

Box 49
Folder 6
Item 1
Page 142.18 J.A. - VOLUNTEERS
INAGAKI, GEORGE K.

May 28, 1943

MEMORANDUM FOR THE INSPECTOR GENERAL:

Reference your memorandum for Mr. McCloy, the Assistant Secretary of War, dated May 25, File IG 291.2 Fort Riley, Kansas, on the subject of the incident where Japanese American soldiers were put under guard during the visit of the President at Fort Riley, it is noted that you state no immediate investigation will be made. While it is not the desire of the Assistant Secretary of War to require immediate investigation, this situation is one which he feels should be fully investigated in order to determine all of the facts in the case, including the name of the responsible officer. It is the Assistant Secretary of War's desire that this investigation be made as early as possible so that appropriate action can be taken.

(SIGNED)

WILLIAM P. SCOBAY
Colonel, General Staff
Executive

oasw:wps:maw

The Inspector General
Riverside Apartments, Room 717
2145 C Street, NW
Washington, D. C.

42.18 J.A. Volunteers, Imigaki, George K.
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May 21, 1943

MEMORANDUM FOR THE INSPECTOR GENERAL:

There is forwarded herewith what is purported to be an extract of a letter written by a Japanese American soldier to a Japanese American resident in a relocation center. The writer of the letter is unknown, but the War Relocation Authority reports that such an event did occur at Fort Riley, Kansas.

You are familiar with the fact that the War Department recently authorized the organization of a special Japanese American Combat Team, the personnel of which was obtained by voluntary induction from among the Japanese in Hawaii and on the Mainland of the United States. If officers of the Army take the position with reference to Japanese American soldiers as indicated in the attached communication, it can hardly be expected that these soldiers or the Japanese Americans in other units of the Army will exhibit any loyalty either to their officers or to the Nation.

I wonder if this is not something that you should watch. The whole idea of making these men good combat troops is completely negatived by destroying their self-respect or the assumption of their loyalty. They are all carefully screened men.

(SIGNED) JOHN J. McCLOY

JOHN J. McCLOY
Assistant Secretary of War

Enc.
Extract of Letter

~~RESTRICTED INFORMATION~~

OASW:WPS:MS

The Inspector General
Riverside Apartments, Room 717
2145 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D. C.

"Today, Easter Sunday, we experienced an action which I'll never forget as long as I live. President Roosevelt came to our camp on his way home from Mexico and we Japs were all told to fall out in dress uniforms. We all fell out with the thought of seeing the President, but what happens? The Captain gives us a speech telling us how much he appreciated our cooperation in conducting ourselves as a soldier and gentlemen during our four days of confinement. And he had the audacity to wish us a Happy Easter when he knew all the time what was to follow. I bet, you won't believe it, but it actually happened, here. We were marched double file all the way to the motor pool and as we approached one of the mechanized school buildings, there were about fifty armed guards with rifles and bayonets posted around this building. Boy! I sure felt lousy when we were told to march single file into this building between two guards standing by the entrance ready to take a pot-shot at us if we made any false move. Inside this building there were more Japs huddled in a group from Motor Pool with about fifteen armed officers to watch us. Yup, we were in the same category as prisoners of war. In fact, I even felt like one. Yes, we were wearing the same uniforms as the men outside watching us. Why? One of the officers mentioned something about precautionary measures so that no harm would befall the President while he was inspecting our camp. Yup, we were wearing the same uniforms as the fellow guarding us and they don't trust us. Boy! a million thoughts kept hammering in my head as we were in there as prisoners.-----

-----They haven't given us the chance to realize what we're fighting for. Of course, in fairness I must say that it isn't like this in all the camps. In Texas-----the Nisei boys in service were allowed to show their trust by permitting them to guard the railroad track so that the President could pass through safely. Over here, it was entirely an opposite situation--they used negative psychology.

May 14, 1943

Dear Mr. Inagaki:

I was glad to have your letter of May 11, and to have the benefit of your observations on the entire Nisei problem. I wish to thank you for your expressions of appreciation.

The War Department and a great many of the officers located in it here in Washington are sincerely concerned with the problem of solving the Nisei question. I believe you are appreciative that all of us have attempted to approach the matter without prejudice or sentiment. The position of the Japanese American at the present time is indeed difficult. The hatred of the Japanese nation on the part of the Americans is so violent that it seems inevitable incidents of dislike must overflow against our Japanese Americans. The one thing I have always hoped for is that the Nisei would understand the realities of the situation and not expect realization of the complete position of a citizen. It is inevitable that unfortunate local incidents and situations will develop, but it is my hope that the Nisei should not express a resentment against these prejudicial acts except in a dignified, cultured manner.

A general policy is gradually being evolved by the War Department, and even though there have been many hostile expressions in Congress, I feel that the Chandler Committee report has been of great value. I suppose that you are familiar with the general context of that report. In the main, it provides for internment of disloyal people, whether citizen or alien; application of the selective service law to all Japanese American citizens (the disloyal citizens will be thrown out); and the release from the relocation centers of all loyal aliens or citizens. This, of course, would mean segregation of the disloyal from the loyal. This is the general program that the War Department has had in mind for some time.

I was quite disturbed over the extract from a letter you had from the Nisei. I showed this to the Assistant Secretary of War, and he felt as I did about it.

The action of the commander of this camp in subjecting the Nisei soldiers to this humiliating position certainly was totally unjustified and will not be tolerated by the War Department. However, it will be necessary for us to have some concrete facts in the case before our investigation may proceed. Would you, therefore, please furnish to me the names of the soldiers who were corralled and held under guard during the President's visit, with the location of the camp. You are well aware that this attitude is entirely contrary to the War Department's policy.

I trust that you will lend your weight in giving the Nisei an understanding of the situation somewhat as I have explained it here. The one thing that the War Department is hoping for is that this Japanese American combat team will so distinguish itself in combat that no question can ever arise as to the loyalty of the Japanese American citizen who professes his adherence to this country.

I do not know when you will be moving to Camp Shelby, but when you do keep in mind that Mississippi and Hattiesburg are highly race-conscious, and it is entirely possible that some unfortunate incident may be precipitated, but against the Nisei. Would bear in mind that incidents are usually precipitated by uninformed and ignorant people.

Please let me hear from you with the information on the incident reported by the Nisei.

Sincerely,

(SIGNED)
WILLIAM P. SCOEY
Colonel, General Staff
Executive

Mr. George J. Inagaki
c/o 413 Beason Building
Salt Lake City, Utah

oasw;wts;EAW