

January 8, 1945

CONFIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM TO GOVERNOR SNELL:

This office was alerted last night, January 7, at approximately 10:15 P.M., the alert lasted until approximately 2:50 A.M. this morning, January 8. The alert was occasioned by the receipt of a report from Harry Dey, Lincoln County Coordinator, that a mysterious flare had been seen by four (4) separate people descending just south of Waldport at approximately 9:10 P.M. last night.

Following our customary procedure G-2 Section, Northwestern Sector, Western Defense Command was notified, as was the Oregon State Police District Office in Salem, and the Deputy Superintendent of State Police. Numerous reports had been made both to the State Police and to Fort Lewis, which indicated that the same or similar lights had been seen by scores of individuals up and down the western part of the State of Washington and involving the Portland-Oswego area, the city of Salem, and the city of Albany.

The original presumption that all those who had reported had actually seen the same light has been declared erroneous in a confidential telephone call from Lt. Colonel Bisenius, G-2, Northwestern Sector, Western Defense Command, Fort Lewis. Intensive search is being made in several sections in Washington and our Civilian Defense personnel together with the Coast Guard and Local and State Police officials are conducting similar searches in the Waldport area and in the area between Halsey and Tangent, which was the area indicated in the report from Albany.

In order that you may be kept fully informed not only was there a Japanese balloon discovered near Estacada, but as well an unconsumed magnesium flare case was dug up in the Medford area recently, where it had buried itself some two and a half (2½) feet below the surface of the ground.

Lt. Colonel Bisenius has informed me that he has been in contact with Colonel William Hammond, Assistant Chief of Staff, Western Defense Command at the Presidio in San Francisco, and has been informed by Colonel Hammond that the military authorities will shortly issue confidential instructions to all responsible agencies as to our future course in connection with these reported incidents. Off the record, Colonel Bisenius told me that it is his feeling that we will encounter similar occurrences on clear nights in the future.

I am enclosing material which has been sent to our county coordinators and county commanders as of today at the request of the military authorities. Content of the material has been cleared with Colonel Bisenius.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack A. Hayes

JAH:lk

January 13, 1945

MEMORANDUM TO GOVERNOR SNELL:

As a result of a conference with Captain McDougall, Military Intelligence, Northern Security District, Ninth Service Command yesterday afternoon I have this additional information for you:

During the course of the afternoon of Wednesday, January 10, a number of reports of Japanese balloons reached the military authorities. The first report involved the Alsea area and occurred shortly after noon. The second report came from residents in the area between Harrisburg and Coburg. The third report came from a State Police officer who apparently sighted the balloon from the vicinity of Cheshire. The fourth report came from the vicinity of Sutherlin. The fifth and most interesting and important, from the standpoint of the military authorities involved the pilot of a Grumman fighter from the Marine Base at Klamath Falls who reported to his base that he had sighted a balloon, was flying alongside of the balloon, had taken pictures and intended to shoot it down. This occurred at an altitude of 28,000 feet and when the attempt was made to shoot the balloon down the pilot found that his guns had frozen. By diving on the balloon from above, the pilot was able to bring the balloon down to an altitude of approximately 8,000 feet where he was joined by a non-combat ship from the same base. Many more pictures of the balloon were taken by this latter craft from all angles and the pilots reported that they had brought the balloon down, from an altitude of 6,000 feet by what they described as a "squeeze play". The general area in which the balloon finally came to earth is described as in the area of Alturas, California. Search parties are in the area and it is expected that they will be able to recover the entire assembly. Previous incidents have not permitted complete recovery of all parts of the balloons because of the activation of the explosives which are part of the assembly and for this reason the Klamath Falls incident is looked forward to with great expectation by the military.

I will furnish you with any further information on this and any other incidents with which I become possessed.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack A. Hayes, Acting Administrator

1 March 1945

MEMORANDUM TO GOVERNOR SNELL:

Because of my desire to have more complete information, which is now at hand, I had not informed you earlier of recent occurrences involving Japanese Balloons. Having had a rather lengthy conference with Captain McDougall, Military Intelligence, Northern Security District, in Portland yesterday, I am in a position now to inform you as follows:

On Thursday, February 22, I received a telephone call from our county coordinator, Harry Dey at Waldport, that a balloon was sighted over Waldport at approximately 9 AM that morning. Shortly after that Nels Rogers informed me that he had received word that a balloon was sighted east of Kernville and another report from the coast at Kernville that a balloon had been sighted. It is presumed that these latter two were the same balloon. This information was reported to Ft. Lewis and to Captain McDougall and I was informed by the latter that balloons had been sighted in the vicinity of Lebanon at 9:15 and at 10:00 A.M.

On Friday, February 23, I received a report from Frank Shaw, Coos County Commander that a balloon had been shot down by navy plane in the vicinity of Haynes Inlet, north of North Bend on the 22nd. This I later verified through Captain McDougall.

On Saturday, February 24, I received a delayed report from Linn County that a balloon had been sighted the day before a few miles west of Halsey. This incident was promptly reported by the Linn County Sheriff to the Western Defense Command at Ft. Lewis.

In talking with Captain McDougall yesterday he informed me that a balloon had been recovered by a military search party, of which he was a member on Saturday, the 24th, in the vicinity of Burns, Oregon. He told me that on ~~Friday~~ the 22nd, search planes from the Redmond Army Air Base had located balloons in the air near Madras and to the east of Roseburg. These balloons were later lost in the overcast, one because the locating plane ran out of gas and the other because the locating plane was a trainer and not equipped to force the balloon down. No further information is at hand with respect to these two. On Monday the 26th, another balloon was recovered from the logged-off area a few miles west of Veneta in Lane county.

Martin Pratt, Sheriff of Multnomah County reported to me yesterday that a resident of the Gresham area reported sighting an object burst into flame and fall to earth in the area to the westward of Larch Mountain. No further information is at hand on this report.

I shall endeavor to keep you informed from time to time, on these happenings.

Respectfully submitted

March 15, 1945

CONFIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM TO GOVERNOR SNELL

On Saturday 10 March 1945 this office received word through the Marion County Coordinator that a balloon was observed passing over Salem at 10:30 A. M.

At approximately 8:30 P. M. on the same day Nels Rogers, State Forester, called to inform me that he had received a report through the Oregon State Police to the effect that a minimum of 40 balloons had passed over Waldport at approximately one half hour before dark. Having had no direct report from our organization at Waldport in Lincoln County, I came to the office and called the Lincoln County Coordinator who expressed ignorance of the report. I then called Fort Lewis where G-2 informed me that an error had arisen when the Silver Lake Controller of the Fourth Air Force made a report to the Redmond Army Air Base. The correct report was that there had been 40 sightings in the Northwest from 8:00 A. M. Saturday 10 March until dark. I was informed that only 4 of these sightings came from Oregon, one at Reedsport, one at North Bend, one at Salem, and the recovery of the free envelope without cordage or cargo at Wolf Creek. The other 36 sightings occurred in the State of Washington and at 9:00 P. M. 4 recoveries had been made.

I have since been informed through the Marion County Defense Council that two reports placed another balloon approximately over the Willamette River bridge between Salem and West Salem at 11:15 A. M. on Saturday. This could not have been a duplication of the earlier report.

I have been informed confidentially that General Pratt Commanding the Western Defense Command was to meet with General Shedd Commanding the Ninth Service Command and with the Commanding General of the Seventh Service Command at Salt Lake City last Saturday to outline policy preparatory to a release of information, first to responsible civilian agencies and later to the public. I am informed that a two day meeting will be called soon by the Western Defense Command to be held in San Francisco and that at this meeting an outline of military policy, capabilities, and requirements upon civilian agencies will be made known.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack A. Hayes
Acting Administrator

March 28, 1945

CONFIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM TO GOVERNOR SNELL

The undersigned together with Brigadier General Olson, acting Adjutant General for Oregon, and H. S. Rogers, State Forester, attended the confidential conference, which was held at Fort Douglas on Friday, March 23. The following is a condensed report of that conference and will deal almost entirely with the relation which Civilian Defense bears to the problem which occasioned the conference, in the belief that similar reports will be furnished you by the other two representatives covering their particular fields of interest.

The meeting convened at 9:30 A. M. with representatives present from at least 8 of the western states as well as representatives from the Western Defense Command, Seventh Service Command, and the Ninth Service Command. The meeting dealt with Japanese balloons and the implication contained in their use. Immediately after convening there was a resume of all incidents involving balloons, which have been verified by the military. This resume is as follows:

The first known incident occurred on 4 November 1944 when paper was recovered from the sea a short distance west of San Pedro, California. The second incident occurred on 14 November 1944 when paper was recovered west of Hawaii also from the sea. On 6 December 1944 a mysterious explosion occurred in Wyoming. Fragments of bomb casing recovered from the site of this explosion were analyzed and were proven to be of Japanese manufacture and through reconstruction it was established that the explosion was caused by the dropping of a 33 pound high explosive bomb. Subsequently witnesses were found who described seeing an object which "looked like a parachute" shortly before the explosion occurred. There is no doubt that this bomb was released from a balloon in the minds of the military authorities, it being further established that the balloon when partially deflated looks and acts like a very efficient parachute.

Since the 4th of November 1944, 93 balloons have been recovered. Of these 64 have been recovered in the United States, 17 in Canada, 6 in Alaska, 1 from the sea west of Hawaii, 1 shot down near Attu Island, and 1 shot down in the Bay of Alaska. There has been 14 verified bombings as a result of these incidents, 12 of which occurred in the United States and 2 in Canada. There have been 350 sightings of paper classified by the military authorities as being from fair to excellent in authenticity. Many hundreds more have been classified less authentic.

Studies by meteorologists and other technical experts in plotting wind courses indicate that the balloons are launched from the general latitude of Tokio and travel southeasterly to an area north of the Hawaiian Islands and then curve toward the northeast for the balance of the trip. During the months from November thru March the wind course is such that most of the balloons launched will hit the North American continent in the general area of Oregon and Washington. From April thru June the wind course is such that more of them will hit the coast farther south in the California area. In the months of July and August the velocity of the wind dies down to such an extent that not many of the balloons would reach the continent if the present type is used. However, it was pointed out that this should not be accepted as conclusive evidence that there will be no danger in those months. Larger balloons or other type of lighter than air craft may be used to counteract the reduced wind velocities.

Colonel Wm Hammond, G-2, Western Defense Command, who represented Major General Pratt at the conference, stated that it was their intention not to underestimate the seriousness of the situation. The military authorities have decided that the greatest hazard involves the forested areas during the dangerous summer fire season. It was stated that incendiaries are the most likely type of pay cargo to be used, although high explosives have been used. No mention was made of the possibility of bacteria being used. However, I was given the opportunity to study the record of the exclusively military conference which was held at the Presidio of San Francisco on 17 January 1945 in which there were several references to this subject. An entire period of discussion at that meeting was given over to a consideration of this threat but the record of this discussion was deleted from the report and all present were admonished to treat the subject as "secret" and directed not to discuss the subject.

A motion picture which was made in Hollywood was presented at Ft. Douglas and shows in graphic detail the construction and operation of the balloon. A recovered balloon was the basis for the picture. A sample of the paper of which the balloon is constructed and the mechanism which controls its flight and dropping of ballast and pay cargo was on display at the conference. A detailed description of the operation of the release mechanism was provided by the picture. In condensed form the following is substantially what happens: When the balloon is released a 35 ft. fuse is ignited which takes 54 minutes to burn to the detonator. This delay permits the balloon to rise to its operational level and away from the launching site before the detonation closes the electric circuits, which, operating through the barometers, cause the dropping of ballast when the balloon drops to 27,000 ft., and which will drop the pay cargo if anything goes wrong with the release mechanism. In the course of its travels across the Pacific the balloon will start out at approximately 30,000 ft. altitude and during the day the gas in the bag will expand under the heat of the sun and excess gas will be released through the 17" release valve. Then when the temperature reduces at night there will not be sufficient gas to keep the bag fully inflated and consequently it will begin to descend. When it reaches 27,000 ft. the barometers will activate the electric circuit and 2 small charges of black powder will be detonated in the blow out plugs which support the bags of sand ballast and the first sand bag will be released. The balloon will then rise again to 30,000 ft. This process will continue until all ballast has been released. The explosion which releases the last bag of ballast will close the circuit which activates the release of the blow out plugs which support the pay load.

If anything goes wrong with the 2 barometers which are set to activate the release of ballast at 27,000 ft. a third barometer is set to operate ballast release at

20,000 ft. If this, too, should go wrong, the fourth barometer goes into action at 13,000 ft. drops the pay cargo, sets off the fuse which ignites the flash bomb designed to burn the balloon and detonates the demolition block which is intended to destroy the mechanism. It is only those balloons which have failed to function properly which have been recovered. If the mechanism functions perfectly the ballast is released at calculated intervals, which summed up, provide sufficient time to bring the balloon over the North American continent where the pay load is released, the flash bomb and demolition block set off and the balloon and its operating mechanism destroyed. It is estimated that not more than ten per cent of the balloons which have failed to function properly have been recovered those unrecovered having come to earth unobserved in out of the way locations. There can be no estimate of the number of balloons which have functioned properly although the assumption is made that several thousands of the balloons have been released. It was stated that improvements have been made from time to time in the characteristics of the balloons, although the basic design has remained the same, and that they are now out of the experimental stage, have reached the production stage and are being released for effect.

Some difference of opinion was encountered at the conference as to methods of reporting balloons. It was held by some that first reports should go to law enforcement officers on state, county, and municipal levels which agencies have already been instructed as to methods to be followed on reporting to the military. The FBI has insisted that first reports should go to their agency because of the possibility that saboteurs may be transported by the balloons. It was carefully brought out that there is no evidence which would indicate that such transport of enemy agents has occurred although the possibility is not ruled out. If such should occur, it is felt that the release of the balloons would be from surface or underwater craft much closer to our shores. The difference of opinion has been referred to Washington, D. C. for determination, it being the sense of the conference that a single military agency be designated to receive such reports and assume responsibility for notifying all other involved agencies.

All present were directed to observe security regulations which prohibit publicity either by press, radio, or public assembly of the occurrences. Information may be released only to the following:

1. Civilian defense personnel at the state level
2. One or more heads of county or municipal civilian defense organizations
3. All reliable law enforcement officials
4. Federal and State Park, Forest, and Grazing agencies

All persons to whom such information is released must be pledged to release the information only to authorized personnel and not to press, radio, or in public assembly.

State defense councils are requested to provide to the Command General of the Ninth Service Command at Ft. Douglas, not later than 1 May 1945 the following information:

- a. An inventory of all personnel in such civilian defense services as may be regarded as essential or helpful in meeting the situation.
- b. Make a particular inventory of all available Bomb Reconnaissance Officers.
- c. Review all arrangements for control and communications which might be necessary should activation occur.

d. Formulate plans on the utilization of the above.

It was pointed out that no reactivation of civilian defense is contemplated now, but that planning for such reactivation should be accomplished and furnished to Major General Shedd by the 1st of May.

It is my feeling that the survey under (a) should include Fire, Police, Medical, Gas Reconnaissance, Forest Fire Fighters Service, Control Center, and Communications personnel and possibly Air Raid Wardens.

We can either communicate with all county coordinators and commanders immediately requesting the surveys of personnel listed above and follow up the request by a personal visit with each one to explain further the situation which requires the surveys, or we can call the county coordinators into a conference in Salem for the same purpose. Lt. Colonel Bisenius, G-2, Northwestern Sector, Western Defense Command, Ft. Lewis, has indicated that he would attend such a meeting and would come equipped with slide photographs of recovered balloons and explain the situation in detail. I would appreciate your comments on the better method to follow.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack A. Hayes
Acting Administrator

JAH:lk