

FDR AND JAPANESE AMERICAN INTERNMENT

Today, the decision to intern Japanese Americans is widely viewed by historians and legal scholars as a blemish on Roosevelt's wartime record.

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.

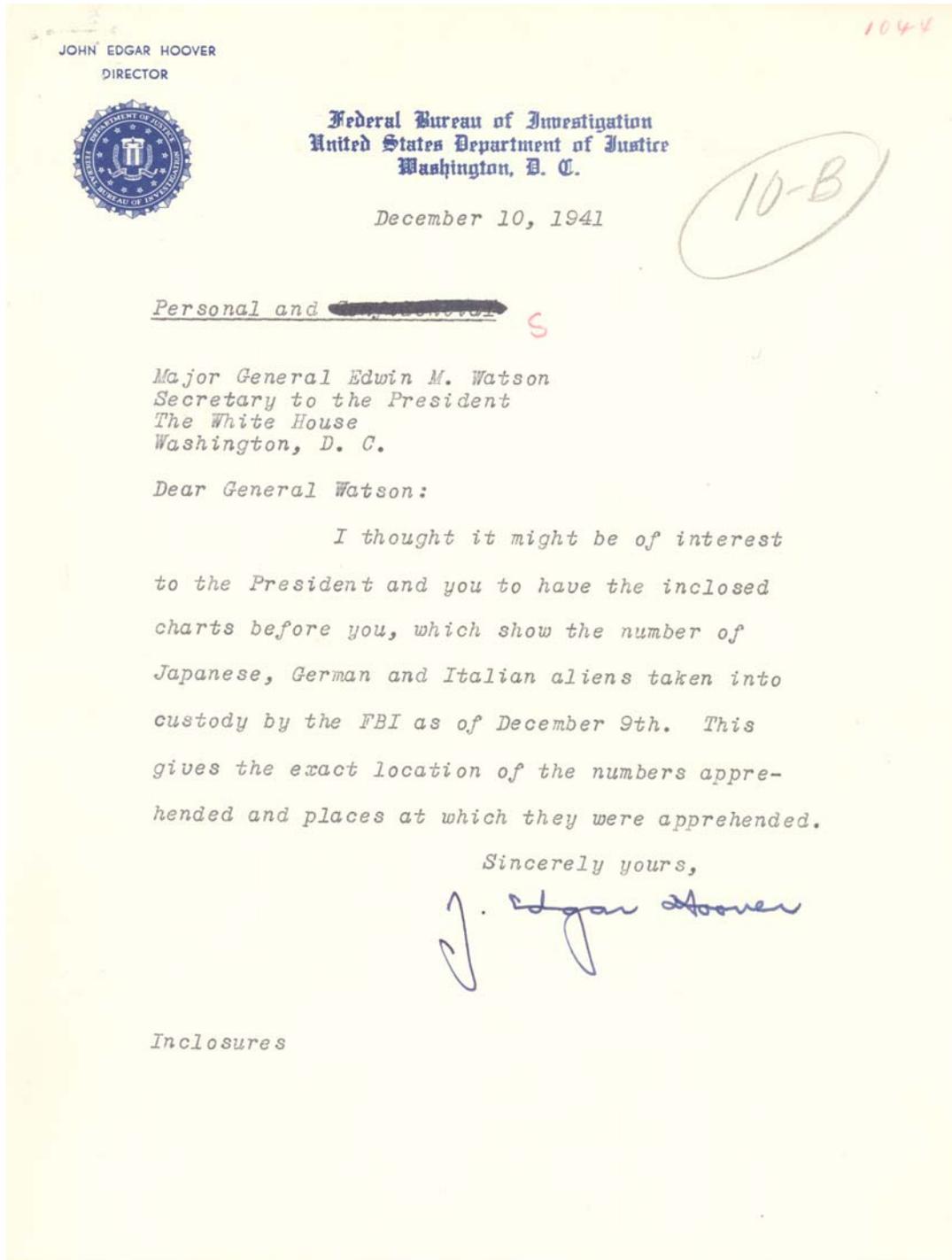
But the shock of Pearl Harbor and of Japanese atrocities in the Philippines fueled already tense race relations on America's West Coast. In the face of political, military, and public pressure, Roosevelt accepted the relocation proposal. The Attorney General acquiesced after the War Department relieved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

The documents contained in this selection are from the collections of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum and are intended to reflect the many sides of this issue

Document 1: 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; Box 15).

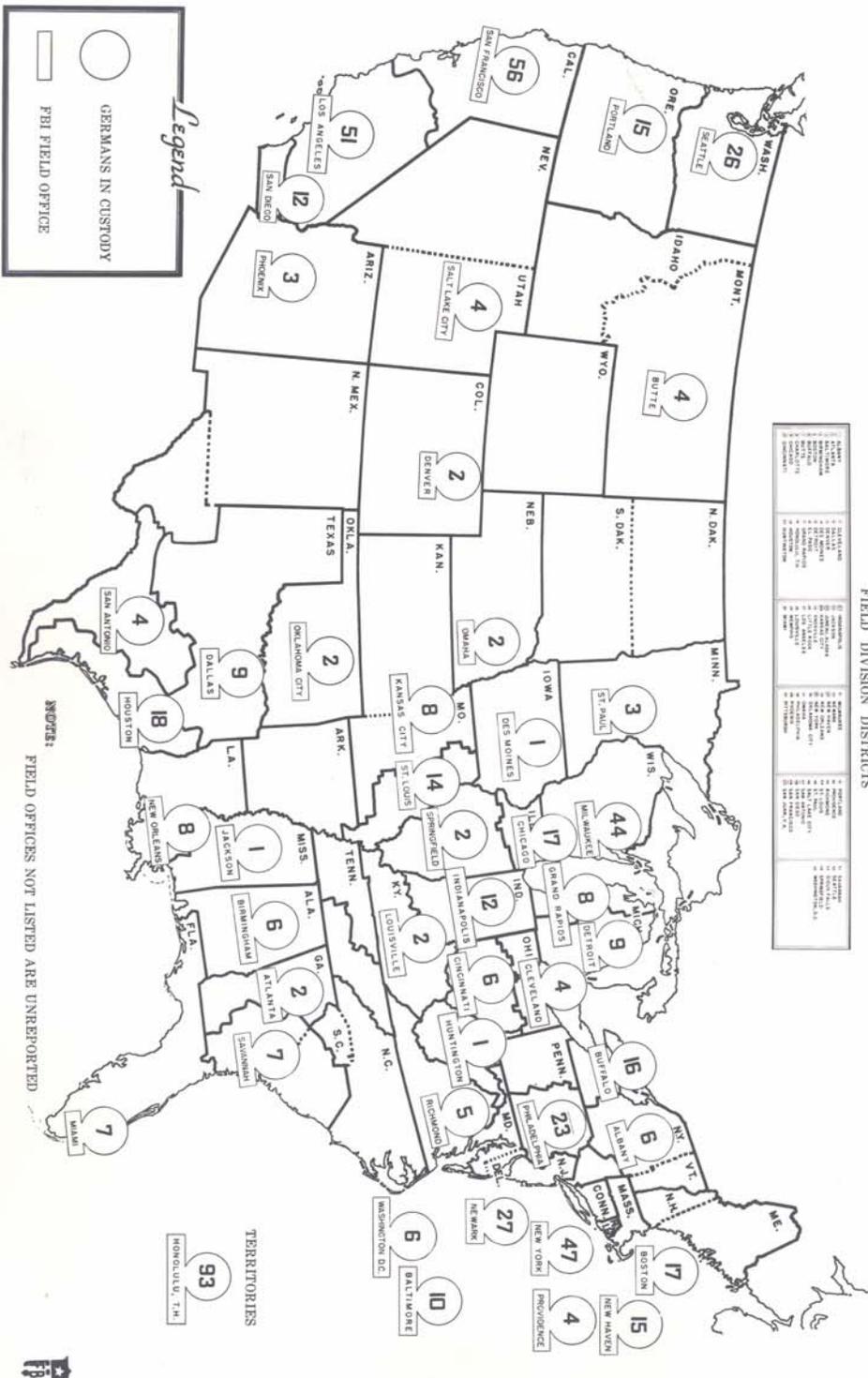


620 GERMAN ALIENS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY BY FBI

12:30 P. M. DECEMBER 9, 1941

FIELD DIVISION DISTRICTS

1. ALBANY	2. ALBUQUERQUE	3. ANCHORAGE	4. ANKARA	5. ARIZONA	6. BOSTON	7. BUTTE	8. CHICAGO	9. CINCINNATI	10. CLEVELAND	11. DENVER	12. DETROIT	13. HOUSTON	14. KANSAS CITY	15. LOS ANGELES	16. MEMPHIS	17. MILWAUKEE	18. MINNEAPOLIS	19. NEW YORK	20. OMAHA	21. OKLAHOMA CITY	22. PHOENIX	23. PORTLAND	24. RICHMOND	25. SALT LAKE CITY	26. SAN ANTONIO	27. SAN FRANCISCO	28. SEATTLE	29. ST. LOUIS	30. TAMPA	31. WASHINGTON D.C.	32. WICHITA	33. WISCONSIN	34. YAKIMA
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Document 2: 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; Box 97).

file personal

PSE Jack Carter Files

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

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

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.
F.F.C.

Document 3: 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; Box 33).

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.

**Document 4: 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 (Box 7).



**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

78-1-8C

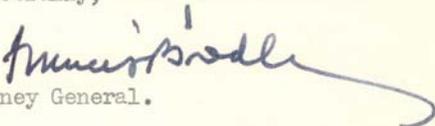
Memo. to the President.

- 2 -

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.

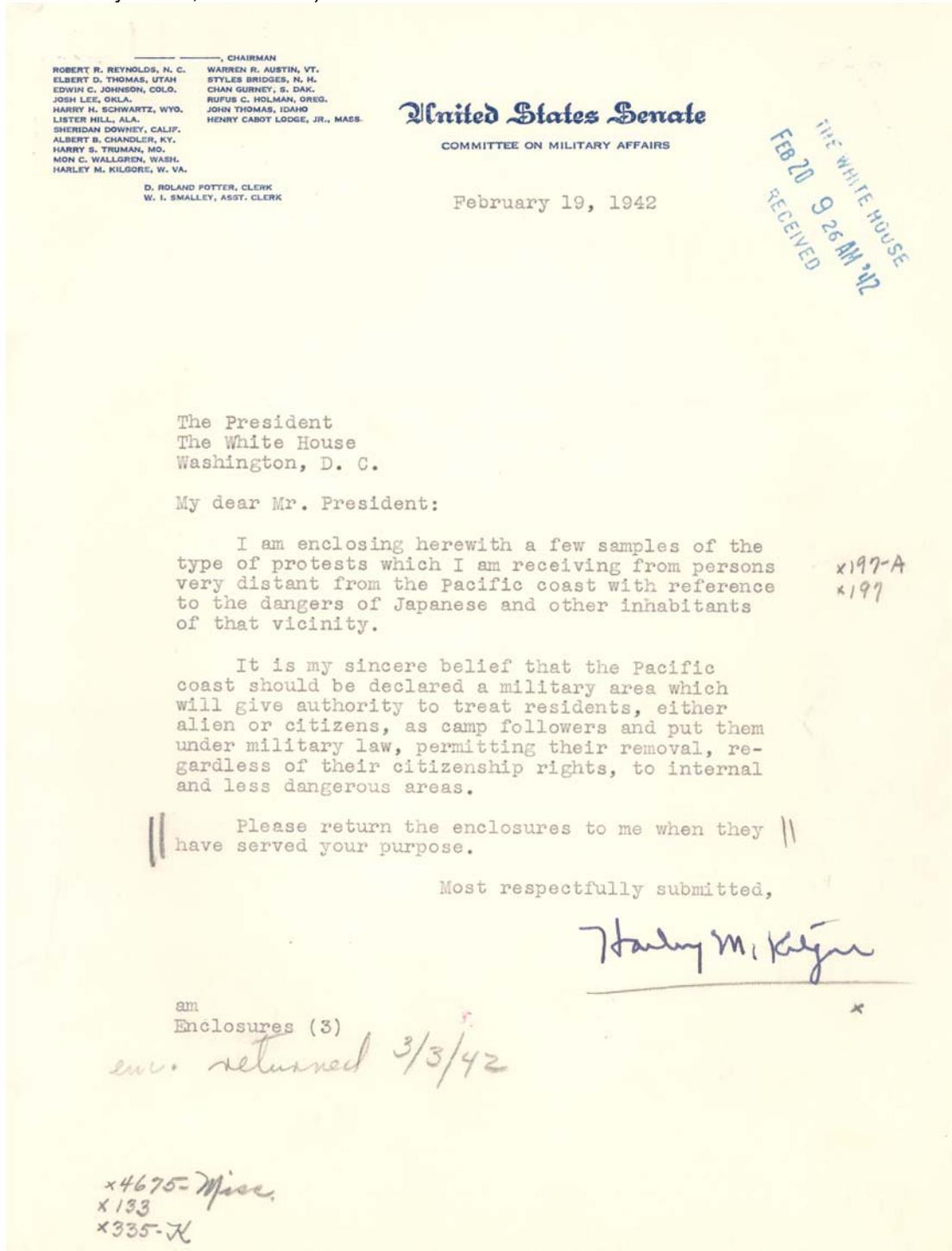
Respectfully,


Attorney General.

78-1-14

Document 5: 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).



Document 6: 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).

4805

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

File
see

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

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.

Harold D. Smith
Director. x79

Enclosures.

x161
x25
x4675

Document 7: 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. (Book and Printed Materials Collection; Franklin D. Roosevelt Executive Orders).

FOR THE PRESS IMMEDIATE RELEASE FEBRUARY 20, 1942

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.