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American Veterans Committee (AVC)

INCORPORATED

TO ACHIEVE A MORE DEMOCRATIC AND PROSPEROUS AMERICA AND A MORE STABLE WORLD

National Offices • 1751 New Hampshire Avenue, N. W. • Washington 9, D. C. • North 0581

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Executive Director

November 9, 1951

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The Honorable Harry S. Truman
President of the United States
The White House
Washington 25, D. C.

7
4-30-52

My dear Mr. President

I am enclosing a copy of a letter I received from General ^{Anthony C.} McAuliffe, Assistant Chief of Staff, Department of the Army, and a copy of my reply. This correspondence relates to the elimination of segregation in the Army. x 1285-B Mig

All the members of the American Veterans Committee were delighted when you issued your Executive Order to eliminate segregation in the armed forces, and we are very much concerned with the failure of the Army, after three years, to carry out this order.

Yours very truly,

Michael Straight
Michael Straight
National Chairman

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C O P Y

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, Personnel
Washington 25, D. C.

6 Oct 1951

Dear Mr. Straight:

This is in reply to your letter of 28 September 1951 addressed to General Collins regarding the elimination of segregated units in the Far East Command and the continuation of certain segregated units elsewhere in the Army. In the absence of General Collins I have been asked to reply for him.

The program of integration recently initiated in the Far East Command was adopted after a very comprehensive study and careful evaluation of experiences.

This study is continuing and will encompass the problems involved in integration in the United States and other areas. In this regard, it is evident that integration in areas other than the Far East Command, particularly in the United States, will present problems of greater magnitude and variety than those encountered in Korea and Japan.

Further steps by the Department of the Army to broaden existing integration will depend upon the evaluation of completed findings of the present studies.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed)

A. C. McAULIFFE
Lieutenant General, GSC
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1

Mr. Michael Straight
1751 New Hampshire Ave., N.W.
Washington 9, D. C.



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Lt. Gen. A. C. McAuliffe, GSO
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1
Department of the Army
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear General McAuliffe:

Thank you for your letter of October 5 in response to my letter to General Collins concerning the elimination of segregated units in the Army.

The American Veterans Committee is, of course, glad to learn that the Army is concerned with this issue. You will understand, however, that we cannot feel satisfied with the attitude of the Personnel Division or the Chief of Staff as expressed in your letter.

More than three years ago, on July 26, 1948, President Truman issued Executive Order 9981. In that order he stated:

"There shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed forces without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. This policy shall be put into effect as rapidly as possible..."

Now, more than three years later, we learn from you that the matter is still under study and further, that there are reasons why, in the opinion of the Chief of Staff, the President's Executive Order cannot be carried out.

We assume that when the President issued his order he meant it to be an order. We cannot understand why the Army, unlike the Air Force and the Navy, has so far failed to carry this order out. Nor can we understand how you can take the position that it will be carried out only if your study indicates that it should be obeyed. That, if you will forgive me for saying so, is not the way we were taught to obey orders in the armed forces.

You mention that integration has been carried out in the Far East Command, where the magnificent morale of our forces is winning the Korean war for the United States and the United

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November 9, 1951

Nations. You add that there are special problems, here in our own country, which do not apply in Korea and Japan. Once again we cannot follow your attitude. We would answer:

First, that the pattern of non-segregation over most of the United States is as deep and should be far more important in determining the attitudes of the military than the dying pattern of segregation in sixteen Southern states.

Second, that the experience of the Navy and of the Air Force and of our universities, trade unions and citizens organizations indicates that Americans are law-abiding citizens who will accept the established policies of the United States.

Third, that it is a mockery of democracy that colored and white soldiers who are fighting together in Korea should be kept apart here at home.

To us these arguments are so vital and compelling that it is superfluous and unnecessary to point out the immense wastage, expense and loss of morale caused by continuing practices of segregation.

My detailed notes indicate to me that when I last spoke to General Collins he assured me and others that the Army was pressing forward as fast as possible to end segregation. That studies are still being made to determine policy, three years after policy was established by the President, suggests to us that that policy is not being "put into effect as rapidly as possible." We think that time has run out on this matter.

Yours very truly,

(signed)

Michael Straight
National Chairman

NOTE: A similar letter was sent to T. A. Young, Deputy Chief for Personnel and Administration, Office chief of Legislative Liaison, Department of the Army. This was in response to a letter Michael Straight received from Mr. Young, similar to his letter from Gen. McAuliffe.