

8 January 1945

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. McCLOY:

A policy with reference to the publication of Japanese atrocities was approved by the Secretary of War on 28 December 1944. This policy was written in a meeting of the Interdepartmental Board of Prisoners of War on which the War Department is represented by Major General Surles (Bureau of Public Relations), Brig. General Berry (G-1), Brig. General Bryan (Assistant Provost Marshal General), and others. Policy is as follows:

1. Atrocity stories may be released on a personal basis by individuals subject only to the necessary clearance for security purposes.
2. Official releases of atrocity accounts shall not be issued or cleared by the War Department, the Navy Department, or the Department of State without coordination among them. This coordination may be conducted informally through the appropriate agencies in each of the aforesaid departments. If matters of high policy are involved, a meeting of the Interdepartmental Board may be called.
3. An official release is defined as a statement or a release issued by the State, War or Navy Departments, or any other authorized agency of the Government, or a statement by an agent speaking for any of the foregoing; also a statement by a theater commander or an authorized statement in his behalf.
4. It was agreed that the Department of State should make this policy known to the Office of War Information, the War Shipping Board, the Director of Censorship, and any other agencies of the Government which may be concerned and request their cooperation.

On January 6 the Bureau of Public Relations notified Army commanders in the Pacific of this established War Department policy.

Joint Chiefs of Staff have indicated (JCS 794) that in their opinion final decisions is one to be made by the War and Navy Departments. They perceive no objection to coordinating the timing of releases along lines recommended by the Department of State.

With reference to the release of German atrocities stories, the only War Department policy in effect at the present is one that restricts the release of stories from repatriated individuals for fear that the publication of such stories might endanger future repatriations.

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CG	740862
By	NARS, Date 5-25-41

~~SECRET~~

*Does this mean anything in the?*



January 6th, 1945.

Memorandum for the Secretary of War:

Forrestal says that he will bring up at the next meeting of Secretary of State, Secretary of War and Secretary of the Navy the question of publicity as to treatment of American prisoners of war in the hands of the Japanese.

Forrestal believes that the Army and Navy should allow more latitude on narratives given by escaped prisoners of war than has been allowed in the past. I agree with him, but that of course is only my personal opinion.

In general it is sound policy to tell the public the full facts. The exception is when our military operations would be prejudiced by publicity. In this case I cannot see how military operations would be prejudiced.

Some people have had the thought that publicity on Japanese maltreatment of prisoners of war might result in worse treatment of our men still in their hands. I think that there is no basis for this belief. On the contrary, publicity as to harsh treatment of American prisoners of war by the Japanese is more likely to result in betterment in the treatment of our unfortunate men who are held by them.

(Signed) ROBERT P. PATTERSON

Robert P. Patterson,  
Under Secretary of War.

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P.S. I am sending McCloy a copy of this paper.  
RPP.