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Shana Storm

Pearl Harbor: 81 Years Later and We Still Cannot Agree

Introduction

Responsibility for the Pearl Harbor disaster should not fall solely on the shoulders of Admiral Kimmel or General Short; it should be broadly shared.

Undersecretary of Defense, Edwin Dorn, December 15, 1995.¹

Early on a sleepy Sunday morning in December, the quietness surrounding Pearl Harbor was shattered by an onslaught of Japanese planes dropping their bombs. One day later, on December 8, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt orated that “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.”² After nine separate investigations were completed by 1946, it seemed as though the blame for being unprepared was going to fall on the shoulders of the commanding officers in Pearl Harbor.³ However, in 1995, the Department of Defense commenced its investigation, and some new truths were brought to life. The Dorn Report, as the investigation was called, signaled that blame had to be shared because of the lack of warning on the part of the government in Washington.⁴ The United States Government and the Pacific Fleet should have acted on available intelligence and prevented or mitigated the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Over the last 81 years, the story of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor has been told and retold. However, many questions still remain unanswered. Was the United States genuinely taken by surprise? Should the attack have been stopped before it happened? Were Kimmel and Short unaware of the recently decoded Japanese transmissions? These questions are what led

1 Fred Borch and Daniel Martinez, *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor: The Final Report Revealed* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 114.

2 Melissa Chan, “‘A Date Which Will Live in Infamy’: Read President Roosevelt’s Pearl Harbor Address,” *Time*, last modified December 6, 2018, 1, <https://time.com/4593483/pearl-harbor-franklin-roosevelt-infamy-speech-attack/>

3 Edward L. Beach, *Scapegoats: A Defense of Kimmel and Short at Pearl Harbor* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 111.

4 Borch and Martinez, *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor*, 114-120.

to the writing of this paper. After ten investigations have been conducted, there is no clear answer to any of them. Society today has the advantage of hindsight when judging the actions of all involved in the attack on Pearl Harbor. Previous literature, such as Bruce Bartlett's *Cover-Up: The Politics of Pearl Harbor, 1941-1946*, Roberta Wohlstetter's *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision*, and even Admiral Husband E. Kimmel's *Admiral Kimmel's Story*, did not have the advantage of having the Dorn Report. The Dorn Report is the first investigation since the Joint Congressional Committee's investigation in 1946.⁵ The Dorn Investigation was also unique in that it was conducted by the Department of Defense and was not affiliated with the Army or the Navy.⁶ This paper attempts to examine the findings of the investigations, whittle them down into basic facts, and present them so that ordinary people can make their conclusions. The American government was formed to be a representation of American citizens. Suppose the citizens are ignorant of the political and militaristic blunders that were made in the past. In that case, they are doomed to repeat those same mistakes.

I began writing this paper as a way for my teenage son and daughters to understand Pearl Harbor's significance. I aimed to pare the details down to basic facts and make it easy for them to draw their own conclusions. However, after I concluded my research, it was clear to me, and maybe clear to others, that the U.S. government in Washington D. C. was at least as culpable, if not more so, than both Kimmel and Short. According to Eric J. Dahl, "As a study by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) put it, this strategic intelligence allows policymakers to see the smoke of growing threat, but not the flames that tell them where and when to take action against it."⁷ This paper challenges such premise in the case of Pearl Harbor since, as the paper will argue, there was enough information in the hands of the intelligence office in Washington D.C. that the policymakers could see not only the flames but also the kindling and matches.

World War II Begins in Europe and Asia

The world was in turmoil in the years leading up to Pearl Harbor. Germany, Italy, and Japan, commonly known as the Axis Powers, were the major countries that began an onslaught of aggressive military actions.⁸ In the 1930s, all three began terror campaigns around Europe, Africa, and Asia. Germany, led by Adolf Hitler, began its aggressive expansion in Eastern

5 Borch and Martinez, *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor*, xi.

6 Borch and Martinez, *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor*, xi.

7 Eric J. Dahl, *Intelligence and Surprise Attack: Failure and Success from Pearl Harbor to 9/11 and Beyond* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 2.

8 Vice Admiral Homer N. Wallen, *Pearl Harbor: Why, How, Fleet Salvage and Final Appraisal* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1968), 5.

Europe, claiming countries such as Austria and Czechoslovakia.⁹ Italy, led by Benito Mussolini, began its takeover in Northern African countries such as Ethiopia and Albania.¹⁰ Japan, led by Emperor Hirohito, was trying to expand its territory by taking Chinese land. Japan wanted to imitate the world powers and have access to the plentiful natural resources found in China.

While this began as a peaceful jockeying for power in Eastern Asia between the United States and Japan, 1931 brought change. Japan seized Manchuria, renamed it, and installed its government that year.¹¹ The United States refused to recognize the new regime.¹² However, the United States did nothing to try to stop the Japanese onslaught against the Chinese. No sanctions were issued for Japan, nor any significant support for China.¹³ In 1939, Germany invaded Poland, thus starting what would become World War II.¹⁴ Due to this attack, Great Britain and France, allies of Poland, declared war on Germany.¹⁵ Italy initially remained neutral but soon entered the war as Germany's ally.¹⁶ The United States was trying to avoid its involvement in any conflicts in Eastern Asia and Europe. The people of the United States were in favor of isolationism.¹⁷ By the end of the 1930s, though, this sentiment was beginning to change. While the American people still preferred to stay out of foreign conflict, they supported sending aid to Great Britain and China while sanctioning the invading countries.¹⁸ The sanctions leveled against Japan were the catalyst that eventually would bring the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The Attack

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked the United States Naval base in Pearl Harbor on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. With a cry of "Tora, Tora, Tora," the attack began. The Japanese strike force included 40 torpedo planes, 103 level bombers, 131 dive bombers, and 79 fighter planes, for a total of 353 aircraft launched from only four aircraft carriers.¹⁹ They also had in their fleet: two heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, two battleships, 11 destroyers, nine

9 Wallen, *Pearl Harbor*, 10.

10 Wallen, *Pearl Harbor*, 12-13.

11 Wallen, *Pearl Harbor*, 14.

12 Wallen, *Pearl Harbor*, 14.

13 Michael Gannon, *Pearl Harbor Betrayed the True Story of a Man and a Nation Under Attack* (New York, NY: Henry Hold and Company, 2001), 68-9.

14 Wallen, *Pearl Harbor*, 11.

15 Wallen, *Pearl Harbor*, 11.

16 Wallen, *Pearl Harbor*, 13.

17 Wallen, *Pearl Harbor*, 25.

18 Wallen, *Pearl Harbor*, 34.

19 "Remembering Pearl Harbor: A Pearl Harbor Fact Sheet," The National World War II Museum, date of access April 6, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/pearl-harbor-fact-sheet-1.pdf>.

oilers, and 35 submarines.²⁰ The attack took one hour and 15 minutes and resulted in massive loss of life and substantial loss and damage to the Pacific fleet.²¹ There were 2,401 deaths and 1,178 wounded among the U.S. soldiers and sailors.²² There were 159 U.S. aircraft damaged and 169 U.S. aircraft destroyed, as well as 16 damaged and three destroyed ships from the U.S. fleet.

In contrast, the Japanese lost 129 lives, 29 aircraft, and five midget submarines.²³ In the aftermath of the attack, the inquiries started and sought to explain why America was caught so off guard that Pearl Harbor was ultimately a perfect target for Japan. It is essential to know the key players and the situations that led to the attack to understand the fallacy of the investigations.

The Commanders

Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, United States Navy, and Major General Walter C. Short, United States Army, were the commanding officers of the Pacific theater at the time of the attack. On February 1, 1941, Rear Admiral Kimmel took over the command of the Pacific fleet and was assigned the temporary rank of four-star Admiral. Major General Short also took over the command of the U.S. Army's Hawaiian Department. He was assigned the temporary rank of Lieutenant General. Following the attack, both Kimmel and Short were relieved of their duties. They both subsequently retired but were not allowed to keep their temporary ranks and had to revert to their permanent rank. They were both accused in at least one investigation of dereliction of duty. While there was not enough evidence to court-martial them, they were both blamed for not being ready for an attack.²⁴ During the investigations, there was evidence signaling that both Kimmel and Short should have expected and been prepared for an imminent attack.

The Mistakes

While the information that Kimmel and Short had received regarding the impending Japanese attack was limited and speculative, it should have been clear that defenses must be mounted. War Plan Orange had been in effect since the 1930s. It was a well-thought-out plan from the Naval Institute regarding what to do if there was a Japanese attack in the Pacific. There is evidence that they received intelligence that if the Japanese attacked, it would be a surprise without a declaration of war. An addendum to Naval Base Defense of the Joint

20 "Remembering Pearl Harbor: A Pearl Harbor Fact Sheet".

21 "Remembering Pearl Harbor: A Pearl Harbor Fact Sheet".

22 "Remembering Pearl Harbor: A Pearl Harbor Fact Sheet".

23 "Remembering Pearl Harbor: A Pearl Harbor Fact Sheet".

24 Borch and Martinez, *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor*, 40-1.

suggested covering Army and Navy air action in the event of sudden hostile action against Oahu or fleet units in the Hawaiian area. Section I stated that "Relations between the U.S. and Japan (Orange) [were] strained, that Japan has never preceded hostile actions by a declaration of war, and a sudden and successful raid on the ships in Hawaii might prevent effective operations by the U.S. in the Pacific."²⁵ By November of 1941, military and civilians had concluded that conflict with Japan was imminent, just not where or when it would occur.

On November 27, 1941, both commanders received a war warning. Short and Kimmel each received a warning with different wording. However, both made it clear that this warning should be taken very seriously. They were advised that negotiations between the U.S. and Japan were at a stalemate and hostile activity by Japan was to be expected.²⁶ Be that as it may, the U.S. government expected Japanese attacks in the Philippines, Thailand, Kra Peninsula, or Borneo.²⁷ Washington did not seem to think that an attack on U.S. soil could happen but thought that the war warning would be enough to put both Kimmel and Short on heightened alert.²⁸

Kimmel and Short were given specific defensive orders in the war warning. Yet, they were not to alarm or inform the civilian population. Kimmel was ordered, by the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Stark, to execute a defensive deployment consistent with the U.S. war plan in the Pacific, War Plan Orange.²⁹ Kimmel interpreted Admiral Stark's message that he should continue doing what he had been doing for the past several weeks. This included sending submarines and planes to patrol the areas around Midway and Wake. He was also sending patrols outside of Pearl Harbor looking for Japanese submarines.³⁰ Army Chief of Staff Marshall ordered Short to undertake reconnaissance and other necessary measures. Short was confused by this, as he thought that command would have known that the Navy had taken over the reconnaissance role in Pearl Harbor. When he replied to General Marshall, Short outlined a plan to prevent sabotage but did not mention anything regarding reconnaissance.³¹ This lack of communication seemed to be just one instance of fallacy in the weeks leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor.

25 United States and Barkley, *Pearl Harbor Attack. Hearings before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, Congress of the United States, Seventy-Ninth Congress, First [-Second] Session, Pursuant to S. Con. Res. 27. 1182-6.*

26 United States and Barkley, *Pearl Harbor Attack*, 782.

27 United States and Barkley, *Pearl Harbor Attack*, 782.

28 United States and Barkley, *Pearl Harbor Attack*, 782.

29 United States and Barkley, *Pearl Harbor Attack*, 782.

30 United States and Barkley, *Pearl Harbor Attack*, 782.

31 Gannon, *Pearl Harbor Betrayed*, 129-30.

The Pearl Harbor commanders did not adequately discuss the defensive techniques and strategies to be used after they received the war warning. According to the Dorn report, the Army and the Navy were separate departments with different leaders reporting only to the President.³² At the time of the war warning, President Roosevelt did not ensure they were working together. Kimmel and Short were cordial but did not pry into the other's department, as was standard at the time.³³ Short's mission was to defend the Hawaiian fleet. His Army Air Corps fliers were on a four-hour alert. He also needed adequate time to ready his anti-aircraft guns since the ammunition was stored far from the batteries.³⁴ Kimmel's duty was to prepare for offensive operations against Japan.³⁵ The Navy had assumed responsibility for the long-range aerial patrols. On December 2, 1941, Kimmel also learned that U.S. intelligence had lost several Japanese carriers and that the Japanese were on radio silence.³⁶ Kimmel and Short did not check with each other to ensure that their duties were being carried out. Kimmel also did not inform Short that the Japanese were on radio silence.³⁷ While Kimmel and Short did not effectively communicate with each other, Washington did not effectively communicate with either of the commanders to ensure they were kept informed.

The lack of communication from Washington led to the laxer attitudes of both Kimmel and Short. Washington had intelligence from the Magic Project that broke some Japanese code. In 1940, codebreaking was still in its infancy. By 1941, the United States had developed a code-breaking program unknown to Japan called "Magic."³⁸ Magic was able to break some, but not all, of Japan's codes. Notably, the diplomatic codes were the most accessible.³⁹ As a result of Magic, Washington had intelligence that Japan had a spy embedded in Pearl Harbor. This spy was supposed to inform his superiors in Tokyo about the precise movement and locations of ships and planes in Pearl Harbor and the surrounding areas.⁴⁰ According to the Dorn Report, neither Kimmel nor Short were informed of these decoded transmissions.⁴¹ Had they known, they likely would have been more diligent in their defenses. Also, when Washington

32 Borch and Martinez, *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor*, 115.

33 Borch and Martinez, *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor*, 115.

34 Borch and Martinez, *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor*, 115-6.

35 Borch and Martinez, *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor*, 115.

36 Borch and Martinez, *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor*, 115.

37 Borch and Martinez, *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor*, 116.

38 Beach, *Scapegoats A Defense of Kimmel*, 37.

39 Beach, *Scapegoats A Defense of Kimmel*, 37.

40 Henry Claussen and Bruce Lee, *Pearl Harbor: Final Judgement* (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1992), 315, 320, 321, 329.

41 Borch and Martinez, *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor*, 115.

received the responses from Kimmel and Short regarding their war warning missions, there were no follow-up discussions.⁴² Short never mentioned in his reply what he was or was not doing. Kimmel did not move the fleet out of the harbor. Instead, he just turned all the ships with bows facing out to make a quick escape if needed.⁴³ No one in Washington seemed to take issue with these responses. Along with the lack of communication, there was also a lack of resources.

Resources in both Washington and Pearl Harbor were scarce. There were not as many cryptographers as needed to translate the vast number of transmissions coming through. As a result, the cryptographers mainly focused on diplomatic transmissions rather than military ones. Also, there were not enough airplanes or crews in Pearl Harbor. Records show that both Kimmel and Short requested more fighter and reconnaissance aircraft. However, Washington knew that American resources were stretched and prioritized the Atlantic coast more than the Pacific. In a letter to Kimmel, dated September 23, 1941, Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Harold R. Stark said that "The situation in the Pacific generally is far different from what it is in the Atlantic. The operations of raiders in the Pacific at present [were] not very widespread or very effective."⁴⁴ While the personnel and equipment shortages impacted the lack of preparation for the attack, it should not be discounted that the Japanese were well prepared.

The Japanese Plans

Since 1935, the Japanese had been devising a realistic plan of attack on Pearl Harbor. Minoru Genda was a Japanese Navy Captain. He started his military career as a fighter pilot and, in 1935, went to the Naval War College in Tokyo. There, he began to question the much-loved Japanese war strategy called "Zengen Sakuse."⁴⁵ This strategy was a Great All-Out Battle strategy focused on luring American ships to Japanese waters.⁴⁶ As the Americans came, the Japanese submarines picked them off one-by-one. When the remaining American ships got to Japanese waters, Japanese battleships surrounded them, soundly defeated. Genda believed that the future of war was in naval aviation.⁴⁷ He thought that fighters should be used aggressively and not just as escorts, even over land. Higher-ranking Navy members did not receive Genda's ideas, most especially gunnery officers of battleships

42 Borch and Martinez, *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor*, 117.

43 Borch and Martinez, *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor*, 117.

44 United States and Barkley, *Pearl Harbor Attack*, 1231.

45 Donald Goldstein and Katherine Dillon, *The Pearl Harbor Papers: Inside the Japanese Plans* (Washington D.C.: Brassey's US, 1993), 5.

46 Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pearl Harbor Papers*, 5.

47 Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pearl Harbor Papers*, 5.

and torpedo officers of submarines. In 1936, Genda suggested a task force that centered around aircraft carriers.⁴⁸ Again, this suggestion was not well received. No one took Genda's air raid idea seriously until early 1941 when Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto reasoned that an attack on Pearl Harbor could work but only if it came from the air.⁴⁹

With Yamamoto's involvement, plans for an air attack on Pearl Harbor began to take shape in early 1941. Secrecy was imperative to the Japanese when planning the attack on Pearl Harbor. As plans were drawn up throughout the spring and summer of 1941, only a select few of the Japanese high command knew that the intended target was Pearl Harbor. The task force was trained, and the fighters flew practice missions, but they were unaware there was an actual target. The commanders knew that a few mission-specific goals had to be accomplished for a favorable outcome. First, they knew that all the plans and designs were secret.⁵⁰ Second, they knew they needed to attack during daytime hours for the bombings to succeed.⁵¹ Third, they knew they needed to use enough force to put the American fleet out of operation for at least six months.⁵² Fourth, they knew that they needed to use the tactic of dive bombing rather than torpedoes, as the water was too shallow.⁵³ Finally, they knew that they needed to target aircraft carriers; to do this, they needed to know the exact locations of said targets.⁵⁴ While they worked on the plans, the Japanese needed someone feeding them information from inside enemy lines.

The Japanese Spy

On March 27, 1941, Takeo Yoshikawa, Japan's top-secret spy, slipped into Honolulu Harbor aboard the line Nita Maru. He used the alias Tadashi Morimura to disguise himself as another tourist or bureaucrat.⁵⁵ Before becoming a spy, Yoshikawa graduated from Eta Jima and quickly advanced his Naval career.⁵⁶ However, he came down with a stomach illness that halted any thought of being career military.⁵⁷ Soon after, someone from the Japanese Navy told Yoshikawa that although his military career was over, he could

48 Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pearl Harbor Papers*, 5.

49 Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pearl Harbor Papers*, 5.

50 Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pearl Harbor Papers*, 14.

51 Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pearl Harbor Papers*, 14.

52 Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pearl Harbor Papers*, 14.

53 Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pearl Harbor Papers*, 14.

54 Goldstein and Dillon, *The Pearl Harbor Papers*, 14.

55 Gordon Prange, Donald Goldstein, and Katherine Dillon, *At Dawn We Slept* (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 1981), 73.

56 Prange et al., *At Dawn We Slept*, 73.

57 Prange et al., *At Dawn We Slept*, 73.

still be of service to the country.⁵⁸ He jumped at the opportunity and soon received instructions. He had to become proficient in English.⁵⁹ He also had to become an expert in the U.S. Naval bases in Guam, Manilla, and Pearl Harbor, in addition to mastering knowledge of the Pacific Fleet and the U.S. Navy.⁶⁰ It took him four years, but Yoshikawa passed the Foreign Ministry's English-language exams and became a junior diplomat, forming his cover story.⁶¹ In August of 1940, Yoshikawa learned of his mission. He was to go to Honolulu as a diplomat and report, by diplomatic code, the daily status of the U.S. Pacific fleet and its bases.⁶² Before he left Japan, Yoshikawa was told to focus mainly on Oahu.

Once he arrived in Hawaii, Yoshikawa found many sites to observe and chart the movements of the U.S. Navy. His spots were unobtrusive, facilitating the making of comprehensive maps and charts.⁶³ He did not have as much luck recording the flight patterns of the air patrols and did not have a way to do so without drawing suspicion.⁶⁴ One of the most vital facts that Yoshikawa gathered was that there were always a significant number of ships in port on Saturdays and Sundays. He also noted that the Americans rarely sent any patrols north of Oahu.⁶⁵ Takeo Yoshikawa mentioned that "[He] knew all this with certainty since [his] whole being had been dedicated to a concentrated study of the U. S. Pacific Fleet for the last seven years, and since [he] alone had been in sole charge of espionage for the Imperial Japanese Navy at Pearl Harbor for the last eight months."⁶⁶ He sent reports of all his findings through diplomatic transmissions.⁶⁷ The transmissions between Tokyo and Yoshikawa should have been a dire warning, but they went apparently unnoticed or not taken seriously.

The Messages

The United States Intelligence personnel should have placed the utmost importance on the transmissions between Tokyo and Takeo Yoshikawa in Honolulu. Messages sent and translated should have clarified, to the

58 Prange et al., *At Dawn We Slept*, 73.

59 Prange et al., *At Dawn We Slept*, 73.

60 Prange et al., *At Dawn We Slept*, 75.

61 Prange et al., *At Dawn We Slept*, 75.

62 Prange et al., *At Dawn We Slept*, 75.

63 Prange et al., *At Dawn We Slept*, 76.

64 Prange et al., *At Dawn We Slept*, 76.

65 Prange et al., *At Dawn We Slept*, 76.

66 Takeo Yoshikawa, "Top Secret Assignment," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, 86/12/694, (1960), <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/1960/december/top-secret-assignment>.

67 Prange et al., *At Dawn We Slept*, 75.

intelligence agencies, that the Japanese were interested in surveying all aspects of Pearl Harbor. The first message intercepted on September 24, 1941, and translated on October 9, 1941, asked Tokyo to Yoshikawa to divide Pearl Harbor into five subareas when making his reports.⁶⁸ This message became known as “the bomb plot” message. The purpose of the requested reporting was to show the exact locations of the ships to establish coordinates for an eventual bombing.⁶⁹ The second transmission was intercepted on November 15, 1941, and translated on December 3, 1941.⁷⁰ This message from Tokyo to Yoshikawa requested instructions for his “ships in harbor” reports to be sent at least two times per week, but not on a regular schedule.⁷¹ The third message was intercepted on November 20, 1941, and translated on December 4, 1941. This missive from Tokyo asked Yoshikawa to investigate the fleet bases, in the neighborhood of the Hawaiian military reservation, comprehensively.⁷² The final message that was intercepted and translated before the attack on Pearl Harbor was sent on November 29, 1941, and decoded on December 5, 1941.⁷³ It contained a request from Tokyo to Yoshikawa asking that he not only report the movement of the ships in and out of the harbor but also to report when there was no movement.⁷⁴ These messages were not treated with the urgency and seriousness they required.

The content of the transmissions between Tokyo and Yoshikawa was translated before the attack on Pearl Harbor as part of the United States Intelligence Department’s efforts to gain insight into what the Japanese were planning. These transmissions were sent in a less secure code than Magic, which was thought to be just a small part of Japan’s intelligence gathering.⁷⁵ However, nobody informed Kimmel or Short about them.⁷⁶ There was no effort to stop or disrupt the communication between Tokyo and Yoshikawa. There was also no attempt to stop the local radio and newspaper from reporting on the movements of the fleet in Pearl Harbor, which according to Yoshikawa, was a significant source of the information he sent from Hawaii to Tokyo.⁷⁷ Many believed Yoshikawa had an extensive network of spies in Hawaii;

68 Henry C., and Bruce. Lee, *Pearl Harbor: Final Judgement*. 1st ed.(New York: Crown, 1992), 315.

69 Bruce R. Bartlett, *Cover-Up: The Politics of Pearl Harbor 1941-1946* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House Publishers, 1978), 54.

70 Hans L. Trefousse, *Pearl Harbor: The Continuing Controversy* (Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1982), 149.

71 Trefousse, *Pearl Harbor: The Continuing Controversy*, 149.

72 Clausen and Lee, *Pearl Harbor Final Judgement*, 315.

73 Trefousse, *Pearl Harbor: The Continuing Controversy*, 150.

74 Trefousse, *Pearl Harbor: The Continuing Controversy*, 150.

75 Trefousse, *Pearl Harbor: The Continuing Controversy*, 46.

76 Beach, *Scapegoats A Defense of Kimmel*, 35-6.

77 Yoshikawa, “Top Secret Assignment”.

however, according to his own words, he worked alone.⁷⁸ All of this allowed the Japanese to continue their spy operations and to send, unhindered, the information that should have been classified to Tokyo, allowing for the well-planned attack on Pearl Harbor. It was the aftermath of the attack, and the investigations began.

The Investigations

The Knox investigation was the first of the U.S. government probes into the attack on Pearl Harbor. Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox immediately went to Pearl Harbor and began his inquiry. His investigation began on December 9, 1941, two days after the attacks, and ended on December 12, 1941. After seeing the carnage and damage for himself, Knox concluded that both the commander of the Navy's Pacific Fleet (Kimmel) and the commander of the Army's Hawaiian Department (Short) would have to be relieved of their respective commands and lose their wartime ranks.⁷⁹ The Knox Investigation was just the first of nine separate investigations in the aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Following the Knox Investigation, the U.S. government conducted eight other investigations between December 18, 1941, and May 23, 1946. The first of these was the Roberts Commission (December 18, 1941-January 23, 1942) which stated unequivocally that Kimmel and Short were derelict in their duty.⁸⁰ On February 12, 1944, the Hart Investigation began and lasted until June 15, 1944. There were no specific recommendations after the Hart Inquiry. It was only to forestall the statute of limitations.⁸¹ After that, three investigations ran simultaneously: The Navy Court of Inquiry (July 24, 1944-October 19, 1944), The Army Pearl Harbor Board (July 7, 1944-October 20, 1944), and The Clark Investigation (August 8, 1944-September 9, 1944). The Navy Court of Inquire found that Kimmel was not derelict, and the blame should be refocused on Washington.

The Army Pearl Harbor Board found that Short did fail in his duties, as did Washington. However, this report did not include any reference to the translated messages.⁸² The Clark Investigation probed the handling of top-secret communications before the Pearl Harbor attack; it found no evidence that supported the destruction of intelligence documents.⁸³ Soon after came two more investigations: Clausen Investigation (January 1, 1945-September

78 Yoshikawa, "Top Secret Assignment".

79 Borch and Martinez, *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor*, 23.

80 Borch and Martinez, *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor*, 40-1.

81 Edwin Layton, Roger Pineau, and John Costello, *"And I Was There": Pearl Harbor and Midway--Breaking the Secrets* (New York, NY: W Morrow, 1985), 512.

82 Layton et al., *"And I Was There": Pearl Harbor*, 513.

83 Layton et al., *"And I Was There": Pearl Harbor*, 515.

12, 1945) and the Hewitt Inquiry (May 5, 1945-July 11, 1945). The one-man-led Clausen Investigation was used to supplement the Pearl Harbor Army Board investigation. He made no public report, but he did testify before the Joint Congressional Committee.⁸⁴ Likewise, the Hewitt Inquiry was to supplement the Navy Court of Inquiry investigation.

Hewitt had no public report, but his findings led the Secretary of the Navy to announce that Admiral Kimmel and Admiral Stark did not demonstrate the necessary judgment in exercising their commands.⁸⁵ The Joint Congressional Committee conducted the last investigation (November 15, 1945-May 23, 1946). The JCC thoroughly investigated the events surrounding the Pearl Harbor attack. Their findings concluded that Japan's attack was skillfully planned and unprovoked, noting that every effort was made to prevent war.⁸⁶ The commanders failed to take appropriate action after the war warnings, but this was an error in judgment, not a dereliction of duty.⁸⁷ Both Army and Navy intelligence failed to recognize the significance of the messages or to pass them on to the Pacific commanders.⁸⁸ Some of these investigations were not conducted to place blame on specific persons. The investigations, whose purpose was to place blame, however, did not agree on the culpability of a single person. However, they agreed that the commanders of the Army and Navy in the Pacific theater held most of the responsibility. According to Henry Clausen, this lack of cohesion among the reports "... proves that America still does not understand the facts behind the disaster of Pearl Harbor."⁸⁹

Conclusion

The attack on Pearl Harbor became one of the most momentous events in United States history, and it was the catalyst that caused the U.S. to enter World War II. The United States may have continued its policy of isolationism, and hundreds of thousands of American lives may have been saved if the attack had been prevented. The United States, along with Great Britain, China, and the Soviet Union, formed the Allied Powers bringing about the end of World War II through bloody battles, defeating the Axis Powers one by one as a result of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Kimmel and Short were vilified after the attack on Pearl Harbor. However, it should be clear that the blame should rest not only on them alone but also the U.S. government in Washington. Kimmel and Short did not take all the defensive measures the events required. They were given a vague war

84 Layton et al., *"And I Was There": Pearl Harbor*, 514-5.

85 Layton et al., *"And I Was There": Pearl Harbor*, 515.

86 Layton et al., *"And I Was There": Pearl Harbor*, 516.

87 Layton et al., *"And I Was There": Pearl Harbor*, 517.

88 Layton et al., *"And I Was There": Pearl Harbor*, 516-7.

89 Claussen and Lee, foreword to *Pearl Harbor: Final Judgment*, 3.

warning. The available intelligence should have been enough of a warning for them to step up their defenses strategically. Washington should have been more aware of the steps, or lack thereof, that Kimmel and Short took. Japan took its time incorporating its plans. They were able to plant an astute spy under the guise of the role of a junior diplomat. This role allowed him to send Tokyo unlimited diplomatic messages containing vital information that pointed directly to the attack on Pearl Harbor. These messages were intercepted and translated. However, they were not deemed necessary enough to be shared.

Washington did not make Kimmel and Short aware of the known information from the transmissions between Yoshikawa and Tokyo. The U.S. Government did not warn the Pacific fleet thoroughly of the danger and allowed Japanese spies to continue working in Pearl Harbor. The U.S. government did not admit wrongdoing in order to avoid taking any blame after the Pearl Harbor attack. Instead, they allowed two decorated officers of the military, who did not have all the information to make informed decisions, to take the fall. The attack on Pearl Harbor occurred 81 years ago. There have been ten investigations and countless debates trying to blame one specific entity or person. There have been no definitive conclusions. The debate somewhat resembles a blame game. This distracts from the real lesson we can learn from such a tragic historical moment. Americans need to know that our government and military commanders are prepared for any attack. The intelligence gathered around 1941 shows that our government can intercept the plans of our enemies. It also shows that our government did not share the pertinent information with those strategically placed to make a difference in defense of the U.S. We need to put an end to this debate to ensure that we can trust our nation's leaders. We do not want another surprise or another day to live in infamy.

