

War Department General Order 143: Creation of the U.S. Colored Troops (1863)

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General Orders,

No. 143

WAR DEPARTMENT,

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,

Washington, May 22, 1863.

I--A Bureau is established in the Adjutant General's Office for the record of all matters relating to the organization of Colored Troops, An officer, will be assigned to the charge of the Bureau, with such number of clerks as may be designated by the Adjutant General.

II--Three or more field officers will be detailed as Inspectors to supervise the organization of colored troops at such points as may be indicated by the War Department in the Northern and Western States.

III--Boards will be convened at such posts as may be decided upon by the War Department to examine applicants for commissions to command colored troops, who, on Application to the Adjutant General, may receive authority to present themselves to the board for examination.

IV--No persons shall be allowed to recruit for colored troops except specially authorized by the War Department; and no such authority will be given to persons who have not been examined and passed by a board; nor will such authority be given any one person to raise more than one regiment.

V--The reports of Boards will specify the grade of commission for which each candidate is fit, and authority to recruit will be given in accordance. Commissions will be issued from the Adjutant General's Office when the prescribed number of men is ready for muster into service.

VI--Colored troops maybe accepted by companies, to be afterward consolidated in battalions and regiments by the Adjutant General. The regiments will be numbered seriatim, in the order in which they are raised, the number to be determined by the Adjutant General. They will be designated: "—Regiment of U.S. Colored Troops."

VII--Recruited stations and depots will be established by the Adjutant General as circumstances shall require, and officers will be detailed to muster and inspect the troops.

VIII--The non-commissioned officers of colored troops may be selected and appointed from the best men of their number in the usual mode of appointing non-commissioned officers. Meritorious commissioned officers will be entitled to promotion to higher rank if they prove themselves equal to it.

IX--All personal applications for appointments in colored regiments, or for information concerning them, must be made to the Chief of the Bureau; all written communications should be addressed to the Chief of the Bureau, to the care of the Adjutant General,

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

E.D. TOWNSEND

Assistant Adjutant Generals.