

DECLASSIFIED  
ED. 11000, 03-20-1980  
JND 730069  
By ERE NARS, Date 6-15-79

13 December 1944

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:**

The favorable progress of the war in the Pacific, as well as other developments, has resulted in a determination by the War Department that the continued mass exclusion from the West Coast of persons of Japanese ancestry is no longer a matter of military necessity.

As you know, that program was instituted at a time when an attack on the West Coast was a definite probability and an invasion on a large scale had to be considered as a real possibility. Experience in Europe had given warning of the danger of the fifth column and had shown that residents having ethnic affiliations with an invading enemy are a greater source of danger than those of different ancestry. The vast majority of persons of Japanese descent in the United States resided in the West Coast region. Social, economic and political conditions had intensified their solidarity, strengthened their ties with Japan, and had retarded their assimilation with the rest of the population. Although the majority were undoubtedly loyal to this country, it was known that

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there was a disloyal group whose number and strength could not be quickly ascertained, and who could not be isolated and separately dealt with. Under these circumstances mass exclusion of persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast was felt to be a necessary military precaution.

Since that time it has been possible to examine our population of Japanese descent and to separate those who have indicated that they are loyal to Japan from those whom the military authorities have determined no longer need be excluded. This latter group will include over 90% of the population of Japanese ancestry. A considerable number of this latter group have proved their loyalty to this country in the most exacting of all tests--the field of battle. American soldiers of Japanese ancestry, fighting with courage and devotion in Italy, in France, and in the Pacific, have shown that loyalty to America is a matter of mind and heart, not of race. Many of these men were recruited from relocation centers. Many of them have families in those centers. The War Department has a definite interest in the morale of these men and feels that from this point of view alone, it is most desirable that the mass restrictions against persons of Japanese descent be not continued a moment longer than is necessary.

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The present capabilities of the enemy on the West Coast include the execution of minor ground raids by air-borne or submarine-borne units, carrier-borne air attacks on a small scale, sabotage, espionage and possibly some incitement of civil disturbances. As our own military activities close in on Japan and bring the war to Japan proper, the well-known face-saving attitude of the Japanese may provoke action of some sort against our West Coast. The Pacific Coast Area remains a critical area because of the large number of important war plants which are located there and because it is the base of our supply line to the active theaters of the Pacific War. It is essential therefore that those persons of Japanese descent who have shown their strong pro-Japanese bias shall be effectively prevented from performing acts of sabotage or working with or assisting the enemy in the planning or execution of any incursion.

After due consideration of all the factors involved, the Commanding General of the Western Defense Command assures us that if adequate safeguards are maintained as outlined herein, the return of the vast majority of persons of Japanese ancestry to the West Coast can be permitted without adverse effect on our

war effort.

Among these safeguards are measures to insure that the return is accomplished gradually. It is also felt to be important that there should be no let up in the efforts which are being made to relocate persons of Japanese descent in other parts of the country.

The responsibility for the actual mechanics of relocation is, of course, in the civilian agencies of government. The decision of the War Department in this matter has been communicated to the Department of Justice and the Department of the Interior. The War Department understands that the Department of the Interior intends to put into effect a program based on a gradual and orderly return to the West Coast and a vigorous continuation of the efforts to relocate persons of Japanese descent throughout the entire United States. As our part of the program, the Commanding General of the Western Defense Command will be prepared, on or about December 15, 1944, to announce the termination, effective approximately a week thereafter, of mass exclusion of persons of Japanese descent and the designation of those whose present status of exclusion is to be maintained. The determination of those who will be excluded will be made as a result of an examination and an evaluation of the information which the various agencies have accumulated relating to persons

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of Japanese ancestry. Persons to be excluded will be those against whom information is available showing their pro-Japanese attitude. It is expected that less than ten thousand persons will be excluded in this manner. The cases of the persons who are excluded will be automatically reviewed from time to time and such persons will be entitled to request a hearing and present evidence in their behalf.

The Commanding General of the Western Defense Command in recommending this program, and the War Department in approving it, are not unmindful of the problem presented by individuals of the type of the segregees who in the main are located at the Tule Lake Segregation Center. Among the persons detained at this camp there is a militant group composed of individuals strongly pro-Japanese in their sympathies and who in fact not only have continued to maintain and inculcate Japanese doctrines to an alarming degree, but also have shown their willingness to return to Japan to assist its war effort. No program can be put into effect without considering the possible damage which might be done if this group were permitted to be at large. The Commanding General of the Western Defense Command is preparing a list of those persons of Japanese ancestry who will not be

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permitted to leave the centers because they fall within the category described above or for other reasons, pending the further examination of their cases individually. The cases of persons who are on this list will be automatically reviewed by the Western Defense Command and all such persons will be entitled to request a hearing and present evidence on their behalf. When the final determinations have been made, the War Relocation Authority will transfer all persons to be detained to a segregation center. It is understood that the Department of Justice will ultimately, to the extent that the law permits, take over the responsibility for such detention and for determining which individuals should be released from detention. The War Department and the War Relocation Authority will, of course, furnish the Department of Justice with all available information which is requested relating to the individuals concerned.

The possibility that disorders might occur when persons of Japanese descent return to the West Coast has been considered. Some initial opposition is to be expected. The War Department is interested in this question because any serious trouble might result in

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retaliation against American soldiers who are held as prisoners of war by the Japanese. The return should be facilitated by an announcement which the Commanding General, Western Defense Command, plans to make, to the effect that only those persons who are cleared by the military authorities are being permitted to return. When this is known, I am confident that the common sense and good citizenship of the people of the West Coast is such that the inauguration of this program will not be marred by serious incidents or disorders.

The matter is now the subject of litigation in the Federal Courts and in view of the fact that military necessity no longer requires the continuation of mass exclusion it seems unlikely that it can be continued in effect for any considerable period. The institution of the system which permits the orderly return of the bulk of the people subject to the safeguards outlined above seems preferable to the alternative of risking an unfavorable court decision with the confusion and disorder which would attend a sudden and unplanned return.

(SIGNED) HENRY L. STIMSON  
Secretary of War

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