

CHAPTER IV

The Fleet at Pearl Harbor

1. WHY WAS THE FLEET THERE?

Pearl Harbor had been a relatively minor naval base for many years, and did not become a major base until the early summer of 1940. The decision to base the fleet at Pearl Harbor was a diplomatic decision, and was taken in the hope that it would accentuate our concern over the situation in the Western Pacific, and serve as a restraining influence on Japan's aggression.

From a military viewpoint Pearl Harbor was not a satisfactory fleet base for many reasons, such as:

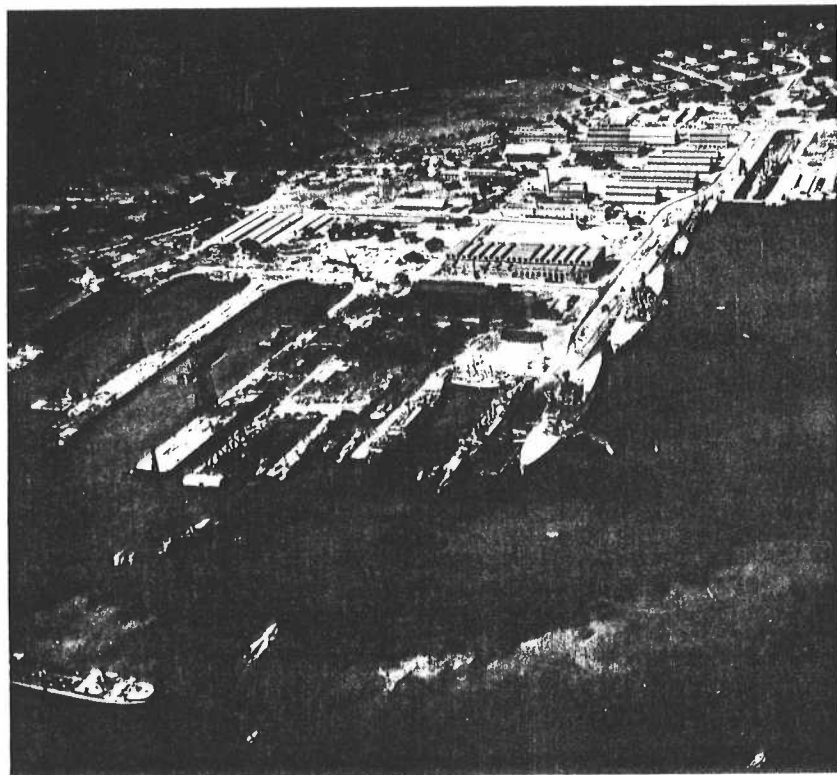
- a. It was restricted in area and had only one access to the open sea. Due to limited area it was necessary for ships to be clustered rather than dispersed.
- b. It was far removed from the source of essential supplies, such as oil, food, mechanical materials, technical installations, and industrial capacity.
- c. Transportation from the West Coast was slow and inadequate.
- d. Essential services for regular fleet activities and exercises were in short supply. These included tugs, target practice facilities, and a host of other things required by ships of the fleet.
- e. Hawaii lacked adequate housing and recreational facilities for military personnel.
- f. The great majority of fleet personnel were separated from their families and friends over long periods of time. This was an unsuitable morale situation in peacetime.
- g. The defenses of Pearl Harbor were almost non-existent. This was an Army responsibility, but the Army lacked the wherewithal to provide much defense, especially in anti-aircraft batteries and pursuit aircraft.

For these reasons, and others, the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Fleet protested strenuously and repeatedly the decision to base the fleet at Pearl Harbor instead of Southern California. He doubted that the presence of the fleet at Pearl Harbor was a deterrent to the Japanese, and pointed out

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Ships docked at Ten-Ten Dock.

that it might have the opposite effect. The final result was that he, Admiral Joseph O. Richardson, was relieved of command on 1 February 1941 and was succeeded by Admiral Husband E. Kimmel. At that time the fleet became the U.S. Pacific Fleet, and the separate Atlantic Fleet was established. It might be well to mention here that Admiral Richardson felt that the fleet was not prepared for war and was seriously lacking in logistic support, especially oil tankers.

Despite the inadequacies at Pearl Harbor it is correct to say that during the year or so before the Japanese attack many of the handicaps were partially overcome through persistent and hard work. In retrospect, it appears that even though Pearl Harbor was in many ways an unsatisfactory fleet base, the fact that the Fleet was there prevented the Japanese from initially occupying Hawaii and Midway, thereby using them later as bases to intercept our naval forces. Our Fleet in that case would have had to operate from the West Coast during at least the early part of World War II. Most importantly, after the war started Pearl Harbor became the largest and most efficient naval base in world history. Its value as a springboard for mounting our unparalleled offensive actions against the Japanese was incalculable.

2. ARMY-NAVY DEFENSE OF PEARL HARBOR

As has been indicated, the military defenses of Pearl Harbor were quite meager. The development of a great military base takes years of planning, coordination, copious funds, and continual construction, installation, and support. Such development required close coordination of the various military services. This, of course, can be quite difficult in the face of separate evaluations both in Washington and on the scene. However, it is noteworthy that, contrary to views expressed by much of the news media after the Japanese attack, there was a high degree of cooperation and coordination between the Army and the Navy in the years prior to the Pearl Harbor episode. This was a friendly and hard working joint effort. Here are some of the results of that effort:

a. Hawaii was defended by Army forces including heavy and light artillery, infantry, and air force. The Air Corps was part of the Army at that time.

b. The Army Air Corps operated largely from the three fields at Hickam, Bellows, and Wheeler. The first two were principally bomber fields, while Wheeler operated pursuit planes. All fields were in process of development and were training personnel to operate planes on a combat basis. Hickam Field was busy receiving new B-17's from the West Coast, outfitting and commissioning them, and flying them to bolster the defenses of Wake Island and the Philippines. It is estimated that only about ninety-four Army Air Force planes were ready for combat by 7 December. Many of the planes were under overhaul or having new equipment installed.

c. The Army had 26 fixed three-inch anti-aircraft guns and 60 mobile three-inch guns. None of the latter were emplaced as the assigned locations for wartime emplacements were on private property. Also 140 thirty-seven millimeter guns were assigned, but only 20 were delivered, and these were without ammunition. A large number of 50 caliber machine guns were on order but only 40 percent had been delivered.

d. The Navy and Marine Corps had three airfields: Ford Island in the center of Pearl Harbor, the Marine Corps fighter field at nearby Ewa, and the seaplane field at Kaneohe. The Ford Island field served primarily to receive aircraft carrier planes and to operate them while the carriers were in port. Like the Army airfields, the Navy was busy training men, installing improvements and new equipment, and overhauling wornout parts. The total number of Navy and Marine Corps planes ready for combat was approximately fifty-two.

e. All of these forces were busy every weekday in flight operations, target practice, and training. Citizens of Hawaii were accustomed to hearing planes overhead continuously every day except Sunday. Gunfire incidental to target practice was commonplace.

f. Ships of the active Fleet when in Pearl Harbor were assigned certain sections of arc to defend against possible air attacks. Standing orders of the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet required that one-quarter of the anti-aircraft batteries be in a ready state at all times, that gun crews be near at hand, and a supply of ammunition be in ready service boxes near the guns.

g. To defend against prowling submarines the channel entrance to Pearl Harbor was guarded by a double submarine net or gate. It was kept closed at night; it was opened and closed as required by traffic of ships entering or leaving. Patrol vessels were always on duty in the approaches to Pearl Harbor to detect any submarines which might be attempting to enter.

3. RECONNAISSANCE

The need for air reconnaissance was clearly understood by the high command at Pearl Harbor, and strenuous steps were taken to make it effective. As early as January 1941 Rear Admiral P. N. L. Bellinger, Commander of Patrol Wing TWO of the Fleet, and also in command of the Ford Island facilities, reported to the Navy Department that because of deficiencies in

planes, equipment, material, personnel, and facilities "we are operating on a shoestring," and that all efforts to improve the situation had not been effective.¹ Similar correspondence ensued later with but little results. The usual answer from Washington was that "we are doing the best we can."

The Army Air Corps and the Navy Patrol Force cooperated closely in developing a joint operation to insure the best possible reconnaissance with the means then available. Admiral Bellinger, together with Major General F. L. Martin of the Army Air Corps, got out a joint estimate of the situation under date of 31 March 1941 which set up a search and attack group to be used in case of hostilities or in time of emergency. In this document the following statement was made: "The aircraft at present available in Hawaii are inadequate to maintain, for an extended period, from bases on OAHU, a patrol extensive enough to insure that an air attack from an Orange [enemy] carrier cannot arrive over OAHU as a complete surprise." Thus the possibility of surprise air attack was envisioned long before the attack, and plans were developed to detect and defeat such an attack. A surprise attack without a declaration of war or of hostilities was envisioned at an early date, but the words "surprise attack" usually referred to a carrier raid after a proper declaration. Such a raid was in the minds of fleet officers, but as in Washington eyes were turned to Southeast Asia.

The shortage of planes and personnel to carry out a continuous daylight patrol was startling, especially when the need to modify and overhaul these planes is considered. It was estimated that one effective patrol through 360 degrees at a distance of 800 miles required not less than 84 planes on a 16 hour flight. To do this continually with necessary reliefs in planes and personnel would require at least 180 reconnaissance planes. Of course no such number of planes was available, nor was the manpower required to operate them.

With the air forces available, however, a considerable amount of air reconnaissance was conducted by both the Army and the Navy, at times as a joint operation. When aircraft carrier task forces of the Fleet were at sea there were simulated air strikes on Pearl Harbor to improve air reconnaissance and air raid defense. The last such drill was held on 12 November 1941; the next was scheduled for 29 November 1941 but had to be postponed until 13 December because of a task force sortie. As early as the spring of 1941 joint air raid drills were held weekly for a time to familiarize

¹ Commander Patrol Wing TWO letter of 16 January 1941 to the Chief of Naval Operations.

personnel with requirements, but the frequency was gradually reduced because of interference with training as well as wear and tear on equipment. Communications of that time were not equal to the tasks put upon them. This was especially true of the communications with the Army and with outlying stations. Anti-submarine search by both aircraft and destroyers was a regular part of fleet movements. Carrier reconnaissance planes ranged out over wide areas of ocean whenever task forces were leaving or entering Pearl Harbor.

On the morning of 7 December there were a number of reconnaissance planes aloft, and others were in a standby ready status.

a. Three patrol planes were searching the fleet operating areas, and three others standing by on a thirty minute notice.

b. Four other planes from Ford Island were in the air operating with submarines in joint exercises.

c. At Midway five planes were on reconnaissance to a distance of 450 miles, two others were enroute to rendezvous with the *USS Lexington* task force 400 miles to the southeast. Four additional planes were on ready alert.

d. Three Marine Scout bombers at Ewa Field were on two hours notice, and fifteen bombers and fifteen utility planes on four hours notice.

e. Some forty Army planes could be called upon for reconnaissance duty by Patrol Wing TWO in emergency but were never called except in connection with air raid drills.

f. In addition, the three task forces at sea were conducting a regular wartime search by aircraft and destroyers, as required by fleet orders.

The advisability of continuous and complete air reconnaissance was always in mind, but this presented a dilemma of the utmost difficulty. First there were insufficient planes and personnel; next was the intensive schedules for training, instruction, maintenance, and improvement. The same principle applied to other elements of our military forces. In the fleet the workday was long and intensive, and reasonable consideration had to be given toward preventing staleness and poor morale among the limited manpower available.

In the days just prior to 7 December we were at peace, although peace was overhung by ominous clouds. The various military forces were preparing for probable hostilities, and it was imprudent to divert our efforts unduly in directions which would wear out planes and pilots in advance of actual needs. When Admiral Richardson was still the Fleet Commander, he took up the question of justification for continuous long range reconnaissance.



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Ships moored in East Loch, looking northwest.

He addressed the Navy Department as follows under date of 28 November 1940: "I feel that the Fleet must operate on either of two assumptions, that is that we are at peace and no security measures are required; or, that wartime measures of security must be carried out. Heretofore, we have carried out limited security measures largely as a basis for training and on

the assumption that no foreign power would choose to bring on a war by an attack on the Fleet, but that some misdirected or fanatical nationals might undertake individual and irresponsible attack on Fleet units."²

This was answered by the Navy Department under the date of 23 December 1940 as follows: "There will be an advantage in making occasional sweeps by aircraft and surface craft but it is not yet necessary to make these continuous. I agree with you that the wear and tear on equipment, and the detrimental effects on training, of full security measures should be given due weight."³

With these points in mind, and others too, it was a command decision based on calculated risks that reconnaissance as well as other defense matters should be on a moderate scale in peacetime. Thus there was a minimum of air reconnaissance on Sunday, 7 December. Of course the Japanese were fully aware that Sunday was a day of rest and relaxation among the defense forces at Hawaii, and they also knew no doubt that Americans accepted in good faith the Japanese legal commitment not to attack without an ultimatum or declaration of war. On top of this was the general feeling that the Japanese would not be so irrational as to make their initial attack on the stronghold of the Pacific.

4. RADAR

The importance of radar for distant reconnaissance was recognized by the late 1930's. Scientists, engineers, and manufacturers were engaged in important programs of development. Military officials were expediting the purchase and installation of radar equipment to the extent that funds and qualified personnel would permit. The installations in Hawaii at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack were new and quite experimental. There were few military personnel who were trained to operate a radar installation in a reliable manner.

The Navy was installing production sets as fast as they could be obtained and made reliable; but in December 1941, only about a half-dozen ships of the Pacific Fleet had radar installed. The Army was then in the process of installing three large fixed radars on high ground in Hawaii,

² *Hearings before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, Part 14, p. 975. Hereafter cited as *Hearings*.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 980.

and six mobile radars on trucks. The effective distance for detection would depend of course upon the height of the installation and the height or elevation of the target. Thus a large ship could be detected by another ship with the radar at a distance of about twenty miles, while an airplane at 10,000 feet could be detected by a fixed land radar at a distance up to 200 miles.

Arrangements had been made between the Army and Navy for joint utilization of radar installations. Since the Navy had more experience in the use of radar, it was agreed that Army personnel would go to sea on four or more of the Navy ships for training and practice in radar operation. This was done in June 1941.

The Army radars were installed by the Corps of Engineers and operated by the Signal Corps. A system was worked out whereby radar information could be forwarded to an "Aircraft Warning Service" for evaluation and action. This came under the Army Air Corps which passed the information to the "Interceptor Command" when defense action was indicated. This system of air raid defense was not fully operative by 7 December although some drills had been held. As will be observed, this was an all-Army set-up since Navy radars were secured in port because of their low elevation on the ships and the interference from the high surrounding land masses and buildings. However, some from the Navy were assigned on an unofficial basis to assist the Army's evaluation system.

The Army radar service was operative every day except Sunday from 0400 to 1600 hours, but on Sunday it was manned from 0400 to 0700 hours. General Short considered these hours the most dangerous time for an air attack. Except for the large installation where one enlisted man had volunteered to continue because of his interest and desire for experience, no radar was operating on the morning of 7 December. This turned out to be a well publicized circumstance, because this man detected on the radar screen a large flight of aircraft bearing north at a distance of about 130 miles. He was perplexed by what he detected, but reported it by telephone to a Lieutenant on duty at the "Aircraft Warning Service." The Lieutenant discounted the information as not being of much moment for several reasons:

- a. They could be planes from our two U.S. aircraft carriers which he knew were at sea.
- b. They could be planes out of Hickam Field.
- c. They could be the twelve B-17's arriving from the West Coast for

transfer to the Philippine Islands. Actually these planes did arrive shortly thereafter and were badly shot up by the Japanese.

d. At that time there was no proper identification system to determine whether planes on the screen were friend or foe, so there was no sure method by which the planes could be identified as other than American.

The important fact of course was that the planes were the Japanese raiding force which arrived an hour later. If the radar information had been fully utilized it is likely that Pearl Harbor and all airfields would have been fully alerted. If our forces had been ready, what would the results have been? No doubt a much greater number of Japanese planes would have been destroyed, and possibly some of their ships damaged or sunk. But our own losses would not have been materially lessened, and the general outcome might well have been about the same. This interesting viewpoint will be covered in later pages.

5. OPERATION OF THE FLEET

During the eighteen months following the basing of the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor great progress was made in training the sea forces for possible hostilities and in improving the facilities of the new base of operations. There were generous appropriations for new ships, equipment, manpower, and for shore installations. The results were beginning to show, but there is always a great time lag between authorizing such things and their integration into the operating forces.

New ships and planes were being delivered but the bulk of these were assigned to the Atlantic where actual war conditions existed and prospects were extremely grave. The new units required trained men, and therefore training had topmost priority. It became the duty of the Pacific Fleet to do a vast amount of on-the-job training of men to be transferred back to the mainland for later assignment by the Navy Department. Many of these, especially officers, were reserves called to active duty. It is worthy to note here that these reserves became a major part of the fleet and fought with great distinction in World War II.

A large proportion of the new air strength was diverted to the Philippines, Midway, and Wake. It was the policy to strengthen these islands. Such a policy originated in Washington, and was part of the war plan which would be followed in case of hostilities with Japan.

In shoreside activities great improvements were made to the shop facilities at the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard. A large new drydock, additional oil stowages, and general expansion of repair capacity were also included. Without these, the wartime performance of the Navy Yard in supporting a greatly enlarged fleet would have been impossible.

In the summer of 1941 the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard was entirely competent to handle a limited number of overhauls of all but the largest ships. The Yard was gradually built up in officers and civilian manpower so that it could do a very creditable job within the limits of its capacity. Although major overhauls of ships such as battleships and aircraft carriers were performed at the West Coast Navy Yards, the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard was able to handle many important items of work on all ships including the installation and testing out of new improvements such as radar, anti-aircraft guns, fire control gear, radios, and so forth. The regular overhauls about once every eighteen months for battleships, aircraft carriers, and most cruisers and submarines were handled at the West Coast Navy Yards. The ships were rotated in the fleet schedules so that a minimum was absent at any one time. The arrangement insured a program of maintenance and improvement, and at the same time gave the ship crews an opportunity to visit the mainland for several months and to be with their families and friends.

The active units of the fleet operated on a strenuous schedule of training. They were engaged in sea maneuvers about 60 percent of the time and were in port at Pearl Harbor the other 40 percent. The submarines based at Pearl Harbor operated on a special schedule, while all other ships were divided into three separate task forces which overlapped each other in their scheduled time at sea and in port. While at sea, major units of the fleet were screened by aircraft and destroyers to be sure that enemy submarines were not in the operating areas. It was assumed that the operating areas were infested with Japanese submarines, and that a surprise attack would be by submarines against major units of the fleet.

6. HOW POWERFUL WAS THE FLEET?

Among most Americans, and even most military personnel, Pearl Harbor was believed to be a mighty bastion of defense. Together with the power of the Pacific Fleet, Hawaii was considered by the public to be impregnable.

The fleet itself was assumed to be invincible as compared to that of any prospective enemy. Even some of the high ranking personnel of the State Department had faith in the supposition that if hostilities occurred, the sea forces of Japan could be vanquished in a few weeks. But as we well know that viewpoint was quite mythical.

Just prior to the Japanese attack the Pacific Fleet had a total of 159 vessels assigned, including some smaller craft such as mine layers, mine sweepers, and patrol vessels. This compared to 224 such vessels assigned to the Atlantic Fleet. If we exclude the smaller vessels, the Pacific Fleet had 111 ships and the Atlantic Fleet 188. The Pacific Fleet had nine of the fifteen battleships and most of the modern submarines, but the Atlantic Fleet excelled in other types. At the time of sending the United States Fleet to base in Hawaii, that fleet was relatively stronger than the fleet based in the Atlantic, but events in Europe and the Atlantic forced Washington to transfer some of the ships from the Pacific where peace still prevailed. In May 1941 the following were detached from the Pacific and sent to the Atlantic for duty: ⁴

- 3 battleships
- 1 aircraft carrier
- 4 cruisers
- 9 destroyers

To show Washington's concern over the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, it was proposed in the summer of 1941 that a like force from the Pacific be transferred to the Atlantic, but this proposal was dropped. These transfers indicate that the Atlantic was deemed to be the scene of needed strength.

The three major task forces comprising the Fleet were organized as follows: ⁵

Task Force I, Vice Admiral W. S. Pye, Commander Battle Force, in *USS California*

- 6 battleships
- 1 aircraft carrier

⁴ *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, and Additional Views of Mr. Keefe Together with Minority Views of Mr. Ferguson and Mr. Brewster*, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1946, p. 167. Hereafter cited as *Report of the Joint Committee*.

⁵ *Hearings*, Part 17, p. 2535.

- 5 light cruisers
- 18 destroyers
- 5 mine vessels

Task Force II, Vice Admiral William F. Halsey, Commander Aircraft Battle Force, in *USS Enterprise*

- 3 battleships
- 1 aircraft carrier
- 4 heavy cruisers
- 18 destroyers
- 4 mine vessels

Task Force III, Vice Admiral Wilson Brown, Commander Scouting Force, in *USS Indianapolis*

- 1 aircraft carrier
- 8 heavy cruisers
- 9 destroyers
- 13 mine vessels
- 6 attack transports

At least one of these three task forces was always at sea. Usually two of them were at sea for overlapping periods during tactical operations.

In addition the submarines were organized as a task force for independent operations to provide an efficient Submarine Observation and Attack Force and to conduct patrols as ordered by the Fleet Commander. The operating schedule called for about thirty submarines and their supporting vessels.

The above gives a good approximation of the strength of the Pacific Fleet. However, all the ships were not in Pearl Harbor or not in full operating status. Some were at West Coast Navy Yards for regular overhaul, some at the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard for required material improvement work, and many were operating at sea.

While the strength of the fleet seemed quite formidable, it was realized by "those in the know" that the Japanese fleet was considerably stronger. Definite information, of course, was unavailable, but it was known that Japan had been busy building and training for at least a half-dozen years. The extent of their superiority was demonstrated in the early days of the war, especially in the category of aircraft carriers and aircraft carrier planes.

- 1 gunboat
- 9 minelayers
- 14 minesweepers
- 27 auxiliaries such as repair ships, tenders, store ships, and tugs.

All of the vessels at Pearl Harbor, except those undergoing overhaul at the Navy Yard, were, in accordance with fleet orders, in readiness condition three, which required about one-quarter of the anti-aircraft batteries and their control stations to be in a ready status with gun crews and ammunition at hand. All fleet vessels had ready for use their full supply of ammunition plus a reserve supply. Also, these vessels were required to be on twelve hours notice for getting underway. Actually, however, none of the ships required twelve hours steaming notice to get underway, as will shortly be seen; the requirement for twelve hours was for a fleet sortie.

CHAPTER V

Imminence of War

For quite some time before 7 December the Pearl Harbor radio stations maintained a fairly accurate record of the location of the major units of the Japanese Fleet. This radio intelligence was reported to the Commander-in-Chief almost daily and was considered quite reliable until just prior to the attack, when its reliability was greatly reduced by counter measures taken by the Japanese. First they changed the call signals of their ships on 1 November, and then again on 1 December. This had been done before, and was confusing for a time but not usually for very long. Then the Japanese used deceptive call signals to give the impression that certain major ships like aircraft carriers were elsewhere than where they actually were. For several weeks in late November our monitoring stations lost contact with the Japanese carriers and some other major vessels. This gave rise to the suspicion that these ships might have taken up stations at the naval bases of the Mandated Islands.

The chief countermeasure to defeat monitoring is radio silence, and that is what the Japanese used so effectively. A certain amount of radio silence by the carriers was observed in the early stages of their preparations for the attack, and absolute radio silence was in effect for all ships of the attacking task force which assembled in northern Japan and sailed for Hawaii on 26 November 1941.

4. WARNING TO THE FLEET

The probability of hostilities between the United States and the Axis Powers was well recognized by a large portion of the American public. But how this might come about, and when, was entirely speculative. The news media featured the growing tensions which existed in both the Atlantic and the Pacific, and even the Mediterranean, but few visualized that a direct attack on the United States was imminent. The general concept seemed to be that if we were drawn into the war it would be by going to the defense of a victimized area, such as Malaya or the Dutch East Indies.

In order to relieve the pressure on Malaya and other areas which were held by our allies, the American plan for a possible war with Japan was for the fleet to attack the Japanese Mandated Islands in the Marshalls and the Carolines and to establish a fleet base at Truk. But because of many problems and shortages, such an expedition was looked upon unfavorably by most naval officials. The American public of that time would not support a war of that nature. Then the Japanese solved this dilemma by making a direct attack on the American flag at Pearl Harbor.

The people of Hawaii, including the military, were accustomed to news reports showing the continuing controversy between opposing powers, but in Hawaii there was little turmoil or tension. Business went on routinely, people pursued their usual activities, and military personnel were carrying out the program of preparedness. There was little suspicion that Japan would launch a direct attack prior to a state of war, or at least an ultimatum, against the strong-hold of the Pacific. Among the military the prevailing talk seemed to be that if war should come it would be somewhere else, probably in the Southwest Pacific.

From official Washington there had come to Hawaii, as to other Pacific outposts, almost a superfluity of alarms and alerts for over a year. These were usually of a general nature as reflecting the new aggressions of Japan, or the widening gap in diplomatic relations. In most cases such warnings were precautionary and were not intended for public information. In fact the Hawaiian commanders were always cautioned to limit the warning information to those who needed to know, and to avoid arousing or irritating Japan by any overt or unfriendly action. The rank and file of the military, as well as the general public, were probably not aware of the serious implications which existed just prior to 7 December. And some of the most important implications were not known to the high commands in Hawaii because Washington had not transmitted them.

The warning signals sent from Washington had value, but were lacking in important essentials. Naturally, in Washington they could not be specific enough to forecast what would happen. There were sometimes differences in the estimates of the situation between the Army and the Navy. Furthermore, the separate signals sent out by the Army and the Navy were received and evaluated separately in Hawaii. There was not unity of command but there was a remarkable degree of discussion and coordination regarding the information which was received.

The first alert came from the War Department to the Hawaiian Army Command and to Panama in June 1940. The date marked the fall of France, indications of possible German aggression in South America, and also the Japanese bombing of Chungking. This alert continued for a month. The Navy was not included in the Washington instructions but was told of the situation locally, and participated by increasing its long-range air patrol and continuing it for some months. Washington cautioned Hawaii to avoid publicity or in any way from provoking curiosity of news media or alien agents.

In February 1941 the Secretary of the Navy advised the Secretary of War of the possibility of air attack on Pearl Harbor. Copies of this communication were received by the Army and by the Navy in Hawaii. In July 1941 Hawaii was warned of the tense situation caused by the Japanese occupation of Southern Indo-China and the United States' imposition of an embargo on trade with Japan.

When the Konoye cabinet fell in Japan and General Tojo took over the government as Premier in October 1941, the Hawaiian commands and other Pacific commands were again advised of the seriousness of the situation in the Pacific. This dispatch from the Chief of Naval Operations in Washington went to all commanders directly concerned.

Admiral Kimmel issued a new security order under date of 14 October 1941 which superseded the security order which was in effect dated 15



USN NR&L (MOD) 27377

Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, USN, Commander-in-Chief Pacific Fleet on 7 December 1941.

February 1941. This delineated actions to be taken in the anti-aircraft defense, anti-submarine defense, Army and Navy coordination, communications plans, drills, and so on. In his order Admiral Kimmel stated: "That no responsible foreign power will provoke war . . . by attack on the Fleet or Base, . . . [but] that a declaration of war may be preceded by; (1) a surprise attack on ships in Pearl Harbor, (2) a surprise submarine attack on ships in the operating areas, (3) a combination of these two."¹³ This eventuality had been mentioned in the letter sent to the Secretary of War by the Secretary of the Navy in January 1941. It had also been covered in great detail by the Martin-Bellinger order for the defense of Pearl Harbor 31 March 1941. In that order it is stated: "In the past Orange [Japan] has never preceded hostile actions by a declaration of war." The Chief-of-Staff of Admiral Kimmel, Rear Admiral W. W. Smith, stated at the Hewitt Inquiry that "they were aware of the possibility of hostile action without a declaration of war, but they expected the Japanese might hit the Philippines, Midway, or Guam, but not Pearl Harbor."¹⁴ This was the thought universally held.

The Navy Department dispatch of 16 October 1941, was essentially as follows:

The resignation of the Japanese Cabinet has created a grave situation. If a new Cabinet is formed it will probably be strongly nationalistic and anti-American. If the Konoye Cabinet remains the effect will be that it will operate under a new mandate which will not include rapprochement with the U.S. In either case hostilities between Japan and Russia are a strong possibility. Since the U.S. and Britain are held responsible by Japan for her present desperate situation there is also a possibility that Japan may attack these two powers. In view of these possibilities you will take due precautions including such preparatory deployments as will not disclose strategic intention nor constitute provocative actions against Japan.¹⁵

On 24 November 1941, a message was received from the Navy Department as follows:

Chances of favorable outcome of negotiations with Japan very doubtful. This situation coupled with statements of Japanese Government and movements of their naval and military forces indicate in our opinion that a surprise aggressive movement in any direction including attack on Philippines or Guam is a possibility. Chief of Staff has seen this dispatch concurs and

¹³ Pacific Fleet Confidential Letter No. 2CL-41 (Revised), 14 October 1941, p. 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Part 36, p. 442.

¹⁵ *Report of the Joint Committee*, p. 96.

requests action aedes to inform senior Army officers their areas. Utmost secrecy necessary in order not to complicate an already tense situation or precipitate Japanese action. Guam will be informed separately.¹⁶

The final and most important warning was sent from Washington and to other Pacific outposts on 27 November 1941. It was specifically designated as a "war warning." It reads as follows:

This despatch is to be considered a war warning. Negotiations with Japan looking toward stabilization of conditions in the Pacific have ceased and an aggressive move by Japan is expected within the next few days. The number and equipment of Japanese troops and the organization of naval task forces indicates an amphibious expedition against either the Philippines Thai or Kra Peninsula or possibly Borneo. Execute an appropriate defensive deployment preparatory to carrying out the tasks assigned in WPL46. Inform district and Army authorities. A similar warning is being sent by War Department. SPENAVO inform British. Continental districts Guam Samoa directed take appropriate measures against sabotage.¹⁷

It is noted that at no time did Washington indicate any belief of a surprise air attack on Pearl Harbor in advance of a formal declaration of hostilities. On the contrary, the supposition continued to be that Japan's moves would be to the south, and evidence was at hand giving validity to such beliefs. This belief was supported by the fortnightly summary sent out from Washington under date of 1 December 1941 from the Director of Naval Intelligence. On the Japanese naval situation it stated:

Deployment of naval forces to the southward has indicated clearly that extensive preparations are underway for hostilities. At the same time troop transports and freighters are pouring continually down from Japan and northern China coast ports headed south, apparently for French Indo-China and Formosan ports. Present movements to the south appear to be carried out by small individual units, but the organization of an extensive task force, now definitely indicated, will probably take sharper form in the next few days. To date this task force, under the command of the Commander in Chief Second Fleet, appears to be subdivided into two major task groups, one gradually concentrating off the Southeast Asiatic coast, the other in the Mandates. Each constitutes a strong striking force of heavy and light cruisers, units of the Combined Air Force, destroyer and submarine squadrons. Although one division of battleships also may be assigned the major capital ship strength remains in home waters, as well as the greatest portion of the carriers.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

The equipment being carried south is a vast assortment, including landing boats in considerable numbers. Activity in the Mandates, under naval control, consists not only of large reinforcements of personnel, aircraft, munitions but also of construction material with yard workmen, engineers, etc.¹⁸

Washington's acute desire to avoid war in the Pacific should also be noted. In fact both the War and Navy Departments expressed the hope in November 1941 that firm diplomatic attitudes toward Japan not be taken for a period of three months or more, during which time reasonable preparedness would be obtained. It was especially desired to improve defenses in the Philippines as it was recognized that the Japanese coveted this territory. Its location was critical to Japanese expansion. The United States was in process of adding a large number of B-17's to the air power of the Philippine Islands. Under date of 27 November 1941 General Marshall, the Army's Chief of Staff, and Admiral Stark, the Chief of Naval Operations, asked the President and Secretary of State for more time to prepare, stating: "The most essential thing now, from the United States viewpoint, is to gain time. . . . Precipitance of military action on our part should be avoided so long as consistent with national policy."¹⁹

Although the additional time was not to be, the fact was clear that the United States did not commit any overt military action against Japan. The final overt hostile act was Japan's treacherous bombing of Pearl Harbor with a consequent toll of destruction and human lives.

5. WHAT INFORMATION DID HAWAII NOT RECEIVE?

While Washington furnished to Hawaii and elsewhere a great volume of information on the critical relations between Japan and the United States, it is a fact that some very important information was not sent to Hawaii. This was the "purple" information regarding the specific ships in designated locations in Pearl Harbor during the few days prior to 7 December, and the instructions to various places to burn certain codes. However, it should be mentioned here that the work of decoding and translation of the multitude of messages was not completed until after 7 December. The amount

¹⁸ *Fortnightly Summary of Current National Situations*, Navy Department, Serial No. 25, 1 December 1941, p. 9.

¹⁹ *Report of the Joint Committee*, p. 175.

of work over-taxed the section in charge of this specialty and some of it was not completed until after the air attack.

At an earlier time, shortly after "purple" messages became available, the Fleet was an addressee for this information. But this was discontinued about six months before the attack in the interest of security. Obviously the value to our government of intercepting and reading Japanese secret diplomatic messages was so great that it would be foolhardy to risk any compromise of our advantage.

Likewise, the instructions to Japanese Embassies and Consulates to destroy their codes and coding machines were highly significant. Here again, Hawaii was not cut in directly. However, the commands in Hawaii were aware of it through their own surveillance of the Japanese Consulate as American representatives observed the burning of records there.

While we must recognize the possibility that the Pearl Harbor attack should have been blunted to some extent if more of the information available in Washington had been transmitted to Hawaii, there is room for other viewpoints. Harassed by the pressure of events and torrents of information, the responsible officials in Washington were subject to human limitations as to relative urgency, evaluation, and necessary action. Without doubt some officials, using their hindsight, could later see that certain things might have been done differently and better. At the time, however, it would seem that their estimate of the situation indicated that little could be gained by alerting Hawaii beyond what already had been done.

As for the Hawaiian commands, some people observed that they were "fed up" on alarms, alerts, rumors, and an overdose of pressures and cautionary messages. Fleet operations were at times subordinate to alerts and defense drills, and suffered accordingly. The cry of "wolf" had become so customary that it no longer made an impact. And even if the Pacific Fleet had been fully ready, the damage would not have been much less. In fact, it might well have been much more.

CHAPTER VI

Japanese Attack, Strategy, and Tactics

CHAPTER VII

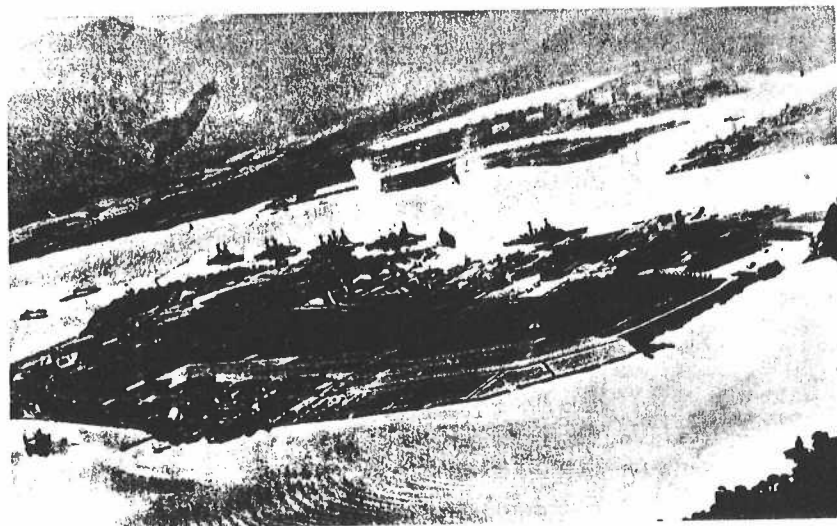
Results of Japanese Surprise Air Raid

1. SUNDAY WAS A DAY OF REST IN HAWAII IN PEACETIME

Sunday, 7 December 1941 was a typical day of rest in Hawaii. The weather was perfect with some cloud cover overhead. The people were taking it easy as was their custom on Sundays. The military was sleeping in or eating breakfast a bit late since this was a day of relaxation and rest. The accounts of battleship survivors, which are included later in this work, give the state of mind general among the military as well as among all Hawaiian residents.

Although Admiral Kimmel in his Fleet Order warned of a surprise air raid on Pearl Harbor as a possibility, few thought "it could happen here." Most people felt the Japanese would not attack without a declaration of hostile intent. The fact that they had attacked China in 1895 and Russia in 1905 without a declaration of war was considered not applicable to modern Japan. The military personnel, however, were not sure of Japan's code of honor in this regard, and made preparations accordingly. Yet, in the various hearings no American military man excused the air raid on the ground that Japan had violated her solemn agreement to the Hague Convention.

There was little real reconnaissance on 7 December. There was none to the north, which proved to be the vulnerable direction. It was taken for granted that if the Japanese attacked, the attack would be from a southerly direction, where the Mandated Islands were. But, the trade winds were northerly and would be helpful to the Japanese in carrying a bomb load over 200 miles of water.



80-G-30584

Japanese planes over Ford Island.

2. SUBMARINES

The first indication of hostile action by Japan was a submarine periscope sighted at 0350 by the minesweeper *Condor*. The destroyer *Ward*, which was on patrol duty at the Pearl Harbor entrance, was notified and opened fire and dropped depth charges. Also a PBV seaplane dropped depth charges which showed a noticeable oil slick after the explosions. It was assumed that the submarine was sunk in about 1,200 feet of water.

A message was sent at 0654 which was delivered to the Duty Officer of the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Fleet at 0715. After requesting confirmation Patrol Wing TWO verified the report at 0732. But a second confirmation of this unbelievable circumstance was requested. Before verification was received the attack on Ford Island dispelled all doubt.

3. WE ARE AT WAR

At 0755 the Navy Yard signal tower telephoned to the Commander-in-Chief at his quarters, "Enemy air raid—not drill." At about the same time the Commander Patrol Wing TWO broadcasted from Ford Island the warn-

ing: "Air Raid, Pearl Harbor—This is Not a Drill." Within a few minutes an identical message came from the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Fleet doctrine required all ships to get underway as soon as possible but some were not able to overcome the damage which the Japanese attack wrought. As it turned out, it was better that ships stayed moored because there was some fear that the planes had dropped mines in the entrance channel; and let us not forget that enemy submarines awaited the ships in the various sea lanes. Most destroyers and a few cruisers did get underway and joined forces to find and confront the Japanese Fleet, but these searched southward instead of northward. Perhaps it was best that they were unable to contact the Japanese forces, for these forces were much superior and had plenty of air power. Sunk at sea, they would have been lost beyond recall—though they would have been far tougher targets.

4. ALL AIR BASES IMMOBILIZED

True to the Japanese plan all air bases were first put out of commission so that air interference with Japanese attacks on the ships of the fleet was minimal. Ford Island was attacked at 0755 and all fighting planes were effectively disposed of prior to torpedo attacks on ships which occurred at 0757. Likewise Ewa, Hickam, Wheeler, Bellows, and Kaneohe were subjected to dive-bomber attacks and machine gun strafing. The Army field at Haleiwa was not attacked because the Japanese knew it had only a few reserve training planes.

The Army was on sabotage alert only, and therefore its planes were grouped together with ten feet or less from wing-tip to wing-tip. Only machine gun ammunition was available to Army personnel until well into the morning. This fact plus the sabotage philosophy resulted in a perfect target for the Japanese dive-bombers and machine gun strafers.

The score board shows that the attackers put all of the air bases virtually out of commission for several hours. The figures given before the Joint Congressional Investigating Committee on 15 November 1945 are as follows:

Ford Island—33 out of 70 totally destroyed or damaged.

Ewa—33 out of 49 totally destroyed.

CHAPTER VIII

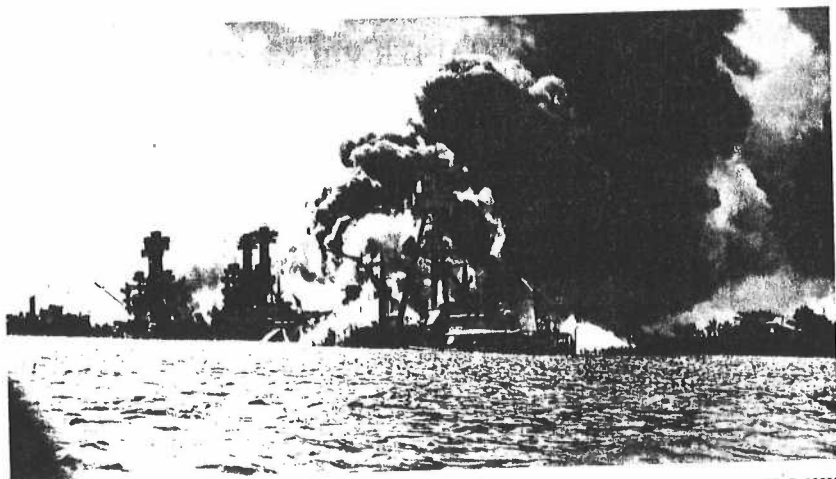
Washington's Response to the Japanese Attack

1. MILITARY AND CIVILIANS TAKEN BY SURPRISE

When President Roosevelt read the intercepted "purple" messages just prior to Pearl Harbor he remarked: "This means war." He did not foresee a Japanese attack on the Pacific Fleet but he knew that the Government of Japan would rather go to war against the United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands than give up their alliance with Germany and Italy, or recede from their depredations in China. By now it was easy to anticipate that eventually we would have to go to the assistance of Great Britain against Hitler if freedom was to prevail, but it was hoped that peace in the Pacific would continue until the Atlantic peril was satisfactorily met.

Thus was war thrust upon us, and hindsight proves that the attack on Pearl Harbor, despite its losses, brought the blessings of a nation unified in spirit and purpose and was for us the easiest way to open hostilities with Japan and the Axis Powers. If the United States had not been attacked, the alternatives were a naval attack on the Mandated Islands or a naval excursion into southern Asia. Either would have been hazardous and the military recoiled from the necessity of fighting a long war against such odds with a divided public opinion at home.

The losses at Pearl Harbor seemed staggering at the time. Washington was as surprised as the personnel at Pearl Harbor that the Japanese had decided somewhat inscrutably to attack the Pacific Fleet. Four years of bloody warfare lay ahead and victory over the fanatical "Sons of Heaven" seemed assured,—at least eventually. The attack on Pearl Harbor proved that the impossible was possible after all.



80-G-33068

USS Arizona burning after the magazine explosion. The ship forward is USS Tennessee which is playing water over the stern to keep oil fires from Arizona at a distance. USS West Virginia is on the far left.

2. DECLARATION OF WAR

The President lost no time in taking official action against Japan. On 8 December 1941 the President told Congress: "Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan." Congress then declared war on Japan. One vote was cast against the measure by a Congresswoman from Montana. Agreeable to their alliance with Japan, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States four days later. So the United States was at war not only with Japan but with the front-runners of the European War, Germany and Italy.

3. SECRETARY OF THE NAVY VISITS PEARL HARBOR

Almost immediately the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, set out for Pearl Harbor to see at first hand what damage the Japanese had wrought. He remained until Friday the 12th. On his return he had a conference with the President, and held a news conference on the following Monday, 15 December 1941. He lauded the heroic action of the fleet in resisting the

enemy, and gave a number of instances of fearless and intrepid action. Secretary Knox admitted that the attack was a surprise to all concerned. Before leaving Washington for Pearl Harbor he sent a message to all Naval ships and stations. It is quoted because it is so appropriate for all times:

The enemy has struck a savage, treacherous blow. We are at war, all of us! There is no time now for disputes or delay of any kind. We must have ships and more ships, guns and more guns, men and more men—faster and faster. There is no time to lose. The Navy must lead the way. Speed up—it is your Navy and your Nation!

Frank Knox
Secretary of the Navy

Although the Japanese took pictures of the damage they had caused, and these pictures were published abroad, Japan was relatively uninformed of the full extent of the damage. As is customary in warfare, the enemy was not told more than he already knows. For that reason Secretary Knox minimized the damage. At that time the fleet in Pearl Harbor felt that the Secretary's report was less than half the truth,—but time proved that his estimates were excessive and that the full extent of the damage was less than at first visualized. This proves the adage that people are prone to see the worst or pessimistic sides of a situation rather than the best or optimistic aspects.

4. THE ROBERTS COMMISSION

Official Washington lost no time in appointing a Commission to investigate Pearl Harbor. This was headed by Associate Justice Owen J. Roberts of the United States Supreme Court, a Republican. Three of the members were retired officers of the Army and the Navy while one member was on active duty with the Army Air Corps.

The Commission met as early as 18 December 1941 in the Munitions Building at Washington. After getting statements from the top officers of the Army and Navy it went to Hawaii where it viewed the wreckage and held hearings at Fort Shafter, at the Submarine Base, and at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. The Commission received sworn testimony until 10 January 1942. After that it returned to Washington where it received sworn testimony from various Army and Navy officers from 19 January 1942 to 23 January 1942 when the Commission's report was made to the President.

The report to the President disposed of a number of wild rumors, and

included a number of basic facts about the Hawaiian Command. Washington knew the possibility of air raids, and so did Hawaii, but both considered such a circumstance remote. Both were of the firm opinion that collision courses in national interests would result in eventual warfare, but neither considered Japan so desperate or foolhardy as to attack Pearl Harbor.

The Roberts Commission went on record with the following summary and recommendations, among others: "Army preparations were primarily based on fear of sabotage while the Navy's were based on fear of submarine attack. . . . The first surprise attack . . . caught them completely unprepared. It was about four minutes before the first anti-aircraft fire by the Navy began, and as the Army aircraft batteries were not manned nor their mobile units in position it was some time before their anti-aircraft fire became effective. . . . The final results . . . left the Army airfields and the Naval station very badly damaged and resulted in the practical immobilization of the majority of the Navy's battle fleet in the Pacific for months to come, the loss of 75 percent of the Army's air forces on the Islands, and the loss of an even larger percentage of the Navy's air force on Oahu. . . . The loss of life and the number of wounded in this attack is a shocking result of unpreparedness."

The Commission concluded: "This attack has emphasized the completeness of the Naval and Military information in the heads of the Japanese, the meticulous detail of their plans of attack, and their courage, ability and resourcefulness in executing and pressing home their operation. It should serve as a mighty incentive to our defense forces to spare no effort to achieve a final victory."

5. PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S FIRESIDE CHAT

On 23 February 1942 the President gave a fireside chat to the nation entitled "We Must Keep on Striking our Enemies Wherever and Whenever We Can Meet Them." This was delivered on the day after Washington's Birthday, and the President drew a parallel between Valley Forge of colonial days and the odds which faced the American people of the present. He discounted wild rumors and called attention to the relatively moderate losses which we suffered at Pearl Harbor. Although we had been compelled to yield ground to the enemy he said, "we will regain it. So spoke Americans in 1776, and so speak Americans today!"

6. ADMIRAL KIMMEL AND GENERAL SHORT RELIEVED

The President did not wait for the Roberts report before taking action with regard to Admiral Husband E. Kimmel and Lieutenant General Walter Short. It was traditional in the services that they should be relieved. Their commands had suffered a tragedy, one which was greatly exaggerated in the mind of the public, but nevertheless one which seemed sizable at the time. There was no air reconnaissance to the north on that fateful Sunday. They left their posts with the good wishes of their subordinates. Admiral Kimmel was affectionately regarded in the fleet as an officer of unqualified loyalty and efficiency. His going was deeply regretted, but the nature of things required that he be relieved. Had he remained as Commander-in-Chief he would undoubtedly have proven himself one of the Navy's greatest heroes of all time.

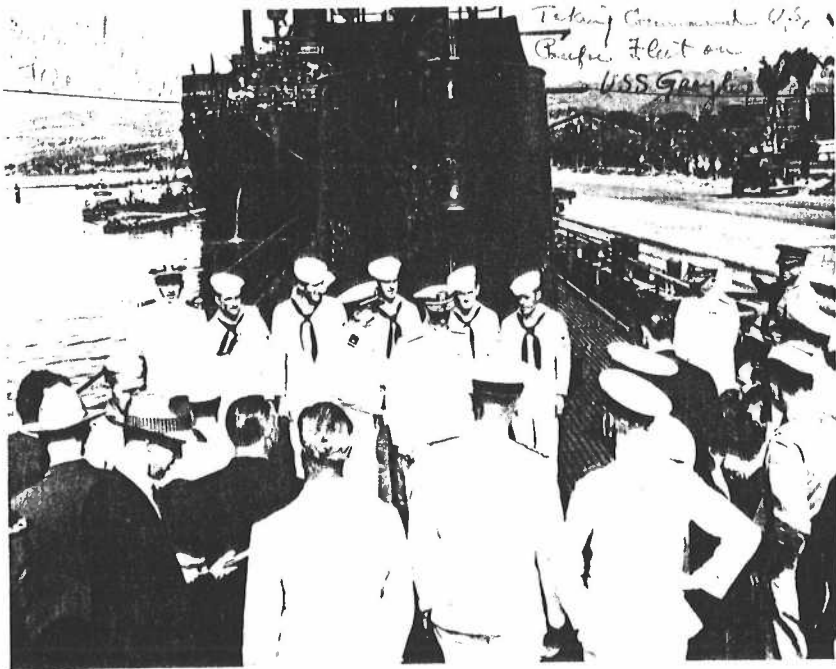
The poisonous rumors that gained credence is illustrated by letters which Mrs. Kimmel received following his departure. The first was from a woman who deprecated the fact that two pregnant women were required to get off the clipper plane to the mainland (planes were very infrequent in those days) to make room for her and her belongings. The nephew of the woman asserted that demands upon the plane's personnel deprived other passengers of the attention which was due them. In the other letter the woman writer said that she had it on good authority that Mrs. Kimmel and Mrs. Short were never invited to the same party because of their conflicting temperaments. To both of these letters Mrs. Kimmel replied that she had never been on a clipper plane and had never been in Hawaii! Too bad that other ill-founded rumors and gossip could not be scotched so easily at the time!

Vice Admiral William S. Pye relieved Admiral Kimmel on 17 December 1941 as temporary Commander of the Fleet. He was number two in the fleet echelon of command and assumed the job as additional duty until a regular relief arrived. Admiral Pye was hard put to decide whether to take action in relieving Wake Island. He had two task forces near enough to the island to subject the Japanese forces to an aircraft carrier raid. But to do so required him to risk the loss of a carrier, which at that stage he could ill afford. Hindsight proves that action even against the land-based planes of the Japanese from the Marshall Islands only about 500 miles away would have been successful. But Wake is nearer to Japan than Hawaii, and holding it would have been impossible without changing the whole complexion of the war which lay ahead. The relief of Wake would have

prevented the capture of military and some 650 civilian personnel which the Japanese took into custody. There were a number of other considerations involved, including the state of the weather, the shortage of fleet oilers, and the lack of loading and unloading facilities at Wake. As it appears now, Admiral Pye acted wisely, about 22 December 1941, in sacrificing the manpower on Wake without risking the loss or crippling of one or more aircraft carriers.

7. ADMIRAL C. W. NIMITZ TAKES COMMAND

Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, formerly Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, took command on 31 December 1941. He was a fortunate choice for the position. Although he was unknown to the public at that time, his appointment restored public confidence in the abilities of the United States Navy.



NR&L (MOD) 27181-A

Admiral Chester W. Nimitz assumes duties as Commander-in-Chief Pacific Fleet, 31 December 1941, on board USS Grayling at Pearl Harbor.

He not only got along with all elements of a unified command but proved a strong commander in his quiet sort of way. He was destined to remain in command throughout the war and to be promoted in due course to Fleet Admiral.

Fleet Admiral Nimitz was a plain man who had no use in wartime for furbelows and ruffles. He was non-argumentative, but used his common sense to arrive at decisions which had to be made. He was a good listener, but used his own judgment in making decisions. Here was a man who in due time gained the confidence of all by the sheer demonstration of ability and good will.

Although originally a pessimist in salvage operations, his interest is well illustrated by the fact that for six months he required the Salvage Officer to see him at an appointed time once a week to talk over the progress of the work. Whenever significant salvage operations occurred, such as the entry into dry dock of a ship that once rested on the bottom of Pearl Harbor, he and others in high command were always present to show their interest and to add their prestige to the work.

8. ADMIRAL ERNEST J. KING BECOMES COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE U.S. FLEET

In order to coordinate the Atlantic and Pacific theaters, the Commander of the Atlantic Fleet was, on 30 December 1941, assigned as the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Fleet. He became the over-all Commander-in-Chief of the Navy under the general direction of the Secretary of the Navy and the President of the United States. Admiral King later became the Chief of Naval Operations as additional duty, when he relieved Admiral Harold R. Stark as the Chief of Naval Operations in March 1942, and eventually was promoted to Fleet Admiral. For the rest of the war Admiral King wore both hats.

Admiral King sent the following message to the Navy shortly after taking the oath as "Cominch:"

The way to victory is long
 The going will be hard
 We will do the best we can with what we've got
 We must have more planes and ships at once
 Then it will be our turn to strike
 We will win through in time.

Final Appraisal of the Pearl Harbor Attack

1. JAPAN'S MISTAKE IN ATTACKING PEARL HARBOR

In retrospect, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was a blessing for both nations, if not for the world. The "Day of Infamy" will long be remembered, because at the time it seemed real and portentous. Since that time, a quarter century ago, the results of that attack appear insignificant compared to the events which have since transpired. What seemed a great disaster at the time of Pearl Harbor has turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Tragically, it was the cheapest way in which a nation such as the United States could become unified and could thereafter go forth as the champion of liberty throughout the world. The results of the war put an end to many of the non-democratic governments in the world and at the same time led the United States to take decisive action and world leadership.

True enough, General Tojo and Admiral Yamamoto were bad news for a peace-loving nation like the United States. The Japanese people became willing victims of a despotic militaristic regime which had never known defeat, and which had attacked without warning in the Chinese War of 1895 and the Russian War of 1905. In later years they signed an agreement at The Hague which prohibited such uncivilized practice. Yet in 1941 they attacked Pearl Harbor in peacetime without warning. Through a miscalculation by their diplomats in Washington, the half-hour's interval between the attack and the final note ending further negotiations turned out to be a warning which was received more than an hour after the event.

The militaristic faction in Japan had been successful in their program of territorial and economic expansion. They had occupied a portion of Manchuria, Hankow, Shanghai, the island of Hainan, and Indo-China, and they had driven many foreigners out of China. Their expressed concern for international amity and goodwill was not sincere. They yearned for the riches

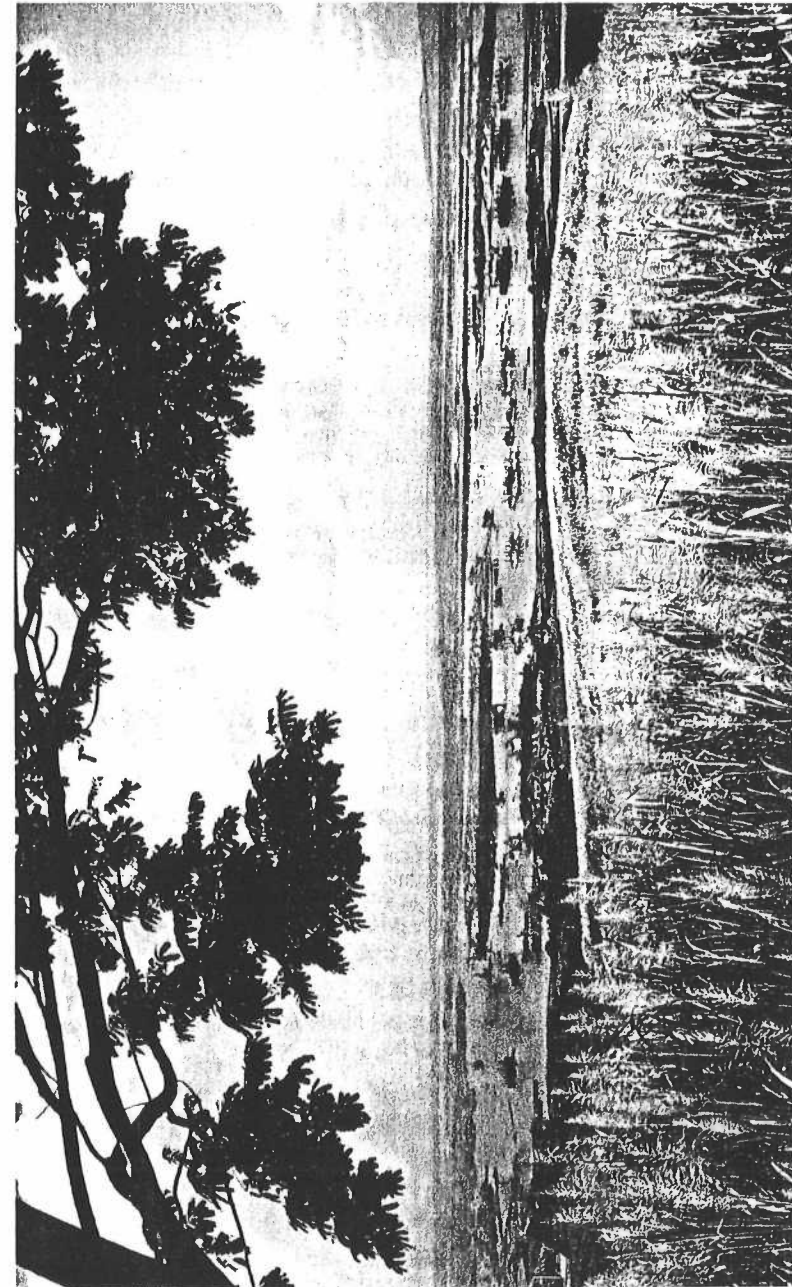
of Southeast Asia and their golden opportunity for further expansion arrived in 1941 when the Axis Powers, Germany and Italy, were apparently successful in their programs of expansion. It was Tojo who declared to a willing people that "Japan's destiny is to return Asia to Asians." Though certain elements in Japan, including the Emperor, cautioned peace, the country had gone so far that it could not draw back without a loss of face. This was impossible, especially when Japan's military power was fully poised, trained, and ready.

The Japanese Fleet attacked Pearl Harbor in force, and the results seemed calamitous then. The military purpose was to immobilize the American Fleet so that the American forces could not interfere with depredations in China or in Southeast Asia. The Japanese leaders accomplished their purpose, but the purpose was wholly illusory when viewed in the context of later events. The question now arises: What mistakes did Japan make in the attack on Pearl Harbor?

In the first place, the Japanese Commander of the attacking force felt that his mission was completed, and that he should return to Japan as ordered. It apparently did not occur to him that his planes could have destroyed the thirty-eight cruisers and destroyers that remained afloat at Pearl Harbor, or the reserve fuel oil supply of the fleet that would have immobilized the fleet for months or even years. His planes could have destroyed the mechanical shops and drydocks which were indispensable to a fleet at war. These important adjuncts of military power were left intact. Possibly they were left to serve Japan at a later date in case they occupied Pearl Harbor.

In the second place, the American Fleet was inferior to the Fleet of Japan, especially in aircraft carriers and aviators. If the Americans did intervene, where could they strike without undue risk from submarines and land-based aircraft? The Rainbow Plan called for the fleet to attack the Marshall and Caroline Islands and to establish a fleet base there. Could this be done without great risk to the American Fleet? Even if successful, what impact would it have had upon the Japanese in their invasion of China, Indo-China, Malaya, or Indonesia?

If the Japanese had warned the Americans of the intended attack even a few days in advance, would the situation have been any better? Perhaps our land-based Army planes could have given a good account of themselves. The losses to the Japanese would undoubtedly have increased, but the losses of our side in terms of ships and aviation manpower could have



Ships of the Fleet anchored in Pearl Harbor near the end of the war.

USN N&A (MOD) 38779

been much greater. A fleet action would hardly have been in our favor, for we would have only two carriers in the Central Pacific against six Japanese carriers. Some of our battleships and cruisers would certainly have been deep water victims. The losses could easily have exceeded those suffered at Pearl Harbor, and would have been final in most cases.

On 3 April 1965 Fleet Admiral Nimitz wrote to the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral David L. McDonald, as follows:

Several times in recent weeks I have been quoted—*correctly*—that “as bad as our losses were at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941—they could have been devastatingly worse”—had the Japanese returned for more strikes against our naval installations, surface oil storage and our submarine base installations. Such attacks could have been made with impunity as we had little left to oppose them. Furthermore—I have been correctly quoted in saying that it was God’s divine will that Kimmel did not have his fleet at sea to intercept the Japanese Carrier Task Force that attacked P.H. on 7 Dec 1941. That task force had a fleet speed at least 2 knots superior to our speed—and Kimmel could not have brought the Japanese to a gun action *unless* they wanted it. We might have had one carrier but I doubt if the *Lexington* could have joined in time. Picture if you can—6 Japanese carriers working on our old ships which would be without air cover—or—had the Japanese wanted to avoid American air attacks from shore—they could have delayed the action until out of range of shore based air. Instead of having our ships sunk in the shallow protected waters of P.H. they could have been sunk in deep water—and we could have lost all of our trained men instead of the 3800—approx. lost at P.H. There would have been few trained men to form the nucleus of the crews for the new ships nearing completion. Not only were the ships of the enemy task force faster—they were more modern—and the Japanese main fleet under Yamamoto was in the rear—in support—if needed. Nagumo—the Commander of the P.H. Attack Force—missed a great chance by not following up his attack . . .

The greatest mistake was purely psychological. The attack on Pearl Harbor solidified a people against Japan and her allies and brought about the greatest miracle of production that the world has seen. Before that happened, the people were divided in their feelings toward Japan and toward the Axis Powers. There was some sympathy for Japan. Going to war to interfere with her exploits in China and Southeast Asia would have failed to arouse a patriotic spirit among Americans. But the unprincipled attack on Pearl Harbor changed the people entirely; they were now committed to an all-out war with “unconditional surrender” as the objective.

2. OTHER MISTAKES MADE BY THE JAPANESE

For a military government to make the mistakes made by Japan is almost inconceivable. In addition, Japan did not use well the superiority which she possessed. Besides underestimating the power of an aroused America, the military leaders of the Japanese failed to gauge the potential of a great country at war. They assumed that the Americans would grow tired of the struggle and be content to let Japan keep her ill-gotten gains. No greater mistake could be conceived with regard to the true character of the American people, in that age or any age.

Overexpansion was without doubt the greatest error of Japan. The first steps of the war were so easy that the leaders departed from the original plan and included parts of Alaska, Midway, and Australia in their projected empire. The result was that when the real tests came they were unable to defend the expanded perimeter against their newly-made enemy.

They assumed that they had insured security of their codes. Yet before Pearl Harbor we had broken the diplomatic code, which was of inestimable value to Americans and their allies.

The military leaders of Japan failed to protect their shipping adequately. Our submarines were able to make intolerable inroads on Japanese merchant ships. In contrast, we lost very few ships to Japanese submarines in the Eastern Pacific or elsewhere. This all points to the fact that they failed to use properly their large fleet of submarines.

We give the Japanese credit for the early-day efficiency which they displayed. At Guadalcanal their destroyers were adept in the use of the “Long Tom” torpedo which had a far greater explosive force than our weapons. They also excelled at first in night action. True, the Japanese were on the offensive and could select the time and place for the sea battles which ensued.

Yet, at Guadalcanal the real caliber of American sea power and American character were shown. As we see it now, the Japanese were eventually turned back at Guadalcanal, as they were at Midway. The turning point of that great war occurred at Midway in June 1942 and at Guadalcanal after August 1942. They retreated from Alaska in the fall of 1942.

The Japanese were not lacking in patriotism or willingness to die for their Emperor. If the atomic bombs had not been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki it is possible that millions of Americans would have been lost in their effort to take the homeland from a relentless and fanatical foe.

An amphibious assault on the Japanese homeland would have been very costly to the Japanese as well as to the Americans.

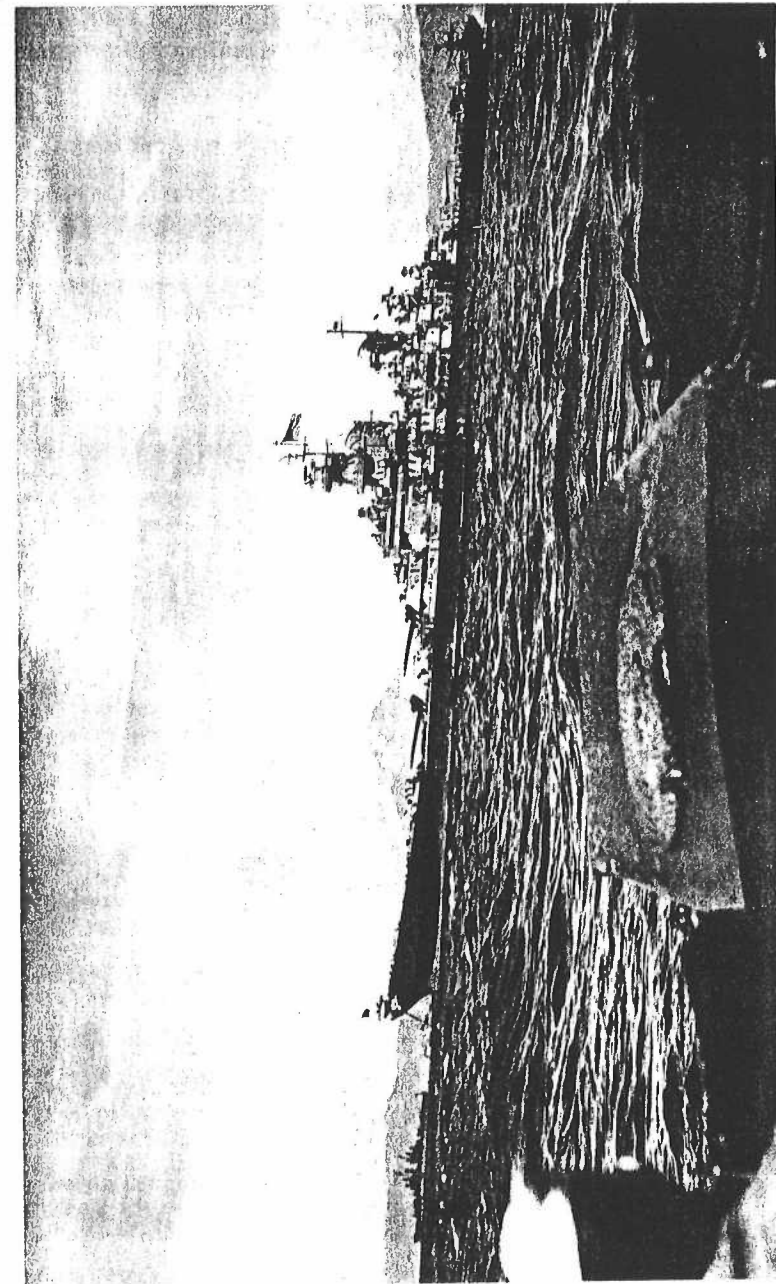
In retrospect, we are thankful that America was with God during the ordeal which tried men's souls. In many ways, He showed that the right prevails over the wrong, provided that the right side perseveres. Truly it has been said that right motives give pinions to thought, and strength and freedom to speech and action. This is especially true of those who strive to perform the right. The final surrender of the hordes represented by Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese militarists, proved unmistakably that the power of God is on the side which is nearest right.

3. UNITED STATES' AVERSION TO WAR

Through the years of 1920-1940 the people of the United States were strongly opposed to war. Isolationism was rampant. World War I was a great victory for America and the western democracies as a whole, but at a fearful cost. It was only when England was near collapse and Japan was taking over China and Southeast Asia that the people of America awoke to the real facts of international life. The American people gradually came to the realization that it was impossible to withdraw from the world or avoid its problems. Such is the way of a leading democratic society. Such is an inherent responsibility of a great world power. Even with this realization there were divisive forces in the body politic.

In the 1920's and early 1930's the people had elected representatives in Congress who believed as they believed. The result was that disarmament was popular and preparedness was anathema. Consequently there was a minimum of money for the armed forces. The Army and Marine Corps were on a starvation diet and few new ships were ordered for the Navy prior to Roosevelt's Presidency. Even when the situation became ominous in 1940, and it was apparent that the world was about to be taken over by predatory forces, it was impossible to make up for the years of neglect. The forces of 'peace at any price' were still powerful in Congress, and the majority of people was adamant in their aversion to war.

That state of mind did not persist among our citizens after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The isolationists in our populace became patriotic Americans. Even the Japanese who were American citizens gave an outstanding account of themselves. The sons and daughters of all Americans went to war in the



USS Missouri anchored in Tokyo Bay for the formal surrender ceremonies on 2 September 1945.

global conflict which ensued. Those who remained at home put their shoulders to the wheel and the world witnessed the marvel of wartime productions.

A few years later, when approving the 1945 Navy Court of Inquiry on the Pearl Harbor attack, President Truman made the following statement:

I have read it very carefully, and I came to the conclusion that the whole thing is the result of the policy which the country itself pursued. The country was not ready for preparedness. Every time the President made an effort to get a preparedness program through the Congress, it was stifled. Whenever the President made a statement about the necessity of preparedness he was vilified for doing it. I think the country is as much to blame as any individual in this final situation that developed in Pearl Harbor.

Appendices