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REPORT ON VISIT TO ALIEN DETENTION STATION
AT CRYSTAL CITY, TEXAS, JULY 11-12, 1943

Date: 8/9/43
WJ:EM

I IN CHARGE OF CAMP:

Officer in Charge: Mr. Joseph O'Rourke.
Japanese Spokesmen: Mr. Ryuchi Fujii, Spokesman.
Mr. Yayemitsu Sugimachi,
Assistant Spokesman.
Mr. Kensaku Tsunoda, General
Secretary.

II CAMP VISITED BY:

Mr. Jose M. Garay, Spanish Consul at New Orleans,
representing the Spanish Embassy at Washington, in
charge of Japanese interests in the continental
United States.

Mr. Ralph J. Blake, Special Division, Department
of State.

III PERSONS DETAINED AT CAMP:

Approximately 658 Japanese were under detention at
Crystal City on the days of the visit, there also being
about 800 Germans and 3 Italians at the camp. The camp
at Crystal City is employed for the accommodation of
family groups and, when completed, it is expected to
provide quarters for 4,000 persons. According to
Mr. O'Rourke, the Japanese internees would prefer that
their total number not be less than that of the Germans
and Italians who are also interned at Crystal City.

IV PHYSICAL CHANGES:

While Mr. Garay and Mr. Blake were making their
visit, the Officer in Charge received word that official
funds had been made available for the construction of
the proposed swimming tank at Crystal City. The actual
construction of the swimming tank may be delayed, how-
ever, pending a final decision by the Japanese and
German internee groups in regard to the extent of the
Labor which they will provide for that purpose.

The completion of the school quarters has been
promised by the first week of September. Two community
halls, one of which will be an auditorium, are to be
built for the exclusive use of the Japanese population
of the camp. Mr. O'Rourke stated that he has also
recommended that at least four laundry buildings, simi-
lar to the one already in use at Seagoville, be built
for the use of the Japanese internees at Crystal City.

It

It is understood that an additional doctor, to specialize in eye, ear, nose and throat cases, and a social worker are shortly to be stationed at the Crystal City camp.

Park grounds roughly 300 feet by 2500 feet in measurement, which adjoin the main camp enclosure, will be opened for the use of the internees during the daylight hours as soon as necessary surveillance arrangements are completed. At the time of the visit, it was expected that these arrangements would be made within a week. It is understood that the internees are particularly looking forward to their being permitted access to this new park area, from which the brush and other desert growth has not been cleared, since it will afford an opportunity for them to obtain materials with which to construct rude shelters from the sun adjacent to their individual living units that are in many instances crowded and poorly ventilated. The camp administration has not so far been successful in obtaining priorities that will enable it to purchase lumber for this and other related purposes.

A number of the living units at the camp are still without screens, which are especially essential in view of the many mosquitoes in the area. While these screens are expected shortly, this situation also exists because of the absence of sufficiently high priorities to ensure the provision of the needed materials.

V COMPLAINTS AND REQUESTS:

Two meetings were held with the Spanish representative by the Japanese internees at Crystal City during the former's visit to that camp, the first being arranged for the purpose of presenting various written questions prepared in advance by the Japanese Spokesman and his two assistants, Messrs. Sugimachi and Tsunoda, and the second was a general meeting open to all Japanese desiring to attend. At the first meeting it was requested that the State Department representative be present only when repatriation and related matters were discussed, and at the later general meeting the questions taken up concerned these matters entirely. In both instances all available information regarding the American-Japanese exchange situation in general and arrangements for the forthcoming second exchange operation in particular was supplied to the internees in response to their requests.

Mr. Garay indicated that the principal matters which the Japanese took up with him privately were in regard to their desire that urgent steps be taken (1) to obtain a supply of materials to be used by the internees themselves in building various necessary additions to their present living quarters, such as shelves, awnings and other sun shelters, (2) to provide adequate screening for all the housing units and (3) to eliminate overcrowding and provide better ventilation

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in certain of those units. It is believed that Mr. O'Rourke was successful in satisfying Mr. Garay that he was well aware of these problems and that he was doing everything in his power to remedy the situation.

No mention was made by Mr. Garay of any complaints concerning food. Mr. Garay likewise did not refer to any concern expressed with respect to the medical facilities of the camp.

VI COMMENT:

The morale of the Japanese internees at Crystal City has been noticeably affected by the deficiencies in the execution of the construction program. The Officer in Charge and his assistants are being confronted with an increasingly acute problem, and it is essential that the competent Government agencies urgently arrange for the allocation of the construction materials and labor that are required for the adequate operation of the camp if a further deterioration in the situation there is to be avoided. With respect to many of its physical aspects, the camp is functioning at present considerably below that minimum humanitarian standard upon which this Government has consistently insisted, on grounds of alleged reciprocity, for the accommodation of United States nationals who are interned by the enemy.

While Mr. Garay did not minimize the serious reaction that the aforementioned material shortages is producing, he expressed confidence that Mr. O'Rourke is making every endeavor to alleviate the situation as rapidly as circumstances permit.

Ralph J. Blake