

SRH-043

STATEMENT FOR RECORD OF PARTICIPATION OF BRIG. GEN.  
CARTER W. CLARKE, GSC IN THE TRANSMITTAL OF LETTERS  
FROM GEN. GEORGE C. MARSHALL TO GOV. THOMAS E. DEWEY  
THE LATTER PART OF SEPTEMBER 1944

DECLASSIFIED per Sec. 3, E. O. 12065  
by Director, NSA/Chief, CSS

Date 11/30/79

Statement for record of participation of Brig. Gen. Carter W. Clarke, GSC in the transmittal of letters from Gen. George C. Marshall to Gov. Thomas E. Dewey the latter part of September 1944

In the forenoon of Monday, 25 September, I was asked by Maj. Gen. Clayton Bissell, A. C. of S., G-2, if I was known personally to Gov. Thomas E. Dewey, Lt. Gen. Hugh A. Drum, or any of Gov. Dewey's entourage or close associates. I stated that I did not know and, so far as I knew, was not known to any of these people. Gen. Bissell later informed me that I would be directed to take a letter to Gov. Dewey at Tulsa, Oklahoma, Gov. Dewey's next stopping point on his trip east from the West Coast. Later in the day, in the office of Col. Frank McCarthy, Secretary of the General Staff, I was given the letter to read, to check for accuracy of technical details. Later in the day I was informed by Gen. Bissell that I should travel in civilian clothes and, if possible, make my contact with Gov. Dewey unknown to any other person, but that under no circumstances was I to disclose to anyone except Gov. Dewey my mission or the contents of the letter, nor was I to give the letter to Gov. Dewey unless we were the only two present in the room at the time.

I left the Pentagon Building early in the afternoon of Monday, 25 September, and went home in order to get my civilian clothes out of storage and have them pressed in preparation for the trip. After dinner I returned to the Pentagon Building, where I received orders from Major Earman at 1942 EWT, Monday, 25 September. Went to

airport and got off ground at 2040 EWT. Landed at St. Louis for fuel at 2330 CWT. In air again 2400 CWT and landed in Tulsa at 0150 CWT. Slept in Hotel de Gink. Up at 0700. Phoned Gen. Bissell at 0730. Went to Mayo Hotel, had breakfast and phoned Roger Randolph at 0820. Got haircut and shave and saw Roger Randolph at 0905. He contacted Mr. William Skelly, President of the Skelly Oil Company. Mr. Skelly was Gov. Dewey's campaign manager and was handling all arrangements. Went to Mr. Skelly's house and made arrangements to meet him in private hotel room in Tulsa Hotel. Met Mr. Skelly as agreed at 1600. He saw Gov. Dewey's Secretary who came down twice to insist that he know who I was and what I wanted. No one knew anything about the case except that I had a letter that had to be delivered to Gov. Dewey personally and alone. Finally he said, "You must write down the name of the man who has sent you, seal it and give it to Gov. Dewey." I did this, and after being gone 16 minutes, he returned and said Gov. Dewey would see me.

I saw Gov. Dewey alone, delivered the letter and asked that I not read it aloud. Gov. Dewey opened the outer envelope and then said, "Well, Top Secret - that's really top isn't it?" He read the first two paragraphs and then stopped. He asked if I were a Regular Army officer. When I said yes he asked if I would give him my word of honor that I had been sent by Gen. Marshall. I said I would. He then said he did not want his lips sealed on things that he already knew about Pearl Harbor, about facts already in his possession or about

facts which might later come into his possession from other sources but which, if they were contained in Gen. Marshall's letter, could not be used because he had given his word on this letter, thereby sealing his lips. He said he would be glad to discuss this matter with me now. I told him I was merely a courier and was not authorized to enter into any discussion about what he knew about Pearl Harbor or about the contents of this letter. He then asked if I were authorized to say to him in the name of Gen. Marshall that if he read the letter through and then stated to me that he already had in his possession the identical information that was contained in the letter, that he would then be released from all obligations to keep silent. I said I had no such authority. He then said he could not conceive of Gen. Marshall and Adm. King being the only ones who knew about this letter. Furthermore he said he could not conceive of Gen. Marshall approaching an "opposition candidate" and making a proposition such as was apparently contained in that letter. He said "Marshall does not do things like that. I am confident that Franklin Roosevelt is behind this whole thing."

All this time the letter was lying face down in his lap. He then picked it up and said "Let me read those first two paragraphs again." He started to read, then laid the letter down and said "I have not reread them because my eye caught the word "cryptograph." Now if this letter merely tells me that we were reading certain Japanese codes before Pearl Harbor and that at least two of them are

still in current use, there is no point in my reading the letter because I already know that." He then said "That is the case and I know it, isn't it?" I said, "Governor, I am merely a courier in this case." He said, "Well I know it and Franklin Roosevelt knows all about it. He knew what was happening before Pearl Harbor and instead of being reelected he ought to be impeached." He then said "Would you like for me to phone Gen. Marshall and say to him what I have just said to you?" I said "Governor, this is a subject that should not, under any consideration whatsoever, be discussed or even mentioned over the telephone." He handed me back the letter saying, "I shall be in Albany Thursday and I shall be glad to receive you or Gen. Marshall or anyone Gen. Marshall cares to send to discuss at length this cryptographic business or the whole Pearl Harbor mess." He continued, "I can arrange it so the conference can be held in absolute secrecy." I then put the letter back into the envelopes, thanked him for his courtesy in giving me so much of his time, and departed. I then left the hotel, went to the field, phoned Gen. Bissell. Took off at 1815 GMT 26 September.

I arrived at Washington airport at 2245 EST 26 September. I phoned Gen. Bissell and asked him if it was necessary for me to make my report that night. He said "No but be in the office early the next morning in order that we may report to the Chief of Staff."

About 0740 on the morning of 27 September, accompanied by

Gen. Bissell, I made oral report to Gen. Marshall as indicated above, leaving with him at that time Gen. Marshall's letter which I had taken with me to Tulsa and brought back on my return trip.

Later in the day on Wednesday, 27 September, I was informed by Gen. Bissell that on the following morning I was to go to Albany to again contact Gov. Dewey and to give him another letter which had been prepared by Gen. Marshall. At 1008 on 28 September I took off from the Washington airport and landed at Albany at 1205. Went by taxi direct to the State House. Arrived there at 1250. Contacted Gov. Dewey's office and was put in touch with Miss Ross, his private secretary. She asked who I was and what I wanted. I told her that I was the same individual who had contacted Gov. Dewey last Tuesday in Tulsa and that I was there at Gov. Dewey's invitation with another letter and message for the Governor. She left to phone and in a few minutes came back saying that Gov. Dewey desired me to come right over to the Executive Mansion. I arrived there at 1330 and was taken directly to Gov. Dewey's reception room. Present were Gov. Dewey and a man introduced as Mr. Elliott V. Bell, Superintendent of Banks, State of New York. I stated to Gov. Dewey that at Gen. Marshall's direction and in accordance with Gov. Dewey's invitation extended in Tulsa, I was there to present him a letter and message from Gen. Marshall and to answer any questions of a technical nature that the Governor might care to ask after a reading of the letter. Gov. Dewey asked if it were the same letter I had in Tulsa. I said no but that it was

on the same subject and that the meat of the letter was the same. He then asked if I still had instructions to see him alone. I replied that I had. He next asked if I could leave the letter with him. I said no that I was to return the letter to Gen. Marshall. He asked if I were authorized to discuss the contents of the letter with him. I stated that I could discuss the technical features of the case freely and could answer any technical questions on the subject that he might care to ask.

Gov. Dewey then said that, in view of the circumstances, his own personal position, in view of what he already knew, to say nothing about what he might later learn, and particularly in view of his trusteeship, he had decided that he could not see me or anyone else alone, that he would not read a letter which he could not keep and which he could not show to and discuss with Mr. Bell, nor would he enter into any further discussion without Mr. Bell being present. He said he could not afford to read a letter he could not keep as he might later be charged with reading a letter different from the one he had really read. He said I might be curious to know whether or not he had a recording device in the room. I said "No, Governor, I am not curious; I merely assume that you have one." He said "Well I haven't and I did not ever have one when I was District Attorney. I had one in my witness room, of course, but never in my own private office." He next said, "Now Colonel, Mr. Bell is an American citizen and is just as patriotic as any member of the Administration. He already

knows all the facts that I know in regard to Pearl Harbor and I certainly intend that he know the contents of the letter if I read it. If I keep the letter I shall put it in my vault and no one but Mr. Bell and myself shall know of its existence or of its contents and we shall discuss it only between ourselves. Furthermore I do not see what Gen. Marshall is so exercised about. There are at least 12 Senators that I can name for you right now if you desire that know all there is to be known about Pearl Harbor and about how we were reading certain Jap codes before Pearl Harbor and how it is claimed that we are still reading two of these same codes. You know, Colonel, this code business is the worst kept secret in Washington, but I for one want to say to you that I do not believe any such thing as that to be a fact."

I said, "Well, Governor, whether you believe it or not, it is a fact and I am willing to take an oath to that effect right here and now. Let me assure you that Gen. Marshall's sole interest in this matter is to protect our most vital source of intelligence and to save the lives of thousands of troops that are certain to be sacrificed if security on these ciphers is blown and the Japs change them." I then said, "There are many other aspects of this case that I would like to tell you but I feel that you should read the letter first."

He sat silent for about three minutes and then said, "Why don't you phone Gen. Marshall and tell him that I will not discuss the matter with you unless Mr. Bell is present, nor receive the letter unless I can let Mr. Bell read it and then I keep it?" I said that I did not want to

phone from the Executive Mansion but would go to a pay phone and call; that if I were unable to reach Gen. Marshall I would fly back to Washington at once, deliver Gov. Dewey's message, and return to Albany tonight and be available to see him (Dewey) early tomorrow morning. He said, "Well I have a direct line in here and I have a line that goes through the switchboard and there is no tap on either of them unless O'Connor has just put one on. I have then checked several times a week so I feel that they are safe." I asked who O'Connor was and he said he was the Democratic leader here in Albany. I said, "Well I prefer not to have the phone used in this case." He said, "Oh hell, I'll phone Marshall, I've talked to him before and this will be all right." He then picked up the phone and put in a call to Gen. Marshall. While waiting for the call, which took about seven minutes, Gov. Dewey said "If, as you say, the Japs are still using two of their codes that they used before Pearl Harbor, why in hell haven't they changed them, especially after what happened at Midway and the Coral Sea?" I explained the difference in the types of codes and ciphers used by the various Jap agencies, their distribution problems: and gave the reason we think the Japs have not changed these codes. He then asked why Gen. Marshall was so anxious to stop him from talking when everyone else in Washington knows the story and is talking about it. Just then the call was completed and he talked to Gen. Marshall in re the letter and about Mr. Bell. He then gave the phone to me and Gen. Marshall authorized me to give the letter to Gov. Dewey, to leave it with him and to discuss the case

technically in the presence of Mr. Bell.

As I was opening the envelope Mr. Bell said, "Colonel, hundreds of people know all about the Midway affair and how most of our other successes in the Pacific have been due to our reading Jap naval codes. Everyone who has ever been out there knows about it and talks freely about it. Why not long ago at a dinner where a large number of people were present I talked to a naval commander who had been out there and had participated in nearly every engagement we have had. He said that they always knew where the Jap ships were and that our people were told by radio where to station their own ships to meet the Japs, and that all this information came from reading Jap codes."

Gov. Dewey said "Yes and I have lots more information about the pre Pearl Harbor messages you were reading." He then took the letter and started to read. Mr. Bell said, "Tom, do you want me to read it over your shoulder?" Gov. Dewey said "No I'll hand it to you a page at a time." Gov. Dewey continued to read, then put the letter down and said, "Well I'll be damned if I believe the Japs are still using those two codes." I again assured him that they were and that one of them was our life blood in intelligence. The letter was still in his lap when I said "Governor, I would like to repeat that I know that Gen. Marshall's sole interest in this case is to preserve the only worthwhile source of intelligence that this nation has. You do not realize it but the War Department has 10,200 people working in the Signal Security Agency; the Navy Department has almost 6000 in their Communications Annex, and both

the Army and Navy each have several thousand in tactical field and fleet units engaged in signal intelligence work.

*See next sheet*

Gov. Dewey said "Yes, Gen. Marshall just said that we had over 10,000 on that work."

I then stated that Churchill considered this his secret weapon and that it had really saved England. I described how Churchill felt about security, how the Navy prized it so highly and how difficult it had been to break down British resistance because of American lack of security consciousness. I quoted to him Churchill's reported statement about protecting this source, how that in order to protect the source the British had time and again permitted convoys to be attacked rather than divert them from their course and thus blow security.

Gov. Dewey then picked up the letter and read some more. Then he put it down and said "Is this true about the OSS?" I said it was. He said "Well I don't feel towards the OSS like most of the Army and Navy people I have talked to. I have a lot of my men in it and they are all damn good, excellent fellows in fact, and they tell me that we have no really trained intelligence personnel in either the Army or Navy. They say that in both the Army and Navy the officers are

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the Army and Navy each have several thousand in tactical field and fleet units engaged in signal intelligence work. [In addition, the British, with whom we have complete liaison, have over 30,000 on this activity and the British would suffer as greatly as ourselves if we lost this source and might even deny us for security reasons material which we get from them and could get from no other source. We were once in such a fix and may well be again if this thing goes sour.]

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\* NOT SENT TO NARS.

merely on temporary detail and that they then go to sea or back to a regiment or somewhere, and that most of the officers of both services are woefully ignorant of world affairs. I suppose that may be the real reason for taking no action on the Pearl Harbor warnings they had - they could not interpret the warning."

Mr. Bell then said "Well it don't account for them not doing anything about that message that gave them the warning that Japan was going to attack the United States - you know the one I mean - where they set the deadline for Kurusu for November 25 and then postponed it till November 29 saying to get done with their negotiations by that time or that things would automatically begin to happen. Anyone should have known that that meant they were going to attack the United States. That was just the time limit on sailing dates."

Gov. Dewey said "Yes that's right." Mr. Bell then said "Those messages you did not get till December 8 and after, why did it take so long for you to receive them?" I said "I do not know what you are referring to, but before Pearl Harbor all our traffic intercepted on the West Coast, Hawaii and elsewhere was sent in by air mail which of course delayed it."

Gov. Dewey then read the letter through and handed the last page to Mr. Bell. After Mr. Bell had finished reading, he handed the letter back to Gov. Dewey. After a minute or so Gov. Dewey said "Well, except for the matter of the two codes and the OSS, there is little in this letter that I did not already know. There is one point though, what

in hell do Jap codes have to do with Eisenhower?" I explained the linkage with a general statement on the three types of ciphers used by G.A.F., Abwehr, Clandestine, Germany Navy, Oshima's visits and interviews, etc. He seemed satisfied. He then said "Colonel, I know a hell of a lot about this business. You probably know that some years ago when ~~William~~ Stimson was Secretary of State he got very damn pure minded one day and stopped all such things as this. He afterwards denied that he had done it but said he was acting on orders from President Hoover. Well, as you know, the man who headed the cryptographic work of the Government was Yardley who was fired by Stimson. Yardley was a friend of mine in those days and I am the man who stopped Yardley from publishing his second book. I met him in a speakeasy one night and persuaded him against publishing the book. He agreed provided that Mr. Stimson write him a letter of apology for the abusive manner in which Stimson had fired him. Stimson did, too."

I did not comment on this other than to say I was quite familiar with the Yardley case. I then asked if there were any questions the Governor or Mr. Bell would like to ask. Gov. Dewey said "Not just now but I would like to discuss this case with Mr. Bell." I got up to go out of the room into the hall but Gov. Dewey said "No you stay here, we will go across the hall." I sat down and Mr. Bell said "Well, Governor, we have pledged ourselves not to discuss this letter with anyone else but just between ourselves but what about Colonel Clarke - who is he going to discuss it with?" Gov. Dewey said "Oh, he will

of course report this conversation to Gen. Marshall - is that not correct?" Before I could reply Mr. Bell said "Yes but with who else?" Gov. Dewey said "Anyone else?" I said, "I shall report to my immediate superior, Major General Clayton Bissell, A. C. of S., G-2, War Department, and through him to Gen. Marshall and to no one else."

They then got up and left the room, leaving the letter on a stand by Gov. Dewey's chair. They were gone about 22 minutes. When they returned Gov. Dewey said "Let me look over this letter again and read carefully a couple of paragraphs." When he finished he said, "Well, Colonel, I do not believe that there are any questions I want to ask you nor do I care to have any discussion about the contents of the letter. Will you give me your full name, serial number, office location and phone number, and your residence address and phone number?" I did this and he thanked me and asked where I was staying. I told him I was flying back to Washington tonight and was going direct to the airport. I then asked him if he had any message that he wanted me to take to Gen. Marshall. He said "No, no message." I thanked him for giving me so much of his time. He shook hands and said "Well I hope we meet again under more auspicious circumstances." I said goodbye to him and to Mr. Bell and left for the airport at 1610. Next I phoned Gen. Bissell and to plane. In air at 1645.

I arrived at Washington airport 1855 and phoned Gen. Bissell advising him of my return and asking if it was desired that I make report that night. He answered in the contrary but directed me to be in the office early the following morning in order that we might make

report to the Chief of Staff. Again about 0740 on Friday, 29 September, accompanied by Gen. Bissell, I made my second report to Gen. Marshall as indicated above.