

April 30, 1918.

In re PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH AN IMMIGRATION  
PATROL SERVICE ON THE LAND BOUNDARIES.

## MEMORANDUM for THE SECRETARY:

Following our oral discussion of about ten days ago concerning the apparent necessity for taking some action that would insure a better patrol of the Mexican boundary with a view to prevent the passage across the line to and from Mexico of persons attempting to aid the enemy in various ways, the Bureau directed Supervising Inspector Berkshire to come to Washington and on Friday and Saturday, last, the subject was discussed with him in considerable detail, resulting in the preparation of a memorandum, a copy of which is attached immediately hereunder.

Copies of this memorandum were sent to the officers of the following Departments interested in the war work on the Mexican boundary, and, with two exceptions (the representatives of the State and Treasury Departments), the persons mentioned met yesterday afternoon in a special meeting called by Mr. O'Brian of the Department of Justice: State, War, Treasury, Navy, Justice, and Labor, the representatives of the Departments, in the order named, being: Mr. Leland Harrison of State Secret Service; Colonel Van Deman and Captain Hunt of Military Intelligence; Mr. F. M. Halstead of Customs; Captain McCauley and Lieutenant Van Slyke of Naval Intelligence; Mr. O'Brian, Special Assistant to the Attorney General, and Mr. Bielaski of the Bureau of Investigation; and Mr. Parker of Immigration. (Mr. Halstead does not attend the weekly meetings of the inter-Departmental conference regularly; but he has been kept informed with regard to this proposition as it was thought to be



of considerable interest to the Customs Service, and it is regretted that he was not able to be present).

It had been the unanimous opinion of those attending the weekly conferences in Mr. O'Brian's office, when this matter had been discussed on several previous occasions, that the situation on the Mexican border, always deplorable in some respects, is not improving but growing worse, and that some action looking to the material betterment of conditions should be taken as promptly as possible. In the final discussion of the subject yesterday afternoon this opinion was reiterated, and the conclusion was also unanimously reached that the proposition advanced by the Bureau of Immigration, as roughly outlined in the attached memorandum, is by all means the most practicable one that has ever been suggested, indeed the only one that could reasonably be expected to produce fairly satisfactory results. It was the sense of the meeting, therefore, that this Bureau should recommend to the Department of Labor the taking of immediate steps having in view the adoption of the plan.

It seemed also to be the sense of the meeting that the Government ought to equip the men employed for patrol duty on the border and also subsidize them. In the Bureau's judgment the physical conditions at certain points on the boundary almost compel the adoption of this method. As the layout of the border given in the attached memorandum shows that 1608 men will be required in the ranks of the patrol service, it may safely be assumed that the adoption of the plan will necessitate adding to the Immigration Service



on the border 2000 men all told, even when some of the commanding officers are provided by taking men already in the Service. In the attached memorandum it is estimated that the men could be secured either by paying them \$900.00 per annum and furnishing their equipment and subsistence or by paying them \$1500.00 per annum and letting them furnish their own equipment and subsistence. The difference between these salaries represents, roughly at least, the cost of equipment and subsistence. If it is finally concluded (as it has been initially by those who have so far discussed the project) that the better plan is for the Government to furnish the equipment and subsistence, nevertheless it may safely be estimated that the salaries, equipment, subsistence and personal equipment of the men will cost in round numbers \$3,000,000.00 per annum. The furnishing of the necessary clerical assistance to carry on such an organization, the purchase of motor trucks for the handling of supplies, the building of sheds for the protection of horses, the erection of tents and block-houses for the quartering of the men, appliances, etc., must be figured upon in addition; and therefore another \$1,000,000.00 must be estimated, making a total of \$4,000,000.00.

Two possible methods of securing the money for carrying out this project have been discussed, to wit, by having the President set aside from his war emergency appropriation the sum in question, making it immediately available to the Bureau of Immigration and Department of Labor, or by obtaining a special appropriation from Congress. In view of the gravity of



April 30, 1918.

the situation on the Mexican border and specially because the developments of the last few days seem to have demonstrated that that situation will rapidly grow even worse, the representatives of the several concerned Departments were unanimously of the belief that the first of these two methods should be adopted, that if an attempt should be made to obtain the appropriation from Congress, even though the most expeditious method possible were adopted in that attempt, it would not be likely to result in obtaining the needed funds in time to meet the conditions as they should be met.

Thinking that the Secretary may desire to bring this subject to the attention of the Cabinet at today's meeting, this memorandum is hastily prepared and presented. It may be well, even at the expense of reiteration, to summarize the Mexican border situation in the fewest possible words as follows:

For a number of years, from the point of view of the enforcement of the laws of this country and of the prevention of local and international trouble, conditions along practically the entire stretch of the boundary have been far from satisfactory. Since the United States entered the war, although every Government agency has cooperated and worked to the best of its ability, it has been impossible adequately to control the passage of persons back and forth across the Mexican boundary. That information of military value has constantly been carried into Mexico and that the various laws having in view the protection of the United States against the machinations of the enemy have been extensively and repeatedly violated in that quarter has been demonstrated in many ways.

Recent movements of troops and other military and political occurrences in Mexico,



April 30, 1918.

although as yet largely inexplicable, are not calculated to relieve the uneasiness caused by previous events. The fact that the wireless station at Chapultepec is being materially improved and its power increased under the supervision of German engineers, and the likelihood that that station will soon be able to communicate directly with Berlin gives further material cause for concern. Obviously by some means the border must be patrolled in such fashion as to give at least reasonable assurance that every person entering the United States from Mexico or going into Mexico from the United States is properly investigated and supervised.

In conclusion the Bureau directs attention to the fact that this plan, substantially, is the one that was suggested by it in 1914 and 1915, and approved by the Department as then presented, the object at that time being merely the adoption of a sufficient means to insure the proper enforcement of the immigration and exclusion laws along the land and coast boundaries. Moreover, while the matter is of particular importance at this time with respect to the Mexican boundary only, the Bureau is preserving the original idea of making it a plan for our protection on both boundaries.

Respectfully submitted,

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Commissioner-General.

AWP/HF