

TRAFFIC CONTROL IN ZONE OF INTERIOR,
1 May 1946.

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CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction--Colonel Robert W. Brown, USA, Assistant Commandant, The Industrial College of the Armed Forces	1
Guest Speaker--Colonel J. R. Messersmith, Deputy Chief, Traffic Control Division, Transportation Corps	1
General Discussion	7
Colonel Brown	
Students	
Colonel Messersmith	

712

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COLONEL BROWN:

Ladies and Gentlemen: Every once in a while a few pleasant things occur in a long period of service, some face shows up that you have known before. Well, that happened this morning. I looked at this name Messersmith and I thought that name sounded very familiar, but that could be one of those planes and I remembered an ambassador to Mexico and I remembered some other Messersmith, but the thing that chiefly stuck out in my mind was a very young field artilleryman at Fort Lewis, Washington, along about 1933 or 1934, running around on the post Acting as an assistant trial judge advocate, helping with courts-martial procedure, helping try Lieutenant Colonels who had committed everything under the sun, surveying all sorts of property and worrying around field artillerymen, he was going to qualify without too much ammunition to shoot with.

Well, he turned out to be "the boy" and now he is a full Colonel. It is sacrilegious now to speak of him as a boy any more, and a lot of those boys were a fine set of boys; and, you know, I run across those boys now and their chests are so full of distinguished service medals that they hardly recognize me; I am just an old foggy.

Well, let us go on with the subject. This Colonel has ceased being an artilleryman. He is now a transportation man; so he is here to tell us about transportation. In case you don't accept all the good things I said about him, at Fort Lewis, here is the document.

Colonel Messersmith is a graduate of West Point; graduate of the Field Artillery School in 1938; graduate of the Command and General Staff School in 1943. His principal wartime activities were Terminal Operations Officer, Honolulu, T. H.; Port Transportation Officer, San Francisco Port of Embarkation. His present position is Chief of the Movements Control Division, Transportation Corps.

The subject of his lecture is "Traffic Control in the Zone of Interior." Ladies and gentlemen, Colonel Messersmith.

COLONEL MESSERSMITH:

Thank you very much, Colonel Brown.

Gentlemen: I seriously doubt that anybody is unfamiliar with the magnificent performance of the Transportation Systems comprised within the geographical limits of the United States during the period of the War years. My purpose here this morning is to give you the highlights of how the combined services or the branches of the Armed Forces combined the various phases of transportation to best suit the war needs.

It is well established that the United States contains the largest rail net of any country in the world. It is commercially operated and not government operated. There were some agencies coordinated in order

to receive maximum capabilities from the carriers. That much organization was necessary immediately upon the outbreak of hostilities.

Within our own Army, we eventually got to the three big groups, Air Forces, Ground Forces and Service Forces; the Navy Department had primary responsibility with respect to the Coast Guard and Marine Corps. When we declared war, our allies entered into the lend-lease agreement with this country. That cargo had to be moved as well as our own. We had civilian organizations that had to be brought into the picture and to be coordinated in the use of our transportation system. There was set up an Office of Defense Transportation as the major government coordinating agency. The Association of American Railroads was a going organization and lent its every effort to the performance of the magnificent job. There was set up for the shipping industry the War Shipping Administration, to control ocean-going vessels. Later UNRRA crept into the picture. At the present time there are many other governmental agencies that require the utilization of our transportation system.

Within the Armed Forces there were set up joint organizations, one of which was the Transportation Control Committee, set up principally to allocate shipping. In allocating shipping to the various services, it was also necessary to control the movement of the cargo within the continental limits of the United States so that congestion in our major ports would be prevented.

Another organization that deserves much credit--very seldom noted in the headlines of newspapers--is one called the Interterritorial Military Committee, which had to do primarily with the movement of personnel, comprising a group of associations throughout the United States which was responsible for the routing of the personnel traffic of all four branches of the service.

Within this transportation system it was also necessary to effect coordination with air transport, both commercial and military. We must not forget that the maze of highways in the United States, with the number of motor carriers in the industry, likewise made a great contribution to the war effort, as did inland waterways.

In order that we might discuss control of this traffic, it is necessary that we divide it into two phases. When you move anything, you do one of two things; you move a piece of cargo or a piece of freight or an individual or group of individuals; therefore, we have chosen to divide this into freight and passenger operations.

The major breakdown--in discussing freight first--is breaking it down into its two primary categories--carload or truck load, less than carload or less than truck load cargo. The control setup, on approval of ODT, originating within the Commercial Traffic Branch of the Office of the Quartermaster General some years ago, as a result of lessons learned in World War I, was a release system. It operated principally like this. No agency could ship a commodity to a port without first securing from a central headquarters a release for the movement of that commodity to a port for shipment overseas. It was originally known as the Quartermaster Release System and is currently known as the

Transportation Corps Release System. We are hoping that the Transportation Corps becomes a separate part of the War Department when and if Congress sees fit to enact such legislation.

When the ODT was organized, it accepted the system of the Quartermaster General as the system to be used in the United States in the control of movement of War Department and other Armed Forces cargo. The system works slightly different in the Navy Department. Up until sometime in 1943--I have forgotten the exact date--both systems were almost identical and operated in the same manner. You can well imagine--particularly those of you who have served overseas--that we had a problem of handling volume. Knowing the capabilities of our ports, it is easy to assume that very definite control must be exercised or you would get the situation that I am told occurred in the New York port during World War I, where for some reason unknown by my informant, there accrued in the Port of New York some 135 carloads of bath tubs. They were closest to the pier. Other cargo that was needed much more than the bath tubs was backed up as far west as Pittsburgh. The only way in the world to get the cargo that they needed, from Pittsburg to New York, was to ship the bath tubs to France.

With the release system inaugurated by the Armed services, it was almost impossible to create a congestion in any port.

Now look at the map for a moment, realizing that New York is our major east coast port. Most of you, I am sure, have been in and around the City of New York and have seen the waterfront which has a maze of piers and the greatest port rail network of any location in the world. Our problems were not too difficult there and the release system did not have to be supplemented in order to make it operate.

That was true likewise of Hampton Roads, Charleston, S. C., and Boston, Massachusetts. When you go from the East Coast and move to the wide expanse of the Pacific Coast, knowing that there are only seven rail gate-ways from the Mississippi River Valley serving the three major ports out there, we did have a problem. In other words, cargo released from the Eastern part of the United States, which is the great industrial area, and going to a port on the West Coast, many unexpected things could have happened to it from the time it left this particular area until it arrived in Los Angeles, San Francisco or Seattle.

Early in 1942 there was set up in the western part of the United States a system of regulating stations located at El Paso, Texas, Albuquerque, New Mexico, Ogden and Salt Lake City, Utah and Spokane, Washington. The reason for two being so close together in Utah is that two different railroads go through there connecting north and southbound traffic and tying in with the West Coast. As this cargo would originate in eastern areas, reports were made so that a copy of that report would either be teletyped or dispatched by air mail to the regulating stations in the western territory. These regulating stations were in direct contact by direct wire with the ports. By constant communication, the ports knew exactly what cargo was flowing through. When a report came in that showed a large volume of cargo for a vessel that was due to return to the Los Angeles port on such and such a date, but unfortunately had been

sent to the bottom by Japanese action leaving no ship to carry 14,000 tons of cargo moving on wheels toward Los Angeles. What did we do with it? In the reports rendered by the regulating station at El Paso to the Los Angeles port, that cargo was diverted to another point. This brings up another part of the system to regulate the flow of cargo into our western ports, i.e., Holding and Reconsignment Points.

Behind each major port on the West Coast, there was set up an installation known as the H & R point. There is one behind the Los Angeles port, one behind San Francisco and there are two in the State of Washington to take care of two different major railroads. Cargo would be diverted in there and retain its carload identity until the Port Commander was assigned another vessel to replace the one lost, or replace one that was placed on a repair berth and stayed there longer than the scheduled time of its departure from the port. These Holding and Reconsignment Points were very large in area, had considerable outside storage area and considerable inside storage area. Remember that the cargo going into those points never lost its identity from its original carload and that was particularly true after the War Department Shipping Document was established and universal throughout the Army. This permitted better records to be kept and also permitted the Port Commander to keep the overseas theater commanders informed at all times as to what was available to him, when he could expect it, and in what quantity.

I mentioned the fact that we moved the cargo in carload lots and less than carload lots. Anyone in the transportation business will tell you that the roughest part of it is shipping less than a carload of cargo and attempting to find out anything about it after it leaves its point of origin and before it arrives at its destination. The Armed Forces likewise experienced difficulty in the movement of less than carload or less than truck load cargo. After many many conferences, consultations, meetings, one thing or another, there was established a setup known as Consolidating Stations. They were located at key points, generally at major transportation gateways throughout the United States. There were several in the East--New York, Philadelphia, Atlanta; one in St. Louis, Chicago, San Antonio, Texas. The primary reason they were set up was again for the benefit of the West Coast to control that cargo.

In the areas where the Consolidating Stations were set up, directives were sent out to shippers to insure that any LCL shipment they had for any destination west of a given point would be consigned to the Consolidating Station. At these stations the shipments were grouped by common destination in carload lots and dispatched, many times in train load lots.

On the receiving end of the line, at the three major ports on the West Coast, there were set up Distributing Agencies. The carloads would come in. There may be in one car, shipments for the Army, Navy and Marine Corps and Coast Guard. At the Distributing Point, it would be broken down and, by truck, delivered from the Distributing Station to the consignee in that particular area. The volume of that particular movement grew to such an extent that it was possible in a very short period of time to consign from each one of the Consolidating Stations, in the United States, complete carload lots of mixed commodities to each one of the ports for common destination overseas.

714

In San Francisco within 60 days of the receipt of the first consolidated car, consigned directly to the port, the port was averaging the receipt of 17 carloads of LCL cargo every day, seven days a week. Soon after that operation started--I believe I indicated that it was originated by the War Department--the Navy Department joined the Army in using the Consolidating Stations and they then became known as Army-Navy Consolidating Stations throughout both services, as well as the Distributing Stations on the receiving end.

I am not going to go into lend-lease traffic for the simple reason that it is practically over. There is very little difference in the manner in which it was handled than regular War Department cargo, other than the fact that the government who made the original purchase had to be consulted as to the availability of shipping at port of destination, which was included on the Quartermaster Release before the cargo left either the manufacturing plant or the depot where it was stored.

Roughly that gives you the freight picture.

Moving over into the more delicate field and talking about passengers, we often hear the statement from a freight man that the reason he prefers to handle freight to passengers is that; first, freight never talks back to you. In handling freight the worst that can happen is that a piece might fall out of the car and bump you on the head, but when you deal with personnel, particularly casual traffic, you then get into headaches.

The overall plan for the movement of military personnel, which is still in effect, was primarily in large groups or main numbers. Most everyone is familiar with main numbers. The Navy uses the term "draft" but in effect it means the same thing and follows the same general principle. Any group of forty or more individuals originating at one point, traveling to a common destination by rail, is required to move under a main number. The passenger equipment of the railroads of the United States was utilized to the best advantage by having a central agency in Washington route all main numbered traffic, with the authority from their headquarters, both in the Navy Department and in the War Department, to coordinate delays and set-ups in movement so as to effect that maximum utilization of railway equipment.

For example, if several divisions were moving out of the desert training center, which was in operation, to a Port of Embarkation; and at about the same time personnel from another training center in the vicinity of that Port of Embarkation was moving to another port; those two moves would be so coordinated that one set of equipment would be utilized for the movement of both setups.

Likewise it was coordinated with the Navy Department. If there was not an Army troop movement to be coordinated with the one that started the setup, then we would inquire of the Navy Department and find out whether or not a similar number of personnel in the Navy did not have to be moved from that point to another destination.

Within the War Department setup, there was organized--and it is still in operation--a Military Section of the Association of American Railroads.

With their complete network and communication system throughout the United States that ties them directly to every district of the Association of American Railroads, we were able to save the War Department thousands of dollars on communications alone in the coordination and utilization of the transportation system.

After V-E Day some of our major headaches started. In other words, Personnel came back a great deal faster than they went over. Every person in this room, I am confident, is familiar with one or more stories of transportation being unavailable. They rode from Camp Kilmer, N. J., to Camp Beale, California, in a coach or they rode from Fort Lawton, Washington, to Camp Blanding, Florida, in a coach. We admit it. We know it. There was not enough equipment to go around. In other words, we had the meal but we didn't have the dessert. We recognized the deficiencies, but too late. We attempted before V-E Day to convince higher authority and other government organizations that the number of troop sleepers and kitchen cars would in no means handle the load to be imposed upon the transportation system of the United States immediately following the cessation of hostilities. So we got along. We moved and we moved and we moved. We answered letters of complaint and are still answering them.

But to give you at least one example of a major transportation crisis, let us go back just prior to the recent Christmas holidays, to the situation on the West Coast. It was going to be bad; we knew it; for the simple reason that every ship skipper in the Pacific who had any idea that he could make the West Coast of the United States in time for Christmas called his engineer into his cabin and said, "Mr. So and So, when we get the signal to go, I want you to put the 'tub' full steam ahead and if anything breaks down, I am going to throw you overboard." Now those may not be the exact words they used but in effect that is what happened, plus the fact that Congress said, "Bring 'em home." We brought 'em.

On Christmas Eve, 1945, there were on board vessels in the three major ports of the West Coast 99 thousand Army-Navy-Marine and Coast Guard individuals who got to the United States for Christmas, but they didn't get home for Christmas. It is interesting to note, in passing, that of the 99 thousand people who spent the Christmas holidays at a West Coast port, to our knowledge, not one letter of complaint has reached the Office of the Secretary of War. I think this is exceptionally commendable so far as the Port Commanders and the combined effort of the Armed Forces to take care of those individuals during that particular period are concerned. It was my fortune or misfortune to be in the San Francisco Port during that period and my observation was that the one thing that prevented a lot of complaints was the fact that the people in authority there, knowing what the situation was going to be, anticipated it by installing at every pier where a personnel vessel was tied up, banks of telephones and a counter for servicing telegrams; and in talking to hundreds of GI's, blue uniforms as well as OD, the general consensus of opinion was that once they set foot on that good old U. S., that was what they wanted and as long as they could get to a telephone to call mother or dad or send a telegram to mother or dad letting them know they were there, they were then ready to go out and spend that partial payment of \$10 and see what San Francisco had to offer.

715

If I may go back before Christmas now and indicate several expedients that were used to relieve the West Coast situation, such as the Trans-Con Project which utilized military aircraft operated by commercial airlines. In other words, the Army Air Forces furnished the planes, the air fields, the servicing crews; that operation was East to West and West to East. At this particular time, we were experiencing a slightly tight situation on the East Coast as well as the West Coast. The Trans-Con Project got underway the 27th of August 1945 and it was curtailed on the 29th of March 1946. During that period, in both directions, those airplanes transported 175,577 military personnel. Now the Trans-Con Project was strictly Army and not participated in by the Navy. At the time Trans-Con was originated, the Navy did not feel that their condition was such that it would warrant them to utilize air transportation. Later on, however, the West Coast situation got exceedingly worse. That was when we appealed to the Office of Defense Transportation and demanded--and when I say demanded I mean it--the four branches of the military demanded that we take over some of the commercial air space originating on the West Coast. As a result of an ODT order, we started on the third day of December 1945 and were assigned 70 percent of all passenger space on all commercial airplanes originating in San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland and Seattle, with destinations on the Eastern Seaboard. It was a transcontinental proposition. That space was in one direction only--from West to East.

That order was canceled on the 15th of February--the commercial operation--and during that period, they moved from the West Coast to the Eastern Seaboard 23,293 GI's. You may have seen the picture of the first plane arriving at the National Airport under the Trans-Con Project; and of interest to me particularly was the fact that seven out of the thirteen military passengers were Southern colored boys who were exceedingly happy to get home.

One of the major problems that faces the Transportation Corps at the present time and which may be of interest to some of you gentlemen is the one on the movement of dependents, now that dependents are authorized to go to the various overseas theaters. We feel that we have an excellent system. There are bugs in it, we know, which will develop, particularly when you are handling large groups of individuals at one time. We were exceedingly fortunate, however, in handling the first move of dependents to the European area, just a week or so ago. We actually got a letter of commendation from one of the wives of one of the officers going to Germany. And I noticed a remark on it by General Leavey when he sent it back to the Port Commander at New York stating that during the years that the Army had been moving dependents, "This is the first time it has come to my attention that we have gotten anything but a kick in the pants."

Gentlemen, I have attempted to cover the high spots of traffic control in the zone of interior. If there are any questions, I would be more than happy to attempt to answer them. If I don't know the answers, I will note them and see that you get it personally.

COLONEL BROWN:

Who are the traffic experts here in this class? Let us have a few questions just to show that we are on the ball.

QUESTION:

Were you in San Francisco too, Colonel, when the Philippine internees came back, or could you describe how they were handled?

COLONEL MESSERSMITH:

Oh, yes. You mean, sir, the people who were prisoners of the Japs in the Philippines and came back to the United States. General Kells was the Port Commander at that time and if I may precede the answer with a little anecdote; there are two famous Port Commanders in the Transportation Corps in the United States; one is General C. H. Kells; the other is General Homer Groninger. General Kells, being new at the San Francisco Port, having gone there from Boston--being comparatively new--spent a few days in the New York Port without the knowledge of General Groninger who was in the New York Port, because General Kells knew that General Groninger had quite a reputation for being a showman in knowing how to do the job. As a result, General Kells carried to the San Francisco Port a number of General Groningers very pet ideas on handling personnel particularly.

Now coming to the story of the return of the military personnel from the Philippines who were prisoners over there, General Kells went all out to do everything under the sun to see that when they arrived at a pier in San Francisco, their slightest desire would be anticipated and they would have no reason even to ask a question. The waterfront was definitely highly decorated. Pier 15 which is the receiving pier for the what do they call it--VIP's--very important people--was decorated so that you wouldn't recognize it as a pier. The City of San Francisco, from the city fathers all the way down, turned everything upside down and offered not only the City of San Francisco but opened it wide for the reception of those people. The hospital at San Francisco--Letterman General Hospital--had, I guess, two-thirds of the available personnel to handle the repatriated people on the piers to serve them in any way they could be served. They were wined; they were dined; they were taken on cook's tours; they were quartered and, knowing some of them myself and talking to them later in Washington, they said that never in their lives did they think that any one place in the world had so much steak and so good at any one time. Does that give you a fair picture, sir?

QUESTION:

I would like to ask a question. Concerning that "kick in the pants" deal, I happened to be in a branch where we spent about 60 percent of our time on foreign service, and we have traveled for the last 20 years--at least I have--on these tubs such as the St. Mihiel and the Chateau-Thierry and a few more of those bug-laden tramps. Now to my misfortune, on the way to Corregidor, one of those days, I saw those ships--at least two of them--disguised as hospital ships. Are our good brothers in the Transportation Corps going to take those back?

COLONEL MESSERSMITH:

Colonel, that is an excellent question and I will answer it. My answer is contingent only on the graciousness of the Bureau of the Budget. The plans of the Office, Chief of Transportation, are that those vessels will not be available for the movement of military personnel and their dependents in the post-war period. The War Shipping Administration has so many vessels that can be converted to do suitable transport service for military needs that there is no reason for the War Department to retain those older types that you mentioned.

We do have authority and there is a program underway right now to convert the C-4 type vessel to a vessel for military needs with particular attention being paid to the movement of dependents. There is also in existence--but our brothers in the blue uniform have them--two of the best, most modern oceangoing transports I have ever had the privilege of being aboard--the Funston and the O'Hara, which were built--originated--by the Office, Quartermaster General, which was a combination of all the experience in the Army Transport Service under the Quartermaster General in the development of an Army transport which would be a combination troop carrier, cargo carrier and first-class cabin space and second-class cabin space. I had the occasion to go on both of those vessels and if I have ever seen an ideal one for our purposes in the military, that is the answer. When we get those two back, I do not know. But they are at present, and have been since they went down the waves, under the Navy Department.

QUESTION:

Would you care to comment briefly on the circumstances which led to the formation or printing and proposed adoption of the Vendor Shipping Document and its importance in being universally accepted by contract to your transportation problem?

COLONEL MESSERSMITH:

I am not too familiar with the Vendors Document, other than to discuss it with respect to its similarity with the War Department Shipping Document, the primary reason behind the Vendor Shipping Document being that when it was received by a port, it would serve the same purpose as a War Department Shipping Document and would not require the same papers that a military depot would in forwarding a batch of cargo; only a bill of lading from the vendor was received. The Shipping Document Program was one major subject and it was the responsibility of the Office of the Quartermaster General, although we had people from what was then known in the Transportation Corps as Port and Field Agencies Division who were in on the development of it. Those of us in the operating part of it were consulted on various operations that would control the development of the War Department. I am not too well versed in the details. I can get that information if you would like it.

QUESTION:

Will the Army Transport Service continue, or will they let the Navy have the ships, where I think they ought to be.

COLONEL MESSERSMITH:

I don't know whether I am telling any tales out of school; nobody told me it was secret, confidential, top secret or otherwise, but it is my understanding that there is a large group of War Department and Navy Department personnel now working on a study to determine whether or not the Navy should not be responsible for all water shipment. The answer has not yet been published.

COLONEL BROWN:

It will not make any difference when we take them (The Navy) over.

QUESTION:

I was in California during the war when the full-crew law of trains was relaxed to some extent. In other words, they permitted trains to leave without a full crew of men if the men weren't available to man it. But, did you find that you couldn't move trains without full crews?

COLONEL MESSERSMITH:

Very definitely. That was particularly true with the Western railroads, the reason being that the Western railroads were drained by the higher wages offered in the ship building industry on the West Coast and it created a problem at two different times, while I happened to be on duty out there. We got authority from the War Department to place qualified military personnel on furlough for the express purpose of accepting employment with the railroads in order to move the trains.

COLONEL BROWN:

Are there any further questions, gentlemen?

QUESTION:

Colonel, I wonder if you would care to comment on the fact that two of the Western railroads, the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific, had by far the greatest burden to bear in this movement of troops, main movements, due probably, primarily, to the fact that most of the big trading areas were in that particular part of the country and served by these two lines; that, of course, added to their particular difficulties, and I wonder if you feel there would be a possibility of spreading that burden a little more by relocating some of those camps in the future.

COLONEL MESSERSMITH:

I cannot give an official answer to that question at this time.

QUESTION:

What about the post-war practice of double tracks on the West Coast?

COLONEL MESSERSMITH:

There was a study already completed on that, Colonel, and the railroads tell me, off the record, that if they get their 25 percent increase in freight rates, they would put the double tracks in.

QUESTION:

Freight rates are high enough now.

COLONEL MESSERSMITH:

I know what you mean, and in addition to that, land grant goes out on the first of October, so we are going to be pretty bad off with the Bureau of the Budget in trying to move something.

QUESTION:

My contention is that if we did that on a military basis, it should be subsidized, as the railroads can't afford it themselves.

COLONEL MESSERSMITH:

I do know that the study has been completed on that and the program has been set up for a long range post-war building program.

COLONEL BROWN:

All right. Any further questions?

QUESTION:

During this past war, inland waterways were not used nearly to their capacity. Is there any plan for utilizing them more in the future, especially for the package trade; I know that they were not used for the merchandise in the package trade nearly to their capabilities.

COLONEL MESSERSMITH:

That is true primarily because equipment to operate was not available, but our program, as far as post-war planning is concerned, is to utilize inland waterways to the best advantage of the War Department, particularly where a rate structure will serve as the most economical means of transportation when the time factor is not the important one.

COLONEL BROWN:

Any further questions, gentlemen? (None) Any questions by any member of the faculty? (None)

Colonel Messersmith, you have certainly given us a very interesting and informative discussion and we are certainly very grateful to you for it.