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WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF
WASHINGTON

July 28, 1917.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHIEF OF STAFF:

Subject: Camp site for 11th National Guard Division
(Wisconsin and Michigan) at Waco, Texas.

1. This question is brought up for consideration by the letter dated July 18, 1917, from Senator Robert M. La Follette, enclosing telegrams from the Governor of Wisconsin, and the endorsement thereon by Senator Charles E. Townsend and a telegram from Mr. Richard Lloyd Jones to the Secretary of War.

2. The recommendation of the War College Division to send the National Guard to camps in the south (WCD 6374-29), approved May 6, 1917, was arrived at after a careful study of all conditions, the necessity of carrying on training throughout the year, the fitting of the National Guard for service abroad in a minimum of time, and the question of expense. The original project involved cantonment construction at all sites in the south.

3. On May 29, 1917, report was made that cantonment construction could not be completed at all 32 sites within the required time. On that date, there seemed some possibility that National Guard divisions in the north might be sent to France before cold weather and therefore instructions were given on June 12, 1917, that "the National Guard will not be sent south."

4. By the end of June, it became apparent that National Guard divisions in the north could not be sent abroad before cold weather because of the uncertainty of securing the necessary shipping and therefore on June 28, 1917, the instructions of June 12, 1917, were revoked and the original plans to camp in the south were ordered carried out.

5. The protest of the Senator is based upon two general grounds:

- 1. Health.
- 2. Existence of ample training grounds in the home states where troops can be trained at no additional expense to the United States.

6. The most serious of these grounds is that of health. The board on the selection of camp sites in the Southern Department included medical officers in its membership, who made careful investigation of sanitary and health conditions at all camp sites examined in that department. Waco is said by a member of the board to be the best site in the state and health conditions there to be most favorable.

7. The War College Division sees no reason to change the previous recommendation as to sending the National Guard to southern camps.

8. Draft of letters for the signature of the Secretary of War herewith.

JOSEPH E. KUHN

Brigadier General, General Staff,
Chief of War College Division,
Assistant to the Chief of Staff.

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July 30, 1917.

Hon. Robert M. La Follette,
United States Senate,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Senator:

Your letter of July 18, 1917, indorsed by Senator Charles E. Townsend of Michigan, has received most careful consideration. In reply I am very glad to furnish you the following concerning the plans of the War Department for training the National Guard after it is drafted into the Federal service.

It is intended to send troops to France as rapidly as the shipping available will permit. The National Guard, being partly equipped and having had several months' training on the border during the past year, it is believed can be made ready for service abroad in less time than the National Army can be.

The plans for transporting our army abroad depend upon the training and equipment of the troops and the availability of shipping. If it were possible to secure sufficient shipping to transport abroad before cold weather all the National Guard divisions in the northern states, manifestly it would be unnecessary to send any of them to the south where training can be carried on throughout all seasons of the year. But the shipping necessary to accomplish this is not in sight, and therefore it becomes necessary to gather together in large camps the units of the Guard where, when systematic training once starts, it can be continued without interruption or break due to inclement weather or other cause.

The most serious objection to the camp site at Waco, as stated in your letter, is that of health. At all training camps selected under the War Department, the sanitary situation always is given careful study by officers of the Medical Department. The board for the selection of camp sites in the Southern Department was no exception to this general rule. Included among its membership were Colonel M. W. Ireland and Major R. H. Pierson, both of the Medical Corps of the Army. These officers made a careful survey of the health conditions at Waco, including statistics as to the sick and death rate, analysis of the water, a drainage survey and an examination of the general water supply. Their report was most favorable.

The camp site at Waco is located on high, cleared ground about 550 feet above sea level just north of the city, on a bluff about 150 feet above the Brazos River. The site is well drained and uncontaminated. The water supply is from the city supply which comes

from wells, the greater part from hot artesian wells; the water therefrom coming to the surface at a temperature of about 110°; is cooled in a settling basin and purified in a purifying plant of the most modern type. Over 6,000,000 gallons of water daily are available for use of the camp. There is no typhoid or other disease prevalent. Waco has a population of over 45,000, having increased nearly 20,000 since 1910. It has a splendid park system, some sixty churches and will provide plenty of good, wholesome amusements for the troops encamped there during their hours of recreation. It is near the beginning of the high, arid belt of west Texas and therefore its climate lacks the humidity of the coast regions.

During July, 1916, the National Guard was hurried to the border and put into improvised camps which, on account of the existing military situation, could not always be selected solely with reference to sanitary conditions. The sick rate from all causes was not excessive and the death rate was very low. The Second Division of the Regular Army was encamped at Galveston and Texas City from February, 1913, until August, 1915, when the camp was destroyed by a storm; both sick rate and death rate were exceptionally low.

Profiting by previous experience, we now propose to bring the troops into camps specially selected, having in view sanitation and the health of the troops, and, in advance of the arrival of the troops, to prepare the camps for occupancy by providing water distribution, mess halls and kitchens, bathing facilities, and terminal and storage facilities.

Our troops, in training for service in Europe, must be developed along special lines for such service. Most of the National Guard units, through the training they had on the border last summer have a good start on their preliminary work. We have not in this country many officers outside of the Regular Army who have made a study of the special conditions existing in Europe today, and few have had an opportunity of profiting by personal observation. Therefore it becomes a problem to make the most efficient use of the available specialists we have. It is believed that this can be done only by assembling the national forces in large camps. Once the troops get settled in camp, and the serious business of training is begun, it would be a mistake to interrupt the training scheme by making a long move by rail to another camp, unless such a move is unavoidable, and would tend to retard the preparation of the troops for service.

In conclusion, I can assure you that every step taken by the War Department in preparing our troops for service has been such as to further our aims in the war, viz., the successful termination of the war in the shortest possible time and at the least expense of

American lives. To accomplish this we must equip and train all our troops with despatch so that when tennage is available they will be ready to go abroad and we can fulfill the part in the war which as a great nation it has fallen to us to perform.

Very sincerely,

Newton D. Baker

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Secretary of War.

OFFICE CHIEF OF STAFF,
To The Adjutant General.