

EXHIBIT NO. 97

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
 ADVISER ON POLITICAL RELATIONS,
 September 21, 1940.

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Mr. WELLES: You state that both you and the Secretary feel that at this moment it would be undesirable for the Department to oppose the plans of the Navy to which the underlying memorandum relates.

You ask for my reaction.

The proposal is susceptible of discussion from two points of view: (a) policy in foreign relations or (b) policy in relations between this Department and the Navy Department.

There arises in my mind at once the question of which is more important, service of our objectives in the field of foreign relations, or service of some objectives particularly regarding which are not known to me in relations between this Department and the Navy Department.

On the face of Mr. Chapin's memorandum it appears that the Navy Department is advancing merely a tentative proposal and that it is seeking in good faith our opinion of the proposal on its merits. If there exists some particular and good reason why we should regard this as a definitive "plan" of the Navy and why we should advance no expression of view unfavorable to it, I am not aware of such fact. Again reverting to Mr. Chapin's statement [2] of the problem, I am compelled to assume that Admiral Stark will wish to discuss the matter with you on its merits.

The proposal calls for a withdrawal of the Fleet from Hawaiian waters and its engagement in maneuvers southward from San Diego for a period of approximately 60 days. The objective is stated to be Fleet training. The problem involved would be apparently a problem of defending the Panama Canal against a naval attack.

As you know, I have contended constantly and consistently during recent months that, the situation in the Far East having been and being what it is, the most advantageous point at which to hold our Fleet is Pearl Harbor. I believe that the presence of the Fleet at that point has rendered the Fleet more useful than would have been its presence at any other point, so long as disposal of the Fleet is simply for guard duty and general defense. I do not today share the view which I heard expressed a few days ago that the presence of the Fleet at Honolulu no longer exercises any restraining influence as regards the situation in the Far East. I believe that withdrawal of the Fleet eastward would diminish our diplomatic influence as regards that situation—even though it be announced that the withdrawal is only temporary, et cetera, et cetera.

[3] That the Fleet must have training exercises is axiomatic. Announcement that the Fleet is engaged in a problem relating to defense of the Panama Canal against a naval attack would tend to emphasize the fact that our policy is essentially a policy of defense in our own waters (only). The suggestion is made that the problem be kept very secret. I do not believe it would be so kept. Whether there be or not be an announcement, and whether there be or not be secrecy, the Japanese would learn enough about the Fleet's whereabouts to enable Japanese naval experts to draw inferences, and their inferences would be that, as always suspected by them, we have no intention of having our Fleet operate in the western Pacific.

I doubt the need at this time for training on a problem of defense of the Panama Canal against a naval attack. In my opinion the Japanese have no thought whatever of any possibility of a launching by them in any near future of a naval attack against the United States or the Panama Canal or any part of South America.

In Mr. Chapin's memorandum it is stated, presumably as an observation advanced by the Navy Department, that there might be an alternative: "a minor Fleet problem could be conducted if necessary in waters adjacent to Hawaii".—In my opinion it would be preferable at this time that training of the Fleet be achieved through such [4] an exercise than through the Pacific Coast exercise under reference.

The Navy is at present engaged in an operation involving the sending of the vessels of the Fleet, one-third at a time, from Pearl Harbor to San Diego and return. There arises in my mind the question why, in the light of that fact,

contemplate at this time a bringing of the whole Fleet again back to the West Coast at about the moment when that operation will have been completed.

In principle, I would always doubt the advisability of sending the whole pack of one's watchdogs to a hospital or to a training school at a time when there are an unusual number of ugly prowlers in one's neighborhood or in the neighborhood of one's outlying estates. My mind reacts adversely to suggestions which seem to me to involve such a procedure, just as it does to suggestions for the making of gestures without the accompaniment of definite and decided-upon objectives and at least tentatively decided-upon intentions.

In these days, we have almost ceased to give consideration to questions of expense. I would point out, however, that Fleet movements cost money. I for one would rather see such money as may be spent upon the Navy and its operations spent in greater proportion upon construction of new planes [5] and of new ships than upon maximum possible expansion of training operations.

/s/ SKH.

PA/H : SKH : ZMK

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE UNDER SECRETARY

September 20, 1940

PA/H - Dr. Hornbeck:

The Secretary and I both feel that at this moment it would be undesirable for the Department of State to oppose the plans of the Navy which are obviously based on what in the judgment of the Navy is required by national defense.

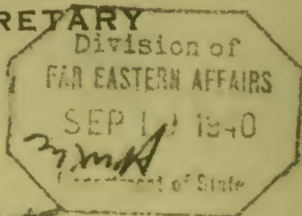
Please let me have your reaction.

U: SW: IJ



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE SECRETARY



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Mr. Hamilton

The Secy will
shortly call you and
Dr. Hornbeck to discuss
the attached.

W. R.

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PROSECUTION

THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN RE: [Illegible Name]

Defendant

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[Illegible signature or initials]

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