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Department of State

Records of the  
Special War Problems Division

Inspection Reports on  
War Relocation Centers, 1942-1946  
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By *200* NARA Date *5/6/88*Supplemental Report on Civilian Detention Station  
Kenedy, Texas, October 13-14, 1942.

Date: NOV 10 1942

I. IN CHARGE OF CAMP: Chief Inspector, Ivan Williams.

II. CAMP VISITED BY: Mr. W. Bruppacher, Representative of the Swiss Legation, Department of German Interests.  
 Mr. R. W. Roth, Representative of the Swiss Legation, Department of Italian Interests.  
 Accompanied by: Mr. P. W. Herrick, Special Division, Department of State.

At the time of this inspection the camp was also being visited by Mr. Rudolph Fischer of the War Prisoner's Aid of the YMCA.

III. PERSONS DETAINED: On the day of the visit 655 persons were detained at the camp comprising the following:

Japanese	289	Swiss	1	Chilean	1
Germans	330	Hungarian	1		
Italians	15	Panamanian	31		
Rumanians	4	Guatemalan	1		
Russians	1	French	1		
Swedes	1	Nicaraguan	1		
Peruvians	5	Danziger	1		

These detainees with a few exceptions, were deported from the other American Republics. Included among the Germans were 116 seamen and 8 Jews. 38 of the detainees other than Japanese who were not interviewed did not wish to be repatriated under any conditions. The detainees other than the Japanese were organized into a number of groups with the following spokesmen:

Non-Repatriate Group:	Klaus Jacobs
Jewish Group:	Fritz Kaul
Seamen's Group:	Captain Johann Schuette
Costa Rican Group:	Hans Alsleben
Honduran Group:	Erich Paysen
Nicaraguan Group:	Willy Riedel
Haitian Group:	Joachius Rieper
Dominican Group:	Dr. Theodore Georg
Bolivian Group:	Hans Bohn
Ecuadoran Group:	Josef Reufels
Peruvian Group:	Anton Steindl
Italian Group:	Elmo Zannoni

IV. PHYSICAL CHANGES: The physical characteristics of Camp Kenedy have changed somewhat from those described in previous reports. The recreation area has now been opened for use. This is a field 450 feet by 625 feet which is accessible to the internees at all times of the day. Here a baseball diamond and a soccer field have been laid out and the necessary equipment supplied. It is also contemplated to build a tennis court and to lay out a miniature golf course in this area.

Within



VI. Within the detention stockade a building has been made available to the German and Italian detainees for use as a school room. A second building has been converted into a recreation room. Two small buildings have been built to house the laundry which is equipped with washing machines, irons, and ironing boards. The mess hall and kitchen have been doubled in size and a new ward has been added to the hospital.

VII. It was previously reported that the detainees complained of water being blown into their huts during rain storms and it was explained to them at that time that when it rained in this area most houses leaked since each rain storm was accompanied by high winds. To prevent water being blown into their huts protective strips of material have now been put over each window which should prevent the water from entering inside. Outside of the enclosure a guardhouse has been built which has only been used on two or three occasions. Also outside of the enclosure detainees have planted a large vegetable garden where it is hoped that sufficient vegetables can be grown to supply the entire camp. The detainees who work in this garden are not paid for their work but are exempt from all camp duties. They volunteer for this work of their own will. During the last part of August a tropical hurricane occurred at Kennedy which completely demolished several of the victory huts and CCC cantonment buildings. Many other buildings were also damaged during this storm. All repairs to these buildings have now been completed and the effects of the storm were not noticeable at the time of this visit.

V. RECREATION AND EXERCISE: Recreational activities have now been well organized among the internees. They have an orchestra and give weekly concerts in one of their recreation halls. A series of educational courses have been established including such subjects as languages, navigation, et cetera. They requested that the representative of the Swiss Legation obtain for them the correspondence courses of various subjects which the German Government has made available to civilian internees and prisoners of war.

The new recreation area is used at all times. A soccer league has been organized and games are played every day. The camp authorities have donated various colored uniforms to the different teams in this league. Movies are given once a week in the recreation halls and in good weather movies are shown outside in the stockade, where a screen has been erected.

The detainees stated that they had but a few books which were all in English and requested that they be given some books in German and Italian. The representative of the War Prisoner's Aid stated that he would attempt to procure these books for them.

VI. CLOTHING:



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- VI. CLOTHING: Winter clothing is now in stock at the camp and will be issued shortly to the internees. Winter clothing to be issued to each man will include two pairs of blue denim pants, two cotton shirts, two union suits, two pairs of woolen socks and one woolen jacket. Shoes will be issued when needed.
- VII. MAIL: The detainees at Kenedy complained of the delays in the mail to and from the other American Republics. They stated that it took at least two months for letters to reach them from South and Central America and a similar length of time for their letters to reach their families there. Similar complaints have been made at other camps. The representatives of the Swiss Legation were informed that this matter was being thoroughly investigated.
- VIII. CAMP ORGANIZATION: Up until a month prior to the visit, Captain Schuette was the spokesman for the entire camp. In view of the fact that after the hurricane the Germans refused to organize work details to clear up the debris which it caused, these duties were taken over by the camp authorities in whose hands they still remain. Instead of one spokesman as heretofore, each group from different South and Central American countries have elected their own spokesman to deal with the authorities. However, these spokesmen do not have the prerogatives of an internment camp spokesman since they do not detail their work which the authorities still do. This arrangement, which was made as a disciplinary measure, has worked out satisfactorily and the detainees appear to approve of it. Mr. Williams stated that the detainees had not requested to be reinstated to their former status and that since the present arrangement was working satisfactorily, no change would be made in the near future. Captain Schuette apparently did not care for the responsibilities of this position and this new arrangement has been agreeable to him.
- IX. MEDICAL FACILITIES AND SICKNESS: The medical facilities at the camp are satisfactory. A few detainees who were suffering from minor ailments were confined at the hospital. None were seriously sick at the camp.
- X. COMPLAINTS: The various spokesmen were interviewed and they stated that the general treatment they received was good. In particular they mentioned that Mr. Williams, the Camp Commander, had been fair with them and that they were appreciative of what he had done for them. The main question brought up by the detainees was their present status. They stated that they should not be classified as internees since they believed that they had a special status as they were brought to this country only for a temporary stay as guests of this Government prior to their repatriation. They felt that on account of this fact they should have been lodged in hotels rather than in an internment camp and that they should not be compelled to do maintenance work in the camp as provided for in the Geneva Convention. The detainees were informed that no possibility for repatriation existed at the present time and that although they might be classified as detainees this would not alter their position with regard to performing maintenance work in the camp since the Geneva Prisoners of War Convention was being applied to detainees as well as to internees.

The



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The detainees asked that the lights in the recreation halls be lowered to facilitate their reading. Mr. Williams, the Camp Commander, informed the Swiss representatives that this would be done.

The detainees working permanently in the kitchen and the laundry requested that they again be paid for their services. Prior to the time that the internees' organization had been taken over by the camp authorities they were paid for their work out of the surplus in the canteen fund at the rate of thirty cents a day. Mr. Williams stated that he would again authorize payments to be made from the canteen funds to these workers and the Swiss representatives suggested that instead of paying them thirty cents a day twenty cents would be a better rate of pay.

The detainees asked to have work made available to them for pay outside of the stockade. They were informed that this matter was receiving consideration and that there existed a possibility that such work would be made available to them in the future.

The German detainees complained of payments being made from the surplus of the canteen funds for relief to the Jews, and to some of the non-repatriates who had not received their \$4.00 monthly from the German Government. Mr. Bruppacher, the Swiss representative, told Mr. Williams that he did not believe that relief should be paid out of the canteen funds and that these funds should be used for purchases of sporting equipment, musical instruments, and to pay the internees working permanently in the kitchen, et cetera. Mr. Bruppacher further stated that the Germans who did not wish to be repatriated would again receive their four dollars a month from the German Government, that at one time they had been told that these funds would not be available to them through error but that this matter had now been rectified. He asked that no relief payment be made to the Jews out of the canteen fund. Mr. Fischer of the War Prisoners' Aid of the YMCA stated that he had now received authorization from his organization to effect payment of small sums monthly to the Jewish internees. Mr. Bruppacher stated that he would send \$500.00 to Mr. Williams to replenish the canteen fund which had been diminished through relief payments.

XI. IMPRESSIONS: The Swiss representatives informed Mr. Williams and Mr. Herrick that they were pleased with the general organization of the camp which now offered adequate facilities for permanent internment.

P. W. Herrick