

Joseph McNarney to Chief of Staff, War Department, August 13, 1945. Security Classified Records, Record Group 220: Records of the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services.

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DOD Dir. 5200.10, June 29, 1960
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AG 291.2/838 C/S-0

Headquarters, MTOUSA, APO 512, c/o PM, NYC. 13 August 1945.



TO: Chief of Staff, War Department, Washington 25, D. C.

1. Approved in principle.

2. From the standpoint of efficient utilization of available military manpower, I consider that the recommendations contained in paragraph 4a of the report are sound. I am convinced that had it been possible to put this proposal to a test in combat elements in an active theater of operations, there would have been no measurable loss in combat efficiency, and we would have been able to demonstrate that the colored soldier individually can be made into a good combat man, whereas we have in general failed to accomplish this using colored troops collectively in segregated units.

3. To attempt a similar test under garrison conditions will present new and difficult problems, particularly of a social nature. The success of the experiment would depend to a considerable extent on the ability of the commanders of the units involved, and more important still, upon the success of the War Department in obtaining forbearance, or at least non-interference, on the part of politicians, the local communities involved, and the leaders of negro opinion, including the Negro press. Any one of these groups can cause so much comment and racial friction as to make failure of the experiment almost inevitable. I, nevertheless, recommend that such an experiment be conducted in a cross section of type units and in selected communities in the US.

4. It must be recognized that with strictly impartial treatment and in mixed organizations of the type proposed, the proportion of negro non-commissioned officers and commissioned officers will be relatively small, since it must be accepted that in competition with white soldiers of average ability few negroes will rise to command responsibility. To offset as much as possible the inevitable reaction of the radical elements against this certain result, I recommend that at least until the success of the experimental organization has been proved, a proportion of segregated negro units be maintained, organized generally as recommended in paragraph 3b of the report.

5. Much of the difficulty in the successful utilization of negro personnel in segregated units can be attributed to our almost complete inability so far to develop competent negro non-commissioned officers and junior commissioned officers. I doubt, however, that we can blame this entirely upon inherent racial characteristics. The lack of initiative, the unwillingness to accept responsibility, and the defensive attitude of negroes in general must be attributed in large part to the history of the race since its emancipation. They have had little opportunity for educational advancement, and few chances to shoulder responsibility or to develop initiative. Until we can overcome these shortcomings, we will never successfully employ negro manpower to its maximum ability. In the

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post-war organization of the Army, I consider it imperative that we provide for a proper proportion of negro personnel, and that we make intensive peace-time effort to develop initiative and command ability among negro soldiers. Only in this way will we meet the next national emergency with sufficient qualified negro leadership to avoid many of the difficulties encountered in the present war.

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/s/ Joseph T. McNarney
General, U. S. Army
Commanding

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