

Witness Richardson

Questions by: Mr. Mitchell

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2 to difficulties of entry, berthing and departure of large
3 ships.

4 "(4) Congested and restricted operating areas, in the air
5 and on the surface.

6 "(5) Inadequate facilities for fleet services, training,
7 recreation and housing.

8 "(6) Prolonged absence from mainland of officers and men
9 in time of peace adversely affects morale.

10 "(7) In case of war, necessary for fleet to return to
11 mobilization ports on West Coast or accept partial and unorganized
12 mobilization measure resulting in confusion and a net loss of
13 time."

14 Shall I continue?

15 Mr. Mitchell: Yes, I think those are pertinent.

16 Admiral Richardson: "If the disposition of the fleet were
17 determined solely by naval considerations the major portion of
18 the fleet should return to its normal Pacific Coast bases because
19 such basing would facilitate its training and its preparation
20 for war.

21 "If factors other than purely naval ones are to influence
22 the decision as to where the fleet should be based at this time,
23 the naval factors should be fully presented and carefully con-
24 sidered, as well as the probable effect of the decision on the
25 readiness of the fleet. In other words, is it more important

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2 to land strength to diplomatic representations in the Pacific
3 by basing the fleet in the Hawaiian area, than to facilitate
4 its preparation for active service in any area by basing the
5 major part of it on normal Pacific Coast bases?

6 "In case our relations with another Pacific nation deterior-
7 ate, what is the State Department's conception of our next move?
8 Does it believe that the fleet is now mobilized and that it
9 could embark on a campaign directly from Hawaii or safely con-
10 duct necessary training from the insecure anchorage at Lahaina
11 which is 2,000 miles nearer enemy submarine bases than our
12 normal Pacific Coast bases?"

13 Mr. Mitchell: Shortly after that you made a visit to
14 Washington, did you not, Admiral?

15 Admiral Richardson: I did.

16 Mr. Mitchell: Do you remember when you reached here and
17 when you left, approximately? You were here on October 8,
18 were you not?

19 Admiral Richardson: Yes. At 07:07. On 7 October. I
20 talked with Stark, Nimitz, Knox. That was my second visit to
21 Washington. I came at that time because the Secretary said he
22 wanted to talk to me. I arrived. I found that they were con-
23 sidering increasing the strength of the Asiatic fleet, which
24 was under the command of Admiral Hart. And while here I lunched
25 with the President. Had a long talk with him. I saw Dr. Stanley

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Hornbeck of the Department of State, who was at that time, if my memory serves me correctly, the advisor of the State Department on Far Eastern affairs.

Mr. Mitchell: In your interviews with the Secretary of the Navy and Admiral Stark, did you take up this question with them of your objections, the objections that you just stated, as to the basing of the fleet in the Hawaiian area?

Admiral Richardson: I think not, because I had given a memorandum to the Secretary and fully stated my views to him. I had sent a copy of it to Admiral Stark, who was thoroughly familiar with my views. And I had sent a copy of part of it to Dr. Stanley Hornbeck of the State Department who knew what I thought. So, if I remember correctly, I did not talk about that with Admiral Stark. I talked primarily about detaching ships from the main fleet to strengthen the Asiatic fleet.

(3) And the first day I arrived I was suddenly confronted with the fact that 5,000 sailors had landed on the West Coast to be turned over to me and I had to find some means of getting them out to Hawaii. So I had to take a carrier, I think it was the SARATOGA, and use her to transport the men that I was unable to accommodate in ships that had come to the Coast with me.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, the White House records show that on October 8, 1940 you had lunch with the President and with Governor Leahy at 1:00 P.M. Do you remember that?

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Admiral Richardson: That is correct.

Mr. Mitchell: Governor Leahy or Admiral Leahy?

Admiral Richardson: Admiral William E. Leahy.

Mr. Mitchell: He was then Governor of Puerto Rico.

Admiral Richardson: Yes. We did not go to the White House office in company. I was invited by the President through the Chief of Naval Operations to lunch at 1:00 o'clock. When I arrived there I found Admiral Leahy there.

Mr. Mitchell: Will you state in your own way, Admiral, just what occurred at that meeting and what was said about any of these matters we have been referring to?

Admiral Richardson: The President talked to Admiral Leahy about Puerto Rican affairs and as I was not interested I remember little of what was said, but I have a vague recollection that one subject under discussion was the question of housing.

The President asked Admiral Leahy his opinion about strengthening the Asiatic fleet and my recollection is that Admiral Leahy said that whatever you sent out will be lost, therefore I would send the least valuable combatant ships we have, the 7,500 ton cruisers, but I recommended, I personally recommended that none be sent. A decision to send none was reached.

Mr. Mitchell: Admiral Leahy had been Chief of Naval Operations previously?

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Admiral Richardson: He had been Chief of Naval Operations. He was Chief of Naval Operations when I was the assistant.

Mr. Mitchell: Then proceed, Admiral, with your statement of what occurred there.

Admiral Richardson: The following statement, because of its importance, I have written out. I wrote it out several weeks ago when it appeared certain, in my mind, that I would, unfortunately, be called before this committee. And with the permission of the Chairman I would like to read this statement.

The Chairman: Yes.

Admiral Richardson: Which I prepared in the quiet of my home, where I could think and refresh my memory to a maximum extent possible.

The Chairman: You may proceed, Admiral, to do that.

Admiral Richardson: I took up the question of returning to the Pacific Coast all of the fleet except the Hawaiian detachment.

The President stated that the fleet was retained in the Hawaiian area in order to exercise a restraining influence on the actions of Japan.

I stated that in my opinion the presence of the fleet in Hawaii might influence a civilian political government, but that Japan had a military government which knew that the fleet was undermanned, unprepared for war, and had no train of

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auxiliary ships without which it could not undertake active operations. Therefore, the presence of the fleet in Hawaii could not exercise a restraining influence on Japanese action.

I further stated we were more likely to make the Japanese feel that we meant business if a train were assembled and the fleet returned to the Pacific Coast, the complements filled, the ships docked, and fully supplied with ammunition, provisions, stores and fuel and then stripped for war operations.

The President said in effect "Despite what you believe, I know that the presence of the fleet in the Hawaiian area, has had, and is now having, a restraining influence on the actions of Japan."

I said, "Mr. President, I still do not believe it and I know that our fleet is disadvantageously disposed for preparing for or initiating war operations."

The President then said, "I can be convinced of the desirability of returning the battleships to the West Coast if I can be given a good statement which will convince the American people and the Japanese Government that in bringing the battleships to the West Coast we are not stepping backwards."

This is embarrassing.

Later I asked the President if we were going to enter the war. He replied that if the Japanese attacked Thailand, or the Kra Peninsula, or the Dutch East Indies we would not

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2 enter the war, that if they even attacked the Philippines he
3 doubted whether we would enter the war, but that they could
4 not always avoid making mistakes and that as the war continued
5 and the area of operations expanded sooner or later they would
6 make a mistake and we would enter the war.

7 Mr. Mitchell: Does that complete your statement of the
8 conversation?

9 Admiral Richardson: That is about all of it.

10 Mr. Mitchell: Do you want to adjourn?

11 The Chairman: Four o'clock having arrived, the Chair
12 thinks we might recess until 10:00 o'clock tomorrow morning.

13 (Whereupon, at 4:00 o'clock p.m., a recess was taken
14 until 10:00 o'clock a.m., Tuesday, November 20, 1945.)

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