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Annotated article "The governor's prepared statement" to Shreveport Times, 30 September 1962

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The governor's prepared statement

1962 SEP 30 PM 6 16

In a prepared statement issued to newsmen at the state mansion shortly after a 60-man Louisiana delegation presented the governor a plaque, Barnett said he "will not add to the present tense situation, any act that will further disrupt the university."

"I have no intention, at the present time, even to consider the closing of the university...let us all forget the closing of the university and concentrate on meeting the unnatural federal power that is being directed against each of us, our state and our institution."

"We told the Louisianians on the steps of the state mansion that we intend to fight this battle all the way through the courts. We know we are right."

After the 10-minute ceremony in which Webster Parish Rep. Perry Branton presented a plaque congratulating Barnett for his stand and assuring him of Louisiana support, a highway patrol officer touched Barnett on the arm several times and repeated several times "Governor, please come in now."

Before dawn today, more troops were arriving hourly from several southern points after the army dispatched at least 2,500 soldiers to nearby Memphis Naval air station to back up the guardsmen if necessary in the Mississippi integration crisis.

*Shelby
Tune*

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630P

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THE REGULAR TROOPS ARE FOR USE IN MISSISSIPPI "IF THE PRESIDENT DECIDES TO USE FEDERAL TROOPS" TO ASSURE THE ENROLLMENT OF NEGRO JAMES MEREDITH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI, THE ARMY SAID.

~~one 11 13 50 50 50~~
THE GUARDSMEN ORDERED TO OXFORD WERE DIRECTED TO TAKE UP THEIR POSITIONS BY 10 A.M. LOCAL TIME (NOON EDT) TOMORROW.

THE REGULAR TROOPS WERE THE 2ND BATTLE GROUP OF THE 23RD INFANTRY, APPROXIMATELY 1,100 MEN, FROM FT. BENNING, GA., AND 503RD MILITARY POLICE BATTALION, APPROXIMATELY 700 MEN, FROM FT. BRAGG, N.C., AND THE 716TH MILITARY POLICE BATTALION FROM FT. DIX, N.J., WITH A STRENGTH OF APPROXIMATELY 700 MEN.

THE FT. BENNING OUTFIT IS A PART OF THE 2ND INFANTRY DIVISION, COMMANDED BY BRIG. GEN. CHARLES BILLINGSLEA, WHO IS NOW FIELD COMMANDER FOR THE OXFORD OPERATION.

Meanwhile, vigilante groups from all over the south flooded the small sheriff's department in Oxford with offers of armed or unarmed assistance.

Lafayette County sheriff J.W. Ford issued a statement to the many offerers that "we implore you to stay away from Oxford, either as a spectator or to help us, if you are sincere in wanting to bring about a peaceful settlement.

The sheriff said he has turned away two Georgia men who offered to muster a force of 10,000 citizen soldiers and place them under his command. Ford said he understood the two were Georgia Ku Klux Klan members.

While all the offers are appreciated, "it would help if it is made known that and accepted by people that we are equipped to handle our own problems without help.

A group of armed volunteers, according to a deputy, left Oxford Saturday night for Oxford before returning to their homes in the county of mobile ~~taxtaxtax~~ Saturday night.

J. W. Ford

WESTERN UNION PRESS MESSAGE

W. P. MARSHALL, PRESIDENT

allen: had car trouble on way back from jacksonville.

unable get pipe out now...will do seems possible with lead.

marshals on campus, highway patrol streaming in, tension extremely high...newsmen barred from campus as of 2 p.m.

this date...will keep trying, if not phone by 8 p.m. at hotel

all orders
UNDER ORDERS OF THE PRESIDENT, ~~THE ARMY DIRECTED ALL OTHER~~
was ordered
GUARD UNITS IN THE STATE TO "REPORT TO YOUR ARMORIES, COMMENCE A
TRAINING PROGRAM IMMEDIATELY, AND AWAIT FURTHER ORDERS."

THIS MEANS, AN ARMY SPOKESMAN SAID, THAT THE GUARDSMEN CANNOT
REMAIN IN THEIR CIVILIAN JOBS AND MUST HOLD THEMSELVES IN READINESS
FOR ACTION AS DIRECTED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

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In Jackson, Maj. William Spell, public information officer of
the Mississippi National Guard, ^{told The Times} ~~said~~ that when the three affected
groups received orders at two minutes after midnight today, "
"they didn't know whether they were going to Cuba, Viet Nam, Ole
Miss, Washington or Timbuctoo, but all units have reported that
sufficient troops are available to perform all duties required
at this time."

"ON ARRIVAL IN MEMPHIS, THE BATTLE GROUP WILL COME UNDER THE COMMAND OF GEN. BILLINGSLEA, WHO IS NOW AT THE MEMPHIS NAVAL AIR STATION," ~~THE ARMY SAID.~~ *A NATIONAL GUARD spokesman said in Jackson.* IT IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE SHORTLY AFTER MIDNIGHT."

THE COMMANDER OF THE FT. BENNING BATTLE GROUP IS COL. LUCIAN F. KELLER OF AKRON, OHIO.

THERE WERE REPORTS OF OTHER REGULAR TROOPS MOVEMENTS TOWARD MEMPHIS, *IN ALL 11,073 officers and men in Mississippi were* ~~BUT NO IMMEDIATE CONFIRMATION FROM THE ARMY OR DEFENSE DEPARTMENT.~~ *hit by the activation order, but only 3,086 have been ordered to Oxford "at this time."*

THE FIRST TROOPS ORDERED TO THE SCENE AT OXFORD WERE MISSISSIPPI GUARDSMEN WHO "ARE IN THE ARMY NOW," UNDER PRESIDENTIAL ORDERS. THEY ARE THE 108TH ARMORED CAVALRY, FROM TUPELO, MISS., COMMANDED BY COL. JAMES G. MARTIN, AND THE FIRST BATTLE GROUP OF THE 155TH INFANTRY FROM LAUREL, MISS., COMMANDED BY COL. MARION D. O'DELL.

THE 108TH ARMORED HAS AN AUTHORIZED STRENGTH OF 1,377 MEN, WHILE THE BATTLE GROUP'S STRENGTH IS LISTED AT 819 MEN.

A THIRD UNIT, THE 2ND BATTLE GROUP FROM AMORY, MISS., WAS ORDERED TO BE ON THE MOVE TOWARD OXFORD BY 10 A.M. LOCAL TIME, MONDAY, AND PROBABLY WILL ARRIVE ON THE SCENE LATER IN THE DAY. THIS OUTFIT, ALSO LISTING A STRENGTH OF 819 MEN, IS UNDER COMMAND OF COL. ROBERT L. GRAY.

The 48-year-old Billingslea is a 1936 graduate of west point and an experienced combat and much decorated officer. He will command at Oxford ~~the~~ Mississippi's Dixie Division which has the motto of "Stand Fast."

The motto was earned in the Mexican War when the forerunner to the group was ordered to hold a position at Buena Vista by Jeff Davis who told them to "Stand Fast Mississippi."