

FUTURE RELEASE

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ARMY PROGRAM FOR RACIAL EQUALITY
APPROVED BY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson today approved a program proposed by the Department of the Army to give greater assurance of equality of treatment and opportunity to all Army personnel without regard to race or color.

In submitting the new program to the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of the Army Gordon Gray pointed out that he had discussed with Charles Fahy, Chairman of the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces, the Committee's suggestions and the Army's proposed program.

Secretary Gray said that in order to insure a progressively more efficient utilization of manpower, including utilization of Negroes in each of the Army's career fields, the Army is taking these specific steps:

1. Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) will be open to qualified personnel without regard to race or color.
2. The present Negro quotas for selection to attend Army schools will be abolished and selection will be made from the best qualified personnel without regard to race or color.
3. The promotion system of the enlisted career guidance program will be administered on an equal merit basis so that all promotions will be obtained by open competition on Army-wide examinations, against a single standard and without regard to race or color.
4. ROTC students attending summer training camps as members of school units to which they are regularly assigned will be trained with those units without regard to race or color.
5. A board of senior Army Officers will be convened from time to time to determine current progress under the program and to re-examine and review the fundamental policies for the utilization of Negro manpower in the light of changing conditions and experiences. The first board will be convened in the near future.

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"This program," Mr. Gray said, "does not mean that existing Negro units will be broken up or that Negro personnel of these units will be scattered throughout the Army. It does mean that qualified Negroes, including members of these existing units, will have the opportunity to learn those skills previously unavailable to them. Hereafter, Negroes who acquire skills will be assigned to positions where their specialties may be applied in the manner most useful to the Army."

Under a new reenlistment policy, the Army has limited reenlistments to those who, during the first regular enlistment, qualify for promotion to Private First Class if unmarried, and to Corporal, if married. Since promotions to these grades may be made without regard to vacancies, all Army members are eligible to win these promotions. Mr. Gray said this policy is expected to produce greater economy and efficiency by gradually eliminating from Army service those who fail to demonstrate the capacity to advance. Its progressive application will also assure continuing opportunities to highly qualified individuals, both Negroes and others, to enlist in the Army.

Under the Army's new program Military Occupational Specialties will be open to all qualified personnel. No individual who qualifies for a Military Occupational Specialty will be denied the opportunity to follow it because of race or color. This will give greater significance and provide further implementation to the Army's policy and practice of using qualified persons without regard to race in filling the operating -- or so-called overhead -- positions at Army installations.

Formerly, Negroes were excluded from acquiring certain Military Occupational Specialties. Also, they were selected to attend schools on the basis of Negro distribution in the Army. They competed for promotion only among themselves. Now all non-commissioned officers will compete for promotion on an Army-wide equal merit basis, against a single standard, without regard to race or color.

Under the old policy, Negro ROTC students attending summer camps were placed in Negro units for their training. Now all personnel regularly assigned to an ROTC unit will remain together and be trained together.

Mr. Gray declared that the Army was continuing its study of the present policy of regulating Negro original enlistments in the Army, which is now based on the population ratio of Negroes to the total population -- currently about 10 percent.

He pointed out that present policies concerning the utilization of Negro manpower in the Army are based on the recommendations of a board, headed by Lieutenant General A. C. Gillem, which made its report in 1946 and which itself recommended a periodic review of Army policies.

"Changing conditions and attitudes require and permit constant reexamining and testing of our policies and our practices," Mr. Gray said. "The new board, which I intend to appoint promptly, will help us in the performance of this duty."

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