

8 PP (GUARD 5) STATE GUARD 7/11 SPRAGUE
WEATHERFORD & THOMPSON
ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW
ALBANY, OREGON

December 17, 1941

Governor Charles Sprague,
Salem, Oregon.

My dear Governor Sprague:

A few days ago I was attending court in Toledo, Lincoln County, when about 4 o'clock in the afternoon the Sheriff entered the courtroom and announced to the Court that information had reached him that the Japanese fleet was some 300 miles off-shore and orders were for a blackout at dusk. The Court immediately adjourned so that the parties and witnesses could reach home before the blackout.

The possibilities of what might happen, of course, then passed through the mind of all those present and all of those informed of the situation. Manifestly the enemy could have landed parachute troops or landed along the coast line. What could we do as American citizens to prevent this, defend ourselves or to help our Country? Everybody willing to give his life and no plan or organization available to us at the moment. Fortunately about an hour later another report was received countermanding the previous order.

The temporary situation passed but every citizen is giving serious consideration to what might happen in the future. In the event of a landing, are ablebodied men going to withdraw or submit to capture as was done in France and Belgium, or are we going to get organized as citizens, stand our ground after attack and no army is present at that particular spot, and not only stay but stay fighting? I have given the matter considerable thought and the following conclusions have been reached.

12/17/41

It is well to have all of these relief agencies and Red Cross plans to take care of the maimed and injured, put out fires, and bury the dead resulting from an attack. This seems to be the main theme of so-called civilian defense. This is all very good and I do not criticize it, but it is all defensive. It presupposes defeat, defeat, defeat. It creates a wrong and dangerous psychology. If we are going to have funerals, my idea is to arrange matters so we can bury a few Japs and be prepared to bring that result about.

Every citizen who has a gun is buying ammunition; every boy old enough to carry a gun is getting fixed in a similar situation. All that is required to make our citizens a formidable line of combat defense is a word of leadership along that line from the Governor.

There may be landing parties, there may be raiding parties, there may be parachute troops in any county in this state; we are in a combat area. What are the citizens going to do if parachute troops do land in Linn County or any other county? Certainly we do not plan to run or await the coming of an army thereby permitting the enemy troops to entrench, capture trucks and vehicles and become a formidable adversary.

It is suggested that a plan something like this be promulgated by the Governor. Let every town and community organize its men into groups of four, armed with rifles, shotguns or any other equipment available. Let it be understood that in the event of an alarm this group of four stay together and proceed to the reported scene of the enemy. In this way at least 200 cars and with four men could be organized and ready for action in towns the size of Albany, 100 in towns the size of Lebanon, 100 at Sweet Home; smaller numbers in the other towns and likewise those living on farms all over the county could produce as many men. An army of 3000 men could thus be assembled in Linn County in less than an hour and be on the spot where parachute troops were reported landing in the county, ready to combat them.

If such a scheme were organized all over the state, a like situation could prevail in any locality. This would inspire a combative spirit. It would place us

12/17/41

on the offensive; it would be a good psychological stimulus for our population. It would implant the idea everywhere that wherever the Japs land, if they do, and the army is not available, they will be met right there by the citizens everywhere and exterminated. There will be no running, there will be no jamming of roads but let the enemy know that the moment it lands there will be fighting by everybody right where they land.

If we wait until there is a landing party with no preconceived plan of action, everyone will feel as helpless as we did at Toledo in the instance I have referred to. Such a program by the Governor of this state would set a good example throughout the nation. All games are being cancelled because we are in the combat area; let the whole United States know that we intend to stay in that area. Let our people feel the power that they as citizens possess and give them confidence to defend this Country.

Such a plan does not need a lot of officers or organization. Let the people form their own cars, their own carloads of armed men, and report to a central station in each town that they are ready. Radios could then give notice of the reported enemy's location. These men could proceed at once to that location and exterminate any small group. True they couldn't make a fight like trained soldiers but they could make a fight and a great deal better than no fight. After troops should arrive then these citizens could withdraw after the troops have the situation in hand.

Whose war is this? Whose homes are located here? Who is holding this front line if it is not the citizens who live here?

I urge upon you the necessity of a fighting leadership. Let the people know that if there is a landing that you will be there with the citizens.

It is wrong to say that the state will turn the military defense to the army; there is no army in Linn County. The citizens are already here; use what we have until the army comes, and that situation applies all over the state.

12/17/41

This letter is confidential and not made for publication. Irrespective of any course that anyone will take something of this nature will be done by the citizens of their own motion. I am certain it will be done in this county. People are not in the mood to stand by if parachutes come; they will get organized and will fight the best they can. Today's report of additional attacks upon the Honolulu Islands evidences the fact that the enemy is still close at hand. Let the army know that every citizen is a soldier and that we are going to stay right here and fight.

I realize that all kinds of objection from the military standpoint would be raised; that is beside the point. You are Governor of the people of Oregon and their leader. Let the people know that we stand for something more than taking care of our own dead and wounded should the enemy reach our shores.

Russia is defeating the Germans because every citizen is a soldier. Jugo-Slavia, crushed but not defeated, still fights because every citizen who can get a gun is a soldier. France will stand in its own shame and cowardice permitting its citizens to be shot by the hundreds, for no other reason than its citizens did not stand their ground and fight.

Such an organization as suggested might never be called into existence. You ask how could it be officered? Let them handle that themselves when the occasion arises. Give them the leadership to organize and be on hand to fight. There will be natural leaders among them.

In Eastern Oregon every year we have wheat fires. Every harvest crew quits, jumps on a truck, takes the tractor and plow and go to the fire; they put it out. There is no fire chief; there is no one giving commands. The effective way in which those fires are extinguished might be taken as a model of efficiency; the loss is kept to a minimum. You let these citizens surround a group of parachutists and see how long they will last.

But the main value is for everybody to know that we are prepared to deliver all of our power on the drawbar and that the Governor of the state is with us. The situation will not be unlike Indian war times.

Governor Sprague -- §

12/17/41

As I see the situation, it would be almost impossible to have officers. Parachutists might land when persons designated as officers were away from the county. Small actions like this better be fought by citizens without officers than not fought at all.

I hope you will receive this letter in the spirit in which it is written, for the good of our state, its people and our Country. Imagine how I felt at Toledo. If a landing party had then arrived, even only fifty strong, they could have captured Newport, Toledo and that whole Yaquina Bay area with all of us standing around like dumb-bells and everyone wanting to help. Needless to say I acquired title to a first class gun within fifteen minutes after Court adjourned. Had there been an organization something like what is here suggested, we would have felt confidence in our own power. Let us create a situation where everybody will be able to help if the situation arises and will have confidence in their own ability.

Sincerely yours,



MVW A

December 22, 1941

Mr. Mark V. Weatherford
Attorney at Law
Albany, Oregon

My dear Mr. Weatherford:

I have read with deep interest your letter of December 17 and, having heard the same report regarding the presence of a Japanese fleet, I can fully understand your reactions to the rumor which you heard at Toledo.

In setting up our state defense organization I had deferred organizing a state guard along the old National Guard lines for the reason that I felt a much wider participation of citizens was necessary in the case of modern wars. Accordingly, I relied principally on our civilian defense organization, which reached into every county and every community. Its purpose was partly protective, partly cooperative with the Army, and partly for the negative service of supplying information and handling mop-up following attack.

This was in line with the division of responsibility as given us by federal authorities. The government assumed responsibility for all military and naval action, including the defense of our land from invasion, and we were charged with preservation of internal order and the civilian activities such as I have indicated.

Since our invasion scare of week before last I have realized, however, the gap which you point out. I further realize the natural instinct of American people, which grows out of the pioneer tradition of Indian fighting, to defend their own homes, an instinct which certainly has been seen also in England and in Russia.

Before moving to create any such organization as you suggest—and it would have to be on some organized basis, otherwise these armed elements might get us into a lot of trouble—I will need to consult with the military authorities. The control of the supplies of guns and ammunition, for instance, rests with the federal government. I intend to do this, however, because I do not want to have Oregon caught offguard.

Mr. Mark V. Weatherford
Page 2

December 22, 1941

I shall report to you later what I learn or decide.

With cordial regards and Christmas greetings to you and
Mrs. Weatherford, I am

Sincerely yours,

Governor

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Comments on letter of Mr. Mack B. Weatherford, Attorney at Law, Albany, Oregon, December 17, 1941.

I am personally acquainted with Mr. Mack Weatherford and I know him to be of very fine character and no one can have any doubt as to his patriotism. In summing up Mr. Weatherford's plan, it appears to me that he desires that we form such an organization as was used in the pioneer days in the State of Oregon when the enemy were the savages who were lurking behind every tree and they had no such problems as we have today of attack by parachute or air-borne troops. In the pioneer days, I am quite sure that the Indian fighters knew their tactics, but it occurs to me that if we had small groups of citizens or individual citizens armed but not organized, they might be more dangerous to themselves and the citizens of the country than they would be to the enemy.

It is my opinion that this letter was written when the situation was tense and Mr. Weatherford intended to be helpful. And in case it is deemed necessary to form a State Guard unit in the city of Albany, I am quite sure that Mr. Weatherford would be one of our strongest supporters.



Alvin C. Baker,
Brigadier General,
Commanding Oregon State Guard.