

## A Dangerous Abandonment. *9/11/47*

The Stars and Stripes have floated over Fort Huachuca, near the Arizona-Mexican border, continuously for seventy years—one of the oldest army posts in the United States. Now the War Department, for reasons of economy, has ordered this historic bastion abandoned. Apparently a post-war lethargy has settled over the southwest, to the point where it has raised only a feeble protest at the War Department's contemplated action. Yet everybody in the southwestern states of New Mexico, Arizona and California ought to be concerned, and ought to show that concern by attempting to bring about a reversal of the War Department order.

Here are a few of the reasons:

Fort Huachuca is the only permanent installation for ground troops anywhere along the border between Fort Bliss, Texas, and the Pacific Ocean, a distance of more than 1200 miles.

It dominates the earliest invasion route into the southwestern United States—the route used by Coronado in the year 1540, when with a band of armed adventurers he entered the present limits of Arizona, progressing down the broad San Pedro Valley almost within rifle shot of Fort Huachuca—seeking the fabled seven cities of Cibola.

Mexico today is a friendly, progressive nation, and Fort Huachuca isn't needed to guard the border against our neighbors to the south. But the invasion route into the United States from Mexico, by way of the Gulf of California, has tempted Asiatic powers for many decades.

When World War II broke at Pearl Harbor, Japan had more than 5,000 of its nationals planted along the Gulf of California. Many of these were high-ranking military and naval intelligence officers and secret agents. It is no secret that during the dark days immediately following Pearl Harbor, American military authorities feared a possible invasion of the United States along Coronado's ancient trail, or up one of the several parallel valleys from the southwest.

This area is the "soft under-belly" of the nation's defenses, to paraphrase Winston Churchill.

Why leave it defenseless?

This is an age of swift movement by air-borne troops. Yet every sensible military man should realize that the enemy, if he seizes the initiative at the outbreak of a war, as Japan did, possesses an advantage in the disposition of air-borne troops.

The role of ground bastions is a defensive holding role. Bataan and Corregidor, holding out for weeks at a terrific sacrifice by their defenders, purchased for the United States invaluable time. In any invasion of our country—and the possibility of invasion cannot be thrust aside in view of present tensions—a few strongholds such as Fort Huachuca could be of tremendous help nationally.

It just doesn't make sense to destroy the only permanent ground-force installation along more than 1200 miles of border and leave this section defenseless, where an enemy nation might drive a wedge between our West Coast and the Central plains, and cut our overland communications.