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Confrontation at Anacostia Flats: The Bonus Army of 1932

Kendall D. Gott

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**Confrontation at Anacostia Flats:
The Bonus Army of 1932**

by

Kendall D. Gott

**The Institute of Land Warfare
ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY**

AN AUSA INSTITUTE OF LAND WARFARE PAPER

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Confrontation at Anacostia Flats: The Bonus Army of 1932 by Kendall D. Gott

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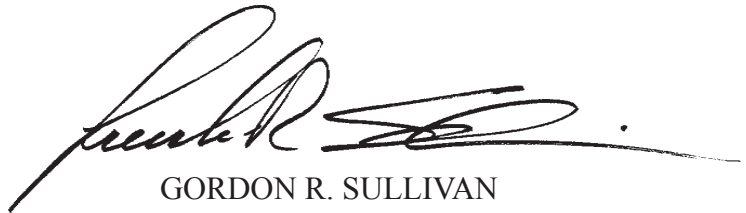
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Foreword

During the Great Depression thousands of hungry and disgruntled veterans of the First World War marched on Washington, D.C., demanding that Congress pay early the bonus for their military service that was scheduled for disbursement in 1945. Spontaneously banding together, unemployed Oregon cannery workers were joined by more than 20,000 men from across the nation to form the Bonus Expeditionary Force. The largest rally up to that time in the nation's capital, it lasted more than ten weeks. The men refused to disperse, and the frustrated Hoover administration finally cleared the capital of the protesters with federal troops.

Although the Bonus March occurred more than 70 years ago, the story yields relevant points for today's leaders. The climactic use of federal troops to break up the assembled mob of veterans represented a failure of the political and military establishment to understand the nature of the gathering, and the public relations fiasco that followed stained the reputation of the U.S. Army and cost the President reelection.

At the time of this writing American forces are faced with rebuilding nations, where riots and demonstrations may certainly occur. Employment of these forces in homeland security operations, in civil disturbances or in response to natural or man-made calamities is a probability. American leaders will face these missions in the foreseeable future, and learning lessons from the Bonus March may well prevent another disaster.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gordon R. Sullivan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

GORDON R. SULLIVAN
General, United States Army Retired
President

April 2007

Confrontation at Anacostia Flats: The Bonus Army of 1932

The Veterans and the Bonus

On 28 July 1932, the nation's capital saw the forced expulsion of the self-styled Bonus Expeditionary Force or Bonus Army, made up of World War I veterans, by the tanks, cavalry and infantry of the regular U.S. Army. Personally led by the Army Chief of Staff, General Douglas MacArthur, and assisted by notable officers such as Dwight D. Eisenhower and George S. Patton, Jr., the Soldiers quickly accomplished their task, but the ramifications of the operations were significant far beyond the capitol grounds. This forced removal of the veterans damaged the reputation of the U.S. Army with the American population and led to the end of a presidential administration. The story of the Bonus March began 13 years earlier when World War I ended in Europe.

At the end of World War I, the U.S. troops returned home to a heroes' welcome. Times were good as the economy shifted back to a peacetime production schedule. This era, known as the "Roaring Twenties," featured a series of fiscally conservative presidents presiding over a government that was traditionally minimalist when it came to social welfare programs, trusting the national economy and various charitable organizations to provide for the populace. Perhaps difficult to fathom to those born after the advent of the New Deal and Great Society programs later in the century, a laissez-faire government was the norm in the United States until that time, and individuals were expected to work hard to provide for themselves.

In the euphoria of victory in the war, Congress passed the Adjusted Compensation Act of 1924 for the veterans, authorizing a bonus of \$450 dollars per person to be paid in 1945. Veterans could borrow against it prior to that date but were required to make payments with interest. This bill was sufficient at the time, but the stock market crash in 1929 and the Great Depression caused a catastrophic economic upheaval that would linger until World War II, increasing the need for those funds.

Hard economic times always incur a certain amount of social dislocation and consequently create opportunities for politically extreme movements. The Great Depression was a global phenomenon that allowed radical movements of the political left and right to make headway in Europe in the 1930s. Because the United States was one of the major industrial powers and one of the hardest hit by the Great Depression, radical groups like these could have posed a serious challenge to public order. There were many instances of violent labor unrest and strikes that prompted temporary mobilizations of state National Guard and even regular Army troops on occasion.

Veterans, like so many others, found themselves broke, destitute and without work. As the Depression grew worse, many veterans saw that the only source of collateral

left to them was the promised bonus. Desperate for any possible relief, many called for essentially changing the rules to receive an immediate cash bonus certificate at the same rate as expected in 1945. This was unacceptable to President Hoover, fiscal conservatives of both parties and most of those in the progressive movement. They saw such a payment as a raid on the treasury just when many called for a balanced federal budget to stem the economy's slide into depression.¹

Contrary to the veterans' perception, Congress had not forgotten them. Representative Wright Patman (D-TX), a colorful populist from Texas, had introduced a bill in the House of Representatives in May 1929 that provided an immediate bonus payment financed by the sale of 15-year bonds, but it never got out of committee; after substantial Democratic gains were made in the 1930 election cycle, 21 bonus bills were introduced. Faced with pressure from the press and organizations such as the American Legion, the Republican leadership felt compelled to act to forestall the Democrats from reaping any political capital out of the situation prior to their assumption of majority status in the House. A number of proposals were bantered about in committee, and a compromise bill—the Hawley Act, easing the ability for veterans to make loans against their bonuses—passed both houses and was sent to the President for signature in February 1931, taking the political pressure off of Congress for the moment.

Not surprisingly, President Hoover vetoed the bill, citing that there were already several veterans programs in place and rejecting the argument that the influx of cash into the economy via the veterans would act as a stimulus. But, more important, Hoover's decision was made on philosophical grounds, not economic, thus making him unyielding. He genuinely feared that dispensing federal funds to individuals, even in the form of loans, was a very bad precedent that could mushroom beyond the ability of the government to cover. However, his arguments were not persuasive to Congress, and more than enough votes were gathered to override his veto. The effect of this bill was actually minimal for the veterans as few took advantage of the loan program, but the most notable effect was that President Hoover was increasingly blamed for doing little to end the Depression and his political strength began to erode.²

In the months following the passage of the Hawley Act the bonus issue did not go away, by and large due to the tireless efforts of Representative Patman. Quite famous in his day, Patman became the center of the bonus issue in the House of Representatives and sought to gather enough support for a second bill calling for the immediate cash payment of the veterans' bonus. This bill also failed to make it out of committee but kept the issue alive in the newspapers and in the minds of many veterans. Bonus payments were even a major subject in Hoover's 1931 State of the Union address, in which he repeated his opposition. The next general election was in 1932 and, with the ongoing Depression and both political parties vying for control of the government, the bonus was a truly galvanizing issue.³

Raising the Bonus Army

The forming of the Bonus Army is surrounded by folklore, embellished often by its participants. In many parts of the country the local and state relief agencies could not

keep up with the increasing demands placed upon them by the Depression. The need for public and private funds to help the unemployed was desperate, as unemployment soared to more than 20 percent. A group of unemployed veterans in Portland, Oregon, spontaneously conceived the notion of marching on Washington to plead their case directly to Congress and the administration. In the 29 April 1932 edition of the *Portland Oregon*, a small article buried in the back pages announced a meeting to plan a march on Washington in early May. A handful of self-proclaimed leaders organized the event, although few of these men would actually make the journey themselves. Chester (Charles) A. Hazen became the commander in chief and Walter W. Waters was appointed “assistant field marshal,” and they recruited actively. On 12 May nearly three hundred men boarded train boxcars and began their travels to the east coast. Hazen would soon fall from favor amidst accusations of embezzlement of funds, leaving Waters to command the group.⁴

Waters was a shadowy figure, but he had no criminal record and no apparent connections with subversive groups. He was born in 1898 and joined the Idaho National Guard in 1916. He served in the 146th Field Artillery as a medic during the Great War, spending almost 18 months in France, and was promoted to sergeant. After the war he drifted from job to job, eventually settling in Portland. He hired on at the local cannery, where he later claimed he rose to the position of assistant cannery superintendent, but the truth of this claim is doubtful as Waters generally embellished his past, including his combat record. However, in spite of being a failure at most of what he set out to do, Waters did possess enough charisma to organize the Bonus Expeditionary Force (BEF) and make them the focus of a national movement. The rank and file did not universally love him, however. He would disappear on occasion when ill, when the complaints from the men became too vocal or when a confrontation with the law appeared imminent.⁵

The journey of the Portland bonus men began peacefully and unhindered as few law enforcement or railroad officials placed any barriers in their path. The western railroads of the time were quite habituated to providing free rides to various groups of unemployed men. The veterans from Portland also had an adept advance man by the name of A. F. Taylor, a former locomotive engineer who organized support from the various American Legion posts and civic groups along the way. Whenever the train stopped the local towns were ready to welcome the bonus marchers with food. Within a week, by 21 May, the men had covered more than two thousand miles and reached St. Louis.

Word spread of the Portland men’s journey and their ultimate objective, as newspapers picked up the story. In East St. Louis, Illinois, the railroad made some half-hearted but highly publicized efforts to stop the veterans from continuing on to Washington. At one point Waters believed that a mass arrest was imminent and he disappeared, but his fears were unfounded. In the end all of these efforts failed, signaling to veterans across the country that there was little to stop them from making their own march. For example, the Portland veterans bypassed the railroad authorities in Missouri by walking across a bridge over the Mississippi River into the freight yards of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad in Illinois. Executives from this railroad appealed to the governor of Illinois for help, but

given that this was an election year, the governor did not press law enforcement officials or the National Guard to respond. Instead, on 24 May the veterans were rounded up and bussed to the Indiana state line, where Waters rejoined them. Not wanting more than 300 unemployed veterans to care for, Indiana followed the Illinois example, as did Ohio, Pennsylvania and Maryland. The nation's railways were soon transporting hundreds of unemployed veterans to Washington, often with the help of local law enforcement agencies; it was far easier to pass the problem on to Washington than to deal with the veterans at the local level. By 29 May the Portland veterans had completed their journey and had become national celebrities in the process.⁶

Although easy to dismiss in their day as desperate radicals or at least unrealistic in their expectations, the vast majority of these men, though unemployed, were not shiftless bums. Most of the bonus marchers seemed to have worked at relatively good middle-class jobs until the Great Depression hit. They were by and large patriotic and steadfastly loyal, so much so that they could be gullible and susceptible to manipulation. For instance, they fully believed in their leaders and their plans in spite of the mishandling, and even outright theft, of monetary contributions to the cause. They were simply following a long tradition of dramatic protest, as the nation had seen with the Suffrage Movement in 1913, the shocking march of the Ku Klux Klan in 1925 and the National Hunger March in December 1931. Those protest movements were generally characterized as peaceful and quickly dispersed once their point was made, but this march was different. This was to be no ordinary brief protest but a prolonged demonstration. In a number of speeches by Waters and others, the word was spread that the veterans vowed to stay in Washington until the bonus was paid, even if it took until 1945.⁷

Many veterans from across the nation were drawn to the cause by news stories favorable to the bonus issue and support from other Americans. Radio personalities such as Father Charles Coughlin (The Radio Priest) and politicians like Senator Huey Long of Louisiana found willing ears. Many of the citizenry along the way lived under the pressure of the same Depression conditions and sympathetically donated food and money to the veterans, encouraging them onward.

The Bonus Army Arrives in Washington

The arrival of the Bonus Expeditionary Force in Washington, D.C., did not come as a surprise to officials. They, too, had followed the progress of the veterans in the newspapers. However, no one in authority took any initiative or responsibility for what was shaping up to be a mass demonstration. Instead, it was left to the chief of the District of Columbia police to arrange for their reception and accommodation, in whatever manner he saw fit. The chief was Pelham D. Glassford, a retired brigadier general who had been on the job for just over seven months. Glassford had no law enforcement experience; the rank and file of the police force had resented his appointment, and many in Congress initially distrusted him. However, no matter how bad his résumé appeared on paper, Glassford had quickly made many friends and supporters within the Washington elite. As the bonus

men descended on Washington the politicians and bureaucrats felt confident in leaving the issue of keeping law and order to Glassford.⁸

In his short stint as chief of police, Glassford already had some experience dealing with demonstrations. In December 1931, the National Hunger March was ostensibly led by Herbert Benjamin of the Unemployed Councils, but was in actuality a communist-sponsored demonstration. Most of the participants were party members and the event drew little public interest, numbering only 1,600 marchers and creating no spectacular incidents with which to incite a revolution. A primary reason why no incidents occurred was that Glassford gave the communists no provocation on which to create one. Instead he treated them as any other legal demonstration, although they were watched closely. Glassford understood that brutal repression would play into the communists' scheme and was actually self-defeating. His tactic was to let the marchers have their say, knowing they would eventually disperse and go home.

By 26 May Glassford was preparing for the arrival of the BEF. He issued statements to the press that no food was available and asked for donations; he used his connections within the Army to obtain the use of cots, tents, mobile kitchens and other equipment from various posts in the capital region; he contacted civic relief organizations and told them to prepare for the worst; and he launched a propaganda campaign to dissuade more veterans from joining the march. Glassford hoped that taking care of the basic needs of the veterans would preclude their begging or looting. When it was pointed out that such generous accommodations would attract even more unemployed veterans, Glassford replied, "It would be far better to have 10,000 orderly veterans under control than 5,000 hungry, desperate men breaking into stores and committing other depredations." The chief even visited members of Congress and urged them to pass the Patman Bonus Bill, then being bantered about in committee. He hoped that passing such a measure would put a damper on the "invasion." Glassford also received help from an unexpected quarter; although opposed to the payment of any bonus before 1945, President Hoover quietly ordered that the men of the Bonus Army be provided tents, cots, food and medical treatment.⁹

Communist organizations had been active in their attempts at recruiting veterans, and their involvement had drastic repercussions. The Workers' Ex-Servicemen's League (WESL), often called the "weasels," had been formed in 1930 as a defensive group similar to the "brown shirts" of Germany, but it failed to attain great numbers. The communists seized upon the bonus issue as a means to enlist veterans and to coattail on this much-discussed topic. Their literature on the subject was widely distributed, and the WESL decided to sponsor a bonus march on Washington on 8 June. Government officials increasingly suspected that those advocating the bonus payments were communists or at least communist-sympathizers. In actuality, of those thousands who descended on Washington in 1932 only some 45 men were actually Communist Party members and only about 150 were sympathizers. Yet the numbers are misleading; these 200 or so men were extremely vocal and inflated the perception of their strength by outrageously claiming

that they were leading the entire BEF movement. Glassford did his best to minimize the communist presence, and his most effective tactic was the physical separation of the communists from the bulk of veterans. Instead of billeting them with the veterans on the Anacostia Flats, he housed the “Reds” a separate area downtown.¹⁰ The rank and file most definitely wanted nothing to do with a people’s revolution along Bolshevik lines and only wanted the bonus. One veteran summed up the thoughts of many with, “If we find any red agitators we’ll take care of them ourselves. . . . We came here under the same flag for which we fought.”¹¹

With or without communist agitation, the Bonus Army became a mass movement due to the national publicity it received, and the resulting throng of veterans descended on Washington. Contemporary estimates vary widely from as few as 5,000 marchers to as wildly inflated as 80,000. The best estimate seems to have come from Glassford, who guessed there were about 25,000 veterans at the height of the movement, but that figure is misleading as some veterans arrived early and departed soon after while others arrived later. The net effect was a steady stream of humanity almost impossible to count, coursing through Washington. Surprisingly, most of the veterans who assembled in the nation’s capital were not from the adjoining states but from the industrial states of the Midwest. The vast majority had been enlisted men who served overseas during the Great War, although there were almost 1,000 former noncommissioned officers and just under 50 commissioned officers within their ranks. Several hundred African-Americans were there as well. Considering the segregated era in which they lived, they were surprisingly integrated into the Bonus Army. One black man, Joe Gardner, was even elected commander of a Chicago contingent.¹²

The various contingents of the BEF arrived in Washington and found the city fairly well prepared to receive them. Many men took up residence in abandoned buildings and parks throughout the town, but the main encampment was formed on Anacostia Flats, just across the river of the same name. Glassford arranged donations from food wholesalers and coordinated with various agencies and charities to feed the throng twice a day. A Marine Reserve unit also set up a dispensary staffed by volunteer physicians. For shelter, the men used whatever material was at hand to build rows of shanties and shacks that increased in number and length as more men arrived. The entire scene was not a strange one for the contemporary American landscape; similar ghettos, cynically called “Hooverilles” in dubious honor to the President, could be found sheltering the migrant unemployed and poor in and around any large city in the United States. At its peak, almost 24,000 people lived in Anacostia Flats, making it the largest Hooverville in the country. The site was well situated, however, as the ramshackle town was out of the direct view of the public and the single drawbridge from the city to the flats provided a bottleneck that could be easily controlled by police.¹³

The Bonus Army was officially organized on Thursday, 26 May 1932, at Judiciary Square in downtown Washington. About 500 veterans had arrived before the men from Portland and organized themselves along military lines, each contingent electing its officers

and reporting up a hierarchy that ultimately reached to Walter W. Waters. However, the man who truly emerged from this meeting in charge of the operation was none other than Chief Glassford. He pulled off this remarkable coup by making two speeches that were friendly yet firm. He was clear in his conviction that law and order would be maintained. Appealing to their sense of patriotism as a fellow veteran, Glassford had the immediate affection of the men. This, of course, did not sit well with “Commander” Waters, who arrived a few days later. Throughout the following weeks the two men were on friendly but terse terms, and neither hesitated to advance his own agenda. Glassford passed command to Waters, but each man still needed the other, so power was not absolute. Glassford was not required to run the day-to-day operation and could focus on the issues of law enforcement and keeping the peace, while Waters’ appointment propelled him to notoriety as the leader of a national movement. However, as long as Waters cooperated with Glassford, he would not be arrested.¹⁴

One thing Waters and Glassford did agree on was the identification and elimination of all radical elements from the growing Bonus Army. To this end, each veteran was required to prove that he had a right to be there by presenting his discharge papers, bonus certificates or other official documents. If a man arrived without such paperwork, he was sent to the Veterans’ Administration to get verified copies. Each veteran who passed this scrutiny was sworn into the BEF and given a membership card, which he had to show at every meal. Glassford also required the various encampments of the Bonus Army to submit morning reports to the police to keep him informed of how many veterans were in town. Waters compiled a list of the veterans’ names and addresses to monitor the assemblage, which had grown to more than 3,000 by 28 May.

The veterans were put to work by the police at various housekeeping and sanitary chores under the supervision of the police, and later their own commanders. The jobs not only helped their general condition but also kept them busy, a wise precaution in light of a time-tested observation that idle Soldiers get into trouble. Glassford feared the worst as the number of incoming veterans continued to rise while there was no apparent action by Congress to address the bonus issue. The living conditions in the squalid camps were deplorable, and there was a potential health risk to the general population. Also, the food supply was precarious, and hunger could eventually touch off a riot. To confront the possibility that the marchers would turn violent, Glassford drew up contingency plans including the seizing of the 11th Street Bridge into Anacostia Flats and the use of tear gas. He also welcomed the forming of a “military police” force formed from the ranks of the BEF. This force, numbering about 300 men, enforced discipline in the camps. Consequently, this military discipline was a key factor in preventing the uprising that Glassford feared.¹⁵

The Hoover administration was not at all pleased to see a growing number of veterans descend upon the capital and was still not convinced that they were not of a communist bent, but the federal government did little to stop the inflow of veterans, and the main efforts were directed merely at urging the railroads and state governors to deny them transport. Furthermore, the whole affair began to take on the aura of a semi-permanent

situation as the Bonus Army became larger, more organized and efficient. A nervous government wanted to know how deep the radical sentiments were, and J. Edgar Hoover volunteered the FBI to investigate. The War Department also put U.S. Army corps headquarters across the nation to work identifying and reporting on all marchers who had any suspected or known communist ties. The resulting flood of reports reflected the paranoia of the day and did not relieve the fears of a communist revolution.¹⁶

Glassford and the District commissioners did their best to persuade the veterans in the city to go home by offering train tickets, money and food, and even had the Army band play sentimental songs at the camps to make the men homesick. Instead, as the veterans became settled, a carnival-like atmosphere arose. A large wooden stage was erected, and the podium was always in use. Tombstones were erected in a “cemetery” with “Hoover” and other prominent politicians’ names on them. A BEF newspaper was printed and sold to raise money and morale. Anacostia Flats became a tourist stop, and the various speeches and assemblies never failed to draw a crowd of curious spectators. Every day a group of veterans marched to the Capitol to demonstrate in support of the Patman Bill and bonus legislation.

The communists continued to agitate and called for a mass rally on 8 June. To counter such a publicity windfall, Glassford asked Waters to parade his veterans on 7 June. The gaunt and ragged men numbered more than 5,000 and seemed to win the sympathy of the 100,000 spectators and subsequently the rest of the country. Although it comprised only a fraction of the BEF men in the capital, the parade was larger than anything the communists could put together. The Reds quietly abandoned their plans for a parade of their own.¹⁷

The Bonus Marchers Become Militant

Congressional temper by mid-1932 was short, and most congressmen were impatiently looking forward to the end of a frustrating session. Many of them, including the bonus supporters, saw the BEF as an embarrassment and a futile gesture. They even refused to meet with constituents from their home states. Even Wright Patman, the bonus champion from Texas, did not encourage the veterans to converge on Washington, and just about everyone looked for a way to entice them to go home peaceably. Many veterans brought their wives and children with them, against all advice. By the end of June there was an estimated 220 dependents at Anacostia Flats.¹⁸

Congress did consider a few measures on behalf of the bonus marchers during that session. At Glassford’s suggestion a special appropriations bill was introduced to provide \$75,000 for emergency relief to the bonus marchers, but it never made it out of committee. In contrast, the Patman Bill, which had languished for months, was resurrected and underwent a series of debates in the House chambers during the first weeks of June. This bill proposed immediate payment of the veterans’ cash bonuses. There was stiff resistance from Republicans loyal to President Hoover, as the estimated cost of the bill was more than \$2 billion and the President was adamant about maintaining a balanced budget. Just

about everyone knew that any bonus bill was unlikely to pass the fiscally conservative Senate, and President Hoover was already on record with his promise to veto the Patman Bill. The majority of congressmen frankly didn't want to vote at all on this bill, but on 15 June it narrowly passed the House in a bipartisan effort. This was to be the only hurdle it would clear. Citing that fully one quarter of the current federal budget was already obligated to veterans' benefits, the Senate, unwilling to create a budget deficit, decisively rejected the Patman Bill two days later.

After the Patman Bill was defeated most everyone in Washington expected the marchers to disperse. Many of the veterans did choose to leave town, taking advantage of President Hoover's offer of free train tickets. However, some 10,000 veterans remained, with no intention of leaving. Although the cooperative Walter Waters remained as commander of the Bonus Army, retired Marine General Smedley Butler became an immensely popular and influential figure among the veterans. Butler had participated in the marches and was a vocal opponent of the Hoover administration. His inflammatory speeches, however, raised the level of hostility within the ranks of the Bonus Army, strengthening their resolve, and brought on the ire of the Hoover administration.¹⁹

As the weather and the marchers' rhetoric grew hotter, concern grew that the Bonus Army marchers could cause widespread civil disorder and violence. The new activism was stimulated with the arrival of a militant group from Los Angeles, California, led by Royal Robertson who refused to follow the established BEF leadership and decided on his own to picket the Capitol building and to sleep on its grounds. These actions not only widened the rifts in the Bonus Army hierarchy, but also overwhelmed the unprepared Capitol Police, a separate entity from Glassford's metropolitan police force. Throughout the remainder of June and into the first week of July the number of scuffles with the police increased, and unruly veterans even stoned some senators' cars. Tired of the veterans sleeping on the Capitol grounds, the Speaker of the House instructed Glassford to enforce the regulations prohibiting people from loitering there. Glassford informed Robertson of the ordinances and his duty to enforce them. Finding a loophole that there were no prohibitions about walking on the grounds, on 12 July about 360 veterans slowly shuffled up and down Pennsylvania Avenue in a three-day protest, called by local newspapers the "Death March." To make sure the veterans did not sleep on the grass, the sprinkler system was kept running. The marchers proved to be orderly, and the pitiful sight of ragged men walking the streets only won the sympathy of many more across the nation. The numerous spectators clearly sided with the veterans. On the last day of the march, a jittery Vice President Charles Curtis called out 60 Marines, who arrived with rifles and fixed bayonets. Surprisingly, the Marines were cheered by the veterans and were recalled shortly after. There were reports that 35 Marines refused to come out against the marchers. When the military was called out a few weeks later, the Marines were excluded.²⁰

As the mood of the veterans became increasingly hostile, President Hoover became more convinced that the Bonus Army marchers were a real threat to public order and

even his own personal safety. He saw them as a mixture of “hoodlums, ex-convicts and communists,” with only a sprinkling of veterans as mere leavening. Communist pamphlets and propaganda found around the veterans’ camps and posted about the city did nothing to alleviate this opinion, nor did the increasing number of veterans picketing around the White House. Contrary to tradition, President Hoover felt so threatened that he did not attend the closing ceremonies of the congressional session on 16 July. Many in Congress also felt threatened, and they left the Capitol building through underground tunnels to avoid facing the demonstrators waiting outside.²¹

On 16 July about 3,000 demonstrators gathered on the Capitol steps to picket the last day of the congressional session. This group was under Walter Waters’ control and was generally peaceful, but on this day Waters abandoned his passive policy. With four followers he broke through the police barrier and made a dash for the chamber doors. The rest of the masses surged forward to follow. The police quickly subdued and arrested the five-man spearhead. The throng stopped, sat down in place and chanted for Waters’ release. Glassford had already taken the precaution of raising the bridge over the Anacostia, thus preventing reinforcements from pouring out of the camps, but the mass of veterans greatly outnumbered the policemen on hand. Fearing a riot he could not contain, Glassford let Waters go with only an admonition. The veterans were also allowed to occupy the steps of the Capitol as long as the aisles on either side were kept clear and passers-by were not molested. In retrospect, Glassford was very lucky that his coolness prevailed, and that most of the radical elements, including all of the WESL communists, were picketing the White House and were not on site to agitate the crowd further.²²

The adjournment of Congress on 16 July should have been the final blow to the Bonus Army, at least for 1932. With the House and Senate members gone there was no chance of any legislation passing, and the leadership of the Bonus Army was splintered; the steam seemed to have gone out of the movement. On Monday, 18 July, more than 1,000 veterans showed up at the doors of the Veterans’ Administration to get their train tickets home. Within a week the dispersing Bonus Army was about one-half of its peak strength, but this still left many thousands in Washington, thousands who were apparently determined to stay until they got their bonus, even if it took until 1945. Many of these veterans had no homes to return to; the towns and cities they left offered no work, no food and no hope. For many veterans the huts and shanties at Anacostia Flats were far better than what they had left behind. This Hooverville offered comradeship, a common goal and something to eat. More ominous to the government were the efforts to organize the bonus movement into either a third party or an organization called the “Khaki Shirts,” modeled after fascist parties in Europe of the time. Of course, the ever-present communists continued to espouse revolution.

With Congress gone home, the administration began to put increased pressure on the veterans to leave, particularly after 25 July, the deadline Congress had previously set for the payment of railroad fares home. Glassford passed word from the District commissioners’ office to Waters that the veterans were required to vacate all camps

within the downtown area and that all federal property such as tents, blankets and field kitchens had to be returned by 1 August. These orders in effect set a specific deadline for the total disbanding of the Bonus Army and set the stage for a confrontation. Waters did not encourage the veterans to return home, but the reality of the end of the congressional session could not be denied. There was also a critical shortage of food, and donations were not keeping pace with demand. Waters published a bulletin for the men that proclaimed that they would not be condemned if they returned home and called upon them to take up the fight there and to remobilize at some future date.²³

Veterans by and large complied with the order to vacate the abandoned buildings and various camps in Washington and either went home or moved to the main encampment in Anacostia Flats. However, a band of veterans calling themselves the 6th Regiment of the BEF continued to occupy a group of buildings on lower Pennsylvania Avenue belonging to the Treasury Department, combatively refusing to vacate the premises. Waters and officials from the Treasury Department were successful in obtaining a temporary stay in the orders for eviction. However, there was a valid contract for the demolition of these buildings, and the workmen could not proceed as long as the veterans occupied them. On 27 July the matter was turned over to the Attorney General and the U.S. Marshal's Office, who made tentative plans to use force to evict the veterans starting the following day. Waters was notified of the plan, which implied that the eviction was limited to only those affected structures and not the outlying camps. The Judge Advocate General was also informed of the situation and began to prepare information papers and memorandums outlining instructions and procedures should federal troops be called out to assist civil authorities.²⁴

On the fateful morning of 28 July, Waters arrived at the buildings slated for eviction and told their occupants the news. He was greeted by jeers and disapproval and, not wishing to jeopardize his standing as the BEF commander, quickly changed his tune. Instead of urging an evacuation he made a militant speech urging his men to stay and offer passive resistance. Some 70 men took up positions in the buildings and waited for the police; they did not have to wait long. In retrospect, Waters had lost all control of the Bonus Army by this point. He was following, not leading. He learned of acts of defiance after the fact or stumbled into them while in progress, as he did in this incident. Overall, the men were ignoring their passive leaders. Attempting to regain their loyalty, Waters became a militant himself and no longer fully cooperated with Chief Glassford.

By 9:30 a.m. Glassford had assembled a 100-man detail and briefed each officer on a planned operation. Glassford would lead the 12-man eviction team into the building himself; the rest were to rope off the area to keep other bonus marchers from reinforcing the occupants and to keep curious onlookers out. It was a workable plan, but Glassford failed to order the raising of the drawbridge over the Anacostia River; this oversight would prove a costly error. However, Waters was not in the vicinity, having gone into the downtown area on some other business, and his limited influence on the veterans was thus absent. Even so, the clearing of the first building—an old armory—went smoothly,

and the veterans left peaceably after assessing the show of force. By noon the first building was vacated and Glassford planned to finish clearing the others after a break for lunch.²⁵

News of the eviction spread quickly, and the pause in operations provided time for the veterans to react. Shortly after noon a large and agitated crowd, numbering in the thousands and growing, had crossed the Anacostia Bridge and gathered at the police rope line. A group of about 35 agitators crossed the park on the corner of 3rd Street and Maine Avenue and made its way through the throng up to the rope line. The men were well known by the veterans and police as members of the WESL. The new arrivals on the scene immediately began to incite the crowd and demanded passage through the line. Upon receiving Glassford's refusal, this band picked up some of the numerous rocks and bricks that were lying about and hurled them at the police officers. The police showed remarkable restraint during this incident as no one was shot. Instead, the agitators were subdued and arrested on the spot. Glassford himself was hit in the chest with a brick, and a disgruntled veteran tore the badge from his uniform. Although the violence had ceased for the moment, the buildings were still occupied and the defiant veterans showed no signs of evacuating.²⁶

Glassford and his men were now badly outnumbered, but held their positions. During the uneasy lull that occurred as the brick hurlers were taken away, the beleaguered chief met with District commissioners Luther H. Reichelderfer and Herbert B. Crosby. Although later testimony conflicted, the commissioners bore witness that Glassford asked for federal troops to control the situation. Glassford insisted that he told them the police could hold the small area that had been cleared, but if further removal of squatters was insisted upon, federal troops were needed. In any case the two District commissioners went to the scene of confrontation to see the situation for themselves. They soon returned to their offices and formally placed a request to the President for federal troops. The time was approximately 1:45 p.m., and events of the day would move with incredible speed.

Shortly after the departure of the District commissioners, another violent incident erupted. As the veterans loitered near the buildings at 3rd Street and Missouri Avenue, a fight broke out between two of the men. Police officers moved in to stop the fight and in the scuffle an unknown gunman fired a shot. Officer George Shinault was swarmed by a number of bonus men, one of whom began to beat him with a club while others threw bricks. Shinault was able to break himself free, draw his revolver and mortally wound marcher William Hushka. A man named Eric Carlson was also fatally wounded in the brawl, and three policemen were badly injured. The ropes strung earlier by the police and a line of officers kept a throng of bonus marchers from joining in the melee, but they jeered and cursed the police and became increasingly belligerent. Glassford bravely stepped in among the throng and called for his officers to holster their weapons. He asked the veterans to stop fighting and disperse, narrowly averting a full-scale riot, but the situation was about to move out of Glassford's hands; the Army was already assembling with the objective of retaking the streets from the Bonus Army. Learning of this development first from a reporter, then from the Assistant Attorney General, Glassford quickly left the scene to meet with the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, General Douglas MacArthur.²⁷

General MacArthur and the Bonus Army

General MacArthur had followed the progress of the bonus movement for several weeks. He was convinced that it was a communist-led attempt to overthrow the government and that such an insurrection could spread into the enlisted ranks of the armed forces. He had refused requests by Glassford for assistance in obtaining medical aid and camp equipment for the bonus marchers and maintained a very unfriendly public posture. That the bonus marchers had received help from the military at all was due only to back channels such as retired officers, the Veterans' Administration and the American Legion, all with the quiet but firm approval of President Hoover. MacArthur conferred at various times with Glassford, but he also talked with Walter Waters on two occasions. The men would later give differing accounts, but apparently Waters assured MacArthur that his men would withdraw without violence should the day come that the Army was called out. Waters claimed that MacArthur agreed to allow the veterans to conduct an orderly retreat.²⁸

By June MacArthur was concerned enough to dust off a secret "White Plan," originally drawn up as a defense of the capital but modified for the situation at hand. The most visible sign that the Army was preparing for an active role was that MacArthur ordered a T-4 armored car and a T-6 truck-mounted 75mm cannon from nearby Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, to move into the District of Columbia. He tried to keep this development secret, but a T-4 right behind the White House made a public display that was impossible to deny. The infantry and cavalry at nearby Fort Myer, Virginia, were placed on heightened alert, as was the Marine base at Quantico, Virginia. The Soldiers and Marines were given training in the use of tear gas and crowd dispersal. Rifles were even issued to the mechanics and students at the Washington Naval Air Station. By late July, the military was prepared for the worst.²⁹

The brick-throwing incident on 28 July exhausted the very thin patience of President Hoover. On the advice of the Secretary of War, supported by the Secretary of the Treasury, Hoover ordered the use of federal troops to stem the violence in the city. Hoover neglected to issue a proclamation announcing their use as technically required, which seemed odd because such a proclamation, as well as three long memorandums that outlined the legal situation and suggested procedures, had been written weeks before by the Army Staff Judge Advocate. In short, the legal advice called for a presidential proclamation, removal of those willing veterans to their home states and the arrest and conveyance under guard of all those who refused to go. This cautious but firm guidance would meet the objective of clearing the capital of bonus marchers, willing to go or not. In addition, four key elements of the legal advice and subsequent orders were that the Army was to cooperate closely with the police, surround the areas occupied by the veterans, take prisoners and hand them over to civil authorities, and clear only occupied buildings. The troops were not to cross the Anacostia River and clear the camps beyond. By the day President Hoover ordered the Army out into the streets, MacArthur had had his men on alert for some time; within the hour the Soldiers were on the move, but the executive guidance was left behind.³⁰ Interestingly, Waters was informed of the operation by the office of the Secretary of War. He sent his wife to Baltimore but did not tell the veterans what was to transpire.³¹

Elements of the 16th Brigade were alerted as early as 2 p.m. and assembled on the Ellipse just west of the White House by 4:30 p.m. The force consisted of one battalion from the 12th Infantry Regiment from Fort Washington under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Louis A. Kunzig and two squadrons of the 3d Cavalry Regiment under the command of Major Alexander D. Surles from Fort Myer. Major George S. Patton, Jr., later of World War II fame, was second in command of the cavalry. Six Renault FT-17 light tanks from the 1st Tank Regiment were also present. The combined force was initially under the command of Brigadier General Perry L. Miles, but MacArthur chose to be on the scene himself, along with his aide, Major Dwight D. Eisenhower. Glassford arrived and spoke briefly with MacArthur and was told the true nature of the operation. Instead of rounding up the veterans and removing them from a few buildings, the general envisioned a far more aggressive approach. With the aim of breaking the back of the Bonus Army, MacArthur intended to drive down Pennsylvania Avenue, clear the occupied buildings, then sweep through the camps. The operation was to be continuous and to last throughout the night, or as long as required.³²

Phase I of the Operation

Assembling some 600 Soldiers and six light tanks near the White House did not escape the attention of the veterans or residents of the city. The streets filled with throngs of the curious. Glassford was instructed by MacArthur to focus his attentions on clearing the streets of spectators. Police officers cleared a stretch of Pennsylvania Avenue in the immediate vicinity and became tougher and rougher as they moved further down the avenue. In response, the veterans became more militant, booing the police and Soldiers, and even inviting them to fight. Several thousand spectators also lined the streets, proving to be a unwieldy mass that was increasingly difficult to control. With the ranks of the veterans and angry civilians growing and becoming more hostile, MacArthur ordered his men forward. At 5 p.m. the infantrymen donned gas masks and fixed bayonets, the cavalrymen drew sabers and the whole force surged down Pennsylvania Avenue, throwing tear gas grenades ahead of them. The tanks and vehicles bypassed the bulk of the crowds by speeding down 3rd Street and heading for the bridge across the Anacostia.

The veterans were organized protesters but they were not up to presenting any coherent resistance to Soldiers. When small pockets of veterans stopped to hurl bricks, they were scattered by cavalrymen on horseback with the flat sides of their sabers. When they refused to vacate buildings, the infantrymen used tear gas liberally. Remarkably, neither side fired any shots during the entire operation. By 8 p.m. the downtown area had been cleared and the light tanks were in place to block the bridge across the Anacostia River leading to the shanty camps where most of the marchers lived. The capital was now cleared of marching veterans and their reentry was blocked. Although many saw this as a shocking use of force, the city was free of riotous bonus marchers and order restored. President Hoover's objective was achieved and the troops took a break for dinner.³³

Unfortunately for the veterans, Waters had fled during this phase of the operation; he was in hiding. There was therefore no focal point in the Bonus Army to negotiate with

either the police or the Army for the disbanding of the camps and the return home of all the veterans. Whether this really would have made a difference is debatable since General MacArthur was operating on his own initiative.³⁴

The operation had taken just over an hour. Although it went well from a purely military perspective, it was clearly becoming a public relations disaster. It had taken place during the height of rush hour; many sympathetic residents were present and joined in shouting insults at the Soldiers. The newspapers and newsreels would later feature images of ragged veterans being chased down by bayonets and sabers. The massive amount of tear gas lobbed by the Soldiers and police also billowed through the streets, and residents who lived blocks away felt the stinging effects. Fearful that the government was looking too oppressive and wanting to contain the public relations damage, Secretary of War Patrick J. Hurley sent duplicate orders to MacArthur containing President Hoover's direct order that he did not wish the Army to pursue the bonus marchers across Anacostia River into their main encampment.

Phase II of the Operation

When presented with the President's orders by his deputy, Major General George Van Horn Mosely, MacArthur flatly ignored them, saying that he was "too busy" and could not be bothered by "people coming down and pretending to bring orders." MacArthur's views on the roles of the commander in chief and the commander of the Army, made famous 20 years later through his relationship with President Truman, became apparent here. While he was a willing subordinate, once a military operation began MacArthur would entertain no interference from anyone, even the President. Had he been operating within the goals and objectives of the President's orders there would have been no problem. That he ignored both from the onset would have serious repercussions later. At 11 p.m. MacArthur set out to finish the job, having given the veterans one hour's notice to evacuate the Anacostia Flats camp. On his own initiative, and against specific orders, he ordered his men to cross the bridge over the Anacostia with the object of driving all of the bonus marchers out once and for all.³⁵

The troops were placed in the same order as before and were met with a shower of stones and debris as they approached the 11th Street bridge. With floodlights from a metropolitan fire truck and a coastal artillery searchlight illuminating the area, infantrymen and cavalrymen crossed the bridge and swarmed through the streets of the camps, rousing the inhabitants and driving them off. To add shock to the operation and to persuade the few pockets of resistance to leave, tear gas was again used in large quantities. During the chaos fires broke out among the ramshackle huts, adding smoke and the threat of being burned to death to the mayhem. Reports vary as to the source of these fires, the initial thought being that either the retreating veterans or debris falling into the numerous cooking fires throughout the camps had started the inferno. Amongst the veterans were about 600 women and children, and journalists did not fail to show some of these unfortunates being driven off into the night or the shantytown afire with the Capitol standing in the background.³⁶

During this last phase of the operation an estimated two or three thousand spectators continued to intermingle with the veterans, in many instances jeering the police and Soldiers. Many of these were residents driven out of their own homes by the clouds of tear gas drifting throughout the southern half of the city. Clearly respect for authority had broken down, with some Washington residents joining the veterans in throwing burning gas grenades back into the ranks of the Soldiers and knots of policemen.³⁷

With the camps at Anacostia Flats in ruins by 2 a.m., MacArthur called an incredible press conference where he praised President Hoover for taking the responsibility for giving the order to cross the river. He brazenly said, “Had the President not acted within 24 hours, he would have been faced with a very grave situation, which would have caused a real battle. . . . Had he waited another week, I believe the institutions of our government would have been threatened.” Secretary of War Hurley was present at this conference and praised MacArthur for his action in clearing the camp, even though he, too, was aware that Hoover had given direct orders to the contrary. When he learned what had transpired, President Hoover was appalled but found that he could not publicly contradict his Chief of Staff and Secretary of War. His official statements on the matter were not convincing to the American public. He maintained that a “considerable part” of the remaining bonus marchers were not veterans but communists or persons with criminal records attempting to overthrow the government. Some 26 communists were indeed arrested during the sweep through the camps, including James W. Ford, the party’s vice-presidential candidate, but all were quickly released for lack of charges against them.³⁸

The Army resumed its sweep of the city at daylight; by the end of 29 July the streets were clear enough for the Soldiers to return to their barracks. The ruined camps were turned over for policing and temporary occupancy by a battalion of the 44th Infantry Regiment, which had come down from Fort Meade, Maryland, as a reserve. Most of the veterans had scattered to the winds, but a few thousand made a temporary stand at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, some 200 miles away. Those not creative enough to escape and leave on their own accord were rounded up by the Soldiers and police, loaded onto trucks and taken out of the city. The last of them had left Washington by the end of 30 July.

The Aftermath

Many people across the nation began evaluating what had transpired. By and large the Army saw the operation as a success. General MacArthur’s official report, submitted two weeks after the event, praised the troops for their efficiency and discipline, pointing out that there were no fatalities. The 3d Cavalry issued a general order commemorating the dispersal of the bonus marchers, and Patton told yarns about lopping off their ears with his saber. Only later did some of the participants reflect upon what happened, change their stance and resent the whole affair. MacArthur himself later called the operation “the most distasteful duty of my whole career.” On the whole, however, the American public was disgusted and outraged from the onset and blamed President Hoover and MacArthur.³⁹

Three main controversies came to the surface almost immediately and received a great deal of public attention. First, many questioned what they saw as the excessive use of

tear gas during the operation. Chemical warfare was still fresh in the minds of those who had witnessed its use in the Great War, and even the nonlethal tear gas conjured up very negative images. Given that it was used in close proximity to civilians in the capital, and that there were women and children within the ranks of the Bonus Army, there should be no surprise that the use of chemical weapons outraged many. The easily believed, but false, reports that a baby (or two) died of asphyxiation added fuel to that fire. These and other incidents of outrage are still often believed today.⁴⁰

The second controversy was the destruction of the camps, which appeared to many as excessive and brutal. When MacArthur was asked during his midnight press conference who started the fires in the camps, he denied any Army responsibility and remarked that “they must have fired it themselves.” Subsequent remarks over the next several days by the War Department repeated that the Soldiers had not started the fires and that they were the work of the retreating bonus marchers. The credibility of these statements and that of the administration as a whole was destroyed as photographic and motion picture evidence showed the contrary. It was learned that upon seeing some shacks aflame, officers assumed that orders had been given to burn the camp. Soldiers quickly and efficiently went to the task. Also, a number of fires could be due to the use of tear gas grenades and candles, which were highly incendiary, especially in the cardboard and wood shanties of Anacostia Flats. To his credit, Secretary Hurley, technically in command at the time, assumed full responsibility for the burnings, but he did not release the report and stuck to the unbelievable line that no Soldiers were involved.⁴¹

The third and most controversial issue was the use of federal troops against unarmed American citizens, which was a direct violation of the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878. However, it was not the first time the military had been used against American citizens, and neither the public nor the bonus marchers should have been surprised. Starting perhaps with the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794, armed troops used against fellow citizens has occurred on occasion, and every bonus marcher knew the story of the use of Soldiers in the Pullman Strike of 1895 and other more recent incidents of strike suppression. What swung public opinion against the Soldiers in this incident was a press hostile to the Hoover administration distributing the pictures and newsreels portraying images of young Soldiers chasing down ragged veterans, wives and children, and setting fire to their only shelter. Although no shots were fired and only minor injuries were reported, the public perception was that excessive force had been used. President Hoover’s public approval rating was precarious enough during this period of the Great Depression, and this particular controversy was key to the tilt of sentiment against him.

President Hoover, his Cabinet and General MacArthur all failed to appreciate the groundswell of support the Bonus Army had generated at the grass-roots level of the American public. They badly misjudged the nature and intent of the veterans. At this point in history a bloody communist revolution by the masses of unemployed was one of the worst fears of many world leaders. Depression riots had already erupted in many large northeastern cities, and the sight of thousands of angry citizens openly defying the government in its own capital was terrifying. But the veterans were not calling for

Bolshevik revolution. They only wanted the unprecedented early payment of an entitled bonus due to the economic Depression. The real communists that had infiltrated the Bonus Army or were otherwise in Washington at the time were indeed extremely vocal, but as always, their voice was far larger than their actual strength. The administration was also reckless in its treatment of the marching veterans as no one could tell what other portions of society might be inflamed by the harsh treatment of this group. For example, there were more than 10 million unemployed workers who were increasingly restless and could have been a potential threat. In the end, President Hoover and Congress found no way to placate the marchers or defuse the situation, not that they looked very hard. The adamant desire to keep the budget balanced to assure a depressed American economy that the government was sound, along with President Hoover's well-known intention to veto any legislation, stymied efforts to reach a legislative solution. So it came down to the use of force to remove the remaining veterans, who by all appearances seemed ready to actually stay until they got their bonus or until 1945, whichever came first.⁴²

The immediate effect of the confrontation at Anacostia Flats was a backlash against the Hoover administration and its handling of the whole affair. By not addressing either the veterans or the nation on the issue, President Hoover allowed the hostile press to shape the image of what had transpired at Anacostia Flats, and it was not becoming. Upon seeing the pictures in the newspapers and newsreels of burning camps and troops chasing down veterans, many Americans became angry. Generally public opinion turned decisively against the administration. Hoover was in a reelection campaign, which received a serious blow with the loss of the support of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, both of which condemned his actions. A growing number of Americans felt that the federal government was responsible for alleviating the suffering of all the unemployed workers in the country, and the bonus marchers became highly symbolic of the issue. President Hoover's opposition to providing relief to the marchers led many to question his willingness or ability to aid unemployed workers at large. Forever forgotten was Hoover's previous support of the 1930 Disability Act and other bills that rewarded veterans.⁴³

The national uproar over the marching veterans did have an unexpected consequence. President Hoover's Democratic rival in the election of 1932 was Franklin D. Roosevelt, then the governor of New York. When he heard of the events at Anacostia Flats, Roosevelt told a friend, "Well, this elects me."⁴⁴

After taking office, Roosevelt took steps not to repeat the mistakes of his predecessor when he faced his own Bonus Army just a few weeks after his inauguration. Instead of sending out the U.S. Army as before, this President used another weapon that turned out to be far more effective—his wife, Eleanor, who talked with the veterans and persuaded them to leave quietly and quickly. Unlike his predecessor, Roosevelt also took to the airwaves to inform the people of his positions on the bonus issue and to call for the veterans to remain at home.⁴⁵

No bonus legislation would pass for the next three years, for much the same reason the previous bills had failed—Roosevelt vetoed them as a matter of fiscal prudence. In

fact, the veterans rapidly discovered that the new President was not their friend either. Roosevelt imposed the Economy Act of 1933, which cut existing disability allowances by 25 percent. Fortunately for the veterans, Congress restored the benefits; pressure from veterans' groups was finally great enough that in 1936 Congress approved more than \$2.5 billion in veterans' benefits. Again, Roosevelt's veto was overridden, but Roosevelt was savvy enough to learn from history. The nation would be better prepared the next time a large number of veterans returned home from war. The political lessons learned from the Bonus Army of 1932 were applied after the Second World War with the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, now known as the GI Bill. The goal of this bill was to ease the transition of the returning veterans into a peacetime economy to avoid the discontent felt by the veterans of World War I.

Lessons for Today

With the probability of U.S. Army involvement in civil-military operations and nation-building missions in the coming decades, careful study and analysis of the events related to the Bonus Army of 1932 is important and relevant. The primary lesson to be learned by this experience is that it is imperative to fully understand the nature and goals of the antagonists. Today there are a myriad of government agencies that can provide useful information. Devising successful methods to deal with confrontations similar to the Bonus Army will depend upon ascertaining who and what the demonstrators are, not making them conform to stereotypes and preconceived notions. In short, military leaders and staffs must become geopolitically astute.

This expertise is key in devising strategies and tactics to neutralize acts of rebellion and civil unrest that are in keeping with our national values, goals and objectives. Methods used must fall within legal limits and adhere to the norms of our culture. A potentially hostile press will heavily scrutinize any use of the military, and inaccurate statements or the use of excessive force will shatter government credibility and lead to the rapid loss of public confidence—which in turn will jeopardize the national goals and strategies the Army was deployed to achieve in the first place. As shown in the confrontation at Anacostia Flats, the result can easily be the discrediting of the entire Army and the demise of a presidential administration.

Endnotes

- ¹ Roger Daniels, *The Bonus March: An Episode of the Great Depression* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1971), p. 42. This is the definitive secondary source on this topic.
- ² *Ibid.*, pp. 45–46; Donald J. Lisio, *The President and Protest: Hoover, Conspiracy, and the Bonus Riot* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1974), pp. 29–31.
- ³ John William Wright Patman, 1893–1976, was from Texarkana, Texas, and a veteran of World War I. He was a long-serving representative, elected to 23 consecutive terms. The bonus issue propelled him to national attention, and throughout his career he championed most populist themes.
- ⁴ Daniels, *The Bonus March*, p. 76; Jack Douglas, *Veterans on the March* (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1934), pp. 25–27; Walter W. Waters, *B.E.F.: The Whole Story of the Bonus Army* (New York: The John Day Company, 1933), p. 17. Waters' account is very colorful and, in spite of his statements to the contrary, it is rather biased in its outlook and understandably so.
- ⁵ Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, pp. 27, 33; Daniels, *The Bonus March*, pp. 78–79; Waters, *B.E.F.*, pp. 4–7, 138–139.
- ⁶ Daniels, *The Bonus March*, pp. 79–82; Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, pp. 29–31; Waters, *B.E.F.*, pp. 45–48. These efforts included the refusal to allow empty boxcars on the eastbound trains. The veterans responded by uncoupling and disconnecting the air brakes on the cars, all done with the clandestine help of train crews. The railroad executives soon relented and sent their problem on its way.
- ⁷ Waters, *B.E.F.*, pp. 116–118, 126; Daniels, *The Bonus March*, p. 75.
- ⁸ Daniels, *The Bonus March*, pp. 88–89; Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, pp. 35–36, 50. Pelham D. Glassford was born in 1883; he graduated 18th in a class of 124 at West Point in 1904. His service included tours in Hawaii, the Philippines and along the Mexican border. During the First World War he commanded the 103d Field Artillery Regiment in France and in 1918 became the youngest brigadier general in the American Expeditionary Force. His post-war assignments, however, were dull for him, and he retired after 27 years in the service. By force of his personality, Glassford extracted a great deal of cooperation from the other three law enforcement agencies in the city: the Park Police, the Capitol Police and the White House Police. Moreover, these other agencies were trained more as guards.
- ⁹ Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, p. 45; Daniels, *The Bonus March*, p. 93.
- ¹⁰ Daniels, *The Bonus March*, p. 111; Waters, *B.E.F.*, pp. 92–95; Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, pp. 54, 56–57, 61–64. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 many people dismiss the threat of a communist revolution or threat. In the 1930s the threat was much greater and caused great anxiety.
- ¹¹ Daniels, *The Bonus March*, pp. 99, 107.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 83–84; Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, p. 81.
- ¹³ Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, pp. 135–136.
- ¹⁴ Daniels, *The Bonus March*, pp. 88, 101, 105; Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, pp. 55–58. Waters set up his headquarters in the downtown home of Don Zelaya, a West Point friend of Glassford. Waters and his staff lived indoors and under far better conditions than the average bonus marcher. He made frequent trips to New York and elsewhere to recruit and collect contributions, and his standard of living increased dramatically.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 108.
- ¹⁶ Bonus March Files, Federal Bureau of Investigation, released to the public under the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts, <http://foia.fbi.gov/bonmarch.htm>. The FBI has released a number of documents pertaining to the Bonus March under the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts. See also Lisio, *The President and Protest*, p. 93. It is clear that the FBI was active in penetrating the Bonus Army in the effort to identify and expose communists, anarchists and other radical elements. Most of the bureau's efforts, however, were limited to checking fingerprint records of arrested

veterans and other such mundane law enforcement techniques. Most of the radicals within the Bonus Army were identified and exposed by the veterans themselves.

¹⁷ Daniels, *The Bonus March*, p. 112; Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, pp. 98–100.

¹⁸ Waters, *B.E.F.*, pp. 62, 109.

¹⁹ Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, pp. 217, 219; Waters, *B.E.F.*, pp. 161–162. Butler received two Medals of Honor for heroism during his distinguished career. He was approached in 1933 by fascist sympathizers in the American Legion, who tried to involve him in an actual plot to seize power in a coup d'état. He refused all such overtures and died in 1940.

²⁰ Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, pp. 190–193, 196, 199; Daniels, *The Bonus March*, pp. 131. Robertson refused to recognize Waters' authority and was branded a "Red" in return. Apparently the accusation didn't hold, as Robertson was able to get a parade permit issued to him by the police. To prove to the police that they had no intention of sleeping on the Capitol grounds, the marchers had to leave their bedrolls and blankets behind. Vice President Charles Curtis played little part in the Hoover administration. His contribution was his role as majority leader of the Senate and his ability to move the scheduled agenda through without calling extra sessions. Other possible reasons why the Marines were not part of the later operation were that they could not arrive in time and because General MacArthur wanted to keep it an all-Army operation.

²¹ Daniels, *The Bonus March*, p. 130; Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, p. 221. Although demonstrations around the Capitol were common, there was no tradition at the time of any around the White House. Having a large crowd encircling the grounds was certainly unnerving to President Hoover.

²² Waters, *B.E.F.*, pp. 167–170; Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, pp. 152–156, 208–210. In his book, Waters denies he rushed the doors and was instead arrested by Glassford as a tactic to control the crowd.

²³ Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, p. 222; Waters, *B.E.F.*, pp. 176–177, 179.

²⁴ Daniels, *The Bonus March*, p. 144; Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, pp. 159–160, 164; Waters, *B.E.F.*, pp. 182–183.

²⁵ Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, p. 226.

²⁶ Perry L. Miles, *Fallen Leaves: Memories of an Old Soldier* (Berkeley, Calif.: Wuerth Publishing Co., 1961), p. 306; Daniels, *The Bonus March*, pp. 149–151.

²⁷ Waters, *B.E.F.*, pp. 216–17; Daniels, *The Bonus March*, pp. 153–155; Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, pp. 5–7.

²⁸ William M. Leary, editor, *MacArthur and the American Century: A Reader* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), pp. 33–35; William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur 1880–1964* (Boston, Mass.: 1978), p. 150.

²⁹ Daniels, *The Bonus March*, pp. 158–159. The T-6 was a truck-mounted 75mm cannon, the same weapon later found on the early variants of the M4 Sherman tank. During this crisis this gun was supplied with high-explosive and anti-personnel ammunition that various sources called "shrapnel rounds." This weapon was not the T-6 halftrack truck, of which only one was built, in 1934; Douglas, pp. 229. It was highly unusual for the personnel at the naval air station to have rifles, and the men were probably not very proficient in their use.

³⁰ Leary, *MacArthur and the American Century*, p. 36.

³¹ Walters, *B.E.F.*, p. 200.

³² Manchester, *American Caesar*, p. 150; Daniels, *The Bonus March*, p. 167; Leary, *MacArthur and the American Century*, pp. 37–38; Miles, *Fallen Leaves*, pp. 306–308. A number of myths persist as to MacArthur's whereabouts and conduct. One states that he mounted his horse and rode to the scene while another tells of the operation being delayed while a courier drove to Fort Myer to fetch the general's dress uniform. The facts are that MacArthur used his staff car or rode with General Miles in his. He did have to change into a uniform that incidentally had the five rows of medals that he was entitled to wear; he had been wearing civilian attire that day, as was the custom for all officers

assigned to duty in Washington at that time. Eisenhower did recommend that MacArthur not take personal command of the operation, suggesting that the politicians had made the decision and should subsequently receive credit or blame. Incidentally, Patton had just joined the regiment less than three weeks earlier.

- ³³ Daniels, *The Bonus March*, p. 168; Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, pp. 7–8, 23–25; Miles, *Fallen Leaves*, pp. 30–32. The Renault FT-17 light tank was known as the Mosquito. One of the most successful tanks of World War I, it was the first of the classic tank design that featured a turret with a 360-degree traverse. More than 3,000 were built during the war, but its main drawback was that it was mechanically unreliable. This tank remained in American service until replaced by the M5 Stuart. A limited number saw service through 1944 with the Germans, who used them in street fighting in Paris. Some of the young Soldiers received a surprise when the older veterans picked up gas grenades and hurled them back. The prevailing winds that day were from the south, which blew the gas back against the troops. As a result, the Soldiers had to hurl a fresh volley every 20 or 30 yards.
- ³⁴ Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, p. 243; Waters, *B.E.F.*, p. 227. Waters claimed he was in his hotel room when the sweep began. He then went to his headquarters and spent the remainder of the day directing veterans to leave the city and regroup at Johnstown, Pennsylvania. He left for that city that evening. Much of his recounting of the events of this day was from second-hand sources.
- ³⁵ Manchester, *American Caesar*, p. 152; Merle Miller, *Ike the Soldier: As They Knew Him* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1987), pp. 266–267. General Miles does not mention this incident in his account.
- ³⁶ Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, pp. 244–245; Leary, *MacArthur and the American Century*, p. 37; Manchester, *American Caesar*, p. 152; Miles, *Fallen Leaves*, pp. 310–311. Leary's account maintains that MacArthur continued the operation under the direct orders of President Hoover and that it was a prudent thing to do, claiming that any delay would have given the bonus marchers time to reorganize, possibly resulting in a more serious situation.
- ³⁷ Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, p. 250; Leary, *MacArthur and the American Century*, pp. 38–39.
- ³⁸ Daniels, *The Bonus March*, pp. 174–176; quote is from Manchester, *American Caesar*, p. 152.
- ³⁹ Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, pp. 254–257; quote is from Jules Archer, *Front-Line General: Douglas MacArthur* (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1963), p. 76. Much of what Archer writes is suspect; he actually portrayed MacArthur as sympathetic to the bonus marchers.
- ⁴⁰ Daniels, *The Bonus March*, pp. 178–179; Miles, *Fallen Leaves*, p. 311. The tear gas (chloracetophenone) apparently drifted with the wind and much of it spread to areas of the city where there were no bonus marchers or veterans. Many accounts tell the tale that an 11-week-old baby was killed by the gas. One child of a bonus marcher did die in Washington's Gallinger Hospital on 9 August, but there is no evidence that it was by gas and the cause of death was listed as a "stomach ailment." However, journalism of the day did have lower standards of accuracy, and sensationalism was very common.
- ⁴¹ Daniels, *The Bonus March*, p. 181.
- ⁴² The communists were stymied in their efforts to ignite the fuse of revolution in the streets across the country by manipulating the Bonus Army, but its dispersing by the regular troops was a propaganda coup they fully exploited for decades.
- ⁴³ Miller, *Ike the Soldier*, p. 263. Hoover was well known for his disdain for speaking on the radio. He tended to sound condescending when he did so.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 267. He was obviously not mistaken. With the country still in the grips of the Depression and with the public turned against him, Herbert Hoover lost the election.
- ⁴⁵ Douglas, *Veterans on the March*, pp. 311, 324.