

PEARL HARBOR REPORT

Who Was to Blame?

For almost a year the official Army & Navy reports on Pearl Harbor had lain under cover, marked "Secret." Last week, the excuse was good no longer: President Truman made them public.

In a week of formal triumph over Japan, few citizens had the inclination to read the story of the first U.S. defeat, three years and nine months ago. The very bulk of the documents (130,000 words) was forbidding. The *New York Times* printed it all (see PRESS) and sat down. Congressmen, before they had read it through, shouted that it was a "white-wash" or that it was incomplete. Harry Truman said that it proved everyone was to blame.

By & large, the reports justified Mr. Truman's easygoing generalization. The Army Board agreed: "The winds of public opinion were blowing in all directions. . . . We were preparing for war by the conference method . . . that was the product of the time and conditions due to the transition from peace to war in a democracy."

But certain other facts were inescapable: there were men in high places, charged with the defense of the republic, who had erred; there were others who had been completely and unaccountably fat-headed.

Two men had already been adjudged (by the 1942 Roberts report) as derelict in their duties: Lieut. General Walter C. Short, Commander of the Army's Hawaiian Department, and Rear Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet on the day the Japs



Associated Press

MARSHALL

Inadequate precautions . . .

attacked. New light shed by the reports did nothing to brighten their records; it cast them, indeed, into darker shadow. What the new light did was to illuminate other failures. Among them:

☐ General of the Army George Catlett Marshall, then, as now, Chief of Staff.

☐ Lieut. General Leonard T. Gerow, now head of a board to study lessons of World War II, then Chief of the War Plans Division of the Army's General Staff.

☐ Admiral Harold R. Stark, recently commander of U.S. Naval Forces in Europe (where he was made an honorary Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire), but on Pearl Harbor Day Chief of Naval Operations.

☐ Cordell Hull, then the Secretary of State.

The Gamblers. The reports for the first time gave eye-popping details of the Jap attack. On Nov. 27-28, a Jap task force, carefully and particularly trained for its mission, set sail from Takan Bay in northern Japan and headed east, in radio silence. Its orders were to sink any vessel it should meet, even Japanese; nothing must be left to a chance betrayal of its course. In the force were six carriers carrying (said the Board) some 424 planes,* two battleships, three cruisers and a destroyer division.

At sea—fortunately south and west of Pearl Harbor—were the U.S.'s only combat-fit carriers in the Pacific, the *Lexington* and the *Enterprise*, with a combined complement of only 180-odd planes. Like sitting ducks in Pearl Harbor were eight of the battleships of the U.S. Pacific Fleet,

* Navymen in Washington doubt there were that many planes.

in a condition of only partial readiness. This the Japs knew; they were well supplied with every detail of intelligence about their target.

The force struck. Adjacent to Pearl Harbor, mother submarines launched two-man subs. From a point due north of Oahu, carriers launched some 300 planes piloted by the best of Jap naval aviators. For the Japs it was a long chance, but well worth the gamble. Below them lay the Americans, who "had gambled upon having time for preparation that did not exist."

The manner in which the U.S. had gambled was the chief subject of both Army & Navy reports.

Navy Court of Inquiry. In a long, detailed and milky-mild document, the Navy three-man court made it clear why "Betty" Stark should at least share the blame with Kimmel.

Stark had failed to give Kimmel all the information at hand on Jap intentions. Stark had even written Kimmel (in a personal letter) on Oct. 17: "I do not believe the Japs are going to sail into us." Stark's messages had "directed Kimmel's attention toward the Far East" as the most probable Jap target if they should attack, rather than toward Hawaii; this was the conviction also generally held in Washington.

Actually the Navy court wound up by exonerating Kimmel, who would stand cleared were it not for sharply worded addenda by Fleet Admiral Ernest King and Navy Secretary Forrestal. Strongly dissenting, both declined to let Husband Kimmel off the hook.

Kimmel had enough information (said King) to make him aware of the need to



Acme

HULL

. . . delayed information . . .



Associated Press

STARK

. . . muffled warnings.

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take extraordinary measures. His preparations were little more than routine. He could have maintained some kind of long-distance air reconnaissance, even with the few patrol planes (69) he had.

In the Navy's book of futures (Forrestal noted) it was written down that a declaration of war might be preceded by: "1) a surprise attack on ships in Pearl Harbor, 2) a surprise submarine attack on ships in operating area, 3) a combination of these two." And yet, even on Dec. 2, when Kimmel's Fleet Intelligence officer told him he had suddenly lost track of four Jap carriers (which they were checking on by radio), Kimmel was not alarmed.

The officer, Captain Edwin T. Layton, testified: "Admiral Kimmel looked at me, as sometimes he would, with somewhat of a stern countenance and yet partially with a twinkle in his eye and said, 'Do you mean to say that they could be rounding Diamond Head and you wouldn't know?' or words to that effect."

Whatever the mannerly Navy court thought, Forrestal and King were sternly convinced, and ruled that both Kimmel and Stark were guilty of "faults of omission" and unfit to hold "any position in the U.S. Navy which requires the exercise of superior judgment." Both officers' careers were thus ignominiously ended.

The Army Board. There was nothing mannerly about the Army's report. Roughshod and ungrammatical, it repeated itself like a garrulous, angry man. But there was no doubting its earnestness. Exhaustively it recounted the story of the eleven months which preceded war—a tragic, sometimes ludicrous story of doodling and unawareness.

Walter Short arrived in Hawaii in February to take command. The nation's outpost was woefully deficient. Hawaii needed aircraft, artillery, searchlights, roads, bombproofing, engineer troops, more airfields for dispersion of planes, aircraft warning systems.

Short wrote to Marshall. Marshall replied that the War Department "appreciated fully" the need for aircraft warning systems, but it would be necessary "to comply with certain fixed regulations in those cases where facilities are to be established on lands pertaining to the Department of Interior. . . . The National Park Service officials are very definitely opposed to permitting structures of any type to be erected at such places as will be open to view and materially alter the natural appearance of the reservation."

By Dec. 7, a handful of radar stations were in operation. But only a handful of men knew how to run them. One man who did, Pfc. Joseph L. Lockard, was sitting at one on that fateful Sunday morning and spotted a large formation of planes. He notified Air Forces Lieut. Kermit Tyler, sole officer at the Information Center, who was there for training. Tyler thought Pfc. Lockard's planes were probably a

flight of B-17s, due to arrive from the West Coast. "Forget it," said Lieut. Tyler, in effect. Said the Army Board: "By his assumption of authority he [Tyler] took responsibility and the consequences of his action should be imposed upon him." Airman Tyler has since risen to lieutenant colonel on the basis of his combat record in the South Pacific.

Tidy Attitude. One of the weirdest chapters in the report deals with the state of Hawaii's Coast Artillery Command. There were three regiments under Major General Henry T. Burgin. But their activities were limited 1) by "important and influential civilians on the island" who objected to artillery using their land for gun positions, and 2) by Ordnance's reluc-



SHORT
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tance to let them have any ammunition.

Ordnance "did not want to issue any of the clean ammunition, let it out and get dirty, have to take it back in later on and renovate it." General Short supported Ordnance in this tidy attitude. As a result, said Burgin, it would take "from a few minutes to six hours before all the guns could be got in position and firing." On the morning of Dec. 7 only half the anti-aircraft guns had ammunition at hand.

Infantry, field artillery and aircraft ammunition was likewise carefully guarded by Ordnance to keep it clean. When the attack came, planes at Bellows Field had no .30-cal. machine-gun bullets.

For air defense, Major General F. L. Martin, commanding general of the Hawaiian Air Force, had only 123 modern pursuit and bombardment planes, a handful of other largely obsolete craft.

Nevertheless, testified General Marshall, Hawaii was the best-equipped base the U.S. had. Said he: "As to Hawaii . . .

it had the maximum of matériel that we possessed. . . . As to Panama: if the Hawaiian state of preparation in men and matériel was 100, Panama was about 25% and the Philippines about 10% and Alaska and the Aleutians completely negligible."

Keep Calm. Short's greatest concern at the time was not the possibility of an attack from the sea but of sabotage by Japanese on the island; 37% of Hawaii's population were of Japanese origin. Short thought one way to avoid stirring up the population was to betray no anxiety, which alerts and maneuvers might have done. This, in spite of the fact that Honolulu newspapers at the time were screaming: "JAPANESE MAY STRIKE OVER WEEK-END"—"U.S. ARMY ALERTED IN MANILA, SINGAPORE MOBILIZING AS WAR TENSION GROWS"—"PACIFIC ZERO HOUR NEAR."

Short decided that an anti-sabotage alert was enough. This was the position in which the Jap carrier planes found him, with his planes parked wing-to-wing on the airstrips and his guards on the *qui vive* for saboteurs.

On Oct. 28, Marshall "clearly indicated to Short that he should change his alert plan (there was no proof that he ever did) and only use the Air Force for guard during the last stage when the Air Force as such had been destroyed and a hostile landing effected. . . ."

Let's Not Be Offensive. Short arrived in Hawaii with specific instructions from Marshall to get along with the Navy. Marshall, grieved to find "old Army and Navy feuds" still persisting, wrote Short: "We must be completely impersonal in these matters, at least so far as our own nerves and irritations are concerned."

Short obediently resolved to get along. His and Kimmel's relations were cordial—despite a subsequent *Collier's* article by President (then Senator) Harry Truman, which represented the two as scarcely speaking.

But when it came to exchanging vital information, the two commands might as well have been at the opposite poles. One reason was the proud and peculiar Navy:

"Apparently Short was afraid that if he went much beyond social contacts and really got down to business with the Navy to get what he had a right to know in order to do his job, he would give offense to the Navy and lose the good will of the Navy which he was charged with securing."

Another reason was service red tape. Another was the complex Navy command setup in which Kimmel held two positions, Rear Admiral Claude C. Bloch held four (including command of the 14th Naval District), and a many-hatted Rear Admiral P. N. L. Bellinger held six. "Under such circumstances," said the Board, "The Army had a difficult time in determining under which of the three shells (Kimmel, Bloch or Bellinger) rested the pea of performance and responsibility."

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Inherent Weaknesses. There was a "Joint Hawaiian Coastal Frontier Defense Plan" and an "Air Agreement" by which Army & Navy would divide responsibilities, come the attack. "The inherent weakness . . . was the fact of their [the plans] not being operative in time to meet the attack. . . . Unity of command in Washington would have been a condition precedent to unity of command in Hawaii."

The Navy, which said that it would conduct distance reconnaissance, failed to inform Short that it was doing no such thing. Short never bothered to check up.

The Navy (and Washington) failed to inform Short when, "on or about Nov. 25," intelligence sources reported the presence in the Marshall Islands of a large part of the Jap fleet. The Navy failed to inform Short that it had sunk a Jap submarine in outer Pearl Harbor at about 6:30 a.m. on Dec. 7—a sure sign that attack was imminent.

As for intelligence—the Japanese Consul sent Tokyo detailed reports of naval and military activities at Pearl Harbor, transmitting them in code over regular commercial cable lines. The messages were safe from the scrutiny of U.S. officials because the FBI was prevented by "Government regulations" from tapping cables.

The FBI was allowed to tap telephone wires and did. On Dec. 5 agents overheard an "apparently meaningless and therefore highly suspicious" telephone message from a Japanese newspaper woman to Tokyo. The FBI passed the message on to Military Intelligence, which submitted it to General Short at 6 o'clock on Dec. 6. "As Short was unable to decipher the meaning," said the Board, "he did nothing about it and went on to a party."

Days before the attack, Jap midget submarines operated inside the Pearl Harbor nets, plotting the mooring locations of U.S. battleships.

War Games. Washington's responsibility in the whole matter will be argued for a long time, was being hotly argued this week. Up until almost the very end, Washington was convinced that the attack would be made in the Far East. Curiously, in their war plans, Army & Navy officers envisaged with uncanny accuracy the type of attack which finally came to Hawaii. But from remarks made later on, it was plain that the military minds were only playing war games then. In their hearts they did not believe in their visions.

Washington failed to get all the information it had to its field commanders. Efforts of subordinate officers to have such information sent out were unavailing. Two men were singled out by the Army Board for their fruitless but "aggressive" attempts to improve handling of intelligence. They were Colonel R. S. Bratton and Colonel Otis K. Stadler (both still colonels).

It was when they turned their eyes on Washington that the Board rushed in where angels might fear to tread and coolly named Gerow, Marshall and Hull as negligent.

Marshall—because (they said) he failed to keep Short fully advised of the growing tenseness of the Japanese situation "of which information he had an abundance and Short had little."

Gerow was pinned because he confused rather than informed Short with his messages. And both Marshall and Gerow were criticized because they did not take steps in the last few days to inform Short that his anti-sabotage alert was inadequate to meet the storm that might break. (War Secretary Stimson characterized the cri-



N.Y. Daily News

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ticism of Marshall as "entirely unjustified.")

Hull (said the Board) had to share in the blame because his Nov. 26 "ultimatum" to the Japanese, delivered when the Army and Navy were desperately playing for time, had "hastened" the onslaught. Hull's note was no ultimatum (it was his last word). But (said the Board) "it is significant that the Secretary of War had to go and call on Mr. Hull to get the information on what amounted to the cessation of negotiations, which was the most vital thing that had occurred in 1941."

In general, by the Army Board's account, liaison in Washington between the War, Navy and State Department heads and the two chiefs of the Army & Navy was close. There were constant huddles and exchanges of information. It was mostly on the second level of bureaucracy, i.e., Army & Navy top levels, that orders got confused and lost.

The Army Board's findings, especially, had scared up some big game, raised some big issues. Army & Navy men joined generally in emotions ranging from anger to regret that able George Marshall had been hit in the fire, even though his distinguished record could stand it. But in general they parted on another, more important issue.

The Army Board had gone out of its way to light up the muddle made by divided command—an issue more important than its showing that stupidity had been countenanced and even rewarded. That military intelligence had been mishandled. The proposal to combine all U.S. fighting services in one department—which the Army advocates, the Navy mortally hates & fears—was before Congress. The Army Board had already made the first cogent argument in the debate.

The Judges

None of the men who served on the two boards were officers with current vital wartime jobs; that was one reason they were chosen. The three on the Navy Court were all graduates of the Naval Academy, all of them well liked in Navy circles:

¶ Admiral Orin G. Murfin, 69, onetime Judge Advocate General, commander of the Asiatic Fleet, predecessor of Rear Admiral Bloch as commandant of the 14th Naval District, is now retired.

¶ Admiral Edward Clifford Kalbfus, 68, veteran of the Spanish-American War, onetime president of the Naval War College, is now on the Navy's venerable General Board.

¶ Vice Admiral Adolphus Andrews, 66, onetime naval aide to three Presidents and Prince Axel of Denmark, socialite skipper of the presidential yacht *Mayflower*, commander of the Scouting Force, U.S. Fleet. Was more recently commandant of the Third Naval District, New York.

Of the three on the Army Board, only one was a graduate of the Military Academy:

¶ Lieut. General George Grunert, 64, who enlisted in 1898, served in the Far East, won the Distinguished Service Medal in World War I; onetime commanding general of the Philippine Department, was most recently commanding general of the Eastern Defense Command.

¶ Major General Henry D. Russell, 55, who began his Army career as a captain in the Georgia National Guard, commanded a regiment, then a brigade in World War I. One of the many National Guard division commanders swept out of their jobs when the country was mobilized for World War II, Russell nevertheless stayed with the Army as a member of the Manpower Board.

¶ Laconic, independent Major General Walter Hale ("Tony") Frank, 59, West Pointer, onetime air officer at Hickam Field, Hawaii, was chief of the Air Service Command in England until he was sent back to service at home.