



11-4-1943

## Press Release [re: Tule Lake "uprising" of events 11/1-11/4/43], November 4, 1943

War Relocation Authority

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## OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION

## WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

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ADVANCE RELEASE: To Be Held in STRICTEST CONFIDENCE and NOT to Be Used by  
PRESS or RADIO BEFORE 8:00 p.m., EWT, SATURDAY, November 13, 1943.

Dillon S. Myer, director of the War Relocation Authority, today issued the following statement regarding the events that occurred between November 1 and November 4 at the Tule Lake Center in northern California:

1. Tule Lake is the only center maintained by the War Relocation Authority for segregation purposes. It was established originally in 1942 as one of 10 relocation centers for persons of Japanese ancestry who were evacuated from the West Coast military area. In September of this year, however, it was made the focal point in a segregation program carried out by the War Relocation Authority and since that time has occupied a peculiar status among WRA centers.

During February and March of this year a registration program was conducted at all relocation centers for the purpose of accumulating information on the background and attitudes of all adult residents. As part of this program, citizen evacuees at the centers were questioned concerning their allegiance to the United States, and alien evacuees were questioned about their willingness to abide by the Nation's laws. After the results of registration were compiled and analyzed, W.R.A. began a program to separate from the bulk of the population at relocation centers, those evacuees who have indicated by word or action that their loyalties lie with Japan.

Four major groups were designated for segregation:

- (1) Those who requested repatriation or expatriation to Japan;
- (2) Citizens who refused during registration to state unqualified allegiance to the United States; and aliens who refused to agree to abide by the laws of the United States;
- (3) Those with intelligence records or other records indicating that they might endanger the national security or interfere with the war effort;
- (4) Close relatives of persons in the above three groups who expressed a preference to remain with the segregants rather than disrupt family ties.

The major movement of segregants into Tule Lake from other WRA centers and of non-segregants from Tule Lake to other WRA centers was started in early September and completed about the middle of October. The process, which was carried out jointly by WRA and the Army involved the movement of approximately 9,000 evacuees from other centers into Tule Lake and the removal from Tule Lake to other centers of approximately the same number. Slightly more than 6,000 residents of Tule Lake who had been designated for segregation or who wish to remain with segregated relatives were retained there. At the present time, there are at the Manzanar Relocation Center in California approximately 1,900 evacuees who are awaiting transfer to Tule Lake. They will be transferred as soon as necessary housing can be completed, probably in the early part of 1944.

2. The Army has the responsibility of providing full protection of the area surrounding the Tule Lake Center. A man-proof fence surrounds the external boundaries of the center; troops patrol that fence; other necessary facilities are at all times in readiness. In September, when Tule Lake was transformed into a segregation center, the Army substantially increased the number of troops assigned to guard duty at the center and built the present man-proof fence around the external boundary outside the ordinary wire fence which was erected at the time of the center's establishment. At this time also additional military equipment was provided.

During the recent disturbance at the Tule Lake Center, the War Relocation Authority and the Army have been in constant contact regarding necessary safety measures. Special arrangements were made for prompt communication between the WRA staff and the officer commanding the troops at Tule Lake.

Like all WRA centers, Tule Lake has been operated, ever since the time of its establishment in 1942, under the terms of an agreement between WRA and the War Department. WRA is responsible for all phases of internal administration of the center. The Army, from the beginning, has been responsible for guarding the external boundaries of the center, and for controlling the entry and departure of all persons of Japanese descent.

WRA maintains order within the center through civilian guards assisted by a staff of evacuees. The understanding with the Army provides that when a show of greater force is necessary to maintain order within the center, WRA will call upon the Army to move inside the center and take full control.

3. Immediately following the segregation movement, some of the evacuees at the Tule Lake Center began to create difficulties. All available evidence indicates that a small, well-organized group -- composed chiefly of persons transferred to Tule Lake from the other centers -- was attempting to gain control of the community and disrupt the orderly process of administration. Against this background, a serious accident occurred at the center on October 15. A truck, carrying 29 evacuee workers and driven by an evacuee, was over-turned while attempting to pass another truck on the road from the center to the WRA farm. All occupants of the truck were injured and one of them subsequently died. On the day following the accident, no evacuee workers reported for duty at the farm.

For a period of approximately 10 days thereafter, work on the harvesting of crops stopped, but no formal representations were made to WRA by evacuee workers. Then on October 25, a group of evacuees who claimed to represent the community met with Project Director Ray Best and submitted a series of questions and demands. Among other things, this committee asked whether the residents of Tule Lake were regarded by the United States government as prisoners of war and stated that the residents would not engage in the harvesting of crops for use at other WRA centers. Project Director Best told the committee: (1) that the residents of Tule Lake were regarded as segregants and not as prisoners of war, (2) that WRA does not operate on the basis of demands, and (3) that if the residents of Tule Lake were unwilling to harvest the crops, some other method of harvesting them would be found.

Faced with the onset of winter and the possibility of losing approximately \$500,000 worth of vegetables, WRA immediately began recruiting loyal evacuees from other centers to carry out the harvesting work at Tule Lake. A crew of 234 was recruited and is still engaged in harvesting work on the Tule Lake Farm. These evacuees are quartered outside the boundaries of the center, wholly apart from the population of the center.

4. On the morning of Monday, November 1, D. S. Myer, national director of the War Relocation Authority, and Robert B. Cozzens, assistant director of the Authority in San Francisco, arrived at the Tule Lake center for an inspection and consultation with key WRA staff members and with evacuee representatives. The original arrangement called for Mr. Myer and Mr. Cozzens to meet with evacuee representatives on the day following their arrival. However, during the lunch hour, a report was received by Project Director Best that certain evacuees were making unauthorized announcements in the evacuee mess halls. Residents were being told, according to this report, that Mr. Myer was to make a speech from the main administration building shortly after lunch. On receiving this report, Mr. Myer and Mr. Best immediately made a quick automobile inspection trip through the evacuee section of the center. They observed that large numbers of men, women and children were proceeding in an orderly manner from the evacuee barracks in the direction of the administration building.

By 1:30 p.m., Mr. Myer and Mr. Best had returned to the administration building and a crowd estimated between 3,500 and 4,000 had congregated immediately outside. One young man from the evacuee group then entered the administration building and asked whether a committee of 17 evacuees might have a conference with Mr. Myer. This request was granted, and Mr. Myer, Mr. Cozzens, Mr. Best and other staff members met with the committee. The committee presented a series of demands including the resignation of Project Director Best and several other WRA staff members at the center.

While the discussion was going on, word was received that a group of about a dozen evacuees had entered the center hospital and beaten the chief medical officer, Dr. Reece M. Pedicord. The conference was interrupted while one WRA staff member left the administration building, passed through the crowd, and went to the hospital for a check up on the situation there. After this man had returned -- wholly unmolested -- with the report that Dr. Pedicord had been badly battered but was receiving adequate medical attention and that order prevailed in the hospital, the conference was resumed. Meanwhile, a small group of evacuees had gone into the administration building and installed a public address system with WRA permission.

At the conclusion of the conference, Director Myer was asked to address the crowd briefly over the address system and agreed to do so. Mr. Myer told the crowd substantially what he had told the committee: (1) that WRA would consider requests made by the evacuee population provided they were in the framework of national policy; (2) that WRA would not accede to demands; (3) that WRA was under the impression that the majority of residents at Tule Lake wanted to live in a peaceful and orderly atmosphere; (4) that if the residents of the center could not deal peacefully with WRA they would have to deal with someone else; and (5) that once the segregation process was wholly completed with the movement from Manzanar, the community at Tule Lake should attempt to select a committee -- more directly representative of its wishes than the current one -- to deal with the War Relocation Authority. After Mr. Myer had concluded his remarks, two members of the evacuee committee addressed the crowd briefly in Japanese. Immediately following the completion of these speeches, at about 4:30 p.m., the crowd broke up quickly and peacefully and returned to family living quarters. During the entire conference and the time when committee members were addressing the crowd, a member of the War Relocation Authority staff who is fully competent in the Japanese language was present and was able to indicate to Mr. Myer and Mr. Best the nature of all remarks made in Japanese.

5. While the meeting was in progress in the administration building a number of automobiles at the center were slightly damaged. Some of these automobiles belonged to visitors and some to WRA personnel. One visitor reported that a window of his car was broken and a sun visor removed. (This statement has not been varified by other evidence.) A door handle was broken off one car. Radio aeriels were removed from two cars and windshield wipers from about twelve cars. Air was released from tires of several cars. The paint on two cars was scratched.

In the struggle during which Dr. Pedicord was beaten, a wooden railing in the hospital office was knocked down. A careful investigation has revealed no reliable evidence of any property damage during this incident other than that listed here.

Several WRA employees and visitors to the centers who were in the area outside the administration building at the time the crowd was forming were approached by some of the evacuees directing the movements of the crowd and told to go inside the building. Aside from Dr. Pedicord, however, no WRA employees or visitors were beaten or injured during this incident. The evacuee employees in the administration office left their work. A few individuals reported they saw knives and clubs in the hands of some of the evacuees. The great majority of WRA personnel reported following the meeting that they had seen no weapons of any kind.

6. After dispersal of the crowd on Monday afternoon, a calm marked by some evidence of sub-surface tension prevailed in the evacuee community for approximately three days. Orders were sent out following the Monday meeting forbidding any meetings or assembly of evacuees in the administrative area. The internal security force was strengthened and authority was given for any member of the internal security staff, under certain specified conditions, to summon the Army directly without consultation with the project director or any other superior officer.

On Thursday afternoon, November 4, work was started on a fence separating the evacuee community from the section of the center where the administrative buildings are located and WRA staff members are housed. That evening a crowd of about 400 evacuees, mainly young men -- many of them armed with clubs -- entered the administration area. Most of the crowd entered the warehouse area. A few entered the motor pool area and some surrounded the project director's residence. The advance of this crowd was resisted by several WRA internal security officers, one of whom tripped, struck his head on a stone, and was then struck by evacuees with clubs. No other persons were injured. As the crowd closed in around Mr. Best's home, he telephoned Lt. Col. Verne Austin, commanding officer of the military unit outside the center, and asked the Army to assume full control of the project area. Troops entered the center at once.

7. During and immediately following the evacuee meeting on Monday, a number of the WRA staff became apprehensive concerning their personal safety. Most of them remained calm but a few became almost hysterical. All were offered the opportunity to leave the center until they felt secure in returning there, and a number of them did so. Since the incident on Monday, twelve people have resigned voluntarily, and two have resigned or were separated at the request of the Authority.

8. A large number of the evacuees at Tule Lake are citizens of the United States, with the constitutional rights of citizens. Many of them are children under 17, and they, together with a very large number of the adults, have no responsible part in the recent events.

In presenting this factual statement, the War Relocation Authority wants to emphasize that reports of the events at Tule Lake are being watched in Tokyo. Already some of the recent newspaper accounts have been used by the Japanese Government for propaganda purposes. There is every possibility that they may be used as a pretext for retaliatory action against American civilians and prisoners of war under Japanese control. Under these circumstances, it is imperative that the situation at Tule Lake be handled with a scrupulous regard for accuracy.

9. In view of the serious international implications in the situation at Tule Lake, the War Relocation Authority has been particularly careful in preparing the information contained in this statement. There have been so many exaggerated, even hysterical, reports that the staff at Tule Lake, confronted with an otherwise complicated and difficult situation, has been able to verify conclusively only the information presented in this statement. As this is written, further investigation is being made to check the accuracy of many of the allegations that have appeared in the press and to complete this story in all its pertinent details. The major events, however, have now been fully documented and can for the first time be presented to the public in an official statement.

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