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Statement by
GENERAL OMAR BRADLEY, CHIEF OF STAFF
Before the
President's Committee on Equality of Treatment
and Opportunity in the Armed Forces

4:00 PM Monday
March 28, 1949

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Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen: Here at the beginning I would like to say that I personally have no prejudice in this matter and my only concern is that nothing be done which might adversely affect our ability to carry out our mission.

The problem before your committee is a complicated and far reaching one. There is much at stake in reaching a proper and correct answer. There is only one reason for an Army--National Security.



In re-examining Army policies as they affect equality of treatment and opportunity for all troops, I would assume that your committee is not only interested in the welfare of our Negro minority but that you are primarily concerned with the need for full utilization of the skills, talents, and competence of all our men in order that the Army might be an efficient and representative protector of our nation.

Consequently I do not believe that we should be charged with being ultra conservative when we say that any changes in our present system should be taken only after very careful study of the questions involved and of the possible effects of any radical changes.

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Any system of handling manpower and any principles of organization must be based upon what will obtain best results in carrying out our mission, i.e., winning battles in case of war. We must not do anything that will jeopardize National Security.

Any system of use of manpower must be applicable in peace and in war. It must be applicable to both the Regular Army and the National Guard. Because in war our replacement systems must be as simple as possible. It is complicated enough at best. You cannot have different rules apply to units of the same type. You certainly could not have some units with complete integration of Negroes and Whites while others practiced segregation.

It naturally follows that the same principles must be applied to National Guard units of every state in the Union.

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Complete integration of units would greatly simplify our administrative problems and I believe that steps towards such integration should be




taken as fast as our social customs will permit. I think that we have made great strides towards further integration in the last few years. However, we still have a great divergence in customs in different parts of the country. In certain instances, such as schools or other temporary assignments we can follow the customs of the locality, however, in our permanent units the problems is more difficult.

68 Neither is integration in a military unit as simple as integration in public gatherings or places of work during the day. The big problems arise after work or training hours, in living quarters and social gatherings. At the same time we must have equality of opportunity, of facilities and of treatment. This is being provided under present policies.

69 I believe that the Negro soldier, in general, considers his lot, from his viewpoint, a good one. Our high rate of re-enlistment indicates this. I do not have the exact figures but it is estimated by our personnel people as being approximately 75%. Evidently the majority of them is satisfied with the pay, the conditions of service, the opportunities offered them and their treatment.

I challenge anyone to show me any large-scale business or government enterprise in the United States where the Negro has achieved faster advancement, more responsibility, and greater remuneration than in the United States Army. The Secretary of the Army has already presented to you statistics which show conclusively that the Negro has not been penalized vocationally while serving in the Army, that by and large he has fared fully as well as our white troops.



There are several advantages to the Negro soldier in this arrangement. In the first place he is competing with men who have in general had the same opportunities as to education and development of leadership. As a result, the percentage of non-commissioned officers of the first four grades who are Negroes compares very favorably with the percentage of Negro soldiers. I am informed that 8.9% of our non-commissioned officers of the first four grades are Negroes. It is especially necessary that we give every gradient of our population which is transposed from civilian to Army life, an opportunity to accept responsibility, learn the basic tenants of leadership, and reap the democratic benefits and results.

Furthermore, in our training and administrative practices we have tried to reduce the number and amount of changes from civil life to military life to a minimum. Of course, some changes are necessary. A man must become a member of a team with more consideration for the rights of his fellows. He becomes more dependent on them and they on him. This is highly important, especially in battle. But we do try to have the Army reflect the best points of our civilian social and political structure. For one thing this makes our job easier, because the transition from civilian life to military life is abrupt enough without our throwing any unnecessary stumbling blocks in the way. Secondly, any organization should take full advantage of the best features of any background that its personnel may have. We all realize that the donning of a uniform does not change a man's personality, his aptitude or his

prejudices.

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To a large extent the success of the American Army has been the result of taking advantage of the adaptation of the native American ingenuity to military problems, not upon the restamping of men into the military stereotype attempted by some nations in the past. Our success in winning battles and in winning wars would attest to the soundness of this adaptation.

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I would say that some of the principal advantages of complete integration are that it might remove any false charges that equal opportunities are not provided. It would simplify administration and the use of manpower, and it would distribute our losses in battle more nearly in proportion to the percentage of the two races.

Among the principal disadvantages I might mention that complete integration might very seriously affect voluntary enlistments, both Negro and White. It might cause great dissatisfaction among Negroes if they did not receive their percentage of higher non-commissioned officer grades. And, of course, any system of selection within an organization based upon anything but free competition would be contrary to our American system.

In addition such a system of complete integration might seriously affect morale and thus affect battle efficiency. I consider that a unit has high morale when the men have confidence in themselves, confidence in their fellow-members of their unit, and confidence in their leaders. If we try to force integration on the Army before the country is ready to

accept these customs, we may have difficulty attaining high morale along the lines I have mentioned.

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I believe that the question of experimental units has been brought up before your committee. The Army staff does not object to experiments as such, our progress through the years has been largely due to our research and experimentation. So far we have been unable to outline an experimental unit which we think will prove anything conclusively on this subject of integration. All the plans submitted so far have included some form of voluntary participation. Such voluntary participation will not be practicable in time of war because as I have already pointed out this would make any reasonable replacement system impossible. Even if the experiment were a success as far as volunteers are concerned it does not prove that it would be satisfactory where the opponents to such a system are concerned. In other words, we do not believe that an experimental unit conducted along volunteer lines will prove anything.

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In conclusion may I point out that primarily our peacetime Army is a volunteer organization depending upon the free acceptance of the conditions within the Army by men who volunteer for such service, both at home and abroad. I hope that we can keep it a volunteer Army without resorting to the Selective Service Act, or at least keep conscription to a minimum. On the other hand, our wartime service is not a volunteer proposition, but in service by conscription in which men have less opportunity to select their branch of service, their type of service, or where they serve. The ultimate winning or losing of battles with this conscript

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Army is our military problem. I am sure that you realize that any radical changes in this Army which might seriously affect its ability to accomplish this mission would be a very serious one.

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