

## **“But they knew, they knew, they knew:” President Roosevelt and the Pearl Harbor Cover-Up**

“The war that we have carefully for years  
provoked  
Catches us unprepared, amazed and indignant.  
Our warships are shot  
Like sitting ducks and our planes like nest-birds,  
both our coasts ridiculously panicked,  
And our leaders make orations. This is the  
people  
That hopes to impose on the whole planetary  
world  
An American peace.” - Robinson Jeffers, “Pearl Harbor.”<sup>1</sup>

“This Pearl Harbor business has a terrible smell.” – Admiral Chester Nimitz, Navy Commander-in chief U.S. in World War II.<sup>2</sup>

In the academy award nominated *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, the ninth highest grossing film of 1970, top army and government officials are eerily complacent in the face of news of the impending Japanese attack on the Hawaiian naval base at Pearl Harbor. Secretary of State George C. Marshall (played by Keith Andes) goes out horse-back riding on the morning of December 7<sup>th</sup> and then fails to mark as urgent the message warning Hawaii of the attack, ensuring that it gets there too late.<sup>3</sup>

20th Century Fox executive Darryl F. Zanuck said that he wanted to create an epic that depicted what "really happened on December 7, 1941", with a "revisionist's approach." In his view the commanders in Hawaii, General Walter Short and Admiral Husband Kimmel had been unfairly scapegoated for the “intelligence failure” when they had received limited warnings and where negligence was displayed by Marshall and other top-level officials in the Roosevelt administration.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robinson Jeffers, “Pearl Harbor,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 1991, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-12-08-bk-304-story.html>. Jeffers was one of the few poets to oppose American entry into World War II. The poem began: Here are the fireworks. The men who conspired

and labored

To embroil this republic in the wreck of Europe

have got their bargain—

And a bushel more. As for me, what can I do but

fly the national flag from the top of the

tower?

America has neither race nor religion nor its own language: nation or nothing.

Stare, little tower,

Confidently across the Pacific, the flag on your

head. I built you at the other war's end,

And the sick peace; I based you on living rock,

granite on granite; I said, "Look, you gray

stones:

Civilization is sick: stand awhile and be quiet

and drink the sea-wind, you will survive

Civilization."

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Summers and Robyn Swann, *A Matter of Honor: Pearl Harbor: Betrayal, Blame, and a Family's Quest for Justice* (New York: Harper Collins, 2016), 279.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Fleischer, Toshio Masuda, Kinji Fukusau, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 1970); Emily Rosenberg, *A Day Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 47-49.

<sup>4</sup> James Parrish, *The Great Combat Pictures: Twentieth Century Warfare on the Screen* (New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1990), 411.

Most professional historians today dismiss as conspiracy theory the idea of a government cover-up or malfeasance prior to Pearl Harbor. A majority are liberals working for universities which receive military funding and do not want their employees probing into the U.S. government's dark secrets.<sup>5</sup> They also do not want to give credence to a theory which was advanced predominantly by anti-Roosevelt conservatives. Even the New Left historian Howard Zinn in his epic *A People's History of the United States* characterized as "wild" the accusation that "Roosevelt knew about Pearl Harbor and didn't tell, or deliberately provoked the Pearl Harbor raid."<sup>6</sup>

This essay contends that Zinn—however admirable—in this case is wrong. The Roosevelt administration very clearly provoked Japan by engaging in a naval buildup in the South Pacific Seas and by enacting an oil embargo, which crippled Japan's economy and threatened its access to vital raw materials in Manchuria.<sup>7</sup> Historian William Neumann sensibly concluded in a 1945 pamphlet: "that this economic war could result in anything but a military conflict was extremely doubtful."<sup>8</sup>

Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson wrote in his diary of a White House meeting on November 25, 1941 in which he explicitly raised the question of "how we should maneuver them into the position of firing the first shot."<sup>9</sup> Hatton W. Sumner (D-TX), the Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, stated in April 1942 that "this blaming of the Pearl Harbor tragedy on the treachery of the Japs is like the fellow who had been tickling the hind leg of a mule trying to explain his bungled-up condition by blaming the mule for having violated his confidence."<sup>10</sup>

Roosevelt found himself in the position of tickling the hind leg of the Japanese mule because he knew that the American public would never support intervention in another world war unless the United States was attacked. A poll conducted by the American Institute of Public Opinion in 1936 had found that 95 percent of Americans would "today regard as imbecile anyone who might suggest that in the event of another European War, the United States should again participate in it."<sup>11</sup>

In the months before the Pearl Harbor attacks, military cryptanalysts had cracked the Japanese diplomatic and military code. They were hence privy to cables specifying that Japan had broken diplomatic relations, which was crucial because in all of Japan's previous wars—including the war with China in 1895, the attack on Port Arthur opening the war with Russia in 1904, and the war with Germany launched at Tsingtao in 1914—the severing of diplomatic relations was followed by a sneak attack on the enemy.<sup>12</sup> The location of this attack was telegraphed also in other cables.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See Christian Sorenson, *Understanding the War Industry* (Atlanta: Clarity Press Inc., 2020), 207-230.

<sup>6</sup> Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States, 1492-present*, rev ed. (New York: Harperennial, 2003), 411.

<sup>7</sup> See William L. Neumann, "How American Policy Toward Japan Contributed to War in the Pacific," in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace: A Critical Examination of the Foreign Policy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Its Aftermath*, ed. Harry Elmer Barnes (New York: Ostara Publications, 2013, orig. 1953), 243, 244, 245.

<sup>8</sup> William L. Neumann, *The Genesis of Pearl Harbor* (Philadelphia, PA: The Pacifist Research Bureau, 1945), 48.

<sup>9</sup> Richard N. Current, "How Stimson Meant to 'Maneuver the Japanese,'" *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (June, 1953), 67. Stimson's comments about knowing the "Oriental mind" are in Craig Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness* (New York: Scribner, 2016), 41.

<sup>10</sup> Jeannette Rankin, "Two Votes Against War: 1917 and 1940," *Liberation*, March 1958 reprinted in *We Who Dared Say No to War: American Antiwar Writing From 1812 to Now*, ed. Murray Polner and Thomas E. Woods Jr. (New York: Perseus, 2008), 168.

<sup>11</sup> Manfred Jonas, *Isolationism in America 1935-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), 1. Even after Hitler attacked Poland, France and England, the numbers opposing the war remained around the same.

<sup>12</sup> George Morganstern, *Pearl Harbor: The Story of the Secret War* (New York: The Devin Adair Company, 1947), 253; Morganstern, "The Actual Road to Pearl Harbor," in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, ed. Barnes, 371; Testimony of James O. Richardson, Pearl Harbor Attacks, Hearings Before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of Pearl Harbor Attacks, 253. Richardson, a former naval commander was in Yokohama during the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war and witnessed the war's outbreak from there.

<sup>13</sup> See Robert B. Stinnett, *Day of Deceit: The Truth About FDR and Pearl Harbor* (New York: Touchstone Books, 2001); David Ray Griffin, *The American Trajectory Divine or Demonic?* (Atlanta: Clarity Press Inc., 2018), 143, 144.

The debate among serious researchers centers on the question of whether the Pearl Harbor attack went forward because of informational overload, resulting in the foreknowledge not being passed on to the proper channels, or whether there was deliberate negligence and a cover-up on the part of top level executive branch officials, as *Tora, Tora, Tora!* suggested. The weight of evidence supports the latter, particularly with the release of newly declassified documents.

British historian Captain Russell Greenfell wrote in 1952 that “no reasonably informed person can now believe that Japan made a villainous, unexpected attack on the United States. An attack was not only fully expected but was actually desired. It is beyond doubt that President Roosevelt wanted to get his country into the war, but for political reasons was most anxious to ensure that the first act of hostility came from the other side, to a point that no self-respecting nation could endure without resort to arms. Mr. Oliver Lyttleton, then British minister of production, said in 1944: ‘Japan was provoked into attacking America at Pearl Harbor. It is a travesty of history to say that America was forced into the war.’”<sup>14</sup>

The dominant political and academic establishment will not acknowledge this, however, because it would entail a reconsideration of “the good war” and destroy the reputation of America’s greatest liberal president. It would further raise critical questions about the American empire and capitalist economic structures, and how the provocation of wars is crucial to their endurance.

### Lost Chance for Peace

Because the United States fashions itself as a republic, its government has repeatedly staged incidents that were designed to give off the appearance that the country was a victim of outside aggression. The best-known example is the Gulf of Tonkin incident which triggered the Vietnam War when U.S. ships shelled North Vietnam in order to provoke a reprisal attack that could then be broadcast as an act of aggression.<sup>15</sup>

After World War I, the American public was weary of involvement in another major war. Historian William Leuchtenburg wrote that the Great War was widely perceived as a “dirty, unheroic war which few men remembered with any emotion save distaste.”<sup>16</sup> The reason was because the United States never joined the League of Nations—which Wilson had specified as one of the reasons for intervention—and a punitive peace imposed on Germany resulted in the rise of Fascism. The Nye Committee hearings of the 1930s, furthermore, exposed the role of arms merchants in profiting from the war and influencing U.S. intervention, which resulted in the death of an estimated 100,000 Americans.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> In *Freedom Betrayed: Herbert Hoover’s Secret History of the Second World War and Its Aftermath*, ed. and with an introduction by George Nash (Stanford, California: Hoover Institute Press, 2011), 310. See also Captain Richard Greenfell, *Main Fleet to Singapore* (New York: The McMillan Company, 1952), 107, 108.

<sup>15</sup> See Peter Dale Scott, *The War Conspiracy: JFK, 9/11 and the Deep Politics of War* (New York: Skyhorse, 2013); Griffin, *The American Trajectory Divine or Demonic?*

<sup>16</sup> Leuchtenburg quoted in Justus Doenecke and John E. Wiltz, *From Isolation to War, 1931-1941*, rev ed. (Arlington Heights, Illinois: Harlan Davidson Inc., 1991), 6.

<sup>17</sup> See Roger Peace, Jeremy Kuzmarov and Charles Howlett, “United States Participation in World War I,” *Peace History*, <http://peacehistory-usfp.org/united-states-participation-in-world-war-one/>

if the Roosevelt administration wanted the U.S. to intervene in World War II, it would have to maneuver craftily behind the scenes and provoke a Japanese attack. The more visionary leaders of the time, Roosevelt among them, foresaw a dominant American role in the post-war order that was to be undergirded by the acquisition of an archipelago of bases in the Far East that could ensure continued American commercial expansion, which Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere threatened to block.<sup>18</sup> A war in the Pacific was also the means by which the Roosevelt administration could successfully enter the war against Germany, whose military conquests were a threat to American strategic interests. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes confided to his diary that "our best entrance into the war [against Germany] would be by way of Japan...And of course, if we go to war against Japan, it will inevitably lead to war against Germany."<sup>19</sup>

In the months leading up to Pearl Harbor, there was ample opportunity for FDR to have upheld his 1940 campaign pledge that American boys would not be sent into any foreign wars. George F. Kennan, a distinguished member of the U.S. diplomatic corps, wrote in *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950* that "a policy carefully and realistically aimed at the avoidance of a war with Japan...would certainly have produced a line of action considerably different from that which we actually pursued and would presumably have led to quite different results."<sup>20</sup>

The U.S. ambassador to Japan, Joseph Grew (1932-1941), a former classmate of FDR's at Groton, had pursued a strategy of "constructive conciliation" which aimed to "erase the basic causes of tension" and "conflict" between the U.S. and Japan, in part by repealing the U.S. oil embargo.<sup>21</sup> As late as October 1941, at the urging of China hands in the State Department, FDR rebuffed a peace overture by Prime Minister Prince Fumimoro Konoye, a moderate who was subsequently pushed out in favor of the hard-liner, Hideki Tojo.<sup>22</sup> The FDR administration did not want to be seen as condoning Japan's conquests, though Konoye expressed willingness to withdraw Japanese troops from China and nullify participation in the Axis Pact with Germany and Italy.<sup>23</sup>

British diplomat Sir Robert Craigie, felt that as late as December 1941, the United States could have reached a compromise with Japan involving the withdrawal of Japanese troops from Indochina in exchange for the resumption of U.S. oil shipments to Japan, which had been cut off by embargo. Craigie noted that by this time, the prospects of a German victory had begun to look doubtful, which made American and British intervention in a Far East campaign less of a necessity. Secretary of State Cordell Hull had prepared a constructive counter-proposal though it was never submitted, owing Craigie believes, to the opposition of the Chinese government.<sup>24</sup> Hull said privately that he had "purposely prolonged the conversations with the Japanese in order to enable the Army and Navy to get men and

<sup>18</sup> See William Appleman Williams, *The Contours of American History* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966), 457.

<sup>19</sup> Harold L. Ickes, *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes: The Lowering Clouds, 1939-1941* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1954), 630.

<sup>20</sup> George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 82.

<sup>21</sup> Neumann, *The Genesis of Pearl Harbor*, 14, 30. Grew had warned similarly to Herbert Hoover that the sanctions policy "carried through to the end may lead to war." See also Jonathan G. Utey, *Going to War with Japan, 1937-1941* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985) and Grew's memoir, *Ten Years in Japan* (New York: Simon Schuster, 1944).

<sup>22</sup> William Henry Chamberlin, "The Bankruptcy of a Policy" in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, ed. Barnes, 486, 488; Morganstern, *Pearl Harbor*, 176; Kazuo Nagumo, *Konoye Fumimaro and the Failure of Peace in Japan, 1937-1941* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishers, 2006). Joseph Grew had encouraged FDR to accept Konoye's peace overture but to no avail. FDR instead listened to Stanley K. Hornbeck, a leading Far-East expert in the State Department. John K. Emerson, *Pearl Harbor Reexamined: Prologue to the Pacific War*, ed. Hillary Conroy and Harry Wray (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990).

<sup>23</sup> Herbert Feis, *The Road to Pearl Harbor: The Coming of the War Between the United States and Japan* (New York: Atheneum, 1964), 310; Charles Callan Tansill, *Back Door to War: The Roosevelt Foreign Policy, 1933-1941* (Chicago: Regnery, 1952), 628. The United States also did not want to cut aid to Chiang Kai-Shek as Japan wanted if he did not agree to peace terms.

<sup>24</sup> Sir Robert Craigie to Mr. Eden, Blackboys, Sussex, February 4, 1943, appendix 9, in James Rusbridger and Eric Nave, *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor: How Churchill Lured Roosevelt into World War II* (New York: Summit Books, 1991).

supplies to the Far East”—in preparation for war, and credited his Japanese counterpart Kichisaburo Nomura, a pro-American liberal, with “having been honestly sincere in trying to avoid war.”<sup>25</sup>

When Admiral Thomas Hart, commander of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet, returned to Washington D.C. and visited Roosevelt in the White House several months after Hart's small fleet was at the bottom of the Java Sea, overwhelmed by Japan's vastly superior navy in the Philippines, FDR told Hart that the army had misinformed him about its ability to defend the Philippines. If he had known the truth, he would have “stalled off the Japs” for another year. These statements make it clear that Franklin D. Roosevelt could have averted or at least delayed a war with Japan—which would have made all the difference, as Japan would have been more amenable to abandoning its alliance with Hitler and ending their stalemated war with China as it became more clear following Russia’s victories on the Eastern front that Germany was losing.<sup>26</sup>

At the Yalta conference in February 1945, the FDR administration allowed the Soviet Union rights to the ports of Darien and Port Arthur and control of the railways in Manchuria—which the Japanese had been condemned for seizing.<sup>27</sup> This exemplified a blatant double standard and Roosevelt’s anti-Japan bias, which led to the outbreak of war.

## American Provocations

Roosevelt’s policy of maneuvering Japan into firing the first shot was outlined in an October 1940 memo from Lt. Commander Arthur McCollum, head of the Far East Desk of the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) to two of FDR’s most trusted military advisers, Navy Captains Walter S. Anderson, the Director of the Office of Naval Intelligence who had direct White House access, and Dudley W. Knox, a naval strategist. The memo called for “intentionally engineering a situation that would mobilize a reluctant America into joining Great Britain’s struggle against the German Armed Forces” by virtually “inciting a Japanese attack on American ground, air and naval forces in Hawaii as well as British and Dutch colonial outposts in the Pacific region.” Code-named F-2, McCollum felt that war with Japan was inevitable and that the United States should provoke it at a time when it suited American interests.<sup>28</sup>

The eight actions that would lead to Japan attacking the U.S. were:

- A. Make an arrangement with Britain for the use of British bases in the Pacific, particularly Singapore
- B. Make arrangements with Holland for use of base facilities and acquisition of supplies in the Dutch East Indies.
- C. Give all possible aid to the Chinese government of Chiang Kai-Shek.
- D. Send division of Long-range heavy cruisers to the Orient, Philippines or Singapore.
- E. Send Two Divisions of Submarines to the Orient
- F. Keep the main strength of the US Fleet, now in the Pacific, in the vicinity of the Hawaiian Islands
- G. Insist that the Dutch Refuse to Grant Japanese Demands for Undue Economic Concessions, particularly oil.

<sup>25</sup> George Victor, *The Pearl Harbor Myth: Rethinking the Unthinkable* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007), 15.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Fleming, “Pearl Harbor Hype,” *History News Network*, June 10, 2001, <https://web.archive.org/web/20010616054029/http://historynewsnetwork.org/articles/article.html?id=89>

<sup>27</sup> Steve Sniegowski, “The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism,” *The Occidental Quarterly*, 6, 1 (Winter 2001); Anthony Kubek, *How the Far East Was Lost: American Policy and the Creation of Communist China, 1941-1949* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1963), 108, 111. Kubek wrote that “Roosevelt gave to Stalin at Yalta effective control of the same territory over which the United States had gone to war with Japan.”

<sup>28</sup> Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

- H. Completely embargo all trade with Japan, in collaboration with a similar embargo imposed by the British empire.<sup>29</sup>

While no record exists indicating whether FDR saw McCollum's memo, logs and navy intelligence documents suggest that he did. And beginning the day after the memo was sent, McCollum's proposals were systematically put into effect. FDR personally took charge of Action D, the deployment of American warships within or adjacent to the territorial waters of Japan, a move objected to by Admiral Husband Kimmel who said this was "ill-advised" and would "result in war" if extended upon.

From March-July 1941, White House records show that FDR ignored international law and dispatched naval task groups into Japanese waters on three pop-up cruises. One of the most provocative was a sortie into the Bungo Strait Southeast of Honshu, the principal access to Japan's inland Sea separating the home island of Kyushu and Shikoku, which was a favored operational area for the warships of the Imperial Japanese Navy. After a near confrontation, the Japanese Navy registered a protest with Ambassador Joseph Grew in Tokyo but to no avail.<sup>30</sup>

Point G in the memo adopts special significance in this latter context because Japan was heavily dependent on oil imports and had begun to try and move into European colonial domains to enhance access to their vital raw materials including oil. This access was of special necessity because of the decline in global trade bred by the Great Depression and growth of serious shortages not only in oil—which Japan did not produce on its own—but also in other commodities such as iron and steel. By blocking access to these and other goods, the United States was in effect waging economic war and undermining the Greater Co-Prosperity sphere, or regional Japanese empire.<sup>31</sup>

Point H in McCollum's memo, the placement of a full embargo on Japan, in collaboration with a similar embargo by the British Empire, was a further key measure for fulfilling FDR's goal as articulated to his war cabinet of maneuvering Japan into firing the first shot of a Pacific War. The leading anti-interventionist group, America First, understood this as a warlike action, criticizing FDR's embargo as being "not in the interest of democracy or even of ourselves but in the interest of Britain's indefensible empire in the East."<sup>32</sup> Former President Herbert Hoover (1928-1932) was convinced that by instituting the embargo, FDR and his associates were "certainly doing everything they can to get us into war through the Japanese back door."<sup>33</sup>

Roosevelt told the American public that the sanctions policy and embargo was necessary to "prevent the use of the financial facilities of the United States and trade between Japan and the United States, in ways harmful to national defense and American interest, to prevent the liquidation in the United States of assets obtained by duress and conquest, and to curb subversive activities in the United States."<sup>34</sup>

On July 2, 1940, Roosevelt had signed the Export Control Act, authorizing the President to license or prohibit the export of essential defense materials to Japan. Under this authority, exports of aviation

<sup>29</sup> Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 8.

<sup>30</sup> Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 10.

<sup>31</sup> Noam Chomsky, "On the Backgrounds of the Pacific War," *Liberation*, September-October 1967, <https://chomsky.info/196709/>; Neumann, "How American Policy Toward Japan Contributed to War in the Pacific," in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, ed. Barnes.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations Throughout History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 200, 201.

<sup>33</sup> Charles A. Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941: A Study in Appearances and Realities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 178; *Freedom Betrayed*, ed. Nash, lv.

<sup>34</sup> Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*, 178.

motor fuels and lubricants and heavy melting iron and steel scrap were restricted. The Japanese Foreign Minister, Shigenori Togo, vigorously protested to American ambassador Joseph Grew that “economic pressure of this character is capable of menacing national existence to a greater degree than the direct use of force.”<sup>35</sup>

Roosevelt followed up, nevertheless, by slapping an embargo, effective October 16, on all exports of scrap iron and steel to destinations other than Britain and the nations of the Western Hemisphere. On July 26, 1941, Roosevelt subsequently froze over \$130 million in Japanese assets in the United States, which columnist Walter Lippmann called a “declaration of economic war.” One week later, Roosevelt embargoed the export of such grades of oil as still were in commercial flow to Japan. (Prior to this time, America supplied Japan 60% of its oil). The British and the Dutch followed suit, embargoing exports to Japan from their colonies in Southeast Asia.<sup>36</sup>

Roosevelt and his subordinates knew they were putting Japan in an untenable position and that the Japanese government might well try to escape the stranglehold by going to war.<sup>37</sup> On October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1941, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto addressed a secret group of officer pilots aboard the Akagi Carrier in Shibushi Bay after it was announced that in December 1941, a Japanese naval Air Force would strike the American fleet at Hawaii. Yamamoto said that “although Japan never wanted to fight the United States, they were forced to because they would be defeated regardless if the United States continued its aid to China and its oil embargo.” The U.S. fleet, Yamamoto further stated, “was Japan’s strongest enemy so if they could strike it unexpectedly at Hawaii, it would be two or three months before it could maneuver. By that time, occupation of Borneo, the Philippines, Singapore, Java, and Sumatra would be complete.”<sup>38</sup> These comments explain Japan’s strategic rationale for the Pearl Harbor attack, which the Roosevelt administration’s policies had clearly helped to encourage.

When Charles Lindbergh, a famed aviator and member of the antiwar America First Committee, toured military installations in the Pacific and spoke to some of those present at the Pearl Harbor raid, they gave him the impression that the United States had been provoking war by dropping depth charges on Japanese submarines for days before the attack.<sup>39</sup> Naval officers, according to peace activist David Dellinger, had further admitted that before Pearl Harbor they were sent on secret expeditions with orders to shoot Japanese ships and aircraft – on sight and without warning.<sup>40</sup> These charges are difficult to independently verify but would not be out of character with policies pursued by the United States in other contexts—and this one.

### **“But they knew, they knew, they knew”**

Right after Pearl Harbor, William Friedman, chief cryptanalyst of the army signals corps whose team had solved Japan’s Purple code, paced back and forth in his home, his wife recalled, and muttered

<sup>35</sup> Sniegowski, “The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism.”

<sup>36</sup> Morganstern, *Pearl Harbor*; Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*; LaFeber, *The Clash*, 200; John T. Flynn, “The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor,” October 1945, <https://www.antiwar.com/rep/flynn1.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Higgs, “How U.S. Economic Warfare Provoked Japan’s Attack on Pearl Harbor,” May 1, 2006, *Independent Institute*, <https://www.independent.org/news/article.asp?id=1930>. Japan’s ambassador Kichisaburo Nomura stated that modern warfare was “not limited to shooting alone.”

<sup>38</sup> In Pearl Harbor Attacks, Hearings Before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of Pearl Harbor Attacks, Congress of the United States, 79<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, November 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 25, 1945 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), 178.

<sup>39</sup> Lindbergh diaries cited in Michele Stenehejm Gerber, *An American First: John T. Flynn and the America First Committee* (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1976), 115, 116.

<sup>40</sup> David Dellinger, “Statement on Entering Prison,” in *A People’s History of World War II*, ed. Marc Favreau (New York: The New Press, 2011), 125.

to himself repeatedly: “But they knew, they knew, they knew.”<sup>41</sup> Friedman later qualified his remarks by telling his young nephew twenty years later that “there were no messages which can be said to have disclosed exactly *where* and *when* the attack would be made.”<sup>42</sup> Friedman was a pro-Roosevelt man who testified before Congress about a long series of “bunglings, coincidences and management, the series of accidents” that “contrived together to prevent due warning.”<sup>43</sup>

Friedman’s biographer Ronald Clark quotes *New York Times* correspondent Hanson Baldwin who stated in his book *The Price of Power* that “the essential warnings were [in fact] available “but not properly processed and analyzed.”<sup>44</sup> The official U.S. government position was that no Japanese naval intercepts were decoded before 1945—a position accepted by many historians. However, cryptographers who worked on Japanese naval messages contradicted the government’s assertion. One in the Philippines wrote during November 1941: “We are reading enough current traffic to keep two translators very busy.”<sup>45</sup>

Robert Stinnett, a naval photographer and author of *Day of Deceit: The Truth About FDR and Pearl Harbor*, notes that two intercepted radio dispatches sent by Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto to the Japanese first Air Fleet on November 25<sup>th</sup> pointed to the anchoring of 31 Japanese warships at Hitokappu Bay in the Kurile Islands, which were awaiting instructions to sail to Hawaii. A subsequent decoded dispatch had Yamamoto directing the Japanese air fleet to depart Hitokappu on November 26<sup>th</sup>, advance into Hawaiian waters through the North Pacific, and attack the U.S. fleet in Hawaii. Yamamoto even provided the latitude and longitude for portion of the route, while calling for the dealing of the U.S. fleet in Hawaii a “mortal blow.”<sup>46</sup>

In January 1941, U.S. ambassador to Japan Joseph Grew had cabled Roosevelt to tell him that the Peruvian ambassador to Japan, Dr. Ricardo Shreiber, had told a member of his staff that he had heard from many sources including a Japanese source that the Japanese military forces planned, in the event of trouble with the United States, to attempt a surprise mass attack on Pearl Harbor using all their military facilities.<sup>47</sup> Arthur McCollum of Naval Intelligence, Roosevelt’s close confidante, according to researcher Robert Stinnett, sent a cable on this issue to Admiral Kimmel with the analysis that the “Division of Naval Intelligence places no credence in these rumors” and that “no move against Pearl Harbor appears imminent or planned for the foreseeable future.” Grew, however, took the warning very seriously.<sup>48</sup>

Nine months later in October, Roosevelt received another warning of impending attack at Pearl Harbor from the Kremlin, which had obtained the information through its spy Dr. Richard Sorge. The information had been passed along in return for U.S. warnings of an impending attack by Germany on Russia.<sup>49</sup> According to Congressman Martin Dies, his House on Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) Investigation into Japanese intelligence activities in 1941 uncovered a map and other documents

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<sup>41</sup> John Toland, *Infamy: Pearl Harbor and its Aftermath* (New York: Berkley Books, 1982), 15; Ronald Clark, *The Man Who Broke Purple: The Life of Colonel William F. Friedman, Who Deciphered the Japanese Code in World War II* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1977), 170.

<sup>42</sup> Clark, *The Man Who Broke Purple*, 171.

<sup>43</sup> Clark, *The Man Who Broke Purple*, 171.

<sup>44</sup> Clark, *The Man Who Broke Purple*, 172.

<sup>45</sup> Victor, *The Pearl Harbor Myth*, 42.

<sup>46</sup> Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 45.

<sup>47</sup> Rusbridger and Nave, *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor*, 117; John Costello, *Days of Infamy: MacArthur, Roosevelt, Churchill – The Shocking Truth Revealed How Their Secret Deals and Strategic Deals Caused Disaster at Pearl Harbor* (New York: Pocket Books, 1994), 47.

<sup>48</sup> Sniegowski, “The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism.”

<sup>49</sup> Robert A. Theobald, U.S.N. ret., *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor: The Washington Contribution to the Japanese Attack* (Old Greenwich, CT: The Devin-Adair Co., 1954), 78, 79, 80.



providing “precise information of the proposed attack” on Pearl Harbor. When Dies informed Secretary of State Hull, he was told to keep quiet on the matter because of delicate relations between the U.S. and Japan, though Dies claimed that representatives from the State Department, Army and Navy inspected the map.<sup>50</sup>

Joe Lieb, a newspaper reporter who had served in the Roosevelt administration, claimed that his friend Cordell Hull confided to him on November 29, 1941 that President Roosevelt knew that the Japanese were going to attack Pearl Harbor within a few days, and that the President was going to let this happen as a way to get the country into war. Hull was strongly against this scheme and turned over a document to Lieb, which allegedly concerned the Pearl Harbor plan and urged him to take it to the press without revealing who had leaked it. Only one newspaper took the story, however, *The Honolulu Advertiser*, which created a front-page banner headline in its Sunday, November 30 issue: “Japanese May Strike Over Weekend.”<sup>51</sup>

On November 19, 1941, the Japanese government had come to a secret decision that if the country was to go to war with the United States, its diplomatic corps would be notified by insertion of a false weather report “east wind rain” in the middle of the daily language short-wave news broadcast. When fifty two suppressed pages of the Army Pearl Harbor Board report were finally made public on December 11, 1945, they disclosed that the board had concluded that the “winds message” had indeed been inserted in the Japanese news and weather broadcast, and was in turn picked up by a U.S. Navy monitoring station, translated on December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1941 and its contents distributed to the White House, Army and Navy high commands though not to Admiral Kimmel and General Short in Hawaii (the two inexplicably were never provided with a decoding machine, and were refused clearance for viewing decrypted cables).<sup>52</sup>

Cryptographer Laurance Safford stated that his superiors ordered him to destroy the notes he had made concerning the “East Wind Rain” message. Crucial confirming evidence for the receipt of the “East Wind Rain” message was a 1977 interview with Ralph T. Briggs, conducted by the Naval Security Group and declassified by the National Security Agency in March 1980. Briggs said in this interview that he was the one who had intercepted this crucial message while on duty as a chief watch supervisor at the Naval communication station at Cheltham, Maryland. Briggs further stated that he was ordered by his superior officer in 1946 not to testify about the matter to the Joint Congressional Committee and to cease any contact with Captain Safford. In addition, the two Japanese assistant naval attachés posted at the Washington embassy in 1941 have verified that the message was transmitted on December 4<sup>th</sup>, exactly as Safford said.<sup>53</sup>

In late November, 1941, Lt. Commander Kramer of Naval Intelligence in Washington distributed a Pearl Harbor “bomb plot” message to the President, the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Stark, the Director of Naval Communications, the Director of War Plans, and the Director of Naval Intelligence. It was accompanied by a summary of its contents as follows: “Tokyo directs special reports on ships in Pearl Harbor which is divided into five areas for the purpose of showing exact locations.” Interpreters felt that this meant that Tokyo was planning an air attack on ships

<sup>50</sup> Martin Dies, *Martin Dies Story* (New York: Bookmailer, 1963), 165; Victor, *The Pearl Harbor Myth*, 47, 48.

<sup>51</sup> Sniegoski, “The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism;” Victor, *The Pearl Harbor Myth*, 50.

<sup>52</sup> Morganstern, *Pearl Harbor*, 198, 199; Toland, *Infamy*, 69; Doenecke and Wiltz, *From Isolation to War 1931-1941*, 170; Craig Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness* (New York: Scribner, 2016), 79; Robert A. Theobald, *Final Secret of Pearl Harbor* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1954).

<sup>53</sup> Toland, *Infamy*, 176-177; Sniegoski, “The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism.”

at Pearl Harbor. Admirals Kimmel and Short, however, were never informed of this fact.<sup>54</sup> (Stimson claimed that the FDR administration issued a general war warning on November 27<sup>th</sup> and that it was unnecessary to repeat the warning in the subsequent days).<sup>55</sup>

Seventy-two hours before the Pearl Harbor attack, the Australian government advised Washington that an aircraft carrier task force of the Japanese Navy had been sighted by Australian reconnaissance headed towards Pearl Harbor. Forty-eight hours before the attack, the War Department was again notified that this Japanese task force was still in progress, with another notification sent 24 hours before the attack, though none of this information was given to General Short.<sup>56</sup>

## Historiographic Debate

The literature on Pearl Harbor can be divided into two perspectives. The first is the orthodox perspective which considers the Pearl Harbor attack one of unalloyed Japanese aggression. Its proponents defend the Roosevelt administration's conduct and blame naval commanders in Hawaii for their negligence. If there was foreknowledge of an attack, it never made it up to the top levers of the Roosevelt administration because of bureaucratic inefficiency and informational overload.<sup>57</sup> The second perspective is the revisionist perspective which argues that the Roosevelt administration helped provoke the Pearl Harbor attack through the oil embargo and other provocative maneuvers, and was privy to cracked naval codes detailing Japanese plans but deliberately kept this information from naval commanders in Hawaii who could have stopped the attacks

The famed historian Charles A. Beard was the most prominent revisionist. His book *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941* (1948) provided a detailed review of congressional and army and navy investigations into the Pearl Harbor attacks, whose findings lent weight to the conclusion that President Roosevelt and members of his administration had deceived the American public into participating in the war.<sup>58</sup> After the book's publication, Beard was attacked as a "conspiracy theorist" and for his "imprecatory preaching," as Harvard University professor Samuel Eliot Morrison put it in his 1950 American Historical Association (AHA) presidential address.<sup>59</sup>

Other rigorous researchers, however, had come to similar conclusions. Notable among these were George Morganstern, a journalist with *The Chicago Tribune* and author of *Pearl Harbor: The Story of the Secret War* (1947), Charles Callan Tansill, one of the top diplomatic historians of his generation who wrote *Back Door to War: The Roosevelt Foreign Policy 1933-1941* (1952), and historian Harry Elmer Barnes, who had written one of the most notable "revisionist" books about World War I, *The Genesis of the World War* (1926). In the concluding essay to the book, *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* (1953),

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<sup>54</sup> *Hearings Before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of Pearl Harbor Attacks*, 266-E, I; Toland, *Infamy*, 5. Numerous decrypted memos from Tokyo to Consul Kita indicated an unusual Japanese interest in Pearl Harbor, and assessment of its defenses. Decrypted cables around this time also pointed to the Japanese order of evacuation for nonessential personnel at its embassy on Massachusetts Avenue in Washington – a sure indication that the final round of the crisis was approaching.

<sup>55</sup> Doenecke and Wiltz, *From Isolation to War 1931-1941*, 170.

<sup>56</sup> Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*, 280; Harry Elmer Barnes, *Pearl Harbor After a Quarter Century* (Institute for Historical Review, 1980), 112.

<sup>57</sup> Key early orthodox works include: Herbert Feis, *Road to Pearl Harbor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), and Basil Rauch, *Roosevelt, From Munich to Pearl Harbor: A Study in the Creation of a Foreign Policy* (New York: Creative Age Press, 1950).

<sup>58</sup> Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941*.

<sup>59</sup> Richard Drake, *Charles Austin Beard: The Return of the Master Historian of American Imperialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018); Samuel Eliot Morrison, "Presidential address read at the annual dinner of the American Historical Association in Chicago on December 29, 1950," *American Historical Review*, 56, no. 2 (January 1951): 261-75, <https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/presidential-addresses/samuel-eliot-morison>

which included selections from prominent “revisionist” authors, Barnes wrote that “the net result of revisionist scholarship applied to Pearl Harbor boils down essentially to this. In order to promote Roosevelt's political ambitions and his mendacious foreign policy, some three thousand American boys were quite needlessly butchered at Pearl Harbor. Of course, they were only a drop in the bucket compared to those who were ultimately slain in the war that resulted, which was as needless, in terms of vital American interests, as the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.”<sup>60</sup>

The political consciousness of the Pearl Harbor revisionists had been shaped by the deception of the Wilson administration during World War I, which they felt had been repeated by the Roosevelt administration.<sup>61</sup> Barnes argued in various brochures and other printed materials that a “historical blackout” on the part of “powerful pressure groups”—the foreign policy “blob” in current terminology—prevented the truth from reaching scholars and the American public.<sup>62</sup> In 1966, two years before his death, Barnes wrote that he remained convinced that on December 4, 1941, “Roosevelt obtained the welcome news, apparently from the British, that the Japanese were not only going to attack but would make their attack on Pearl Harbor.” The President then revealed this information to General Marshall and “gave an order that all information sent to Pearl Harbor had to be cleared with Marshall, and ordered Marshall to disappear,” so it would never get there.<sup>63</sup>

In 1981, Gordon Prange, the chief historian of General Douglas MacArthur’s staff during the U.S. military occupation of Japan and a professor of history at the University of Maryland, published a massive history of Pearl Harbor posthumously, *At Dawn We Slept*, which purported to debunk the “revisionist” view about Pearl Harbor, particularly in its concluding essay.<sup>64</sup> Prange wrote that a conspiracy was impossible because “somewhere along the line, someone would have recalled his solemn oath to defend the United States...and have blown the whistle.”<sup>65</sup> Prange blamed General Short for a preoccupation with training at the expense of fulfilling his primary task to guard the Pacific Fleet and for a failure to use radar. He also faulted Admiral Kimmel—who once stated that he’d “never thought those little yellow sons of bitches could pull off such an attack, so far from Japan”—for failing to place torpedo nets around the battleships.<sup>66</sup>

In the early 1960s, Samuel Eliot Morrison, a Harvard professor commissioned to write a multi-volume history of the naval war in the Pacific, and Roberta Wohlstetter, a RAND Corporation researcher and husband of nuclear strategist and neoconservative guru Albert Wohlstetter, gave unwitting validation to the revisionist point of view in emphasizing the confusion and fragmentation in intelligence gathering and problem of communications between different government agencies. Their view was that indications of an attack at Pearl Harbor existed but were lost amidst the clutter of incoming intelligence.<sup>67</sup> Separating the wheat from the chaff, however, as one historian notes, is the fundamental function of the intelligence agencies.<sup>68</sup> Wohlstetter also admitted that it was “impossible to establish

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<sup>60</sup> *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, ed. Barnes, 651.

<sup>61</sup> Drake, *Charles Austin Beard*.

<sup>62</sup> Richard T. Ruetten, “Harry Elmer Barnes and the ‘Historical Blackout,’” *The Historian*, 33, 2, February 1971, 203.

<sup>63</sup> Harry Elmer Barnes, “Revisionism: A Key to Peace,” *Rampart Journal of Individualist Thought* (Spring 1966), 33.

<sup>64</sup> Gordon W. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982).

<sup>65</sup> Prange quoted in Victor, *The Pearl Harbor Myth*, viii.

<sup>66</sup> Prange, *At Dawn We Slept*. “Little yellow sons of bitches” comment is in Nelson, *Pearl Harbor*, 443. Pearl Harbor investigator Henry Clausen in *Pearl Harbor: Final Judgment* (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 1992) claimed that Kimmel should have been prepared for the Pearl Harbor attacks from reading the newspapers. But if that was the case, the FDR administration should have been prepared too!

<sup>67</sup> Roberta Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962); Samuel Eliot Morrison, “The Lessons of Pearl Harbor,” *Saturday Evening Post*, October 28, 1961, 24, 27.

<sup>68</sup> Sniegowski, “The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism.”

with the evidence available whether or not an authentic execute message of the ‘winds code’ [revealing a Japanese attack] was received.” The insinuation being that it might have been.

The revisionist perspective was given further weight by the publication of a book by a distinguished foreign service officer, Frank Schuler, *The Pearl Harbor Cover-Up* (1976), which detailed how the U.S. ambassador to Japan, Joseph Grew—who had warned about an impending attack on Pearl Harbor in advance—and other State Department officials had destroyed many documents as part of an effort to coverup the truth.<sup>69</sup> John Toland’s 1982 book *Infamy*, shed light on the fact that the Dutch naval attaché in Washington, Captain Johan E. Meijer Ranneft, kept a secret diary, which revealed that the U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence (O.N.I.) had detected, in early December 1941, two Japanese aircraft carriers heading east toward Pearl Harbor.<sup>70</sup>

Historians Justus Doenecke and John E. Wiltz who are critical of “revisionist historians” that want to blame Roosevelt, nevertheless acknowledge that the “warnings from Washington [to Hawaii about an impending attack] were ambiguous and lacked any follow-through,” something they find to be “quite inexcusable.”<sup>71</sup> Another staunch orthodox historian, Samuel Flagg Bemis of Yale University, who made a career attacking the revisionists, conceded in a 1947 essay that one of these revisionists whom he attacked, George Morganstern, was correct in arguing that “much of the blame for Pearl Harbor rested in Washington” and that “the majority of the congressional committee [investigating the Pearl Harbor disaster] was biased and trying to protect its party’s leaders.”<sup>72</sup>

Passionate debate about Pearl Harbor has continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Orthodox historians like Susan Dunn, a pro-Roosevelt liberal disdainful of the America-First Committee, continue to dismiss revisionist authors.<sup>73</sup> National Security Agency (NSA) historian Stephen Budiansky and Emily Rosenberg of Macelester College claim in writings published in the early 2000s that U.S. code intercepts were of diplomatic and not military cables, which could not have been very specific about any war plans.<sup>74</sup> However, in the early 1990s, NSA historians had uncovered declassified documents at a warehouse used to store naval records in Crane, Indiana which showed that Japanese naval signals were picked up and that the U.S. Navy possessed all the intercepts that would have revealed Japanese plans to attack Pearl Harbor. According to historian John Costello, these decrypts, known as JN-25 intelligence, were not broken on time and only 10 percent were read due to staffing shortages and bureaucratic miscalculation, which the Navy subsequently took pains to cover up for half a century. Costello finds

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<sup>69</sup> Frank Schuler and Robin Moore, *The Pearl Harbor Coverup* (New York: Pinnacle Books, 1976).

<sup>70</sup> Toland, *Infamy*. Critics, however, have suggested that it was believed those carriers were on a surveillance and not attack mission.<sup>70</sup> British Historian Ronald Lewin emphasized in a 1982 book that there was no specific indicator to pinpoint Pearl Harbor as the specific target of any Japanese attack. Ronald Lewin, *The American Magic: Codes, Ciphers, and the Defeat of Japan* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1982).

<sup>71</sup> Doenecke and Wiltz, *From Isolation to War 1931-1941*, 172.

<sup>72</sup> Bemis quoted in Thomas E. Mahl, *Desperate Deception: British Covert Operations in the United States 1939-1944* (Washington, D.C. Brassey’s, 1998), 186; Samuel Flagg Bemis, “First Gun of a Revisionist Historiography for the Second World War,” *Modern History* 19 (March 1947): 56-59.

<sup>73</sup> Dunn is quoted deriding the revisionists in Drake, *Charles Austin Beard*.

<sup>74</sup> Stephen Budiansky, *Battle of Wits: The Complete Story of Codebreaking in World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2000); Stephen Budiansky, “Too Late for Pearl Harbor,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, December 1999, 47-51. On the broader debate, see *Pearl Harbor and the Kimmel Controversy: The Views Today*, ed. David F. Winkler and Jennifer M. Lloyd (Washington, D.C. : Naval Historical Foundation, 2000), and Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live*. Rosenberg’s book has some good insights but unfairly mocks Stinnett and other so-called revisionist historians for conveying conspiracy theories. She herself lacks the same inquisitive spirit as them, fails to rigorously assess their findings, and ignores evidence that they present. In her attempt to undercut the revisionist claims, Rosenberg also makes egregious errors, such as her claim that McCollum, author of the 8-point memo urging measures to provoke Japan into war, was a mere junior level officer when he was in fact head of the Far East Desk of the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI). Besides intellectual laziness, Rosenberg’s bias may be attributed to the fact that Pearl Harbor revisionism was a cause taken up by Republicans in the 1990s and conservative isolationists before that. Like most U.S. historians, Rosenberg is a liberal who lionizes FDR.

evidence, however, that British cryptanalysts in Singapore cracked the naval code and engaged in secret exchanges with the Americans according to Duane Whitlock, a U.S. naval intercept operator.<sup>75</sup>

Pacific War veteran Robert Stinnett's 2001 book *Day of Deceit* offered a strong revival of the revisionist perspective. It showcased a letter from Rear Admiral Royal Ingersoll, assistant chief of naval operations, to U.S. Navy Pacific Commanders Admiral James Richardson and Thomas Hart on October 4, 1940, which stated that the Navy had begun tracking the movement and location of Japan's warships. Stinnett also found record of a request in November 1940 for special IBM computer sorting equipment for use in decrypting the 5-Num Japanese code. He wrote that every major movement of the Japanese Fleet [showing their move towards attack] has been predicted, and that Navy cryptographers had solved the Japanese naval system, which was "ninety nine percent readable."<sup>76</sup>

White House route logs further show that Roosevelt was on the receiving end of the cracked codes which revealed that Hawaii or Pearl Harbor was a target, and that the Hawaiian attack would occur on December 7<sup>th</sup>.<sup>77</sup> Stinnett's research determined that American monitors tracked the Japanese Pearl Harbor task force by means of radio direction finding techniques and interception of radio transmissions. Homer Kisner, who supervised the interception of Japanese naval communications, told Stinnett that he had handled over 1,460,000 Japanese military intercepts, and that he had warned his superiors that Japan had been placed on a war footing and that its ships were "headed towards Pearl Harbor."<sup>78</sup>

British and Australian intelligence veterans James Rausbridger and Eric Nave's 1991 book *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor*, had earlier provided important detail about how the U.S. Navy suppressed the record of JN-25 messages that had been decrypted which are believed to have contained the final operational details of the Pearl Harbor attacks.<sup>79</sup> The authors believe that Admiral Richmond K. Turner, Director of the Navy's War Plans Division, and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill withheld the information from Roosevelt and his civilian advisers as part of a conspiracy to draw the U.S. into the world war.<sup>80</sup> Stinnett sees Roosevelt as central to the conspiracy while maintaining that Joseph J. Rochefort, the commander of the cryptographic center at Pearl Harbor, and Edwin Layton, the Pacific Fleet's chief security officer, were aware of the approaching Japanese fleet and refrained from warning Admiral Kimmel.<sup>81</sup>

While many questions remain unanswered, the revisionist literature overall provides a wealth of evidence to back up its perspective and to raise critical concerns about the conduct of U.S. foreign policy

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<sup>75</sup> John Costello, *Days of Infamy: MacArthur, Roosevelt, Churchill-The Shocking Truth Revealed : How Their Secret Deals and Strategic Blunders Caused Disasters at Pearl Harbor* (New York: Pocket Books, 1994), 279, 282, 294, 320, 321, 323. Costello points out that it remains a matter of speculation how much Japanese naval traffic was read and whether sufficient intercepts were broken to establish the precise date and timing of the Pearl Harbor attacks. The mystery can only be fully solved when all the records are declassified.

<sup>76</sup> Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 22, 23, 77, 78, 80. This important document is available in RG 38, CNO, Secret Serial 081420 of October 1940, SRH 355, Vol. 1, p. 395-397 at Archives II in College Park Maryland. Apparently, there is also a censored copy that Stinnett advises researchers to beware of. Agnes Meyer Driscoll, the Navy's chief civilian cryptanalyst and a female, played a key role in cracking the code.

<sup>77</sup> Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*; Griffin, *The American Trajectory: Divine or Demonic?*

<sup>78</sup> Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 58, 215. See also Toland, *Day of Infamy*; Sniegoski, "The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism;" Griffin, *The American Trajectory?* In May, 2000, Stinnett found 4,000 additional communications intelligence documents which pointed to the fact that that Japanese commanders had declared their target (Pearl Harbor) over radio airwaves which had been decoded. (*Day of Deceit*, 261, 262). In one letter, Lt. John M. Lietweiler wrote Washington about his staff succeeding in intercepting, decoding and translating the Japanese naval operations code, and that they were reading enough traffic to keep two translators very busy. Stinnett believes that there are 143,000 naval intercepts that remain classified and unseen from the 1941 U.S. Navy files.

<sup>79</sup> Rausbridger and Nave, *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor*, 172, 179. The JN-25 messages are known by researchers to exist, as has been confirmed by the NSA, but have been withheld from the U.S. National Archives.

<sup>80</sup> Rausbridger and Nave, *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor*, 179, 180. See also Costello, *Days of Infamy*, 324, which promotes the same view.

<sup>81</sup> Stinnett, *Days of Deceit*, 261-270.

in the lead-up to Pearl Harbor. That revisionist authors continue to be ridiculed, attacked, or ignored by mainstream academics reflects less on the quality of argument than on the continued politicization of history, and sentimentality towards Franklin Roosevelt in an era of conservative political dominance.

### Dewey's Secret

During the 1944 presidential campaign, the Republican candidate Thomas Dewey was going to go public with the charge that the U.S. had broken the Japanese diplomatic codes and that Roosevelt had advance knowledge of the attack, though he was dissuaded by one of Marshall's assistants, Colonel Carter Clarke. He showed Dewey a letter from Marshall which stated that the war effort would be compromised if Japan had learned her codes had been broken as it would then change them.<sup>82</sup>

The U.S. Navy at the time of Pearl Harbor had taken over espionage investigations from the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and had gained operational knowledge about the planned attack from Tadashi Morimura, a Japanese spy whose activities the FBI had monitored. Robert Ogg, a special Navy investigator for San Francisco's 12<sup>th</sup> Naval District, located Japanese warships in the North Pacific by radio direction in the week before Pearl Harbor. The FBI further gained information of the attacks from Dusko Popov, a German and British double agent loyal to the allies whose flamboyance made him Ian Fleming's model for James Bond.<sup>83</sup> FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover said that he passed on to Roosevelt information pointing to an imminent attack on Pearl Harbor though was told by Roosevelt to keep quiet on the matter.<sup>84</sup>

General Elliot Thorpe, the U.S. Army representative to the government of the Dutch East Indies headed by General Hein ter Poorten wrote that the most important thing he ever did as an army intelligence officer was to notify Washington of the forthcoming attack on Pearl Harbor...General ter Poorten...said to me, 'I have something here of great importance to your government;...and handed me...an intercept of a message from Tokyo to the Japanese ambassador in Bangkok...[which] told of the upcoming attacks on Hawaii, the Philippines, Malaya, and Thailand.' Besides showing an intercept to Thorpe, ter Poorten reportedly sent a warning of a Pearl Harbor attack to the Dutch army attaché in Washington, Colonel F.G. Weijerman, who relayed it to Marshall.<sup>85</sup>

In the last week of November 1941, Roosevelt warned diplomat William Bullitt against traveling across the Pacific, stating that he was "expecting the Japs to attack any time now, probably within the next three or four days."<sup>86</sup> On the eve of the attacks, someone in the administration curiously ordered the Red Cross to quietly send large quantities of medical supplies and experienced medical personnel which would indicate foreknowledge that something bad was about to happen. Don C. Smith, who directed war services for the Red Cross before World War II, according to his daughter, was told by Roosevelt to prepare secretly for an impending Japanese attack on Hawaii and that "the American people would never agree to enter the war in Europe unless they were attack [sic] within their own borders."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Victor, *The Pearl Harbor Myth*, 54, 55.

<sup>83</sup> Wisnioski, "The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism;" Toland, *Infamy*, 258, 260; Frank Mintz, *Revisionism and the Origins of Pearl Harbor* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 97, 98; Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 83-97.

<sup>84</sup> Hoover relayed this information in the presence of a Colonel Carleton Ketchum who referred to the discussion in his 1976 autobiography. Toland, *Infamy*; Sniegoski, "The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism;" Victor, *The Pearl Harbor Myth*, 36.

<sup>85</sup> Victor, *The Pearl Harbor Myth*, 48.

<sup>86</sup> Tim Tzouliadis, *The Forsaken: An American Tragedy in Stalin's Russia* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), 240.

<sup>87</sup> Daryl S. Borquist, "Advance Warning? The Red Cross Connection," *Naval History*, 13:3 (May/June 1999); Sniegoski, "The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism."

## Vacant Sea

When U.S. Ambassador Joseph Grew warned Washington of a sudden military and naval action by Japan in January 1941, Navy officials amazingly responded by declaring the North Pacific Ocean—the region over which the Japanese Task Force that attacked at Pearl Harbor would travel—a “vacant sea” and ordered all U.S. and allied shipping out of the waters; a reversal that was ignored by subsequent Congressional investigations.<sup>88</sup> Two weeks before Pearl Harbor, Admiral Kimmel defied the order by ordering a search for a Japanese carrier force north of Hawaii, though the ships were ordered back.<sup>89</sup>

Admiral T.B. Inglis, the head of naval intelligence, testified before Congress in 1945 about inadequate anti-aircraft guns and radar systems and that the Army had puzzlingly failed to carry out long range patrols with long range bombers, which would have made it exceedingly difficult for the Japanese forces to have approached Pearl Harbor.<sup>90</sup> The only planes made available were B-18s, which were described by Fleet Admiral William S. Halsey as “slow, short-legged and unfitted for overseas scouting.”

A prior directive required the training of large quotas of airmen in the Atlantic. This, Halsey writes, combined with the transfer of the carrier Yorktown on the East Coast of the United States “was a tremendous drain on our already slim resources”<sup>91</sup> – coming at a time that U.S.-Japanese relations had broken down and cracked codes revealed that the Japanese were surveying Pearl Harbor to determine the exact location of battleships and cruisers in preparation for an inevitable attack.<sup>92</sup>

In December 1940, Admiral Claude C. Bloch had issued a warning about the vulnerability of the Pearl Harbor base to the Chief of Naval Operations, James O. Richardson, prompting some upgrades, which were less than adequate.<sup>93</sup> In February 1941, FDR relieved Richardson of his command after he launched his own protest against concentrating the U.S. Fleet in Pearl Harbor away from its traditional location off the West Coast. Richardson felt that this offered the Japanese an opportunity to destroy much of the Navy at a single blow.<sup>94</sup> Ten days before the Pearl Harbor attack, naval planes were shipped away from Hawaii to Wake Island and Midway along with Army and Navy personnel. General Short begged for more planes, more men, more detection equipment, which could have helped defend Pearl Harbor though he was ignored.<sup>95</sup>

## December 6<sup>th</sup> and December 7<sup>th</sup> Oddities

On the night of December 6<sup>th</sup>, the Navy Department intercepted a fourteen point memo known as “the pilot memo” between 11:49 AM and 2:51 AM which provided Japan’s reply to a series of

<sup>88</sup> Stinnett, *Days of Deceit*, 144; Sniegowski, “The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism.”

<sup>89</sup> Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 144, 145. An alternative Trans-Pacific route was designated through the Torres Strait in the specific area between Australia and New Guinea.

<sup>90</sup> Rear Admiral T.B. Inglis, *Pearl Harbor Attacks, Hearings Before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of Pearl Harbor Attacks*, 160. See also Testimony of Lt. General Walter C. Short before the Navy Court of Inquiry in Roland H. Worth, *Pearl Harbor: Selected Testimonies from the Congressional Hearings* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013), 289. Short stated that his forces had access to only 20 out of 140 anti-aircraft guns that were supposed to have been allotted and 180 out of 345 .50 caliber guns. He said that “we required approximately 200 pursuit planes,” but had “I think, something like 105 P-40s and 80 of them were in commission.” Short had also asked for a garrison at Kaneohe Bay which was not fulfilled.

<sup>91</sup> William F. Halsey, foreword to Theobald, *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor*, viii.

<sup>92</sup> Theobald, *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor*, 46.

<sup>93</sup> Testimony Admiral James O. Richardson, *Pearl Harbor Attacks*, Congress of the United States, 277.

<sup>94</sup> *Congressional Record*, September 6, 1944, 7670; Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*, 290; John T. Flynn, “The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor,” October 1945, <https://www.antiwar.com/rep/flynn1.html>; Barnes, *Pearl Harbor After a Quarter Century*, 23.

<sup>95</sup> Flynn, “The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor.”

proposals made by Secretary of State Cordell Hull and effectively called for a severing of relations with the United States. The Japanese government in the memo rebuked the Roosevelt administration for continuing aid to Chiang Kai Shek (Jiang Jieshi), for sustaining economic pressures which were “more inhuman than military pressure” and “menaced the empire’s existence,” and for colluding with Great Britain and other powers to sustain the dominant position it has “hitherto occupied not only in China but in other areas of East Asia.”<sup>96</sup>

Cordell Hull received the memo after 9 PM on the night of the 6<sup>th</sup> through Secretary of the Navy William F. Knox. Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall appears to have been deprived vital information by Walter Bedell Smith, the Secretary of the General Staff who became Dwight Eisenhower’s chief of staff and later CIA Director.<sup>97</sup> Marshall testified before the Congressional investigating committee that he could not recollect his whereabouts on the night of December 6<sup>th</sup> though claimed elsewhere that he was sick and went to bed early and was home helping his wife recover from an accident. However, the headline in *The Washington Times* on the 7<sup>th</sup> read: “Marshall Goes to Vets Reunion.” This was at the University Club, mere blocks from the White House.<sup>98</sup>

Senator Homer Ferguson (R-Michigan) later reported to his colleague Senator Owen Brewster (R-ME) and to his research aide Percy L. Greaves that a few days after Marshall’s attack of amnesia on the witness stand, he overheard Marshall tell Senator Alben W. Barkley (D-KY), chairman of the Congressional Pearl Harbor Investigation, that “I could not tell you where I was Saturday night (the 6<sup>th</sup>). It would have got the chief (Roosevelt) into trouble.”<sup>99</sup>

Roosevelt claims that he never held a meeting of his war Cabinet on the evening of the 6<sup>th</sup>, however, Naval Secretary William F. Knox confided to a trusted longtime associate, James G. Stahlman, that Roosevelt did indeed call a meeting of the “War Council” late on the night of the 6<sup>th</sup>, where war plans in response to the impending Japanese attack were discussed.<sup>100</sup> George Marshall had to have been among those present.

Earlier in the night of the 6<sup>th</sup>, Roosevelt had hosted a dinner party for a British Vice-Admiral and was delivered the intercept at 9:30 PM in his study. He told aide Harry Hopkins who was with him that “this means war.” Hopkins replied that since war was imminent and the Japanese were intending to strike “it was too bad that we could not strike the first blow and prevent any sort of surprise.” Roosevelt nodded and then said: “No, we can’t do that. We are a democracy and a peaceful people.”<sup>101</sup>

After travelling to Hawaii, Secretary Knox asked Admiral Kimmel if he had received a dispatch of the night before the attack warning of its imminence. Kimmel responded that he had not, and quoted Knox as saying “well, we sent you one [a midnight warning]. I’m sure we sent one to the commander of the Asiatic Fleet.”<sup>102</sup> What happened to the alleged dispatch remains a mystery.

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<sup>96</sup> Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack: *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, Congress of the United States, July 20, 1946 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946), 212-218.

<sup>97</sup> Morganstern, *Pearl Harbor*, 269, 271. Morganstern raises the question as to whether Smith’s promotions were because he had withheld the warning about Pearl Harbor until the blow had fallen, hence supporting the designs of the war hawks in the Roosevelt administration?

<sup>98</sup> *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, 219; Costello, *Days of Infamy*, 207. At the club, the Times reported that Marshall was given a cheering vote of confidence.

<sup>99</sup> Barnes, *Pearl Harbor After a Quarter Century*, 37.

<sup>100</sup> Costello, *Days of Infamy*, 209.

<sup>101</sup> *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, 216; Morganstern, “The Actual Road to Pearl Harbor,” in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, ed. Barnes, 371.

<sup>102</sup> Morganstern, “The Actual Road to Pearl Harbor,” in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, ed. Barnes, 374.



The 14<sup>th</sup> part of the decoded response to Secretary Hull was most significant. It stated:

Obviously it is the intention of the American Government to conspire with Great Britain and other countries to obstruct Japan's efforts toward the establishment of peace through the creation of a New Order in East Asia, and especially to preserve Anglo-American rights and interests by keeping Japan and China at war. This intention has been revealed clearly during the course of the present negotiations. Thus, the earnest hope of the Japanese Government to adjust Japanese-American relations and to preserve and promote the peace of the Pacific through cooperation with the American Government has finally been lost. The Japanese Government regrets to have to notify hereby the American Government that in view of the attitude of the American Government it cannot but consider that it is impossible to reach an agreement through further negotiations.<sup>103</sup>

This message, which portended an imminent attack—particularly given Japan's history of adopting surprise attacks towards adversaries when diplomatic relations were cut—was filed at 2:38 AM in Tokyo on the morning of December 7<sup>th</sup>, intercepted by the naval monitoring station between 3:05 AM and 3:10 AM and delivered within the Navy Department shortly after 8 AM. The delivery to the White House and to Secretary Knox, who was at the State Department for a 10 AM meeting with Secretaries Hull and Stimson, was made shortly before 10 AM. Distribution of the fourteenth part within the War Department was begun at 9 AM. with subsequent delivery to the State Department.<sup>104</sup>

Another of the decoded messages noted that a “hostile action by Japan would occur” at a time that corresponded to 7:30 AM Hawaii time or 1 PM Eastern time on Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>. Both Admiral Kimmel and General Short testified before Congress their belief that this and other decoded cables they saw only after the fact pointed to Pearl Harbor as the likely venue of attack.<sup>105</sup>

After he woke up on the morning of December 7<sup>th</sup>, despite the imminence of war, General George C. Marshall said that he went for his customary horseback ride. Historian Charles C. Tansill described this as “a history-making ride” as it ensured that the urgent cables pointing to the 1 PM timing of Japan's attack—which a Colonel Rufus Bratton was trying to get to Marshall on that morning—would not reach Pearl Harbor in time.<sup>106</sup> Major Eugene Harrison pointed to a deeper conspiracy when he testified that “whoever said [Marshall] was riding horses lied, because I saw and I talked to him at that time, and other Army and Navy officers confirmed that Marshall was not riding.”<sup>107</sup>

When Marshall got to his office reportedly at 11:25 AM, Marshall still had time to get word to General Short of the impending attack through use of a scrambler phone—which rendered conversations a hash of meaningless sounds that are unscrambled at the receiving end. However, inexplicably, Marshall did not pick up his scrambler phone, which would have reached General Short within a matter of minutes. Marshall also rejected an offer by Admiral Harold Stark to use the Navy communications facility, which would have also gotten the message to Hawaii quickly. Instead, Marshall sent the warning using a combination of Western Union and Radio Corporation of America (RCA), a much slower method. His message did not carry a “priority” classification and was not marked “urgent.” It read: “The Japanese are presenting at 1 PM Eastern Standard Time, today, what amounts to an

<sup>103</sup> *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, 221.

<sup>104</sup> *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, 221.

<sup>105</sup> *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, 232, 233.

<sup>106</sup> Morganstern, “The Actual Road to Pearl Harbor,” in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, ed. Barnes, 374; Tansill, *Back Door to War*, 351. Barnes suggests another scenario in which Marshall got to the office early but withheld delivery of the message for several hours. Barnes, *Pearl Harbor After a Quarter Century*, 38, 39.

<sup>107</sup> Victor, *The Pearl Harbor Myth*, 178.

ultimatum. Also, they are under orders to destroy their code machine immediately. Just what significance the hour set may have we do not know, but be on alert accordingly.”<sup>108</sup>

When the Japanese assault on Pearl Harbor began, a bicycle boy was carrying Marshall’s dispatch through the streets of Honolulu. It was not actually delivered to the Army signal office at Ft. Shafter until 11:45 AM, two hours after the last Japanese plane had retired. Because it was not marked “priority” other messages which were so marked were decoded first at the signal office. The message was finally decoded and delivered at 2:58 PM Hawaii time (9:58 EST) and turned over to General Short’s aide, Captain Trueman who delivered it to Short at 3 PM.

The warning thus was in Short’s hand eight hours and twelve minutes after being filed for transmission and seven hours and five minutes after the attack had begun.<sup>109</sup> A demoralized Kimmel tossed the message when he got it into a wastebasket and allegedly stated: “it is not the slightest interest to me now.” General Short later testified before Congress that if Marshall had “used the scrambler phone and gotten it [the message] in ten or fifteen minutes, we would probably have gotten more of the import and a clearer idea of the danger from that message and we would have had time to warm up the planes and get them in the air to meet any attack.”<sup>110</sup>

Marshall’s statements before an army board regarding his failure to use the scrambler phone was contradictory and evasive. He claimed that he could not say with certainty what was “going on in his mind at that time” since it had been four years ago, and that he was not sure “what his reasons were,” but that he had hesitated to use the device because it was known that German agents had tapped scrambler phone conversations between FDR and Winston Churchill and communications from William Bullitt when he was ambassador to France. Marshall also told Admiral Short that he feared a “leak which would embarrass the State Department.”

This explanation, repeated by Marshall’s biographer Forrest Pogue, makes no sense if we consider that the Japanese intended to embarrass the whole nation with their attack, and that Marshall was in a position to save American lives and defend the country, which was his principal duty. Significantly, Marshall’s lame excuse did not pass muster before the army board, which found that Marshall was remiss in his conduct.<sup>111</sup>

The Minority Report of the Joint Congressional Committee raised serious concerns not only about the method of dispatch but also the quality of the messages sent by Marshall to General Short and Admiral Kimmel. It determined that these messages were “couched in such conflicting and imprecise language that they failed to convey to the commanders’ definite information on the state of diplomatic relations with Japan and on Japanese war designs and positive orders respecting the

<sup>108</sup> *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, 224.

<sup>109</sup> Morganstern, *Pearl Harbor*, 239. See also Morganstern, “The Actual Road to Pearl Harbor, in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, ed. Barnes, 374; Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 228; Harry E. Barnes, “The New York Times Whitewash of General Marshall,” in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, ed. Barnes, 387-395.

<sup>110</sup> Barnes, “The New York Times Whitewash of General Marshall,” in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, ed. Barnes, 395; *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, 227.

<sup>111</sup> Roland H. Worth, *Pearl Harbor: Select Testimonies, Fully Indexed, From the Congressional Hearings (1945-1946) and Prior Investigation of the Events Leading Up to the Attack* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1993), 283; Summers and Swan, *A Matter of Honor*, 319, 320, 321; Barnes, “The New York Times Whitewash of General Marshall,” in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, ed. Barnes, 395, 396. Major General Henry Russell, who was on the army board and author of a lengthy account that surfaced only 57 years later in 2001, 28 years after Russell’s death, wrote of Marshall giving investigators the “brush off technique” and claiming he had another meeting to attend when questioned seriously. Marshall’s career did not suffer, however, as he was later appointed Secretary of State. A defense of Marshall’s conduct is presented by his official biographer Forest C. Pogue in *George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope, 1939-1942* (New York: Viking, 1966).

particular actions to be taken—orders that were beyond all reasonable doubts as to the need for an all-out alert.” They concluded in turn that “high authorities [ie. Marshall et al.] failed to discharge their full duty.”<sup>112</sup> The Army Pearl Harbor Board, after careful review of the messages, also concluded that the messages to General Short were “inadequate and misleading” and that the War Department had failed to send specific directives to outpost commanders.<sup>113</sup>

## Aftermath

After he was telephoned the news by the President that the Japanese were bombing Hawaii, Stimson confided to his diary that “We three [Hull, Knox, and Stimson] all thought that we must fight if the British fought. But now the Japs [short for Japanese] have solved the whole thing by attacking us directly in Hawaii.” Stimson further wrote: “when the news first came that Japan had attacked us, my first feeling was of relief that the indecision was over and that a crisis had come in a way which would unite all our people. This continued to be my dominant feeling in spite of the news of catastrophes which quickly developed. For I feel that this country united has practically nothing to fear; while the apathy and divisions stirred up by unpatriotic men had been hitherto very discouraging.”<sup>114</sup> The latter reference to “unpatriotic men” epitomize the contempt for pacifists and isolationists who continue to be demonized in most American history books.

FDR himself reacted with shock but also “great relief” to the news of Pearl Harbor and appeared more concerned about public reaction than the actual attack and its human cost.<sup>115</sup> Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins was among those perturbed by FDR’s body language at a Cabinet meeting after the attack, stating that she had this “deep emotional feeling that something was wrong, that this situation was not all it appeared to be...His surprise was not as great as the rest of us.”<sup>116</sup> A few weeks after the attack, FDR set up an investigating commission under Supreme Court Justice Owen Roberts, a friend and supporter of the president. It released a thirteen-thousand-page report in January 1942 exonerating Executive Branch authorities of any wrongdoing and blamed Kimmel and Short for the disaster.<sup>117</sup>

Secretary of War Henry Stimson called the Roberts committee’s findings a “masterpiece of candid and accurate statements based upon most careful study and analysis of a difficult factual situation.”<sup>118</sup> However, the committee did not interrogate senior FDR administration officials or inquire into Japanese intercepts and their distribution and evaluation in Washington or allow for Admirals Kimmel and Short to defend themselves or for their attorneys to ask questions and cross-examine witnesses.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Morganstern, *Pearl Harbor*, 249.

<sup>113</sup> Morganstern, *Pearl Harbor*, 242.

<sup>114</sup> Morganstern, *Pearl Harbor*, 309.

<sup>115</sup> Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1950), 428.

<sup>116</sup> Toland, *Infamy*, 272; Summers and Swan, *A Matter of Honor*, 354. Perkins said that she had a “deep emotional feeling that something was wrong.”

<sup>117</sup> REPORT OF THE COMMISSION APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO INVESTIGATE AND REPORT THE FACTS RELATING TO THE ATTACK MADE BY JAPANESE ARMED FORCES UPON PEARL HARBOR IN THE TERRITORY OF HAWAII ON DECEMBER 7, 1941, 77TH Congress, 2nd Session, January 26, 1942 (Washington, D.C. G.P.O., 1942), <http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/pha/roberts/roberts.html>. Kimmel and Short were subjected to stinging public rebuke, with some even demanding that they be executed for treason

<sup>118</sup> Toland, *Infamy*, 42.

<sup>119</sup> Toland, *Infamy*; John T. Flynn, *The Truth About Pearl Harbor* (Glasgow: The Strickland Press, 1945); Griffin, *The American Trajectory*, 147. Witnesses were struck by the chumminess of the proceeding, headed by Roosevelt and Marshal cronies. Kimmel was shocked by the lack of professionalism, epitomized by the proceedings’ stenographers—one a teenager, the other with almost no court experience—who omitted much of his testimony and left other parts badly garbled. Permission to correct the errors was refused.

Staffed by one of George C. Marshall's most trusted aides (Major General Frank B. McCoy), the commission did not furthermore produce any evidence that Kimmel and Short were properly forewarned.<sup>120</sup> Curiously, on November 29<sup>th</sup>, it identified a dispatch that Short received by civilian authorities warning him that "protective measures should be confined to those essential to security so as to avoid unnecessary publicity and alarm."<sup>121</sup> This has provided grounds for the belief that the FDR administration knew in advance of the attack and wanted to make sure the public was not alerted and that it appeared to be a sneak attack so he could rapidly mobilize the populace for war.

In a letter to Harry S. Truman in August 21, 1944, Admiral Kimmel stated that the Roberts report "did not contain basic truths about the Pearl Harbor catastrophe" and that "the real story had never been told."<sup>122</sup> America's "newspaper of record," *The New York Times* agreed, editorializing on January 26, 1942 that "however grave the responsibilities of each of these commanders [in Hawaii] may have been, the conclusions of the Roberts Commission seem too sweeping in exculpating their superiors in Washington from blame and in too easily finding that each of these 'fulfilled his obligations.'" On the same day, *The New York Herald Tribune* objected to the exoneration of Washington and asserted: "the want of foresight at Pearl Harbor was paralleled higher up." The new head of the Navy, Admiral King said that Kimmel and Short had been "sold down the river for political expediency."<sup>123</sup>

In his 1955 memoir, retired four-star Admiral William H. Standley, an old friend of Roosevelt who rued the "wave of pacifism that engulfed our land" after World War I, denounced the findings of the Roberts Commission to which he had been appointed. Pointing to "sins of omission" that resulted from the President limiting the commission's jurisdiction, Standley stated that the real responsibility for Pearl Harbor was logged thousands of miles from the territory of Hawaii." Admiral Kimmel and General Short had been "martyred." Roberts' performance as head of the commission was "as crooked as a snake." A fair-minded investigation would have found the uniformed heads of the army and navy in Washington "fully culpable."<sup>124</sup>

After the Roberts commission hearings, FDR prevented Standley, according to his granddaughter Helen, from filing a dissenting minority report and offered him the ambassadorship to Moscow "to get him as far away from Washington as possible."<sup>125</sup> Rear Admiral Leigh Noyes, the Navy's Director of Communications, at the same time instituted a 54-year censorship policy that consigned the pre-Pearl Harbor Japanese military and diplomatic intercepts and the relevant directives to Navy vaults, while illegally ordering subordinates to "destroy all notes or anything in writing." Fleet Admiral Ernest King threatened a loss of pension for any naval officer who disclosed the successful code breaking.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Flynn, *The Truth About Pearl Harbor*, 28. The Commission specified that Kimmel and Short were given dispatches on October 16<sup>th</sup> about the fall of the moderate Prince Konoye (something reported on in newspapers), on November 27<sup>th</sup> about the breakdown of negotiations, and on November 24<sup>th</sup> about a potential "surprise, aggressive move by the Japanese" in "any direction" including an "attack on *Philippines* or *Guam*." Other dispatches mentioned potential Japanese drives into the Kraw Isthmus, Thailand and Borneo, but not Pearl Harbor or Hawaii.

<sup>121</sup> Flynn, *The Truth About Pearl Harbor*, 37.

<sup>122</sup> Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*, 274, 275.

<sup>123</sup> *The New York Times*, January 26, 1941; *New York Herald Tribune*, January 26, 1941; Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*, 222.

<sup>124</sup> Andrew Bacevich, *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2013), 117, 118, Toland, *Infamy*, 176-177; William Standley and Arthur Ageton, *Admiral Ambassador to Russia* (Chicago: Regnery, 1955), 82, 83.

<sup>125</sup> Summers and Swann, *A Matter of Honor*, 274.

<sup>126</sup> Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 255. Since the documents are of the public record, they could only be destroyed through an act of Congress. Senator Owen Brewster (R-MA) was blocked from obtaining intercept records that he requested. Percy Greaves pointed out that those who maintained secrecy, failed to remember, or testified on behalf of the administration in the Pearl Harbor investigations rose very quickly to high places. These people include Gen. George Marshall, who was made a permanent five-star general and the Secretary of State, Col. Walter Bedell Smith, who became a three-star general and CIA director, Alben Barkley, who became Vice-President under Harry Truman, Sen. Scott Lucas, who became the Senate majority leader, and John W. Murphy and Samuel H. Kaufman, who were both appointed to lifetime Federal judgeships. On

Admiral James O. Richardson, who had turned over command of the Pacific Fleet to Kimmel, stated that the Roberts Commission report was “the most unfair, unjust and deceptively dishonest document ever printed by the Government Printing Office.” Richardson added that “he could not conceive of any honorable man being able to recall his service as a member of the commission without great regret and the deepest shame. A more disgraceful spectacle has never been presented to this country during my lifetime than the failure of the civilian officials of the government to show any willingness to take their share of responsibility for the Japanese success at Pearl Harbor.”<sup>127</sup>

A week after V-J Day, President Harry S. Truman made public the lengthy findings of 1943 and 1944 Army and Navy Boards that were appointed to assess responsibility for Pearl Harbor. The Army Board, headed by Lt. General George Grunert, reversed the verdict of the Roberts Commission and concluded that “responsible authorities all expected an air attack before Pearl Harbor.” Henry Stimson testified at the hearings that he was “not surprised [by the attacks].” The report found grounds for criticism of General Short but also General Marshall; Lieutenant General Leonard T. Gerow, former chief of war plans, and Cordell Hull.<sup>128</sup>

Marshall was singled out for particular rebuke for his “failure to keep [Admiral] Short fully informed as to the international situation and probable outbreak of war” and “failure to alert him on the evening of December 6<sup>th</sup> and early morning of December 7<sup>th</sup> that an almost immediate break with Japan was coming.” The Army Board further concluded that “the messages actually sent to Hawaii, by either the Army or the Navy, gave only a small fraction of information it had of an impending war.”<sup>129</sup>

The Navy Board of Inquiry, headed by Admiral Orin G. Murfin, former commander of the Asiatic Fleet, found responsibility for complacency and lack of readiness that made the attack possible shared by Rear Admiral Kimmel and Admiral Harold C. Stark, Pacific Fleet commander and the chief of Naval Operations of that date. Kimmel, the report found, though, had not received all available information from Washington and could not be blamed for something he could not expect. The notion that all anti-aircraft guns should have been manned and U.S. Navy planes airborne—absent any knowledge that an enemy strike was imminent—was “questionable.” After being briefed on the report, Secretary of War James Forrestal made sure that its findings remained confidential.<sup>130</sup>

One of the key witnesses at the hearing, Captain Laurence Stafford, who headed the Naval communications section in Washington, testified that “we received definite information from two independent sources that Japan would attack the United States,” the first coming on December 4<sup>th</sup> at 9 PM, which he said was decoded and made available to military intelligence right away. President Roosevelt consequently had ample time to broadcast a warning which might have caused the Japanese to call off their “surprise” attack or at least prevented 3,500 Americans from dying without a chance to fight back.<sup>131</sup>

A July 1946 Congressional committee headed by Senator Alben Barkley (D-KY), which journalist William H. White characterized as “one of the longest and most extraordinary [investigations] in the

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the other hand, virtually no one who testified in the various hearings as to the facts that were damaging to the Roosevelt administration and their superiors was ever promoted or rewarded.

<sup>127</sup> Toland, *Infamy*, 43, 44; Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 255.

<sup>128</sup> Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*, 365.

<sup>129</sup> Toland, *Infamy*, 112, 113.

<sup>130</sup> Toland, *Infamy*, 111, 113; Summer and Swan, *A Matter of Honor*, 323.

<sup>131</sup> *Freedom Betrayed*, ed. Nash, 302.

history of any country,” subsequently concluded that the “one o’clock intercept should have been recognized [in Washington] as indicating the distinct possibility that some Japanese military action would occur somewhere at 1 P.M, December 7, Washington time. If properly appreciated, this intercept should have suggested a dispatch to all Pacific outpost commanders supplying this information.”<sup>132</sup> The committee also found that Japanese message intercepts “should have been [properly] appreciated and supplied to the commander-in-chief of the Pacific Fleet and the commanding General of the Hawaiian Department,” an indictment of Washington authorities for their failure to appreciate and offer warning in advance of the danger of attack. The committee, however, went on to conclude that virtually everyone in Washington was surprised by the attack.<sup>133</sup>

Pacific War veteran Robert Stinnett found that at least one witness at the hearings, Admiral Kimmel’s intelligence chief, Edwin Layton, perjured himself. He claimed that no radio frequencies from Japanese ships were addressed or heard in the days preceding Pearl Harbor, however, declassified records show that they were in fact available—though withheld from Admiral Kimmel.<sup>134</sup> In a section of the report entitled additional views, Representative Frank Keefe (R) from Wisconsin stated his belief that “secret diplomacy was at the root of the tragedy” and that “the intercepted messages received and distributed in Washington on the afternoon and evening of December 6 and the early hours of December 7, pointed to an attack on Pearl Harbor.”

Keefe in turn criticized Admiral Stark and General Marshall for failing to act upon the information promptly and giving proper instructions to General Short and Admiral Kimmel in Hawaii.<sup>135</sup> He stated that Senator Barkley’s investigation “had not brought to light all the facts about Pearl Harbor. We have been denied much vital information.” As an example, he noted the refusal of Henry Stimson to answer certain vital interrogations, citing his ill-health, and evasiveness of Cordell Hull and other witnesses, with “I do not recall” being an answer frequently received. Keefe also noted the failure to call Walter Bedell Smith as a witness, despite the important role he played in the distribution or non-distribution of vital messages to George C. Marshall on the night of December 6<sup>th</sup>.<sup>136</sup>

In their report, the Republican minority, Senator Homer Ferguson (R-MI) and Senator Owen Brewster (R-ME), took the position that in terms of sea-power strategy, an attack on the American Fleet at Pearl Harbor was necessary from the Japanese point of view, was highly probable, and “President Roosevelt was taking the probability into account—before December 7.” They further found that Army and Navy commanders along with President Roosevelt had neglected the possibility or probability of an attack while having access to information which would have indicated so. The “messages sent to General Short and Admiral Kimmel by high authorities in Washington during November were couched in such conflicting and imprecise language that they failed to convey to the commanders’ definite information on the state of diplomatic relations with Japan and on Japanese war designs and positive orders respecting the particular actions to be taken [at Pearl Harbor]—orders that were beyond all

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<sup>132</sup> Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack: Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, Congress of the United States, July 20, 1946 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946), 252; Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*, 367; Toland, *Infamy*, 235.

<sup>133</sup> Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack: Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, Congress of the United States, July 20, 1946 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946), 228, 252; Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*, 368.

<sup>134</sup> Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 47. One naval officer at the hearings was thrown into the psychiatric ward at Bethesda naval hospital and told that “his testimony better change or he’d be in the ward for the rest of his life – an example of the intimidation of witnesses to help cover up the truth. In Griffin, *The American Trajectory*, 148.

<sup>135</sup> Additional Views Frank Keefe, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, 266-F, 266-T.

<sup>136</sup> Additional Views Frank Keefe, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, 266-S.

reasonable doubts as to the need for an all-out alert. In this respect [and others], the said high authorities failed to discharge their full duty.”<sup>137</sup>

On December 7<sup>th</sup>, the minority further found that “there was no excuse for the failure of General Marshall and Admiral Stark to be on alert and to “reach General Short and Admiral Kimmel by the swiftest possible means with a final warning message, based on the latest information and designed to put the commanders on special guard against immediate attack.” Ultimate blame lay with the commander-in-chief, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was “responsible for the failure to enforce continuous, efficient and appropriate cooperation” among his high officials “in evaluating information and dispatching clear and positive orders to the Hawaiian commanders as events indicated the growing imminence of war....” Roosevelt, the minority reported concluded, had advanced knowledge of Japanese designs early Sunday morning at least two hours before the Japanese attack, making it his duty to put his own war administration in Washington on war alert and, through his agents in that administration, also to put all the American outpost commanders on full war alert.”<sup>138</sup> This he did not do.

Author John Toland wrote:

what novelist could persuade a reader to accept the incredible activity during those two days by America’s military and civilian leaders? Was it to be believed that the heads of the Army and Navy could not be located on the night before Pearl Harbor? Or that they would later testify over and over that they couldn’t remember where they were? Was it plausible that the chief of Naval Operations, after finally being reminded that he talked to Roosevelt on the telephone that night, could not recall if they had discussed the thirteen-point message. Was it possible to imagine a president who remarked ‘this means war,’ after reading the message, not instantly summoning to the White House his Army and Navy commanders as well as his secretaries of war and Navy? One of Knox’s close friend, James G. Stahlman, wrote Admiral Kemp Tolley in 1973 that Knox told him that he, Stimson, Marshall, Stark and Harry Hopkins had spent most of the night of December 6 at the White House with the President. All were waiting for what they knew was coming: an attack on Pearl Harbor.”<sup>139</sup>

Historian Charles A. Beard was among those to place central blame for the whole fiasco on President Roosevelt, whose big ambition was the European War, with the war on Japan being a subsidiary. It was a one-man decision that sent us into the European War, Beard wrote, “as it was a one-man decision that started Napoleon off on the invasion of Russia.”<sup>140</sup>

Because of the evils of Nazism and atrocities committed by the Japanese regime in China and elsewhere<sup>141</sup>, many historians feel that unlike Napoleon, Roosevelt and his subordinates were justified. Historian Thomas A. Bailey noted that “Franklin Roosevelt repeatedly deceived the American people during the period before Pearl Harbor... because the masses are notoriously shortsighted and generally cannot see danger until it is at their throats.” Bailey added that “posterity would thank Roosevelt because our statesmen are forced to deceive [the masses] into an awareness of their own long-run interests.”<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*; Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*, 358, 370.

<sup>138</sup> *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*; Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*, 359, 360. The Minority report further noted that General Douglas McArthur who had access to the MAGIC intercepts was in better position to judge the situation than Admiral Kimmel, who was unfairly scapegoated.

<sup>139</sup> Toland, *Infamy*, 320.

<sup>140</sup> Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*, 314, 315.

<sup>141</sup> See Yuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017) and Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2012) on these, among other works.

<sup>142</sup> Thomas A. Bailey, *The Man in the Street: The Impact of American Public Opinion on Foreign Policy* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1948), 13.

The Pacific War did not serve humanity's interest, however, if we consider that it saw the first use of an atomic weapon, resulted in millions of deaths, and enabled the U.S. to acquire military bases from which it would launch deadly attacks on Korea and Vietnam.<sup>143</sup> China's liberation from Japan was spearheaded also by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)<sup>144</sup> which never received any U.S. support—indicating that Asians could fight and win their own moral battles. Had the FDR administration been forthright about Nazism's evil, it could have mobilized the American public to fight it on moral grounds without having to wage a destructive war for empire in the Pacific.<sup>145</sup> That FDR and his advisers underestimated Japan's fighting strength and could not have conceived of the war's massive humanitarian toll, does not necessarily validate their actions.

In 1998, the U.S. Congress exonerated Admirals Kimmel and Short for the intelligence failure at Pearl Harbor. In a speech before the Senate, future President Joseph Biden Jr. (D-DE) declared:

"These officers were publicly vilified and never given a chance to clear their names. If we lived in a closed society, fearful of the truth, then there would be no need for the President to take any action today. But we don't. We live in an open society. Eventually, we are able to declassify documents and evaluate our past based on at least a good portion of the whole story. One of our greatest strengths as a nation comes from our ability to honor truth and the lessons of our past. . . . I cannot accept that there is a reason for continuing to deny the culpability of others in Washington at the expense of these two officers' reputations fifty-seven years later."<sup>146</sup>

While Biden fell short of admitting to foreknowledge of the attack, his statements offered vindication for Short and Kimmel and indictment of the Roosevelt administration by implication. The key lingering question remains as to whether a full-fledged conspiracy occurred at Pearl Harbor and whether the Pacific War was avoidable. The existing evidence points to clear American provocations and negligence and worse on the part of Roosevelt administration officials. However, it is unlikely that a critical perspective on Pearl Harbor and the origins of World War II could receive a fair hearing in mainstream or academic circles today.

Historian Steve Sniegowski wrote in his 2004 essay, "The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism" that "the good war scenario still serves a vital purpose as America...marches forward to make the world safe from terrorism." Sniegowski added that "preconceived ideas generally control historical observation. Historians, especially those who make their living in academic circles, must necessarily work within the paradigmatic confines of the prevailing orthodoxy, especially where taboo topics are involved. The heretic must labor on the scholarly fringe, with little or no financial backing and no major avenue for dissemination."<sup>147</sup> Be that as it may, the search for truth will always be important, and it is the heretics who are the ones who will be respected by future historians if they do their job diligently.

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<sup>143</sup> Robinson Jeffers gave expression to the antiwar view in his poem "The Double Axe" in which he imagines a dead American soldier, killed in the Pacific campaign, coming back to life and seeking revenge for his unnecessary death and all the other soldiers destroyed by the war. "it is the lies, it is the lies, it is the dirty/lies/War peddlers lies and the people's imbecility/That raked me out of the grave." Robinson Jeffers, "The Double Axe," in *The Double Axe and Other Poems* (New York: Liveright, 1977), 7. Charles Lindbergh wrote in 1969 in another rebuttal to Bailey that "more than a generation after the war's end, our occupying armies still must occupy, and the world has not been made safe for democracy and freedom." Wayne S. Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh and the Battle Against American Intervention in World War II* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1974), 238.

<sup>144</sup> See Chalmers Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1937-1945* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1962).

<sup>145</sup> See David Wyman's book, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*, rev ed. (New York: The New Press, 2007), which shows the FDR administration's weak response to the Nazi holocaust and lack of moral leadership.

<sup>146</sup> Justin Raimondo, "The Secret of Pearl Harbor – FDR's Role Exposed, 1944," *Antiwar.com*, May 25, 2001, <https://www.antiwar.com/justin/j052501.html>; Rosenberg, *A Day Which Will Live*, 137.

<sup>147</sup> Sniegowski, "The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism."