

E. N. Johnson, Secretary
Service Suggestion Committee
Harlon B. Carter

November 28, 1951

Chief, Border Patrol Section
Your memorandum dated November 9, 1951, file 56222/446,
addressed Mr. W. F. Kelly, Assistant Commissioner, con-
cerning Suggestion No. 164.

This suggestion relates to the authorization of cotton khaki uniforms and pith helmets for patrol inspectors of the El Paso District during the summer months.

The cotton khaki uniform, a short while ago, was authorized for rough duty wear all along the Mexican Border. The only duty where officers must dress in the regulation uniform is highway assignments or other activity of a police nature where instant identification by uniform is helpful to required performance.

It is correct to say that such a change would involve no cost to the Government because no uniform change involves cost to the Government. The officers buy their own uniforms. This means, then, that any change might reflect considerable cost to those already outfitted with the present uniform. Hence, no change should be made in uniform without great consideration, due regard for the job and the wishes of all the officers themselves.

A few years ago in Texas, the pith helmet was authorized for uniform wear, and it cannot be said, in any sense, that a high esprit de corps resulted. As a matter of fact, most of the officers complained that this type of hat was very bad about blowing off in the high winds prevailing most of the year through the West. They also complained that a certain segment of the public was prone to jest at them and their "lion-tamer" hats.

In the suggestion, it is stated that "a change in uniform is always anticipated with enthusiasm." I seriously question the truth of this statement. As a matter of fact, my observation for the last fifteen years has been that all officers who have passed their probation are already outfitted with uniform equipment and are somewhat reluctant to spend their own money replacing that from which they have not yet received full use and which cost them their own good money.

It is, of course, nonsense to say that the proposed change in uniform would result in patrol inspectors being less conspicuous in sandy areas because aliens recognize "the traditional olive drabs now in use by patrol inspectors" In the first place, the

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traditional Border Patrol uniform is forest green and not olive drab. In the second place, they never wear their regulation uniform on details into the desert anyway.

I recommend we take no action pursuant to suggestion No. 164.

HBC:wfg