HEADQUARTERS, U. S. MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON

14 May 1948

LETTER OF INSTRUCTION NUMBER 421

From: The Commandant, U. S. Marine Corps
To: All Commanding Officers

Subject: Colored Personnel

Encl: (A) Copy of 1st CMC to Distribution List AO-320-kb (CIC7743),
dated 20 March, 1943.

1. Enclosure (A) is forwarded for your information and guidance in
connection with the handling of colored personnel.

2. The initial assignment of colored personnel to Marine Barracks
and Marine Detachments at posts and stations within the continental limits of
the United States will be in the rank of private first class and private.

3. While rapid promotion, when deserved, is necessary, it is
essential that in no case shall there be colored noncommissioned officers
senior to white men in the same unit, and desirable that few, if any,
be the same in rank.

4. Subject to the above provision, promotion of colored personnel
is authorized in the same manner as applicable to all Marines. In cases
where, for example, a colored corporal is qualified for promotion to sergeant
prior to the time all white corporals in the unit have been replaced by
colored ones, recommendation will be made to this Headquarters, and if the
recommendation is approved, the man will be transferred to a post where his
services can be utilized in the highest manner. The same procedure
will be followed through all ranks until only colored noncommissioned
officers are employed in all colored units. The above does not apply
to members of the Steward's Branch.

5. Beyond the continental limits of the United States commanding
officers will control promotions of colored personnel as necessary to carry
out the spirit of the above directive.

6. On all change sheets and strength reports, colored personnel
will be shown separately. They will not be included in quotas for transfer
unless transfer orders so state, except that beyond the continental limits
of the United States they may be transferred in such manner as the Corps,
Division, Wing, Area, or Force Commander may direct.

7. Since the inclusion of colored personnel in the Marine
Corps organizations is a new departure, it is requested that Commanding
officers make a study of the situation as it exists from time to time and
the problems involved, and make report to the Commandant, Marine Corps. This
report should include the adaptation of the Negroes to military discipline
and guard duty, their attitude towards other personnel, and vice versa,
liberty facilities, recreation facilities, and any other matter that would
be of interest to the Commandant.

8. All Marines are entitled to the same rights and privileges
under Naval Regulations. The colored Marines have been carefully trained
and indoctrinated. They can be expected to conduct themselves with propriety
and become a credit to the Marine Corps. All men must be made to understand
that it is their duty to guide and assist these men to conduct themselves
properly, and to set them an example in conduct and deportment.

9. Commanding Officers will see that all men are properly
indoctrinated with the spirit of paragraph 8 above, particularly when Negro
troops are serving in the vicinity.

T. HOLCOMB