the beaches are open to Negroes it will take the US Army to keep the people under control.

(4) Columbus, O., 16 May. Racial violence involving four teenagers and at least six teen-aged Negroes occurred when the auto driven by the white youths was stoned. The whites returned to the scene obtaining two shotguns, shells and a hunting knife and challenged the Negroes to fight. The Negroes summoned the police who arrested the white youths and held the Negroes as witnesses.

(5) Columbus, O., 24 May. Increased animosity among Negroes and streetcar operators followed another altercation between a group of youths and a motorman. The incident started when the youths attempted to board a streetcar and were chased by the motorman armed with a controller. On the return trip the Negroes stopped the vehicle and threatened the motorman with bodily harm. Police were notified. When the car again approached approximately ten Negroes, armed with clubs, were waiting and several companions were observed in parked cars. Police intervened when the car approached the streetcar and the entire group was dispersed.

(6) Easton, Md., 24 May. The case in which a white woman was assaulted in her home by a Negro civilian on 20 May created considerable reaction.

#### Housing

a. Detroit, Mich. Efforts to erect a 1400-unit temporary war housing project for Negroes in Ecorse township brought strong resentment from white residents of that area. The federal public housing authority showed no tendency to back down to community opposition and is justifying its action on the basis of its duty.

b. Milwaukee, Wisc. The City Housing Authority Chairman predicted the construction of a 230-unit Negro war housing project will begin about 1946.

c. Toledo, O., 14 May. The City Plan Commission approved construction of a 100-unit Negro war housing project.

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Labor. Dayton, O., 11 May. Six white female employes of the  
is Company quit their jobs after refusing to work with Negroes.

#### Preventive Action

- a. New York City, 19 May. The Golden Gate Ballroom has been  
into a community center project for Harlem residents.
- b. Cleveland, O. Detailed police investigations will be made  
sault and battery cases involving religious or racial prejudice.
- c. Durham, N.C., 12 May. Two additional Negroes have been  
to the city police force.

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#### Communists

- a. Baltimore, 20 May. The State CPA Committee stressed the impor-  
FEPC legislation.
- b. Philadelphia. CPA has distributed a 32-page booklet, "Political  
ion" to Negroes.
- c. Cleveland, O., 26 May. Continued CPA efforts to secure Negro  
were noted.
- d. Atlanta. During a membership campaign a CPA member urged that  
nization be played up as the "Negro political party".
- e. California. The CPA intends to abandon its nomination policy  
AACP in favor of other Negro civic, fraternal and religious organizations.
- f. Seattle, Wash. CPA press comment hailed the hiring of Negro bus  
as "a splendid example of democracy in action".
- g. Seattle, Wash, 20 May. A CPA convention, representing 17 local  
, adopted proposals which included support of a permanent FEPC and  
l anti-poll tax bill.
- h. Oregon. The State CPA president has sent NAACP literature and  
tip application forms to members of the armed forces on the CPA mailing

#### Legal

- a. Washington, DC, 23 May. The Senate Education and Labor Committee  
i the Chavez bill for a permanent FEPC.
- b. Boston. Activity for state legislation to outlaw employment  
ination increased following favorable committee action.



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c. Springfield, Ill. The Senate Committee rejected a state FEPC bill.

d. Milwaukee, Wisc. The State Assembly rejected a proposal to provide instruction in racial, national, religious and economic tolerance in State schools.

e. Columbus, O., 19 May. The Ohio State News (Negro) stated that Republican opposition in the Senate Rules Committee had prevented the FEPC bill from reaching the Senate floor.

f. Cleveland, O., 19 May. The Cleveland Call and Post (Negro) stated that the City Council passed a resolution urging the Ohio General Assembly to enact proposed FEPC legislation.

3. Post-War Expectations

a. New Orleans, La. The New Orleans Sentinel (Negro) stated, "It is indeed regrettable that most of our Negro newspapers and militant organizations fail to see the need for challenging the establishment of authorized vigilante committees, which are all white groups, armed and supplied through the US Army Division and are known as State Guard Units". The article stated that organizations of this nature are growing rapidly in Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi and Georgia.

b. East St. Louis, Ill, 6 May. The NAACP Secretary charged that forces at home and abroad are conspiring to prevent the Negro from assuming his rightful place.

IV. Miscellaneous.

a. Fourth Service Command. Negro newspaper accounts of an alleged incident in which a white bus driver was said to have choked a Negro baby to death and in turn was killed by a Negro MP while the bus was traveling between Pensacola and Tallahassee, Fla. were not substantiated by an investigation initiated by this Headquarters.

b. Eighth Service Command. Recent Negro newspaper articles described an incident at Shreveport, La. in which a white bus driver was said to have been killed by a white soldier after having choked a Negro baby to death. Investigation by this Headquarters proved the report to be entirely false.

c. Memphis, Tenn., 12 May. The Southern Negro Conference for the Equalization of Educational Opportunities stated as its aim "a true and complete equality of opportunity within the South's chosen framework of racial separation".