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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Attorney General
FROM: James Lawrence Fly, Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
SUBJECT: Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt's Final Report on Japanese Evacuation from West Coast.

The accuracy of the statements in General DeWitt's Report concerning the existence of illicit radio signaling along the West Coast after our entry into the war must be appraised in the light of the ability of the military personnel to deal with radio intelligence problems. The fact is that military personnel was entirely incapable of determining whether or not the many reports of illicit signaling were well-founded. Indeed, the Western Defense Command was undoubtedly led to believe such signaling existed and to give credence to the many rumors to that effect, because Army installations themselves repeatedly made wholly inaccurate reports of the existence of illicit stations along the West Coast.

Time after time, the Army reported that stations transmitting in Kana Code, a code used almost exclusively by Japanese military stations, had been located at various points along the West Coast by Army direction finders. It was upon the persistent report by Army personnel of such stations in Monterey County, in one instance alleged to have been located within a city block, that the cases posed in General DeWitt's memorandum of January 5, 1942 to Mr. Rowe were unquestionably based. The Commission's investigations disclosed that all such reports were unfounded; that the transmissions involved were in each case from a station outside the United States, usually in Japan itself.

After a number of such erroneous and abortive Army reports of stations in Japan as Japanese spy stations in California during December 1941 and early January 1942, arrangements were made for Commission personnel to inspect some of the Army operations. The basic trouble observed was the lack of training and experience of military personnel in carrying on the monitoring and direction-finding work. As the Chief of the Commission's Radio Intelligence Division said in part in a memorandum reporting on a conference with General DeWitt and his staff, on January 9, 1942:

"Since Gen'l DeWitt seemed concerned and, in fact, seemed to believe that the woods were full of Japs with transmitters, I proceeded to tell him and his staff the organization of the

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[Commission's] N. D. O. Section [subsequently, Radio Intelligence Division] its inception, objective, jurisdiction and distribution of stations, equipment employed, personnel and training of personnel and the general modus operandi. I explained how we determined the general area in which an unauthorized station was operating and how we closed in on it with mobile units and other specialized equipment, including that all-frequency response receiver. I know it virtually astounded the General's staff officers. They had no comprehension whatsoever as to the difficulties one encounters in radio direction finding and why different equipment is necessary for ground wave as compared to sky wave and why it was particularly necessary to train personnel, not only in use of equipment but radio wave propagation and polarization.

"Frankly, I never have seen an organization that was so hopeless to cope with radio intelligence requirements. *** The personnel is unskilled and untrained. Most are privates who can read only ten words a minute. They know nothing about signal identification, wave propagation and other technical subjects, so essential to radio intelligence procedure. They take bearings with loop equipment on Japanese stations in Tokio listed in the Berne list as such and employing their authorized call letters and report to their commanding officers that they have fixes on Jap agents operating transmitters on the West Coast. These officers, knowing no different, pass it on to the General and he takes their word for it. It's pathetic to say the least."

Our inspection of the Army operations and installations furnished some indication of the inadequacies existing all along the line. Direction-finding apparatus was not properly located so as to be free from interference from outside sources. Apparatus was noted to have an error of several degrees which had not been notified. The lists giving the frequencies and call letters of stations throughout the world which were used were several years out of date. Frequencies of signals monitored were determined most inaccurately—by reading from the receiver instead of carrying out the necessary technical operations to determine the precise frequency. The speed at which the personnel engaged in monitoring could receive signals was so slow that the transmissions could not be read and accordingly could not be identified. Accordingly, bearings were taken on other than the stations thought to be under observation. Bearings were taken on two different stations and on different frequencies and at different times on the assumption that a single station was being monitored because the strength of signal and type of transmission were the same. A bearing upon the source of a signal is taken by a direction finder by determining the null or point of least intensity of the signal; it was observed that a fading point in the signal would sometimes be taken by the Army stations as the null, resulting, of course, in bearings widely in error. Reciprocals of the true bearing, that is, the direction opposite or 180° from the source of the signal, were sometimes reported as the bearing, leading to fixes to the inland or east instead of to the west.

Bearings were attempted upon signals originating at a great distance with loop direction finders which can furnish accurate bearings only within the ground-wave range, from a few up to about 100 miles, from the station. There was little conception of the importance of evaluating bearings in the light of ionospheric and other changing conditions - the very heart of accurate direction finding.

In view of such inadequacies as these in the Army's handling of radio intelligence matters and the fact that the Commission's investigations of hundreds of reports, by the Army and others, of unlawful or unidentified radio signals showed that in each case there either was no radio transmission involved or that it was legitimate, the statements in the Report indicating the existence of illicit radio signaling along the West Coast cannot be regarded as well-founded.