

John Nicholas Brown to Secretaries of Defense, Army, and Air Force, December 28, 1948. Security Classified Records, Record Group 220: Records of the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces.

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COPY

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

28 Dec 1948

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MEMORANDUM

To: The Secretary of Defense
The Secretary of the Army
The Secretary of the Air Force

Subj: The Secretary of the Army's confidential memorandum of 2 December to the Secretary of Defense, concerning the possible establishment of "an experiment with a unit of reasonable size in the interests of a complete elimination of segregation between white and Negro races" - comment on.

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DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS
DOD DIR 5200.10 NARS-NT



1. It is believed that the establishment of experimental units in the interest of a complete elimination of segregation as proposed in the Secretary of the Army's confidential memorandum of 2 December 1948 to the Secretary of Defense would be of interest to the Secretary of the Army. It is desired to point out that the establishing of experimental units of this nature will certainly create widespread publicity. Regardless of the good intentions and sincerity and precautions taken to avoid it, a large portion of the publicity will be adverse and non-constructive in nature.
2. With regard to the Navy the assignment of Negro personnel is made without reference to the race of the individual. Negro personnel of the Marine Corps, depending upon their duty assignment, are either completely integrated or assigned in groups which are components of a larger organization. An effort is being made to increase the number of Negro officers in the Navy and Marine Corps on a long-range permanent basis.
3. Very satisfactory progress has been made in the Navy and the Marine Corps without creating problems of morale and discipline or lowering the esprit de corps. The white personnel of these services have accepted the fact that Negroes must take their rightful place in the service.
4. The normal distribution of qualified personnel without regard to race has resulted in Negro personnel being assigned to each combatant ship in the Navy. In carrying out integration of the races in the Navy, assignments to duty are not made by race; therefore, records of the number of Negroes on individual ships and units are not normally tabulated. A spot check of the reports of a few individual combatant ships reveals that of ten destroyers taken at random, the percentages of Negroes on

that of ten destroyers taken at random, the percentages of Negroes on board ranged from 5.0 to 12.9, average 6.9, and for five cruisers from 3.1 to 7.5, average 4.7. All Negro personnel are assigned berthing space with the divisions of the ship to which assigned.

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5. It would be difficult, due to the dissimilarity of the Army and Navy shore activities, to reproduce a shore station for the assignment of Navy or Marine Corps personnel where the social problems for individuals and their families would approximate those confronting the Army. At the present time available housing for enlisted personnel is allocated to whites and Negroes on an equitable basis. A recent check of two areas reveals that in order to assure that there will be no discrimination in the allocation of available housing facilities, an allocation has been made to whites and Negroes on a basis of the percentage of each in the upper three pay grades of the allowances of the naval activities concerned. A community center is provided within the housing project at Annapolis for the use of all personnel living in the project. The soda fountain, game room and lounge of this center are open to all races on an equitable basis and are frequently used simultaneously by whites and Negroes.

6. It is believed that the progress made to date by gradual education and indoctrination of naval personnel in the Navy's policy of nondiscrimination is accomplishing the desired results on a sound and permanent basis. The conducting by the Navy of any experiments such as proposed would unnecessarily risk losing all that has been accomplished in the solution of the efficient utilization of Negro personnel to the limit of their ability.



/s/ John Nicholas Brown
Acting

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