

*Burke*

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL  
DATE:

TO : The Attorney General

*just* FROM : J. Edgar Hoover - Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation FEB 7 1944

SUBJECT: Reported Bombing and Shelling of the West Coast

There is attached a memorandum relative to Lieutenant General DeWitt's final report on the Japanese evacuation of the West Coast.

Certain statements were made in the report indicating that immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor there was a possible connection between the sinking of United States ships by Japanese submarines and alleged Japanese espionage activity on the West Coast. It was also indicated that there had been shore-to-ship signaling, either by radio or lights, at this time.

As indicated in the attached memorandum, there is no information in the possession of this Bureau as the result of investigations conducted relative to submarine activities and espionage activity on the West Coast which would indicate that the attacks made on ships or shores in the area immediately after Pearl Harbor have been associated with any espionage activity ashore or that there has been any illicit shore-to-ship signaling, either by radio or lights.

Attachment

*Smith*

EXHIBIT  
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MEMORANDUM

Reported Bombing and Shelling of the West Coast

In the Washington Post under dateline of January 20, 1944, an article appeared entitled "Japs Attack All Ships Leaving Coast", wherein Lieutenant General DeWitt was quoted on the disclosures made by him in a final report on the Japanese evacuation of the West Coast. This report, which is a 618-page bound volume, has been reviewed relative to any possible connection between Japanese espionage activity on the West Coast and shore-to-ship signaling, either by lights or radio. The only references relative to such statements are those included in Part I, in which various reasons are stated in an apparent attempt to justify the Japanese evacuation plan. As will be noted, all allegations are substantially the same as those appearing in the Washington Post news article previously mentioned.

Part I. Evacuation--Its Military Necessity

Chapter I. Action Under Alien Enemy Proclamations

(1) Pages 3 and 4

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"The Commanding General, during the closing weeks of December, requested the War Department to acquaint the Department of Justice with the need for vigorous action along the Pacific Coast. He sought steps looking toward the enforcement of the contraband prohibitions contained in the proclamations and toward the declaration of certain prohibited zones surrounding 'vital installations' along the coast. The Commanding General had become convinced that the military security of the coast required these measures.

"His conclusion was in part based upon the interception of unauthorized radio communications which had been identified as emanating from certain areas along the coast. Of further concern to him was the fact that for a period of several weeks following December 7th, substantially every ship leaving a West Coast port was attacked by an enemy submarine. This seemed conclusively to point to the existence of hostile shore-to-ship (submarine) communication."

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Chapter II. Need for Military Control and for Evacuation

(2) Page 8

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"In the Monterey area in California a Federal Bureau of Investigation spot raid made about February 12, 1942, found more than 60,000 rounds of ammunition and many rifles, shotguns and maps of all kinds. These raids had not succeeded in arresting the continuance of illicit signaling. Most dwelling places were in the mixed occupancy class and could not be searched promptly upon receipt of reports. It became increasingly apparent that adequate security measures could not be taken unless the Federal Government placed itself in a position to deal with the whole problem.

"The Pacific Coast had become exposed to attack by enemy successes in the Pacific. The situation in the Pacific theatre had gravely deteriorated. There were hundreds of reports nightly of signal lights visible from the coast, and of intercepts of unidentified radio transmissions. Signaling was often observed at premises which could not be entered without a warrant because of mixed occupancy. The problem required immediate solution. It called for the application of measures not then in being."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"It is interesting to note that following the evacuation, interceptions of suspicious or unidentified radio signals and shore-to-ship signal lights were virtually eliminated and attacks on outbound shipping from west coast ports appreciably reduced."

(3) Page 18

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"As already stated, there were many evidences of the successful communication of information to the enemy, information regarding positive knowledge on his part of our installations. The most striking illustrations of this are found in three of the several incidents of enemy attacks on West Coast points.

"On February 23, 1942, a hostile submarine shelled Goleta, near Santa Barbara, California, in an attempt to destroy vital oil installations there. On the preceding day the shore battery in position at this point had been withdrawn to be replaced by another. On the succeeding day, when the shelling occurred, it was the only point along the coast where an enemy submarine could have successfully surfaced and fired on a vital installation without coming within the range of coast defense guns.

(3) continued

"In the vicinity of Brookings (Mt. Emily), Oregon, an enemy submarine-based plane dropped incendiary bombs in an effort to start forest fires. At that time it was the only section of the Pacific Coast which could have been approached by enemy aircraft without interception by aircraft warning devices.

"Similarly, a precise knowledge of the range of coast defense guns at Astoria, Oregon, was in the possession of the enemy. A hostile submarine surfaced and shelled shore batteries there from the only position at which a surfaced submarine could have approached the coast line close enough to shell a part of its coast defenses without being within range of the coastal batteries."

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With reference to General DeWitt's statement that after Pearl Harbor Japanese activity on the West Coast was so effective that "substantially every ship leaving a West Coast port was attacked by an enemy submarine", it should be noted that no information is possessed relative to the number or percentage of ships attacked immediately after Pearl Harbor, nor is there any information to indicate that these attacks were associated with any espionage activity ashore. However, it is pointed out that undoubtedly the Japanese Navy had made preparations for submarines to proceed to the West Coast immediately after Pearl Harbor and, quite, naturally, if such preparations were made these attacks would follow.

As to General DeWitt's statement that "there were many evidences of the successful communication of information to the enemy, information regarding positive knowledge on his part of our installations", it is generally known that the Japanese had for years prior to the outbreak of the war collected information as to locations of military and naval installations, as well as data relative to the coast lines of the United States, but it should not be assumed that any part of this information came to the Japanese through shore-to-ship signaling by lights or illicit radio operation. Every complaint in this regard has been investigated, but in no case has any information been obtained which would substantiate the allegation that there has been illicit signaling from shore-to-ship since the beginning of the war.

Relative to the comment made in this report to the effect that "It is interesting to note that following the evacuation, interceptions of suspicious or unidentified radio signals and shore-to-ship signal lights were virtually eliminated and attacks on outbound shipping from west coast ports appreciably reduced", it is noted that numerous reports concerning allegations pertaining to flashing lights, radio transmissions, et cetera, have been received. However, all such reports have been investigated with negative results. It might also be said that there has been no material reduction in the number of complaints received pertaining to submarine activities on the West Coast as a result of persons of Japanese ancestry having been removed from the coast.

Relative to General DeWitt's statement of the three incidents of enemy attacks on the West Coast, it is pointed out that General DeWitt is referring to the same incidents of reported bombings and shellings of the West Coast which were published in connection with the testimony of Mr. Lyle F. Watts, Chief of the Forest Service, and Mr. Earl W. Loveridge, Assistant Chief of the Forest Service, given before the Appropriations Committee in June of 1943.

#### Prior Investigations of the Three Known Attacks

There are set out hereinafter the results of the investigations which were conducted immediately following the occurrence of each incident referred to by General DeWitt.

##### 1. Shelling of the Coast Near Santa Barbara, California, February 23, 1942

At approximately 7:10 p. m. on February 23, 1942, an attack was made on the Santa Barbara area by an unidentified vessel off the coast of California. Included in the area shelled was an oil refinery. The blackout in this area went into effect about one hour after the shelling had occurred and, although there were reports of lights and flares in the vicinity, investigations were made with negative results. Subsequent to the shelling Army authorities had planes scouting for submarines all along the coast and in connection with these searches the Army utilized numerous flares. There was no evidence of shore-to-ship signaling and no evidence of a landing in the area.

##### 2. Japanese Incendiary Bomb Dropped in Wooded Area Nine Miles from Brookings, Oregon, on September 9, 1942

At 6 a. m. on September 9, 1942, an unidentified plane was observed coming from the sea towards the vicinity of Brookings, Oregon. Four minutes later a Forest Service observer saw the plane. The Fourth Fighter Command of Portland thereafter received a report of this plane, which was identified as having taken off from a submarine based off Cape Blanco. This plane, a single float type, which was released from a Japanese submarine, dropped a 132-pound bomb of incendiary character in a heavily wooded area southeast of Mount Emily about nine miles from Brookings, Oregon. The bomb fragments were located and photographed, and Japanese markings were found thereon. It was thought by the Army that this bomb was dropped for the purpose of starting forest fires. There were no indications or allegations of suspected landings. It is noted that an Army plane dropped three bombs in an attempt to sink the submarine. As a result of this bombing, an oil slick on the water was observed where the bombs had been dropped and it was believed the submarine was sunk.

##### 3. Shelling of Oregon Coast by Unidentified Ship on the Night of June 21, 1942

Between 11:30 and 11:45 p. m. on June 21, 1942, the Oregon coast near Fort Stevens was shelled by an enemy vessel. (Astoria, Oregon, is located near the mouth of the Columbia River, the area in question.) According to Captain

Kroeger, Fort Stevens, an enemy vessel approximately 6,000 yards at sea and moving north began shelling the beach in the vicinity of Fort Stevens. This vessel fired nine shots in the space of fifteen minutes, three of which landed on the Military Reservation property and one within 120 yards of a coastal battery. Captain Kroeger believed the craft to have been a submarine due to the fact that its presence was detected by radio detectors located at Fort Canby which followed the path of the vessel as it cruised slowly southward. After sailing for more than one-half hour, they lost track of it. There was no return fire from Fort Stevens. Further investigation was negative.

REVIEW OF OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST CONTAINED IN GENERAL DEWITT'S REPORT

In noting the part played by the Department of Justice in the evacuation, it is stated, "By arrangement with the Attorney General, the Department of Justice, through the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the United States Attorneys, acted as the enforcing agency for all of the proclamations and exclusion orders of the Commanding General promulgated under Executive Order #9066. Although prosecutions in connection with the Japanese evacuation were few, the number of cases of violation of the Commanding General's curfew and travel restrictions, applicable to alien enemies, were many. Through the agency of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, state and local law enforcement agencies cooperated and assisted in enforcement of the evacuation program, primarily by reporting promptly any and all cases of failure to comply with exclusion orders."

In describing the security measures taken in the various Japanese assembly centers, the report makes note of the fact that subversive activities and violations of Federal laws were investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and prosecuted in the Federal courts. The report states, "In conformance with the delimitation agreement between Federal investigative agencies, the Federal Bureau of Investigation was ordinarily responsible for investigations of these types in the Centers. Because the Centers had many of the aspects of military reservations, the usual practice was for the interior security police to conduct preliminary investigations, report those that appeared to be Federal violations to the Federal Bureau of Investigation office having jurisdiction, and then cooperate with the Federal Bureau of Investigation agents in such manner as desired in further investigation or in the apprehension of the violators. Several cases of conspiracy to violate Public Law #503 (involving liquor transactions and gambling) and theft of Government property were completed in this manner."

In noting the crime rate in assembly centers as compared to the pre-evacuation crime rate among Japanese, reference is made in the report to the Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports, from which the figures were taken. The report states that during the year 1941 a total of 570 persons of Japanese ancestry were arrested for Part I and Part II offenses. The crime records in assembly centers cover a period of six months, during which 534 Part I and Part II offenses were reported to the interior security police. The average monthly evacuee population during these six months was 58,004. The total

population of persons of Japanese ancestry in the United States in 1941 was 126,500. The annual crime rate per 1,000 Japanese for 1941 is 4.5, while the same rate projected from the six months of record in the assembly centers was 20.6. This increase of approximately 450% was attributed to petty thefts, assaults, disorderly conduct, and other similar minor offenses which "always occur when large populations are concentrated into small areas under abnormal conditions."

The report also sets out for the record the regulations imposed by the Attorney General and military authorities over the conduct to be observed by alien enemies, such as curfew, travel, and contraband regulations.

To summarize the entire report briefly: it is a complete and detailed chronology of the Japanese evacuation, supplemented with supporting correspondence, memoranda, Executive Orders and proclamation, including that which concerned the Department of Justice, upon which was based all action taken by the military authorities. Most of the report is concerned with the Army's activity in removing the Japanese to temporary assembly centers, and the administration of the assembly centers. However, it also deals with all phases of the evacuation and the mechanics used in accomplishing it, beginning with the need for the evacuation and the legal basis therefor, and tracing the movements of the Japanese from the time they were removed from their homes, sent to Army control stations, assembly centers, and finally moved into War Relocation Centers.