

prisoners , guerrillas, executions

War of Rebellion, Series II, Vol VII p 18-19

Nashville, Tenn., April 6, 1864

Colonel Joseph Holt, Judge-Advocate General, Washington

Sir: I wrote you from Memphis some time ago asking your specific instructions as to the power of a commander of an army in the field to approve and execute the sentence of death.

I have not yet time nor the means to examine the question, but the law of Congress approved December 24, 1861 on page 490 of the volume Military Laws, 1776-1863, gives division and even brigade commanders powers to order general courts-martial and to approve and execute sentence, save in cases of death, and dismissal of a commissioned officer, which requires the approval of the general commanding the army in the field.

I have always construed that as final, and to substitute the said commander in place of the President of the United States in the cases enumerated in the Sixty-third and Eighty-ninth Articles of the Articles of War.

The question arises daily, and I expect to execute a good many spies and guerrillas under the law without bothering the President. Too many spies and villains escape us in the time consumed by trial, review and remission to Washington and we all know that it is very hard for the President to hang spies even after conviction when a troop of friends follow the sentence with earnest and ex parte appeals.

Spies and guerrillas, murderers under the assumed title of Confederate soldiers, deserters on leave, should be hung quick, of course, after a trial, for the number of escapes made easy by the changes on guard during the long time consumed by trial and references have made that class of men bold and dangerous and our own scouts and detachments have so little faith in the punishment of known desperadoes that a habit is growing of "losing prisoners in the swamp," the meaning of which

you know.

The horrible attendant of war originated in the practice of our enemies and I have seen it chuckled over in their public journals; but our own men are quick to learn, and unless a legal punishment can be devised you will soon be relieved of all such cases.

I believe that the veriest demon should have a hearing and trial, but punishment should be prompt, yea, speedy, or it loses its efficacy.

I believe the laws I have quoted give the commander of ~~XXXXXX~~ an army in the field lawful power to try by court martial, approve and execute the sentence, and I believe the law to be right and humane to society. If wrong I should be corrected at once. Forty or fifty executions now would in the next twelve months save a thousand lives.

Very respectfully etc,

W.T. Sherman

major-general

[Series II, p. 63]
prisons: Andersonville, War of Reb. Series I, Vol VII

Headquarters of Post, Andersonville, Ga., April 17, 1864

General S. Cooper, adjutant and inspector general: General: Your telegram of the 14th calling on me to report by letter why I was absent from my post is just at hand.

As directed I beg leave to submit the following statement of facts: By the want of tools, such as axes, spades, shovels, picks etc. this post was greatly embarrassed. In the interior of the prison not an axe was to be had (Spade, Shovel etc) In the same were quartered 8,000 prisoners. The foul, fetid malaria and effluvia coming from the prison occasioned by filth and a pool of almost stagnant water acting in concert with same caused the diseases of the prison to spread fearfully, and carried home to the number there quartered a faithful mortality, as will more fully appear by reference to the hospital records. These contagious diseases such as smallpox, etc. threatened not only the Confederate forces stationed at this post but the country generally.

My medical board urged upon me the absolute importance of a thorough renovation of the whole encampment. Up to this time I had made every effort to secure such tools or implements as we then stood in need of. I had sent my quartermaster time and time again, but to no avail in need of things we so much needed and could not then be had. I wrote throughout the State and tried by proxy to supply the prison, all to no purpose. Up to my absence we did not have sufficient tools with which to bury the dead, and the day preceding the three days of my absence I learned authoritatively that I could be supplied with the things I so much needed in Augusta.

I immediately went to my quartermaster, found him in bed sick with inflammatory rheumatics, where he had been a week previous, and has been since, scarcely able to turn himself over in his bed. The regimental

2 previous to Atlanta for tents for hospital purposes. ~~The~~ So I stood with the pressing case upon me without a quartermaster and without a man in whose hands I could safely and satisfactorily intrust the important business (made so by the surroundings) of my mission. From experience I had learned a lesson. I exercised an intelligent discretion in this case and acted under a conscientious conviction of duty. My mission was successful and the recent condition of the encampment with its improved health and the contagious diseases ~~xxxxx~~ in abatement are witnesses in my favor.

The mob that maltreated Mr. Dillman during my absence could not have been quelled had I been present, for a sufficient force was not on the side of law and order to have dispersed them. I make no charge against officers being at the bottom of the whole affair, because I have no legal evidence of the fact, yet I with shame own the fact (if evidence filed with me is true) the procession marched through the Twenty-sixth Alabama regiment between the colors of the regiment and the colonel's quarters yelling like madmen, without an officer to raise his voice against it. If these facts are true the post commander would have been helpless.

Hoping that this will prove satisfactory, I am, general, your obedient servant, A.W. Persons, colonel, commanding post.

)p.64)

Prisons: Richmond: Cruelties Belle Isle

War of Rebellion: Series I, Vol VII, p 80

Prison Life at Richmond--Its Cruelties

To the Editor of the New York Times:

I was taken prisoner by the enemy on the 7th of November last at Morrisville, near Kelly's Ford on the Rappahannock, and was confined for four months on Belle Isle.

On entering Libby Prison we were closely searched by the rebel authorities and most of the prisoners robbed of whatever money they had, not one cent of which they ever saw again. On the 14th of November about 100 of us were taken from the Libby and marched to Belle Isle, reaching there about 9 a.m. The prisoners collected on the bank on all sides of the inclosure to meet us, and such a collection of woe-begone, miserable, starving men I never beheld. We were marched inside the gate and turned loose like so many cattle, to find a resting place where we could; shelter there was none.

The whole inclosure does not comprise more than four acres, and within it more than 8,000 prisoners were at one time confined. The only shelter was tents generally worn out and leaky; and during the whole winter hundreds and sometimes more than a thousand men were obliged to sleep in the open air on the ground and in ditches. The coldest winter days, the thermometer down to 5 or 8, from 200 to 500 men were invariably sent over from Libby Prison where they had been all winter under shelter, and had sold their clothing to procure food. Some walked the weary night, some laid down and died, some went raving mad. Forty men were brought out one morning to the surgeon frozen in different ways. Two died.

The medical attendance was a farce, and when all chance of living was past the patients were carried over to Richmond to die. Those who had died on the island were buried without attendance of friends or ceremony of any kind. Their bodies sometimes lay for a week exposed to the weather, trampled on by dogs and hogs. Each prisoner was allowed one-quarter of a loaf of corn bread in the morning and one-third of

a loaf at night, with half a pint of black beans, the latter wormy and unfit to eat; the bread half baked and calculated to produce irritation and sickness instead of sustaining life.

Not one-fourth of the rations sent by the United States in November ever reached the prisoners, and no sanitary stores were ever delivered on Belle Isle; only 200 out of 4,000 express boxes were delivered there, and the night before we were sent away the guards of the Libby were selling us crackers from our own express boxes at \$5 a 60 pound.

Men would eagerly gather up bones, crumbs, potato parings, and any article of food however loathsome, killing and eating dogs to satisfy their hunger. The Western army stripped our men of almost every article of clothing and sent them nearly naked to Richmond, but I have never heard of any outrages of this kind attributed to the soldiers of General Lee's army, and after three years' intercourse on the bloody soil of Virginia I give them credit for being honorable foes who would scorn to injure defenseless prisoners.

The clothing sent by the United States was fairly delivered, but the hungry prisoners sold most of it to the guards, who are now enjoying the benefits of it. The guards were not generally cruel to the prisoners, but were under no restraint whatever and would sometimes shoot them down without provocation. The lieutenant in charge of Belle Isle was a humane man, but allowed a cruel and brutal subordinate to tyrannize over and persecute the unfortunate prisoners.

I have carefully avoided exaggeration in making this statement which can be corroborated by the affidavits of 2,000 prisoners at Camp Marole. I make it unwillingly and only from a sacred sense of duty to my miserable comrades yet in captivity, and to the memory of hundreds of brave men who had escaped unharmed from many a battle field and

the prime of life and health to die by slow torture and a dog's death.

W.S. Toland,
Ninth Regiment, New York State Militia.

(Johnson Island)

Office Commissary General of Prisoners (second indorsement)
Washington, D.C., April 29, 1864

Respectfully returned to the Secretary of War.
No reports have been made to this office of the manner in which prisoners have been treated by the rebels at Belle Isle, but from notices in the newspapers, made from representations of paroled prisoners, there can be little doubt of the truth of the statements made in the within communication, but to guard against mistake I respectfully suggest that the testimony of some of the most intelligent paroled prisoners recently arrived at Baltimore be taken as to the treatment they received, and if the within statement is sustained I respectfully suggest as a means of compelling the rebels to adopt a less barbarous policy toward the prisoners in their hands that the rebel officers at Johnson's Island be allowed only half-rations; that their clothing be reduced to what is only sufficient to cover their nakedness; and that they be denied the privilege of purchasing the articles allowed to other prisoners.

W. Hoffman, colonel third infantry
and commissary general of prisoners.

Johnson's Island
War of Rebellion, series II , vol VII. p 122

Johnson's Island, Near Sandusky, Ohio, May 6 , 1864

Col James A. Hardie, inspector general U.S. Army

Colonel: I have the honor to submit the following inspection report of Johnson's Island near Sandusky, Ohio.

Commanding officer , Brig. Gen H.D. Terry, U.S. Volunteers. General Terry is an intelligent , clever gentleman, but quite as fond of a social glass of whisky as of attending to the duties of his command. The grounds and barracks of the garrison and also of the prison are badly policed; the sinks are allowed to become offensive and although the health of the post is now good, there are indications of malarial fever which will increase with the heat of summer unless the grounds and barracks are more thoroughly cleaned.

But little judgment is exercised in the management and discipline of the prison. The wood furnished the prison and also the garrison during the past winter was of the poorest quality, consisting principally of green bass, elm, and a small amount of oak. It was furnished by Mr. Johnson, proprietor of the island, who was paid a higher price than merchantable wood was worth at Sandusky. There was no contract. Johnson wanted the wood off his land, I think.

Lieutenant Colonel Pierson, of the One hundred and twenty-eighth Ohio Volunteers, who was in command at the time this wood was purchased, appears greatly interested in Johnson's affairs. Johnson was appointed sutler by General Terry upon condition that he should take a man by the name of Finnegan as a partner. I inspected the sutler's store and found only such articles for sale as are authorized by law, although I believe they smuggle whisky to the prisoners.

Lieutenant Colonel Pierson charges Finnegan with the offense. Pierson however, for some reason is anxious to get Finnegan out of Johnson's way.

The beef furnished the post is of the poorest quality and often deficient in quantity. The prisoners get most of the fore-quarters. The hospital is not in the cleanest condition, but presents a passable appearance. The clothing, food (with the exception of beef) shelter and security of prisoners satisfactory. Post fund collected, expended and distributed as authorized. Commissary of subsistence and treasurer of prison fund--Capt. E. Ellmaker, U.S. Volunteers. Prison fund March 31, 1864 \$14,005.08; savings for April \$1,891.60 not transferred; subsistence fund due United States May 5, \$11,789.68. Treasurer of prisoner's money Capt. Samuel Truesdell, Sixty-fifth New York Volunteers. Cash on hand belonging to prisoners \$9,363.63.

Post quartermaster--Capt. L.M. Brooks, U.S. Volunteers. Due United States May 5, 1864, \$34.85; all funds and balances counted and found correct. I think there has been a disposition on the part of officers purchasing supplies for this post to be exceedingly liberal toward parties furnishing such supplies. I have no evidence of collusion however. Purchases are not made in excess of the wants of the post.

Captain Truesdell, treasurer of the prisoners' money is an exceedingly useful, careful man in his position. The commissary of subsistence and quartermaster are competent men. No pecuniary transactions discovered between officers and sutler, or persons furnishing supplies for prisoners. The garrison, numbering 2,238 men is passably efficient, but not under much restraint. I think one regiment of the National guard (100-days' men) of Ohio, with a company of artillery, the whole under the command of an intelligent, active and diligent officer, a sufficient force to guard this island and its prisoners. Number of prisoners, May 6, 1864, 2,087.

I am etc. John F. Marsh, lieut-colonel Twenty-fourth rgt.

War Department, Washington, D.C., May 21, 1864

Copy respectfully furnished for the information of Colonel Hoffman,
Commissary-General of prisoners.

The commanding officer at Johnson's island has been directed to take immediate measures to cause a thorough cleansing of the barracks and prison and to direct his personal attention to the improvement of the discipline and efficiency of his command. By order of the Secretary of War, Jas. A. Hardie, Colonel and Inspector General.

[Series II]

prisoner rations: Northern

p 183, War of Rebellion, Series I, Vol VII.

Circular: Office Commissary General of Prisoners, Washington, D.C.,
June 1, 1864

1-By authority of the secretary of War the ration to be issued to
prisoners of war, as announced in the circular from this office dated April
20, 1864 is hereby modified as follows to go into immediate effect viz:

Modifications: Pork or bacon, in lieu of fresh beef, 10 ounces.

Fresh beef, 14 ounces

Flour or soft bread, 16 ounces

Hard bread, in lieu of flour or soft bread, 14 ounces

Worn meal, in lieu of flour or bread, 16 ounces.

Cornmeal in lieu of flour or bread, 10 ounces

Beans or peas a 12 1/2 pounds

Or rice or hominy a 8 pounds

Soap 4 pounds

Vinegar a 3 quarts

Salt, 3 3/4 pounds

Potatoes a 15 pounds.

Sugar and coffee, or tea, will be issued only to the sick or wounded,
on the recommendation of the surgeon in charge at the rate of twelve
pounds of sugar, five pounds of ground or seven pounds of green coffee, or
one pound of tea to the 100 rations. This part of the ration will be
allowed only for every other day (a for 100 rations)

The difference between the ration as above established and the
ration allowed by law to soldiers of the U.S. Army constitutes the
"savings" from which is formed the "prison fund." W. Hoffman,
Colonel third U.S. Infy and Commissary General of Prisoners.

[Series II]

Johnson's Island

Series I, Vol VII, War of Rebellion p 184

Washington, June 1, 1864 8:50 p.m.

Col. Charles W. Hill:

Be prepared to quarter 1,000 prisoners that will probably be sent to Johnson's Island. You will procure tents for the purpose which will be pitched in the inclosure in front of the present barracks. In case tents cannot be procured temporary sheds can be put up. It will probably be necessary to put up a shed for messing. Please report what arrangements you can make.

Wm. Hoffman, commissary general of prisoners.

p. 186

Headquarters Department of the Gulf, New Orleans, June 2, 1864

The Adjutant General U.S. Army Washington D.C. Sir: Inclosed I have the honor to transmit lists of prisoners captured at the places and upon the dates designated. These prisoners of war were all sent North in June, 1863, and are, to the best of my knowledge, now held in confinement, excepting some that it is understood have escaped.

I also beg leave to inclose the copy of a letter from Maj. Gen. R. Taylor, C.S. Army, disclaiming that certain officers commanding colored troops have been held in close confinement or in irons as reported at these headquarters; also one stating that colored troops had not been beaten or hung after having been captured by his forces, and another denying that two officers of U.S. Colored troops had been murdered at Monroe as alleged in accompanying affidavits. *

I beg leave respectfully to request that the prisoners mentioned upon

the accompanying lists may be sent to Colonel Kilborn , assistant commissary general of prisoners, Department of the Gulf, at New Orleans, in order that they may be exchanged under a cartel now being arranged by Col. C. C. Dwight, assistant inspector general, commissioner for exchanges, acting on my part and Maj. W. M. Levy, assistant adjutant and inspector general, commissioner for exchange, acting on the part of Maj. Gen. R. Taylor, C.S. Army , very respectfully etc.

N. P. Banks, major general

commanding.

First indorsement

Office Commissary -General of Prisoners, Washington, D.C. July 2, 1864

Respectfully submitted for the information of the Secretary of War
The two rolls of prisoners have been returned to Major-General Banks
The officers referred to, except one who died at Johnson's island, made their escape from the steamboat Maple Leaf while en route from Port Monroe to Fort Delaware on the 10th of June, 1863, and the enlisted men were delivered to the rebel agent at City Point on the 6th of July, 1863.

W. Hoffman

Colonel, Third Infantry and Commissary General of Prisoners.

second indorsement July 6, 1864

These papers seem to be but a portion of a correspondence. From what I can gather from it I am of opinion that under the actual information in our hands touching the treatment of colored troops and their officers by the rebels the letters of General Taylor prove nothing but his personal ignorance of notorious transactions.

The best evidence that the class of prisoners referred to either have received or are to receive the treatment due to prisoners of war would be to bring them forward and offer to exchange them. Until the enemy does this it is a sort of connivance on our part in these

proceedings to attach the slightest importance to such letters as that of General Taylor,

W.A. Hitchcock, major-general of volunteers

(For enclosures here omitted see Logan to Andrews Aug 8, 1863, Vol VI. this series, p. 180; Taylor to ^DBanks, Sept 7, 1863, ibid p. 264, Taylor to Franklin, Dec. 23, 1863, ibid, p. 748.

[Series II, p. 200]

Johnson's Island, Series I, Vol VII, War of Rebellion

p 201

Office Commissary General of Prisoners, Washington, D.C., June 6, 1864

Col C.W. Hill, commanding, depot prisoners of War, Johnson's Island, Ohio

Colonel: Until further orders under no circumstances will visitors be permitted to see prisoners in confinement at Johnson's island except by authority from the War Department or by permission from this office
Very etc.

W. Hoffman, Colonel Third Infantry and Commissary

Gen of Prisoners... (Same to Col. A.G. Draper, Point Lookout, Md.)

Johnson's Island

War of Rebellion, Series I, Vol VII, p. 229

~~Headquarters~~ Office Superintendent Military Prisons, Johnson's Island, Ohio,
June 12, 1864

Capt. A. N. Mead, acting assistant adjutant general:

In compliance with orders received through you from the Commissary-General of Prisoners "to report every Sunday morning the condition of the prison and prisoners," I have the honor to submit the following: The condition of the grounds inside the prison is good, being ever well policed. The policing of the quarters is improved, but not quite what it should be; the prisoners being nearly all officers makes it somewhat difficult to obtain the necessary amount of "dirty work" from them to keep their quarters, mess rooms and kitchens in perfect order. The sanitary condition of the prisoners is good, as will be seen from the following: Whole number of prisoners, 2,145; number of sick in hospital 34; number of deaths, last week 0. A small number of convalescents and light cases are treated in quarters, respectfully etc. E. A. Scovill, major 128th Reg. Ohio Vol Infantry, Supt of Prisons.

(indorsement)

Headquarters U.S. Forces, Johnson's Island, June
DEC 16, 1864.

The report has been unavoidably delayed to get time for an examination expected to have been made much earlier. I should have forwarded it at once if I had supposed that imperative duties would successfully interfere. I think the condition of the prison is not what it ought to be and might be made. I allude to the cutting of holes in the barracks of the prisoners for light and ventilation, and the most of which occurred more than a month ago; the defective mode of supplying water and the defective sinks, and the means of preventing their becoming so great a nuisance as

they have been and must be again without some other plan.

I shall make these matters the subject of a special report soon,

Chas. W. Hill, colonel, commanding.

[p. 368]

Archer (Note date en route to Fort Delaware, June 24)

War of Rebellion, Series II, Vol. VII

Office, Commissary-General of Prisoners, Washington D.C. June 13,

1864. Brig. Gen. A. Schoepf, commanding Fort Delaware, Del.:

General: The authorities at Richmond having placed Maj. Nathan Goff,

Fourth Regiment, West Virginia Cavalry a prisoner of war in their

hands; in close confinement in a cell, the Secretary of War directs

that a major of their army be confined in like manner and receive the

same treatment in all respects as received by Major Goff. I therefore

respectfully request you will place Maj. W.P. Elliott, commissary of

subsistence of General Morgan's staff, now a prisoner of war at Fort

Delaware, in close confinement in a cell and permit him to have

communication with no person except those who visit his cell on duty

Until further orders he will be allowed the ration prescribed

for prisoners of war by the circular of June 1 from this office. His

meals will be given to him twice a day and he will be permitted to

receive nothing else unless prescribed by the surgeon of the post in

consequence of sickness. Please report the execution of this order.

I am etc. W. Hoffman, colonel, Third Infantry and Commissioner general of
prisoners.

Office Commissary-General of Prisoners

Washington D.C. June 13, 1864

Brig. Gen. A. Schoepf, commanding Fort Delaware, Del.

General: By direction of the Secretary of War I have ordered the
transfer from the Old Capitol Prison to Fort Delaware of the following
named persons viz: Charles P. Faidley, Thomas Edwards, Joseph Rinker, W.S.
Pickett, George W. Ryan, Dr. William Cross, E.L. Bentley and William
H. Gray.

The above named persons were arrested at Leesburg, Va. and are held as hostages for the delivering to the custody of the Federal authority eight persons who decoyed across the Potomac River at Edwards Ferry by a white flag two U.S. soldiers then fired upon them, wounding one in the thigh and robbing them of their pistols, watches, clothing, etc. and then marching them through the streets of Leesburg for the gratification of the citizens etc. They are to be held until further orders and if possible you will confine them by themselves. Particular care must be taken to prevent their escape. I am, etc. W. Hoffman.

Officer Commissary-General of Prisoners

Washington, D.C. June 13, 1864

Col. C.W. Hill, commanding, Johnson's Island, Sandusky, Ohio: Colonel, I am directed by the commissary-general of prisoners to request that all prisoners of war under your charge may be informed that for the present no more discharges will be granted; but those who do not wish to be sent south for exchange may make application to you to that effect, and you will please forward to this office semi-monthly or oftener rolls of all such applicants, giving the rank, regiment and company, when and where captured, and in the column of remarks such other particulars as on an examination you may think necessary to a proper understanding of the case. Cases which you may deem of an extraordinary character may be presented separately. No prisoner of war who has made application to be released, or who desires to remain North will be sent South for exchange unless under orders from this office. X R. Lodor, Capt. Fourth Arty. Assistant to commissary-general of prisoners.

Hqrs. Dept. of S. Carolina, Georgia and Florida, Charleston, S.C.

June 14, 1864.

Brig. Gen J.H. Winder (south) Charleston S.C. No. 3 Montague St.

General: I am instructed by the major-general commanding to inform you that, by the inclosed copy of an intercepted letter, you will find that the prisoners en route to Andersonville have been buoyed up with the hopes of a speedy delivery from incarceration.

It might be well to inform them that these plans have been discovered and that any attempt of the enemy in their direction will be a failure, whilst any endeavor on their part to participate in these plans would most certainly result in bloodshed and loss to themselves.

H.W. Fielden, assistant adjutant general

Headquarters, Department of the South

Hilton Head, S.C. June 16, 1864

Maj. Gen. H.W. Halleck, U.S. Army. Chief of Staff of Armies of the United States: General: I think the cruel determination of the rebels to place our officers in Charleston under fire is an evidence of their vindictive weakness and of the destruction that the city is sustaining from our fire. This last is not so much from actual demolition as from the depopulation and desolation. Friend letters speak of this and of the grass growing in the streets. I hope the president will decide to retaliate in the manner proposed. I inclose some late files of rebel papers. J.C. Foster, major-general commanding.

(See also Series 1, Vol XXXV, Part II, P. 131.

Columbus Ohio, June 16, 1864, 2 a.m.

received at 9 a.m.

E.W. Stanton, secretary of War: Vallandigham is in Ohio. He makes

a speech at Dayton today. "What is the pleasure of the President and War Department in the matter? Answer soon. John Drough.