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## Wartime Exile: The Exclusion of the Japanese Americans from the West Coast

U.S. Department of Interior and War Relocation Authority

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# Wartime Exile

## The Exclusion of the Japanese Americans From the West Coast

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

# Wartime Exile

## The Exclusion of the Japanese Americans From the West Coast



United States Department of the Interior

J. A. KRUG, *Secretary*

U. S. War Relocation Authority

D. S. MYER, *Director*

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Price 45 cents

that the Japanese should be allowed to return. I am opposing it with every proper means at my disposal."<sup>48</sup>

Asked if he based his "determined stand on experience as a result of sabotage or racial history or what," the general replied:

"I first of all base it on my responsibility. I have the mission of defending this coast and securing vital installations. The danger of the Japanese was, and is now—if they are permitted to come back—espionage and sabotage. It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen, he is still a Japanese. American citizenship does not necessarily determine loyalty.

"You needn't worry about the Italians at all except in certain cases. Also, the same for the Germans except in individual cases. But we must worry about the Japanese all the time until he is wiped off the map. Sabotage and espionage will make problems as long as he is allowed in this area—problems which I don't want to have to worry about."<sup>48-a</sup>

It will be remembered that the general displayed his worry over illicit signaling and radio transmission on the part of Pacific coast Japanese in a memorandum addressed to James Rowe, Jr., of the Department of Justice, on January 5, 1942. In his final report on the evacuation, published in the latter half of 1943, the general repeated charges of illicit signaling and radio transmission against the Japanese population of the coast.

The Chief of the Federal Communication Commission's Radio Intelligence Division had reported a conference with General DeWitt and his staff, on January 9, 1942. In the course of this conference, the procedures of radio intelligence were explained to the general, and he was informed that there had been no illegitimate radio transmission or signaling from Japanese or other coastal residents.<sup>50</sup>

More than two years later, asked to comment on statements contained in the DeWitt final report, the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission wrote the following letter to Attorney General Francis Biddle, dated April 4, 1944:

"This is in reply to your letter of February 26, 1944 with reference to Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt's Final Report on Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast, which was recently made public by the War Department.

"You state that you are interested in the accuracy of General DeWitt's account, in the first two chapters of the Report, of the events leading to his decision that military necessity required the evacuation, and you note that prevention of signaling by persons, presumably of Japanese descent, on shore to enemy surface vessels or submarines off the coast apparently was a very considerable part of the problem with which General DeWitt was concerned during the period between December 1941 and July 1, 1942, when the evacuation was substantially complete. You direct attention particularly to his reference to hundreds of reports of such signaling by means of signal lights and unlawful radio transmitters and state that investigation by the Department of Justice of great numbers of rumors concerning signal lights and radio transmitters proved them, without exception, to be baseless.

"You inquire, first, whether during the period from December 1941 to July 1, 1942, the Commission was engaged on the West Coast in monitoring and identifying signals reported to be from unlawful transmitters and in locating any such transmitters; and, if so, the number of reports received by the Commission during this period of unlawful or unidentified signals, with a detailed breakdown of the results of its investigations:

"Throughout this period on the West Coast as elsewhere throughout the United States and its territories, the Commission's Radio Intelligence Division was engaged in a comprehensive 24-hour surveillance of the entire radio spectrum to guard against any unlawful radio activity.

"Within the area on the West Coast from which the Japanese were subsequently evacuated, the Commission's Radio Intelligence Division had in operation two Primary Monitoring Stations, located at Portland, Oregon, and San Pedro, California, and Secondary Monitoring Stations, located at Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon; Arcata, California; Larkspur, California; Fresno, California; Los Angeles, California; San Diego, California; Yuma, Arizona, and Tucson, Arizona. During the period here involved, the Secondary Station at Larkspur, California, was moved to San Leandro, California, and was expanded to a Primary Monitoring Station; and the Secondary Station at Yuma, Arizona, was moved to Salinas, California. The Commission had additional stations at other places within the Western Defense Command.

"At all stations, there were special receivers and recorders for intercepting and recording signals throughout the entire radio spectrum. The Primary Monitoring Stations were equipped with extensive antenna arrays and Adcock high-frequency direction-finding apparatus for taking bearings upon sky-wave signals received from all over the world. They were tied in with other Primary Monitoring Stations on the continent as well as in Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico, which together constituted a nation-wide direction-finding system for immediate coordinated action in taking bearings upon and establishing the fix of any suspected transmitter and for exchanging other information relative to identity of radio stations. At the Secondary Monitoring Stations were mobile units, equipped with loop direction finders, for going into the field and quickly locating an unidentified transmitter by taking bearings within its ground-wave range. Other devices enabled investigators to determine the exact house or even room in which a transmitter was located.

"Soon after December 7, 1941, at the request of General DeWitt, the monitoring facilities described above were supplemented by patrols of mobile direction-finding intercept units along the West Coast from Canada to Mexico. These patrols were instituted for the particular purpose of detecting any radio transmissions from shore to ships off the coast.

"In the early months of the war, the Commission's field offices and stations on the West Coast were deluged with calls, particularly from the Army and Navy, reporting suspicious radio signaling and requesting the identification of radio signals. In hundreds upon hundreds of cases, identification of the signal was made by Radio Intelligence Division personnel merely by listening to it right at the monitoring station. In no case was the transmission other than legitimate.

"In the case of 760 reports of unidentified or unlawful radio signals within the evacuated area during the period in question, which could not be heard or identified by listening at the monitoring station, a field investigation was conducted by mobile direction-finding units. In 641 of the cases it was found that no radio signaling at all was involved. Of the 119 cases remaining, 116 were found to involve lawful transmissions by following stations:

United States Army Stations	- 21
United States Navy Stations	- 8
Local Police Stations	- 12
United States and Foreign Commercial Licensed Stations	- 65
Japanese Stations in Japanese Territory	- 10
	<u>116</u>

"The final 3 were found to involve the very short-range transmissions of the ordinary commercial type phonograph oscillator used in playing recordings for home amusement.

"There were no radio signals reported to the Commission which could not be identified, or which were unlawful. Like the Department of Justice, the Commission knows of no evidence of any illicit radio signaling in this area during the period in question.

"You also ask the extent to which General DeWitt or his subordinates were informed of the operations of the Commission's Radio Intelligence Division. The General and his staff were kept continuously informed of the Commission's work, both through occasional conferences and day-to-day liaison. In the earlier part of the war, there was constant contact by telephone between Radio Intelligence Division stations and Army and Navy posts along the West Coast for the purpose of furnishing these agencies with bearings and other information pertaining to radio signals. And as the result of a request of General DeWitt in January 1942, the Commission established a Radio Intelligence Center in San Francisco for coordinating radio intelligence information collected by the Army, Navy and the Commission. This Center was tied in by teletype-writer circuit with the Primary Monitoring Stations on the West Coast, as well as with other Primary stations on the Continent through headquarters in Washington. As a result, it was an integral part of the Commission's nation-wide direction-finding system described above. As a part of the plan for coordinating activities, Army and Navy personnel maintained a liaison attendance at this Center. Both these services, moreover, had a direct telephone circuit from the Center to their headquarters.

"You direct attention, further, to the statement in General DeWitt's Report that following the evacuation, interception of suspicious or unidentified radio signals and shore-to-ship signal lights was virtually eliminated. You state it

was the experience of the Department of Justice that, although no unlawful radio signaling or any unlawful shore-to-ship signaling with lights was discovered, a great number of reports of such activity were received, and that these did not diminish in number following the evacuation. It is likewise the Commission's experience that reports of unlawful radio signaling along the West Coast—which in each case were unfounded—were not affected by the evacuation. In fact, throughout the year 1942, the number of reports of unlawful radio operation requiring investigation by mobile units which were received in the States along the West Coast varied in close parallel with the number of such reports received throughout the whole country.

"Finally, you refer to General DeWitt's memorandum of January 5, 1942 to James H. Rowe, Jr., Assistant to the Attorney General, set out in the Report, in which concern is expressed over the action to be taken in a case where there should be strong evidence of shore-to-submarine radio communication, but the unlawful radio transmitter could not be located within an area more precise than a city block, or even a general area such as Monterey County.

"You note that the memorandum suggested that available means were inadequate to locate and seize any such radio transmitter, but state that if your understanding that equipment was available for locating such a transmitter is correct, the problem with which General DeWitt was concerned would not arise in practice. Your understanding is correct. As noted above, equipment developed by the Commission's engineers was on and after December 7, 1941 in the hands of its personnel on the West Coast, which enabled them easily to locate the individual house and even the exact room containing the concealed transmitter."51

The information, thus gradually acquired, was regarded as confidential; no public official refutation of the charges made against the Japanese Americans was offered. There was a war in progress.

By March 2, 1942, when General DeWitt issued Public Proclamation No. 1, it had become apparent to him that voluntary evacuation would not dispose of the entire West Coast Japanese population in any reasonable length of time or without disorder. Problems of property disposal, finance, employment and acceptance in other areas were constituting a block to this voluntary movement. The minor movements of Japanese aliens from prohibited "spots" in February had resulted for the most



part in bewildered individuals or families simply moving in with relatives or camping in the back yards of friends in other sections of the same town or city. Some families had moved as far as the interior valleys of California—to the dismay of many of the citizenry in those regions; very few had been able to migrate east of the State line. It was plain that a controlled evacuation would have to be inaugurated for the tens of thousands of people who could not plan or finance their own evacuation, and that provision would have to be made for the maintenance of a substantial part of the Japanese population for an indefinite period, until their resettlement eastward could be accomplished in orderly fashion.

Up to this point the Western Defense Command's sole concern in the matter had been with the physical evacuation, with clearing the designated military area of the Japanese residents. It was not considered feasible or proper that the military should assume responsibility for the future welfare of thousands of families or that it should administer an extensive resettlement program. The Department of Justice was unwilling to take on such responsibilities. Discussions between representatives of the Department of Justice, the War Department and the Bureau of the Budget ended in a decision to create a special civilian war agency to assume jurisdiction over the evacuated population.

What was most important of all in this stage of planning, the President requested the Director of the Bureau of the Budget to find him a man to head the new agency who was without political ambitions, a man of humanitarian principles with a grasp of the social implications of the evacuation, with administrative ability, and with skill to direct the extremely delicate program in public relations posited by the controversial nature of the issue of evacuation. The qualifications required by the President in the director of an unprecedented program were a determining factor in setting the key of the agency's future policy.

At this time and for some time to come the voice of the racists was dominating public sentiment toward the Japanese Americans, and it was clamoring for arbitrary detention of the entire minority for the duration of the war and deportation of the entire group to Japan at the close of the war. Had the President requested a different sort of director to head the new war agency, it is obvious that the evacuation story must have had a much grimmer ending than it has had.

48. House of Representatives. Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Naval Affairs. 78th Congress, 1st Session. Pursuant to H. Res. 30. A Resolution Authorizing and Directing an Investigation of the War Effort. Part 3. San Francisco, California Area. April 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17, 1943. GPO. Washington, D. C. 1943.

48 p. 739

48-a p. 740

49. Letter of June 17, 1942. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson to Major General Lewis B. Hershey, National Headquarters Selective Service System, Washington, D. C.

Letter of March 8, 1944. Harold M. Hayes, Captain AUS, Foreign Liaison Section, Manpower Division, to Mr. John Baker, Chief of Reports, War Relocation Authority.

Letter of November 5, 1942. Major General J. A. Ulio for the Adjutant General, to Mr. John F. Embree, Senior Archivist, War Relocation Authority.

50. Confidential Memorandum from the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, James Lawrence Fly, to the Attorney General. Subject: Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt's Final Report on Japanese Evacuation from West Coast. Dated April 1, 1944. Contains quote from the report of the Chief of the Commission's Radio Intelligence Division on a conference with General DeWitt and his staff, on January 9, 1942.
51. Letter to the Honorable Francis Biddle, Attorney General, from James Lawrence Fly, Chairman, Federal Communications Commission. April 4, 1944.