



CONFRONT THE ISSUE
**FDR AND
JAPANESE AMERICAN
INTERNMENT**

TOUCH TO BEGIN



CONFRONT THE ISSUE

FDR AND JAPANESE AMERICAN INTERNMENT

Scroll down to view
select documents
from the FDR Library
and excerpts from
the historical debate.

Today, FDR's decision to intern Japanese Americans is widely viewed by historians and legal scholars as a great injustice.

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the FBI arrested over 1200 Japanese aliens throughout the United States. Over the next several weeks, President Roosevelt received contradictory advice about further action.

FDR's military advisers recommended the exclusion of persons of foreign descent, including American citizens, from sensitive areas of the country as a safeguard against espionage and sabotage. The Justice Department initially resisted any relocation order, questioning both its military necessity and its constitutionality.

But the shock of Pearl Harbor and of Japanese atrocities in the Philippines fueled already tense race relations on America's West Coast. In the face of political, military, and public pressure, Roosevelt accepted the relocation proposal. The Attorney General acquiesced after the War Department relieved the Justice Department of any responsibility for implementation.

On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 granting the War Department broad powers to create military exclusion areas. Although the order did not identify any particular group, in practice it was used almost exclusively to intern Americans of Japanese descent. By 1943, more than 110,000 Japanese Americans had been forced from their homes and moved to camps in remote inland areas of the United States.

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Today, FDR's decision to intern Japanese Americans is widely viewed by historians and legal scholars as a great injustice.

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the FBI arrested over 1,200 Japanese aliens throughout the United States. Over the next several weeks, President Roosevelt

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Letter, J. Edgar Hoover to Edwin M. Watson

December 10, 1941

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover routinely forwarded information for the President through military aide and presidential secretary General Edwin M. “Pa” Watson. This December 10, 1941 letter and accompanying map show the locations of the 1,212 Japanese aliens considered to be disloyal or dangerous that were arrested by the Bureau within 48 hours of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Additional maps gave the locations of the 620 German and 98 Italian aliens taken into custody.

President's Official File 10-B: Justice Department; FBI Reports, 1941

JOHN EDGAR HOOVER
DIRECTOR



Federal Bureau of Investigation
United States Department of Justice
Washington, D. C.

December 10, 1941

10-B

Personal and ~~Confidential~~

S

Major General Edwin M. Watson
Secretary to the President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear General Watson:

I thought it might be of interest to the President and you to have the inclosed charts before you, which show the number of Japanese, German and Italian aliens taken into custody by the FBI as of December 9th. This gives the exact location of the numbers apprehended and places at which they were apprehended.

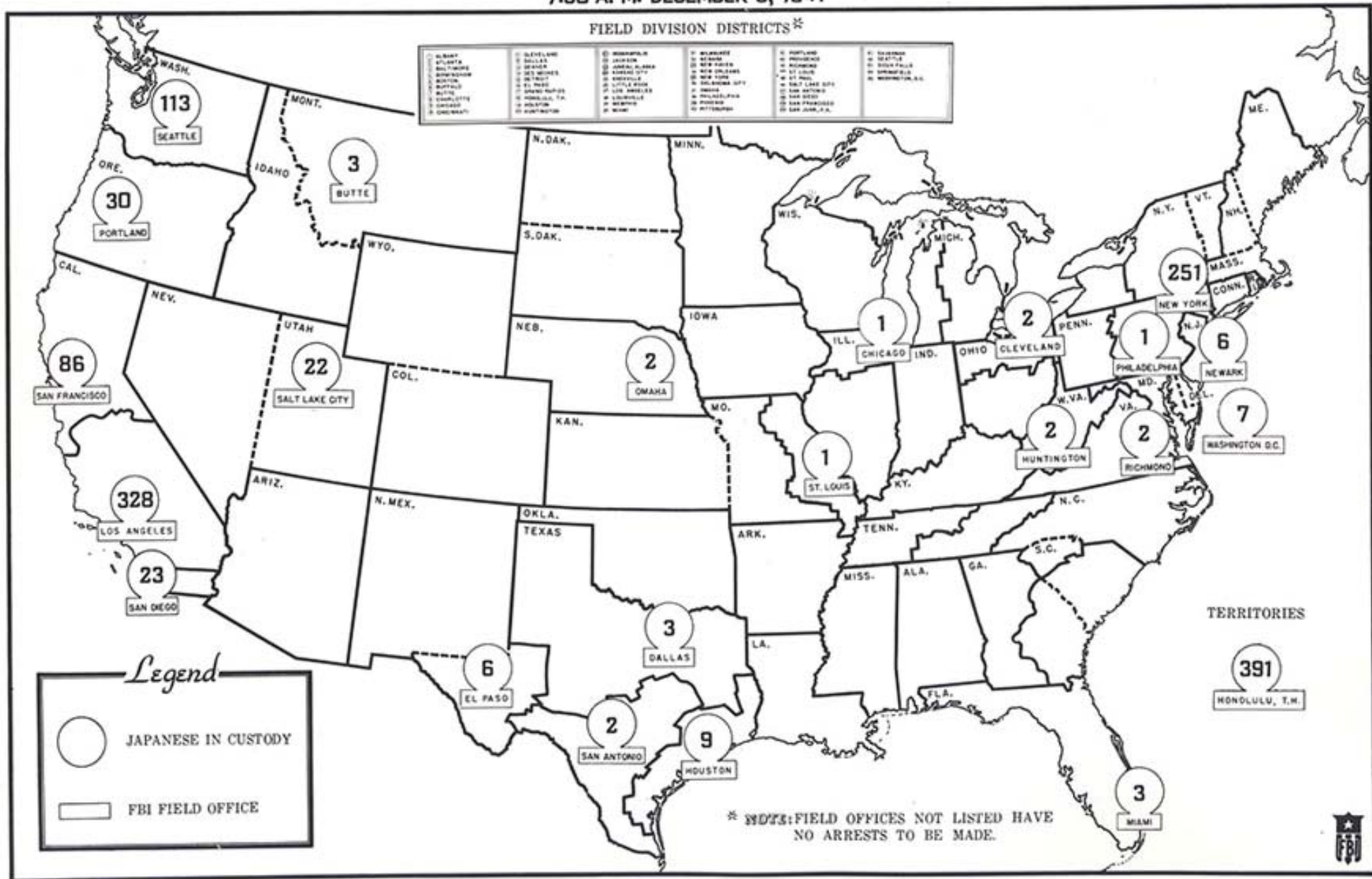
Sincerely yours,

J. Edgar Hoover

Inclosures

1,212 JAPANESE ALIENS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY BY FBI

7:30 A. M. DECEMBER 9, 1941

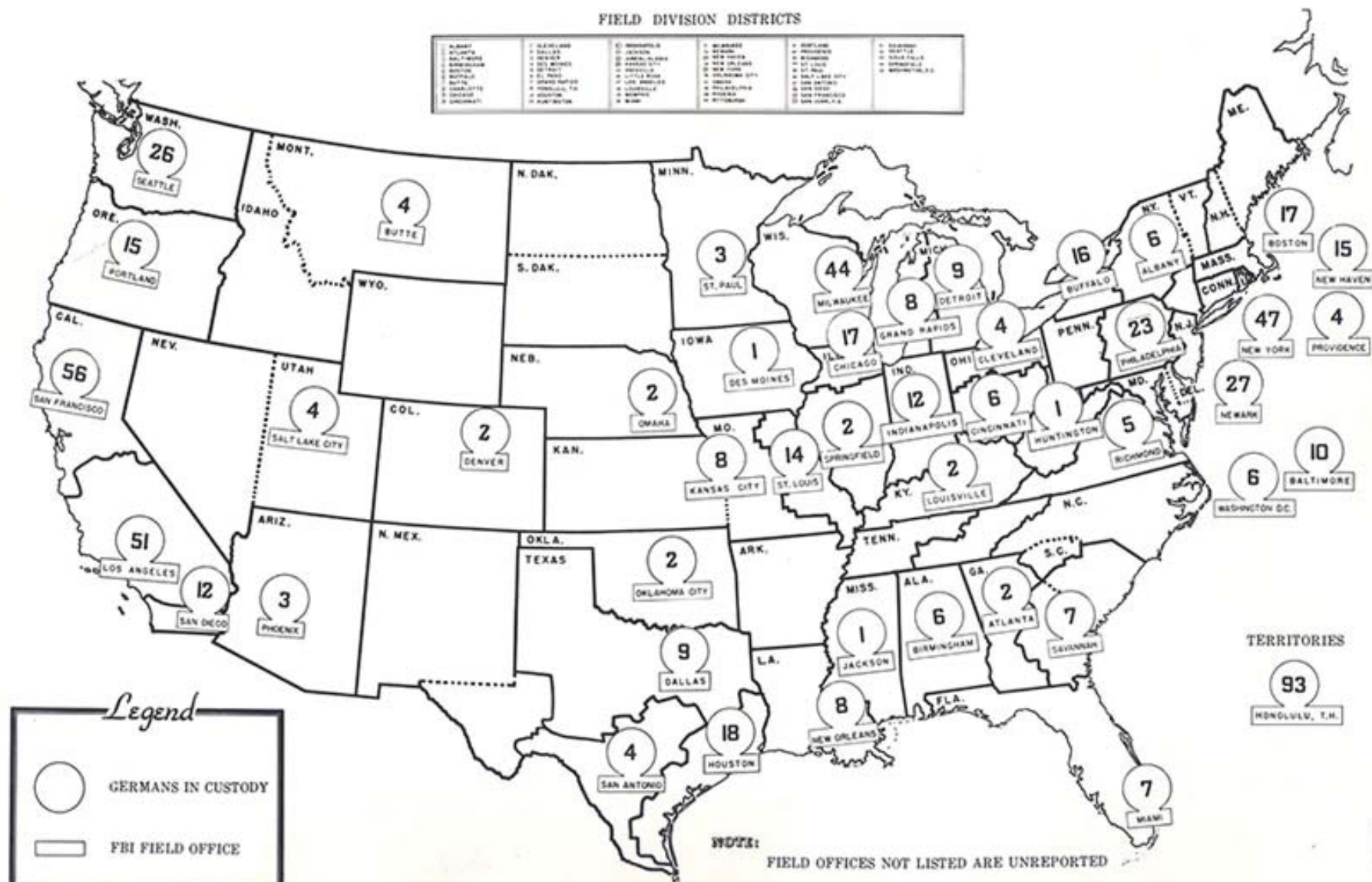


620 GERMAN ALIENS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY BY FBI

12:30 P. M. DECEMBER 9, 1941

FIELD DIVISION DISTRICTS

ALABAMA	ALASKA	ARIZONA	ARKANSAS	CALIFORNIA	CONNECTICUT
ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA
ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA
ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA
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ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA
ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA
ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA
ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA	ARIZONA



98 ITALIAN ALIENS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY BY FBI

1:30 P. M. DECEMBER 9, 1941

FIELD DIVISION DISTRICTS *

ALBANY	ALBUQUERQUE	ALBUQUERQUE	ALBUQUERQUE	ALBUQUERQUE	ALBUQUERQUE
ALBANY	ALBUQUERQUE	ALBUQUERQUE	ALBUQUERQUE	ALBUQUERQUE	ALBUQUERQUE
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**Eleanor Roosevelt, “My Day” Column Draft
December 15, 1941**

In the days following the attack at Pearl Harbor, Eleanor Roosevelt grew increasingly concerned that the rights of Japanese Americans were being threatened. In mid-December, she toured the West Coast, praised public officials who called for racial tolerance, and posed for press photographs with Japanese Americans. She followed up these actions with a very public appeal in support of the civil liberties of all Americans, including those of Japanese descent, in her “My Day” column published on December 16, 1941, in newspapers across the country.

Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; Speech and Article File; “My Day” Drafts, December 1941

We are back in Washington and during the trip I have been reading Louis Adamic's book "Two Way Passage" It is a book that every American should read. I have not quite finished it, so I can not really discuss it, but it has started ^a ~~my~~ trend of thought which ~~maxzmaxz~~ is pointed up by the situation on the west coast ^{for} ~~by~~ the American born Japanese.

We know that there are German and Italian agents and people representing other sympathetic Axis nationalities who have been very active in this country during the past few ^{years. ~~that the Communists have been~~} We know that now there are Japanese ~~was~~ as well as these other agents who are here to be helpful to their own nation and not to ^{us} ~~us~~. But these people are gradually being rounded up by the FBI and the Secret Service. ^{Use} ~~You~~ as citizens, if ^{we} ~~you~~ hear anything suspicious are going to report it to the proper authority, ^{is} but the great mass of ^{our citizens coming from} ~~people of~~ these ~~various~~ nationalities ~~must~~, particularly ~~those who are American~~ citizens, must not feel that they have suddenly ceased to be Americans.

This is perhaps the greatest test this country has ever met. Perhaps it is the test which is going to show whether the United States can furnish a pattern to the rest of the world for the future. Our citizens come from all the nations of the world. Some of us have said from time to time that we were the only proof ~~to show~~ that different nationalities could live together in peace and understanding, each bringing their own contribution, different though it might be, to the final unity

which is the United States. If out of the present ~~pattern~~ *chaos*
there is ever to come a world where free people live together
peacefully in Europe or in Asia, ^{or in the Americas} we will have to furnish the
~~pattern~~ *model*. It is not enough to restore people to an old and out
worn pattern. People must be given a chance to see the
possibilities of a new world and work for it. Perhaps on
us today lies the obligation to prove that such a ~~thing~~
vision may be a ~~practicable~~ possibility. If we can not
meet the challenge of fairness to our citizens of every
nationality, of really believing in the Bill of Rights and
making it a reality for all loyal ~~Negroes and~~ citizens
regardless of race, creed or color, ^{if} we can not keep in check
anti-Semitism, anti-racial feelings as well as anti religious
feelings, then we will ^{have} ~~be~~ removed from the world, the one
real hope for the future on which all humanity ^{is} ~~is~~ now
relying.

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Memorandum of Summary of West Coast and Honolulu Reports, by J. Franklin Carter, December 16, 1941

A former news reporter and columnist, J. Franklin Carter was a part of President Roosevelt's informal intelligence network. Carter had connections around the world with diplomats, government officials, the press, and business executives, including Chicago businessman C.B. Munson who was sent to the West Coast to assess the situation. This December 16, 1941 Memorandum from Carter to the President summarizes several earlier reports regarding the espionage threat, the reliability of other formal intelligence gathering agencies, and the loyalty of Japanese Americans.

President's Secretary's Files; Subject File; Carter, John Franklin, Nov.-Dec. 1941

pg# Jack Carter Folder

file
press mail

JOHN FRANKLIN CARTER
(Jay Franklin)
1210 NATIONAL PRESS BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D. C.

"We, the People"
"The Week in Washington"

Metropolitan 4112
Metropolitan 4113

December 16, 1941.

MEMORANDUM ON SUMMARY OF WEST COAST AND HONOLULU REPORTS BY MUNSON ETC.

The reports submitted by this unit prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor emphasized the following:

- 1) No substantial danger of Fifth Column activities by Japanese. (Despite Secretary Knox's contrary statement, his report shows he was referring to close physical espionage at Honolulu directed by the Japanese Consulate General).
- 2) Considerable danger of sabotage to strategic points left unguarded.
- 3) Need to arrest all suspects without regard to citizenship (This has been done only for alien suspects).
- 4) Need to reassure loyal Japanese and Japanese-Americans. (This is doubly necessary following the Knox "Fifth Columnist" statement).
- 5) Army Intelligence poor or non-existent on West Coast; F.B.I. pretty good; Navy Intelligence also good.
- 6) Navy Intelligence poor at Honolulu; F.B.I. excellent; Army Intelligence pretty good.
- 7) Good cooperation between services along Mexican Border. Need for coordination and change of methods or attitude at Washington.
- 8) Munson continues to work at Los Angeles; Irwin is completing his "tour" of Northwest Mexico to Mazatlan and back. Irwin has already reported an Axis "underground railway" into Mexico leading out of Phoenix or Tucson. (This has been reported to the F.B.I.)

J.F.C.
J.F.C.

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**Memorandum from James H. Rowe, Jr. to Grace Tully
February 2, 1942**

Assistant to the Attorney General James H. Rowe, Jr., was the most ardent critic of the proposal to relocate and intern Japanese Americans. He denounced the proposal as unconstitutional, and believed that it was being forced on the administration by public hysteria. In this February 2, 1942 Memorandum to the President's private secretary Grace Tully, Rowe warns the President of the growing public pressure and the constitutional issues involved.

James H. Rowe, Jr. Papers; Assistant to the Attorney General Files; Alien Enemy Control Unit

OFFICE OF
THE ASSISTANT TO THE
ATTORNEY GENERAL



February 2, 1942

CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR GRACE TULLY.

Dear Grace:

Please tell the President to keep his eye on the Japanese situation in California. It looks to me like it will explode any day now. There is tremendous public pressure to move all of them out of California — citizens and aliens — and no one seems to worry about how or to where. There are about 125,000 of them, and if it happens, it will be one of the great mass exoduses of history. It would probably require suspension of the writ of habeas corpus -- and my estimate of the country's present feeling is that we would have another Supreme Court fight on our hands.

However, my only point now is to give him some warning. He will be hearing a great deal about it in the next few weeks.

James Rowe, Jr.

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Memorandum to the President from Attorney General Francis Biddle February 17, 1942

This Memorandum from Attorney General Biddle to President Roosevelt was Biddle's last, best attempt to steer the President away from the massive, immediate evacuation and internment of Japanese Americans being proposed by the military. In this memo, Biddle clearly tries to limit the Justice Department's involvement in relocating American citizens, while at the same time warning Roosevelt not to bend to pressure from Congress and from the public outcry being created by outspoken columnists Walter Lippmann and Westbrook Pegler. Lippmann had recently written that "Nobody's constitutional rights include the right to reside and do business on a battlefield", and in a widely read column, Pegler had declared "The Japanese in California should be under armed guard to the last man and woman right now, and to hell with habeus corpus until the danger is over."

President's Official File 18: Navy Department, March-April 1942



Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D.C.

February 17, 1942

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT

For several weeks there have been increasing demands for evacuation of all Japanese, aliens and citizens alike, from the West Coast states. A great many of the West Coast people distrust the Japanese, various special interests would welcome their removal from good farm land and the elimination of their competition, some of the local California radio and press have demanded evacuation, the West Coast Congressional Delegation are asking the same thing and finally, Walter Lippman and Westbrook Pegler recently have taken up the evacuation cry on the ground that attack on the West Coast and widespread sabotage is imminent. My last advice from the War Department is that there is no evidence of imminent attack and from the F. B. I. that there is no evidence of planned sabotage.

In view of the fact that you may be asked about it at your press conference, or may wish to say something about the steps being taken, I am supplying you with the facts.

I have designated as a prohibited area every area recommended to me by the Secretary of War, through whom the Navy recommendations are also made. The less populated areas are already in effect and the remainder have been designated to be evacuated by February 24. I have also designated a number of restricted areas in which alien enemies may live only under rigorous curfew and other restrictions.

We are proceeding as fast as possible. To evacuate the 93,000 Japanese in California over night would materially disrupt agricultural production in which they play a large part and the farm labor now is so limited that they could not be quickly replaced. Their hurried evacuation would require thousands of troops, tie up transportation and raise very difficult questions of resettlement. Under the Constitution 60,000 of these Japanese are American citizens. If complete confusion and lowering of morale is to be avoided, so large a job must be done after careful planning. The Army has not yet advised me of its conclusion in the matter.

There is no dispute between the War, Navy and Justice Departments. The practical and legal limits of this Department's authority which is restricted to alien enemies are clearly understood. The Army is considering what further steps it wishes to recommend.

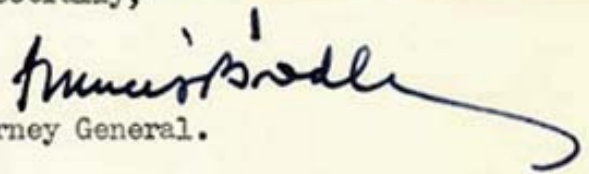
It is extremely dangerous for the columnists, acting as "Armchair Strategists and Junior G-Men," to suggest that an attack on the West Coast and planned sabotage is imminent when the military authorities and

78-1-14

the F. B. I. have indicated that this is not the fact. It comes close to shouting FIRE! in the theater; and if race riots occur, these writers will bear a heavy responsibility. Either Lippman has information which the War Department and the F. B. I. apparently do not have, or is acting with dangerous irresponsibility.

It would serve to clarify the situation in the public mind if you see fit to mention it.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Cummings", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Attorney General.

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**Letter, Sen. Harley M. Kilgore to President Roosevelt
February 19, 1942**

This letter from Sen. Harley Kilgore, a Democratic member of the powerful Senate Committee on Military Affairs, is an example of the political pressure to deal with the issue of Japanese Americans on the West Coast that Roosevelt was receiving. The letter was received by the White House the day after Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066.

President's Official File 4805: Military Areas, 1941-1942

CHAIRMAN
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ELBERT D. THOMAS, UTAH
EDWIN C. JOHNSON, COLO.
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LISTER HILL, ALA.
SHERIDAN DOWNEY, CALIF.
ALBERT B. CHANDLER, KY.
HARRY S. TRUMAN, MO.
MON C. WALLGREN, WASH.
HARLEY M. KILGORE, W. VA.

WARREN R. AUSTIN, VT.
STYLES BRIDGES, N. H.
CHAS GURNEY, S. DAK.
RUFUS C. HOLMAN, OREG.
JOHN THOMAS, IDAHO
HENRY CABOT LODGE, JR., MASS.

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AFFAIRS

D. ROLAND POTTER, CLERK
W. I. SMALLEY, ASST. CLERK

February 19, 1942

THE WHITE HOUSE
FEB 20 9 26 AM '42
RECEIVED

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. President:

I am enclosing herewith a few samples of the type of protests which I am receiving from persons very distant from the Pacific coast with reference to the dangers of Japanese and other inhabitants of that vicinity.

x197-A
x197

It is my sincere belief that the Pacific coast should be declared a military area which will give authority to treat residents, either alien or citizens, as camp followers and put them under military law, permitting their removal, regardless of their citizenship rights, to internal and less dangerous areas.

|| Please return the enclosures to me when they ||
|| have served your purpose. ||

Most respectfully submitted,

Harley M. Kilgore

am
Enclosures (3)

enc. returned 3/3/42

x4675-Misc.
x133
x335-H

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**Letter, Budget Director Harold D. Smith to the President
February 19, 1942**

Following established procedure, the Bureau of the Budget reviewed the final Executive Order prescribing military areas as drafted by the Justice and War Departments. In this letter transmitting the Executive Order to the President for his signature, Budget Director Smith makes reference to the “personal conference” held at Attorney General Francis Biddle’s house on the night of February 17, 1942 at which the Justice Department finally acquiesced to the issuance of the Executive Order as proposed by the War Department. James Rowe assisted in the revision of the language to ensure that the Justice Department would take no part in the implementation of the order.

President’s Official File 4805: Military Areas, 1941-1942

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BUREAU OF THE BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D. C.

File
see

4805-

FEB 19 1942

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

Mr. James H. Rowe, on the part of the Department of Justice, and Lieutenant Colonel Karl R. Bendetson, on the part of the War Department, have presented the attached draft of Executive Order directing the Secretary of War or any designated Military Commander to prescribe military areas from which any or all persons may be excluded.

x10
x

The order will permit designation of restricted areas from which all persons now residents therein, including Japanese, may be excluded, and is for particular action on the west coast.

x197

The order will permit the Secretary of War to provide transportation, food, shelter, and other accommodations for persons so excluded.

x173
x892
x63

The draft has the informal approval of the Attorney General, after a personal conference with the Secretary of War, and it has been requested that if you approve the order, it be retained at the White House and not released to the Press until requested by the War Department.

|||

Edward J. Smith
Director.
x79

Enclosures.

x161
x25
x4675-

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Text of Executive Order 9066: Authorizing the Secretary of War to Prescribe Military Areas

This press release containing the text of Executive Order 9066 was issued on the day after Roosevelt signed the order. The original Executive Order is located at the National Archives in Washington DC as part of Record Group 11: The General Records of the United States Government.

Franklin D. Roosevelt Executive Orders and Proclamations; EO 9066

The President has signed the following Executive Order:

AUTHORIZING THE SECRETARY OF WAR TO PRESCRIBE
MILITARY AREAS

9066

WHEREAS the successful prosecution of the war requires every possible protection against espionage and against sabotage to national-defense material, national-defense premises, and national-defense utilities as defined in Section 4, Act of April 20, 1918, 40 Stat. 533, as amended by the Act of November 30, 1940, 54 Stat. 1220, and the Act of August 21, 1941, 55 Stat. 655 (U.S.C., Title 50, Sec. 104):

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, and Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I hereby authorize and direct the Secretary of War, and the Military Commanders whom he may from time to time designate, whenever he or any designated Commander deems such action necessary or desirable, to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate Military Commander may determine, from which any or all persons may be excluded, and with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restrictions the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military Commander may impose in his discretion. The Secretary of War is hereby authorized to provide for residents of any such area who are excluded therefrom, such transportation, food, shelter, and other accommodations as may be necessary, in the judgment of the Secretary of War or the said Military Commander, and until other arrangements are made, to accomplish the purpose of this order. The designation of military areas in any region or locality shall supersede designations of prohibited and restricted areas by the Attorney General under the Proclamations of December 7 and 8, 1941, and shall supersede the responsibility and authority of the Attorney General under the said Proclamations in respect of such prohibited and restricted areas.

I hereby further authorize and direct the Secretary of War and the said Military Commanders to take such other steps as he or the appropriate Military Commander may deem advisable to enforce compliance with the restrictions applicable to each Military area hereinabove authorized to be designated, including the use of Federal troops and other Federal Agencies, with authority to accept assistance of state and local agencies.

I hereby further authorize and direct all Executive Departments, independent establishments and other Federal Agencies, to assist the Secretary of War or the said Military Commanders in carrying out this Executive Order, including the furnishing of medical aid, hospitalization, food, clothing, transportation, use of land, shelter, and other supplies, equipment, utilities, facilities, and services.

This order shall not be construed as modifying or limiting in any way the authority heretofore granted under Executive Order No. 8972, dated December 12, 1941, nor shall it be construed as limiting or modifying the duty and responsibility of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with respect to the investigation of alleged acts of sabotage or the duty and responsibility of the Attorney General and the Department of Justice under the Proclamations of December 7 and 8, 1941, prescribing regulations for the conduct and control of alien enemies, except as such duty and responsibility is superseded by the designation of military areas hereunder.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

THE WHITE HOUSE,

February 19, 1942.

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Letter, Franklin D. Roosevelt to Interior Secretary Harold Ickes April 22, 1943

Once internment under EO 9066 had been implemented, FDR showed little interest in revisiting the issue. Although advisers such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Interior Secretary Harold Ickes lobbied FDR to reverse the policy once it became obvious that Japanese Americans were not a threat, the President was reluctant to reverse his order and to re-integrate internees back into society while the war still raged. In this April 1943 reply to Ickes, FDR expresses his sympathy for the plight of internees and describes some loosening of restrictions, but the President makes no firm commitment to end the internment program during the war.

President's Official File 4849: War Relocation Authority, 1943

April 22, 1943

Honorable Harold L. Ickes
Secretary of the Interior

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I have your letter of April 13 calling to my attention that the Japanese Americans in relocation centers are becoming embittered. Everyone with whom I have talked is dissatisfied with the present situation of this group of people -- most of all the officials of the War Relocation Authority.

Like you I regret the burdens of evacuation and detention which military necessity has imposed upon these people. I am afraid some measure of bitterness is the inevitable consequence of a program involving direct loss of property and detention on grounds which the evacuees consider to be racial discrimination. I was therefore glad to endorse the recent announcement by the War Department which re-opened to American citizens of Japanese ancestry the opportunity to become employed in essential war industries and to serve in the armed forces.

Since normal American life is hardly possible under any form of detention, I believe that the best hope for the future lies in encouraging the relocation of the Japanese-Americans throughout the country and in turning as many as possible of the relocation centers over to the War Department for use as prisoner-of-war camps. Your own recent action in employing a Japanese family on your farm seems to me

to be the best way for thoughtful Americans to contribute to the solution of a very difficult and distressing problem.

Sincerely yours,

President.

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HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Citizenship has its responsibilities, as well as its privileges, and, in time of war, the burden is always heavier....It is said that we are dealing here with the case of imprisonment of a citizen in a concentration camp solely because of his ancestry, without evidence or inquiry concerning his loyalty and good disposition towards the United States. Our task would be simple, our duty clear, were this a case involving the imprisonment of a loyal citizen in a concentration camp because of racial prejudice. Regardless of the true nature of the assembly and relocation centers—and we deem it unjustifiable to call them concentration camps, with all the ugly connotations that term implies—we are dealing specifically with nothing but an exclusion order. To cast this case into outlines of racial prejudice, without reference to the real military dangers which were presented, merely confuses the issue. Korematsu was not excluded from the Military Area because of hostility to him or his race. He was excluded because we are at war with the Japanese Empire, because the properly constituted military authorities feared an invasion of our West Coast and felt constrained to take proper security measures, because they decided that the military urgency of the situation demanded that all citizens of Japanese ancestry be segregated from the West Coast temporarily, and, finally, because Congress, reposing its confidence in this time of war in our military leaders—as inevitably it must—determined that they should have the power to do just this. There was evidence of disloyalty on the part of some, the military authorities considered that the need for action was great, and time was short. We cannot—by availing ourselves of the calm perspective of hindsight—now say that, at that time, these actions were unjustified.

Supreme Court of the United States, Korematsu v. United States, 32 U.S. 214 (1944)



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The roundup of Japanese Americans that Roosevelt delegated through the War Department...went far beyond the accepted powers of the government to intern foreign nationals and resident aliens. Most of the 110,000 “evacuees” from the West Coast could not have been interned under any interpretation of U.S. law—because they were citizens. And the Issei (the first generation of immigrants) among the larger group—who were not citizens, even though they had lived in the United States for decades—had been barred from citizenship by law for decades. In this key respect they differed from German and Italian immigrants, who faced no such barriers....Executive Order 9066 actually gave the government even greater authority than martial law. Unlike internment, which had well-defined legal procedures and boundaries, and unlike martial law, which was meant to apply universally rather than single out Japanese Americans, the “exclusion,” “evacuation,” “assembly,” “relocation,” “registration,” “segregation,” and “distribution” of Japanese Americans were almost completely open-ended and unconstrained. Policies and procedures were invented month-to-month and enforced with an arbitrariness that should have alarmed, and should continue to alarm, both civil libertarians on the left and opponents of big government on the right.

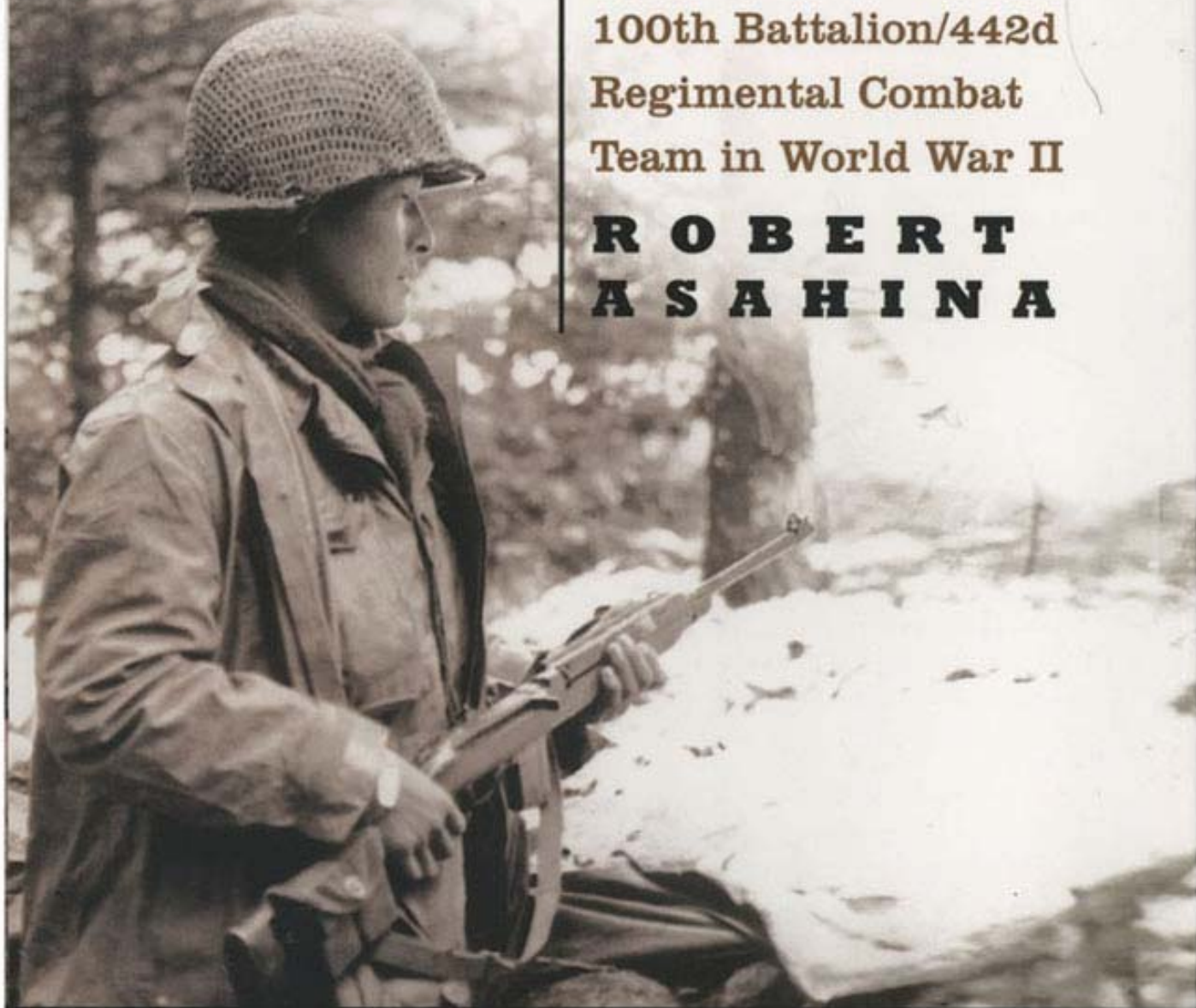
Robert Asahina, Just Americans: How Japanese Americans Won the War at Home and Abroad
(Gotham Books, 2006), 264-265

Just Americans

How Japanese
Americans Won
a War at Home
and Abroad

The Story of the
100th Battalion/442d
Regimental Combat
Team in World War II

**R O B E R T
A S A H I N A**



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HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

On February 19, 1942, in one of the shabbiest displays of presidential prerogative in American history, Roosevelt approved Executive Order 9066, authorizing the forcible evacuation of persons of Japanese ancestry from the Pacific coast....Racism fed fears of sabotage. For fifty years anti-Japanese sentiment had pervaded the social structure of the West Coast....Politicians jumped on the bandwagon. By the end of January the entire California congressional delegation, as well as Democratic governor Culbert L. Olsen and Republican attorney general Earl Warren, was clamoring for removal of the Japanese....Japanese evacuees were forced to liquidate their property at fire-sale prices....The U.S. government made no effort to secure fair prices, guarantee land values, or ensure the safety of goods placed in storage. "I am not concerned about that," FDR told [Treasury Secretary] Morgenthau on March 5, 1942. Estimates of Japanese property losses exceeded \$400 million in 1942 dollars—the current equivalent of almost \$5 billion. After the war Congress provided a meager \$35 million in reparations. Forty years later another Congress awarded each surviving detainee an additional \$20,000. Though Roosevelt said he later regretted "the burdens of evacuation and detention which military necessity imposed on these people," he showed no concern when he signed the measure on February 19.

Jean Edward Smith, FDR (Random House, 2007), 549-552



FDR

JEAN EDWARD SMITH

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FDR AND JAPANESE AMERICAN INTERMENT

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

The President did not conduct the internment alone, and he should not be saddled with the entire burden of guilt. Nevertheless, Roosevelt failed to transcend the prejudice around him in his direction of public policy. Because of his early training and experiences, FDR was ready to believe that Japanese Americans posed an indiscriminate threat to national security, and he persisted in this belief without ever attempting to check the credible information to the contrary. He also deserves censure for not providing moral and constitutional leadership. Although his duty as President of the United States was to protect the constitutional rights of all citizens, he repeatedly subverted the rights of those of Japanese descent. His decision to sign Executive Order 9066 was made casually, with no consideration or weighing of the racial or constitutional implications of that action. After he ordered the evacuation, Roosevelt effectively stripped the internees of their property and possessions, but he did not offer any restitution or just compensation for their financial losses. He did not consider instituting immediate loyalty hearings, even though the government later took the position in Court that the loyalty of Japanese Americans could be so determined....And finally, Roosevelt bears a special measure of guilt for his inability to project any real sympathy or consideration for the concerns and interests of the interned Japanese Americans. FDR made little effort to defend the internees from the stigma of disloyalty in the months after Executive Order 9066 was signed, and he took no recorded steps to improve conditions in the camps.

Greg Robinson, By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans (Harvard University Press, 2006), 257



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