

# Eighty Years of Lies: President Franklin Roosevelt Told Public Pearl Harbor Was a Surprise Attack—However There Is Considerable Evidence Demonstrating Government Foreknowledge

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

– Robinson Jeffers, “Pearl Harbor.”

*“This Pearl Harbor business has a terrible smell.*

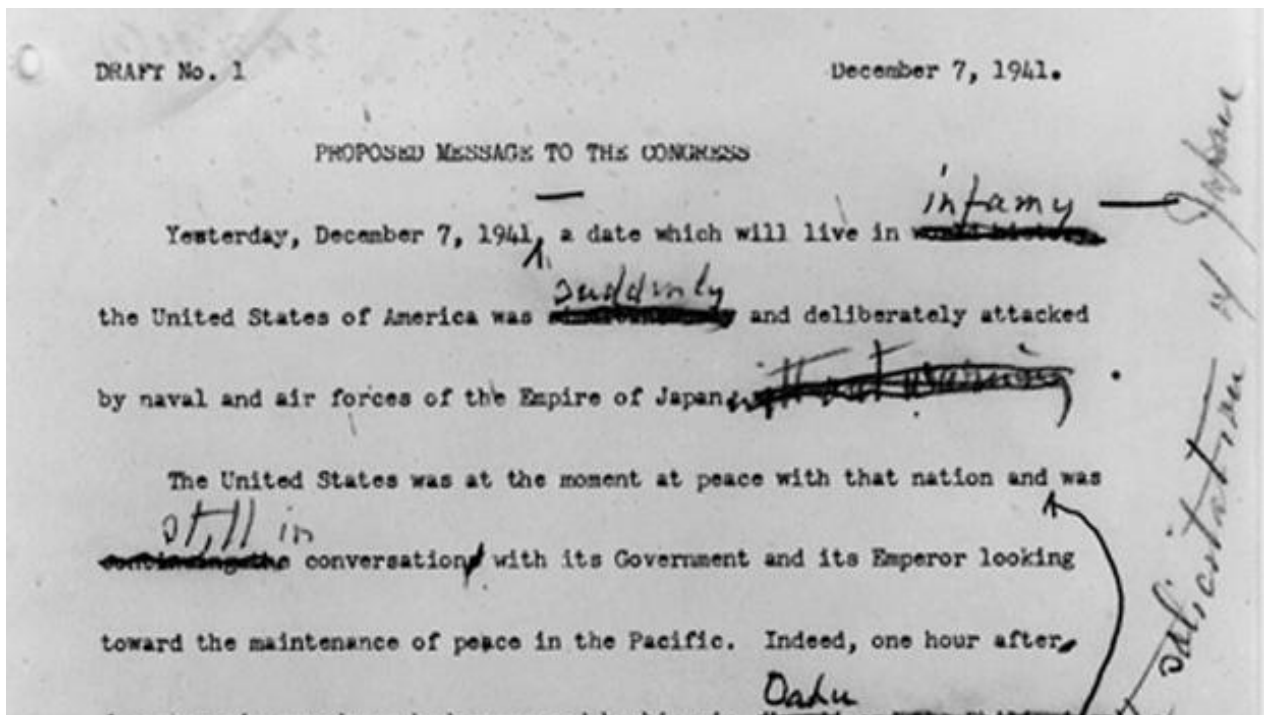
– Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander-in Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet in World War II.

Eighty years ago today—what President Franklin Roosevelt termed a “date which will live in infamy”—Japanese forces attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor off the coast of Hawaii, triggering U.S. intervention in World War II.

Historian Samuel Elliot Morrison wrote that one could “search military history in vain for an operation more fatal to the aggressor.”<sup>[3]</sup> 2,403 Americans were killed and 1,143 were wounded. Eighteen ships were sunk or run aground, including five battleships.

Of the American fatalities, nearly half were due to the explosion of the USS Arizona’s forward magazine after it was hit by a modified 16-inch (410 mm) shell.<sup>[4]</sup>

In his address to the nation following the attacks, President Roosevelt stated that ["the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by the empire of Japan."](#)



The first draft of President Roosevelt's speech to the Joint Session of Congress, asking for a declaration of war against Japan. [Source: [cbsnews.com](https://www.cbsnews.com)]

This statement was a lie: The Roosevelt administration had provoked Japan by engaging in a naval buildup in the South Pacific and by enacting an oil embargo, which crippled Japan's economy and threatened its access to vital raw materials in Manchuria.<sup>[5]</sup> Historian William Neumann concluded in a 1945 pamphlet "that this economic war could result in anything but a military conflict was extremely doubtful."<sup>[6]</sup>

Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson wrote in his diary of a White House meeting on November 25, 1941, in which he explicitly raised the question of "how we should maneuver them into the position of firing the first shot."<sup>[7]</sup>



Henry L. Stimson, with military aide Colonel W.H. Kyle, at the Gatow Airport in Berlin, July 1945. [Source: [apjif.org](http://apjif.org)]

Hatton W. Sumners (D-TX), the Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, stated in April 1942 that “this blaming [of] the Pearl Harbor tragedy on the treachery of the Japs is like the fellow who had been tickling the hind leg of a mule trying to explain his bunged-up condition by blaming the mule for having violated his confidence.”<sup>[8]</sup>

President Roosevelt found himself in the position of tickling the hind leg of the Japanese mule because he knew that the American public would never support intervention in another world war unless the United States was attacked. A poll conducted by the American Institute of Public Opinion in 1936 had found that 95% of Americans would “today regard as imbecile anyone who might suggest that in the event of another European War, the United States should again participate in it.”<sup>[9]</sup>



Rally by the America First Committee on the eve of Pearl Harbor. America First was the largest anti-war movement in American history, which drew off popular disaffection with U.S. involvement in World War I. [Source: [americanhistoryusa.com](http://americanhistoryusa.com)]

In the months before the Pearl Harbor attack, military cryptanalysts had cracked the Japanese diplomatic and military code. They were hence privy to cables specifying that Japan had broken diplomatic relations, which was crucial because in all of Japan's previous wars—including the war with China in 1895, with Russia in 1904, and with Germany launched at Tsingtao in 1914—the severing of diplomatic relations was followed by a sneak attack on the enemy.<sup>[10]</sup> The location of this attack was telegraphed also in other cables.<sup>[11]</sup>





Painting of Japan launching surprise attack on the Russians at Port Arthur in February 1905. The Russians never recovered and lost the Russo-Japanese War. [Source: [historycentral.com](http://historycentral.com)]

British historian Captain Russell Grenfell wrote in 1952 that “no reasonably informed person can now believe that Japan made a villainous, unexpected attack on the United States. An attack was not only fully expected but was actually desired. It is beyond doubt that President Roosevelt wanted to get his country into the war, but for political reasons was most anxious to ensure that the first act of hostility came from the other side, to a point that no self-respecting nation could endure without resort to arms. Mr. Oliver Lyttleton, then British minister of production, said in 1944: ‘Japan was provoked into attacking America at Pearl Harbor. It is a travesty of history to say that America was forced into the war.’”<sup>[12]</sup>

### Lost Chance for Peace

In the months leading up to Pearl Harbor, there was ample opportunity for FDR to have upheld his 1940 campaign pledge that American boys would not be sent into any foreign wars.

The U.S. ambassador to Japan, Joseph Grew (1932-1941), a former classmate of FDR’s at Groton, had pursued a strategy of “constructive conciliation” which aimed to “erase the basic causes of tension” and “conflict” between the U.S. and Japan, in part by repealing the U.S. oil embargo.<sup>[13]</sup>

As late as October 1941, at the urging of China hands in the State Department, FDR rebuffed a peace overture by Prime Minister Prince Fumimaro Konoye, a moderate who was subsequently pushed out in favor of hardliner Hideki Tojo.<sup>[14]</sup>

The FDR administration did not want to be seen as condoning Japan’s conquests, though Konoye expressed willingness to withdraw Japanese troops from China and nullify

participation in the Axis Pact with Germany and Italy.<sup>[15]</sup>

British diplomat Sir Robert Craigie felt that, as late as December 1941, the United States could have reached a compromise with Japan involving the withdrawal of Japanese troops from Indochina in exchange for the resumption of U.S. oil shipments to Japan, which had been cut off by embargo. Craigie noted that, by this time, the prospects of a German victory had begun to look doubtful, which made U.S. and British intervention in a Far East campaign less of a necessity.

Secretary of State Cordell Hull had prepared what appeared to be a constructive counter-proposal to Konoye's peace proposal, though it was never submitted, owing, Craigie believes, to the opposition of the Chinese government led by Chiang Kai-Shek (Jieng Jieshi).<sup>[16]</sup>

Hull said privately that he had "purposely prolonged the conversations with the Japanese in order to enable the Army and Navy to get men and supplies to the Far East"—in preparation for war— and credited his Japanese counterpart Kichisaburo Nomura, a pro-American liberal, with "having been honestly sincere in trying to avoid war."<sup>[17]</sup>



Japanese Ambassador Kichisaburo Nomura, left, and Special Envoy Saburo Kurusu leave the White House after proposals they thought would avert the war were rejected. [Source: [warfarehistorynetwork.com](http://warfarehistorynetwork.com)]

"But they knew, they knew, they knew"

Right after Pearl Harbor, William Friedman, chief cryptanalyst of the Army Signal Corps whose team had solved Japan's Purple code, paced back and forth in his home, his wife recalled, and muttered to himself repeatedly: "But they knew, they knew, they knew."<sup>[18]</sup>

Robert Stinnett, a naval photographer during the Pacific War and author of *Day of Deceit*:

*The Truth About FDR and Pearl Harbor*, notes that two intercepted radio dispatches sent by Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto to the Japanese First Air Fleet on November 25<sup>th</sup> pointed to the anchoring of 31 Japanese warships at Hitokappu Bay in the Kurile Islands, which were awaiting instructions to sail to Hawaii.



Naval cryptographers reading Japanese cables. [Source: [warfarehistorynetwork.com](http://warfarehistorynetwork.com)]

A subsequent decoded dispatch had Yamamoto directing the Japanese air fleet to depart Hitokappu on November 26<sup>th</sup> and advance into Hawaiian waters through the North Pacific before attacking the U.S. fleet in Hawaii. Yamamoto even provided the latitude and longitude for portions of the route, while calling for the dealing of the U.S. fleet in Hawaii a “mortal blow.”<sup>[19]</sup>

In January 1941, Joseph Grew had cabled Roosevelt to tell him that the Peruvian ambassador to Japan, Dr. Ricardo Schreiber, had told a member of his staff that he had heard from a Japanese source that the Japanese military forces planned, in the event of trouble with the United States, to attempt a surprise mass attack on Pearl Harbor using all their military facilities.<sup>[20]</sup>

Nine months later, in October, Roosevelt received another warning of impending attack at Pearl Harbor from the Kremlin, which had obtained the information through its spy Dr. Richard Sorge. The information had been passed along in return for U.S. warnings of an impending attack by Germany on Russia.<sup>[21]</sup>

Joe Lieb, a newspaper reporter who had served in the Roosevelt administration, claimed that his friend Cordell Hull confided to him on November 29, 1941, that President Roosevelt knew that the Japanese were going to attack Pearl Harbor within a few days, and that the President was going to let this happen as a way to get the country into war.

Hull was strongly against this scheme and turned over a document to Lieb, which allegedly concerned the Pearl Harbor plan and urged him to take it to the press without revealing who had leaked it. Only one newspaper took the story, however, *The Honolulu Tribune Herald*, which created a front-page banner headline in its Sunday, November 30, issue: “Japanese May Strike Over Weekend.”<sup>[22]</sup>

East Wind Rain

On November 19, 1941, the Japanese government had come to a secret decision that, if the



country was to go to war with the United States, its diplomatic corps would be notified by insertion of a false weather report “east wind rain” in the middle of the daily language short-wave news broadcast.



Captured Japanese code device known as purple that gave the U.S. access to Japanese secret decisions.  
[Source: [warfarehistorynetwork.com](http://warfarehistorynetwork.com)]

When 52 suppressed pages of the Army Pearl Harbor Board report were finally made public on December 11, 1945, they disclosed that the Board had concluded that the “winds message” had indeed been inserted into the Japanese news and weather broadcast.

It was in turn picked up by a U.S. Navy monitoring station, translated on December 3, 1941, and its contents distributed to the White House, Army and Navy high commands—though not to Admiral Husband Kimmel and Lieutenant General Walter Short, the top military commanders in Hawaii (the two inexplicably were never provided with a decoding machine, and were refused clearance for viewing decrypted cables).<sup>[23]</sup>

Cryptographer Laurance Safford stated that his superiors ordered him to destroy the notes he had made concerning the “East Wind Rain” message.

Crucial confirming evidence for the receipt of the “East Wind Rain” message was a 1977 interview with Ralph T. Briggs conducted by the Naval Security Group and declassified by the National Security Agency in March 1980.

Briggs said in this interview that he was the one who had intercepted this crucial message while on duty as a chief watch supervisor at the Naval communication station at



Cheltenham, Maryland. Briggs further stated that he was ordered by his superior officer in 1946 not to testify about the matter to a Joint Congressional Committee and to cease any contact with Captain Safford.

In addition, the two Japanese assistant naval attachés posted at the Washington embassy in 1941 have verified that the message was transmitted on December 4<sup>th</sup>, exactly as Safford said.<sup>[24]</sup>

### Dewey's Secret

During the 1944 presidential campaign, Republican candidate Thomas Dewey was going to go public with the charge that the U.S. had broken the Japanese diplomatic codes and that Roosevelt had advance knowledge of the attack, though he was dissuaded by one of Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall's assistants, Colonel Carter Clarke. He showed Dewey a letter from Marshall which stated that the war effort would be compromised if Japan had learned her codes had been broken.<sup>[25]</sup>

### Impending Attacks

In the last week of November 1941, Roosevelt warned diplomat William C. Bullitt against traveling across the Pacific, stating that he was "expecting the Japs to attack any time now, probably within the next three or four days."<sup>[26]</sup>

On the eve of the attacks, someone in the administration ordered the Red Cross to quietly send large quantities of medical supplies and experienced medical personnel, which indicates foreknowledge that something bad was about to happen.

Don C. Smith, who directed war services for the Red Cross before World War II, was told by Roosevelt, according to his daughter, to prepare secretly for an impending Japanese attack on Hawaii and that "the American people would never agree to enter the war in Europe unless they were attack [sic] within their own borders."<sup>[27]</sup>

### Vacant Sea

When U.S. Ambassador Grew warned Washington of a sudden military and naval action by Japan in January 1941, Navy officials responded, amazingly, by declaring the North Pacific Ocean—the region over which the Japanese Task Force that attacked at Pearl Harbor would travel—a "vacant sea" and ordered all U.S. and allied shipping out of the waters, a reversal that was ignored by subsequent congressional investigations.<sup>[28]</sup>

Two weeks before Pearl Harbor, Admiral Kimmel defied the order by ordering a search for a Japanese carrier force north of Hawaii, though the ships were ordered back.<sup>[29]</sup>

Admiral T.B. Inglis, the head of naval intelligence, testified before Congress in 1945 about inadequate anti-aircraft guns and radar systems and that the Army had puzzlingly failed to carry out long-range patrols with long-range bombers, which would have made it exceedingly difficult for the Japanese forces to have approached Pearl Harbor.<sup>[30]</sup>

The only planes made available were B-18s, which were described by Fleet Admiral William

S. Halsey as “slow, short-legged and unfitted for overseas scouting.”

A prior directive required the training of large quotas of airmen in the Atlantic. This, Halsey writes, combined with the transfer of the carrier Yorktown on the East Coast of the United States “was a tremendous drain on our already slim resources,”<sup>[31]</sup> coming at a time when U.S.-Japanese relations had broken down and cracked codes revealed that the Japanese were surveying Pearl Harbor to determine the location of battleships and cruisers in preparation for the attack.<sup>[32]</sup>

In December 1940, Admiral Claude C. Bloch had issued a warning about the vulnerability of the Pearl Harbor base to the Chief of Naval Operations, James O. Richardson, prompting some upgrades, which were less than adequate.<sup>[33]</sup>

In February 1941, FDR relieved Richardson of his command after he launched his own protest against concentrating the U.S. Fleet in Pearl Harbor away from its traditional location off the West Coast. Richardson felt that this offered the Japanese an opportunity to destroy much of the Navy at a single blow.<sup>[34]</sup>

Ten days before the Pearl Harbor attack, naval planes were shipped away from Hawaii to Wake Island and Midway along with Army and Navy personnel. General Short begged for more planes, more men, more detection equipment, which could have helped defend Pearl Harbor, though he was ignored.<sup>[35]</sup>

#### General Marshall’s History-Making Ride and Other December 7 Oddities

On the night of December 6<sup>th</sup>, the Navy Department intercepted a 14-point memo known as “the pilot memo” between 11:49 p.m. and 2:51 a.m. which provided Japan’s reply to a series of proposals made by Secretary of State Cordell Hull and effectively called for a severing of relations with the United States.

This message, which portended an imminent attack—given Japan’s history of adopting surprise attacks towards adversaries when diplomatic relations were cut—was filed at 2:38 a.m. in Tokyo on the morning of December 7, intercepted by the Naval monitoring station between 3:05 a.m. and 3:10 a.m. and delivered within the Navy Department shortly after 8:00 a.m.

The delivery to the White House and to Secretary of War Frank Knox, who was at the State Department for a 10:00 a.m. meeting with Secretaries Hull and Stimson, was made shortly before 10:00 a.m. Distribution of the fourteenth part within the War Department was begun at 9:00 a.m. with subsequent delivery to the State Department.<sup>[36]</sup>

Another of the decoded messages noted that a “hostile action by Japan would occur” at a time that corresponded to 7:30 a.m. Hawaii time or 1:00 p.m. Eastern time on Sunday, December 7. Both Admiral Kimmel and General Short testified before Congress that this and other cables—which they saw only after the fact—pointed to Pearl Harbor as the likely venue of attack.<sup>[37]</sup>

After he woke up on the morning of December 7<sup>th</sup>, despite the imminence of war, General

George C. Marshall said that he went for his customary horseback ride. Historian Charles C. Tansill described this as “a history-making ride” as it ensured that the urgent cables pointing to the 1:00 p.m. timing of Japan’s attack—which Colonel Rufus Bratton was trying to get to Marshall on that morning—would not reach Pearl Harbor in time.<sup>[38]</sup>

Major Eugene Harrison pointed to a deeper conspiracy when he testified that, “whoever said [Marshall] was riding horses lied, because I saw and I talked to him at that time, and other Army and Navy officers confirmed that Marshall was not riding.”<sup>[39]</sup>

When Marshall got to his office reportedly at 11:25 a.m., Marshall still had time to get word to General Short of the impending attack through use of a scrambler phone—which rendered conversations a hash of meaningless sounds that are unscrambled at the receiving end.

Inexplicably, however, Marshall did not pick up his scrambler phone, which would have reached General Short within a matter of minutes.

Marshall also rejected an offer by Admiral Harold Stark to use the Navy communications facility, which would have also gotten the message to Hawaii quickly. Instead, Marshall sent the warning using a combination of Western Union and Radio Corporation of America (RCA), a much slower method.

His message did not carry a “priority” classification and was not marked “urgent.” It read: “The Japanese are presenting at 1 PM Eastern Standard Time, today, what amounts to an ultimatum. Also, they are under orders to destroy their code machine immediately. Just what significance the hour set may have we do not know, but be on alert accordingly.”<sup>[40]</sup>

When the Japanese assault on Pearl Harbor began, a bicycle boy was carrying Marshall’s dispatch through the streets of Honolulu. It was not actually delivered to the Army Signal Corps office at Ft. Shafter until 11:45 a.m., two hours after the last Japanese plane had retired.

Because it was not marked “priority,” other messages which were so marked were decoded first at the Signal office. The message was finally decoded and delivered at 2:58 p.m. Hawaii time (9:58 p.m. EST) and turned over to General Short’s aide, Captain Louis Truman, who delivered it to Short at 3:00 p.m.

The warning thus was in Short’s hand eight hours and twelve minutes after being filed for transmission and seven hours and five minutes after the attack had begun.<sup>[41]</sup> A demoralized Kimmel tossed the message when he got it into a wastebasket and allegedly stated, “it is not the slightest interest to me now.”



[Source: [express.co.uk](http://express.co.uk)]

General Short later testified before Congress that, if Marshall had “used the scrambler phone and gotten it [the message] in ten or fifteen minutes, we would probably have gotten more of the import and a clearer idea of the danger from that message and we would have had time to warm up the planes and get them in the air to meet any attack.”<sup>[42]</sup>

Marshall later claimed before an Army Board of Inquiry that he could not say with certainty what was “going on in his mind at that time” since it had been four years ago, and that he was not sure “what his reasons [for failing to use the scrambler phone] were,” but that he had hesitated to use the device because it was known that German agents had tapped scrambler phone conversations between FDR and Winston Churchill and communications from William Bullitt when he was ambassador to France. Marshall also told General Short that he feared a “leak which would embarrass the State Department.”

This explanation, repeated by Marshall biographer Forrest Pogue, makes no sense if we consider that the Japanese intended to embarrass the whole nation with their attack, and that Marshall could have saved American lives and defended the country, which was his principal duty.<sup>[43]</sup>

#### Cover-up

Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins was among those perturbed by FDR’s body language at a Cabinet meeting after the Pearl Harbor attack, stating that she had this “deep emotional feeling that something was wrong, that this situation was not all it appeared to be...His surprise was not as great as the rest of us.”<sup>[44]</sup>

According to insider sources—Frank Knox, Henry Stimson, George Marshall, Admiral Stark, and Harry Hopkins had spent most of the night of December 6<sup>th</sup> at the White House with President Roosevelt waiting for what they knew was coming: an attack on Pearl Harbor.<sup>[45]</sup> Marshall later claimed to have forgotten his whereabouts on that night or to have been home in bed sick, though the headline in *The Washington Times* on the 7<sup>th</sup> read: “Marshall Goes to



Vets Reunion”—at the university club mere blocks from the White House. Senator Homer Ferguson (R-Michigan) reported that he overheard Marshall tell Senator Alben W. Barkley (D-KY), chairman of the Congressional Pearl Harbor Investigation, that “I could not tell you where I was Saturday night (the 6<sup>th</sup>). It would have got the chief (Roosevelt) into trouble.”

A few weeks after the attack, FDR had set up an investigating commission under Supreme Court Justice Owen Roberts, a friend and supporter of the president, which released a [13,000-page report](#) in January 1942 exonerating Executive Branch authorities of any wrongdoing and blamed Kimmel and Short for the disaster.<sup>[46]</sup>

Foreshadowing the Warren report following the JFK assassination, the Roberts Commission was an obvious whitewash. It did not interrogate senior FDR administration officials or inquire into Japanese intercepts and their distribution and evaluation in Washington or allow for Admiral Kimmel and General Short to defend themselves or for their attorneys to ask questions and cross-examine witnesses.<sup>[47]</sup>

In his 1955 memoir, retired four-star Admiral William H. Standley, an old friend of Roosevelt who rued the “wave of pacifism that engulfed our land” after World War I, stated that the real responsibility for Pearl Harbor was logged thousands of miles from the territory of Hawaii.” Admiral Kimmel and General Short had been “martyred.” Roberts’s performance as head of the commission was “as crooked as a snake.” A fair-minded investigation would have found the uniformed heads of the Army and Navy in Washington “fully culpable.”<sup>[48]</sup>

Admiral Richardson, who had turned over command of the Pacific Fleet to Kimmel, stated that the Roberts Commission report was “the most unfair, unjust and deceptively dishonest document ever printed by the Government Printing Office...A more disgraceful spectacle has never been presented to this country during my lifetime.”<sup>[49]</sup>

Afterwards, Rear Admiral Leigh Noyes, the Navy’s Director of Communications, instituted a 54-year censorship policy that consigned the pre-Pearl Harbor Japanese military and diplomatic intercepts and the relevant directives to Navy vaults, while illegally ordering subordinates to “destroy all notes or anything in writing.” Fleet Admiral Ernest King threatened a loss of pension for any naval officer who disclosed the successful code breaking.<sup>[50]</sup>

Within the State Department—as [Frank Schuler, Jr., reported in an unpublished memoir uncovered by researchers at the Roosevelt Library](#)—Stanley K. Hornbeck, Alger Hiss, and other top officials also falsified or removed key documents that painted the Roosevelt administration in a negative light, and demoted staffers like Schuler who threatened to expose this cover-up.

Percy L. Greaves, Jr., who headed the congressional investigation into Pearl Harbor, pointed out that those who maintained secrecy, failed to remember, or testified on behalf of the administration in the Pearl Harbor investigations rose very quickly to high places.

These people include Gen. George Marshall, who was made a permanent five-star general and the Secretary of State, Col. Walter Bedell Smith, who became a three-star general and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)’s second director.<sup>[51]</sup>

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

### The Truth Emerges

A week after V-J Day, President Harry S. Truman made public the lengthy findings of 1943 and 1944 Army and Navy Boards appointed to assess responsibility for Pearl Harbor. The Army Board, headed by Lieutenant General George Grunert, reversed the verdict of the Roberts Commission and concluded that “responsible authorities all expected an air attack before Pearl Harbor.”

Henry Stimson testified at the hearings that he was “not surprised [by the attacks].” The report found grounds to criticize General Short but also Generals Marshall and Leonard T. Gerow, former chief of war plans, and Cordell Hull.<sup>[52]</sup>

Marshall was singled out for particular rebuke for his “failure to keep [Admiral] Short fully informed as to the international situation and probable outbreak of war” and “failure to alert him on the evening of December 6<sup>th</sup> and early morning of December 7<sup>th</sup> that an almost immediate break with Japan was coming.”<sup>[53]</sup>

At the Navy Board of Inquiry, Captain Laurence Safford testified that “we received definite information from two independent sources that Japan would attack the United States,” the first coming on December 4<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 p.m., which, he said, was decoded and made available to military intelligence right away. President Roosevelt consequently had ample time to broadcast a warning which might have caused the Japanese to call off their “surprise” attack or at least prevented 3,000 Americans from dying without a chance to fight back.<sup>[54]</sup>

A July 1946 Senate committee headed by Senator Alben Barkley (D-KY), which journalist William H. White characterized as “one of the longest and most extraordinary [investigations] in the history of any country,” subsequently concluded that the “one o’clock intercept should have been recognized [in Washington] as indicating the distinct possibility that some Japanese military action would occur somewhere at 1 P.M., December 7, Washington time. If properly appreciated, this intercept should have suggested a dispatch to all Pacific outpost commanders supplying this information.”<sup>[55]</sup>

The committee also found that Japanese message intercepts “should have been [properly] appreciated and supplied to the commander-in-chief of the Pacific Fleet and the commanding General of the Hawaiian Department,” an indictment of Washington authorities for their failure to appreciate and offer warning in advance of the danger of attack.<sup>[56]</sup>

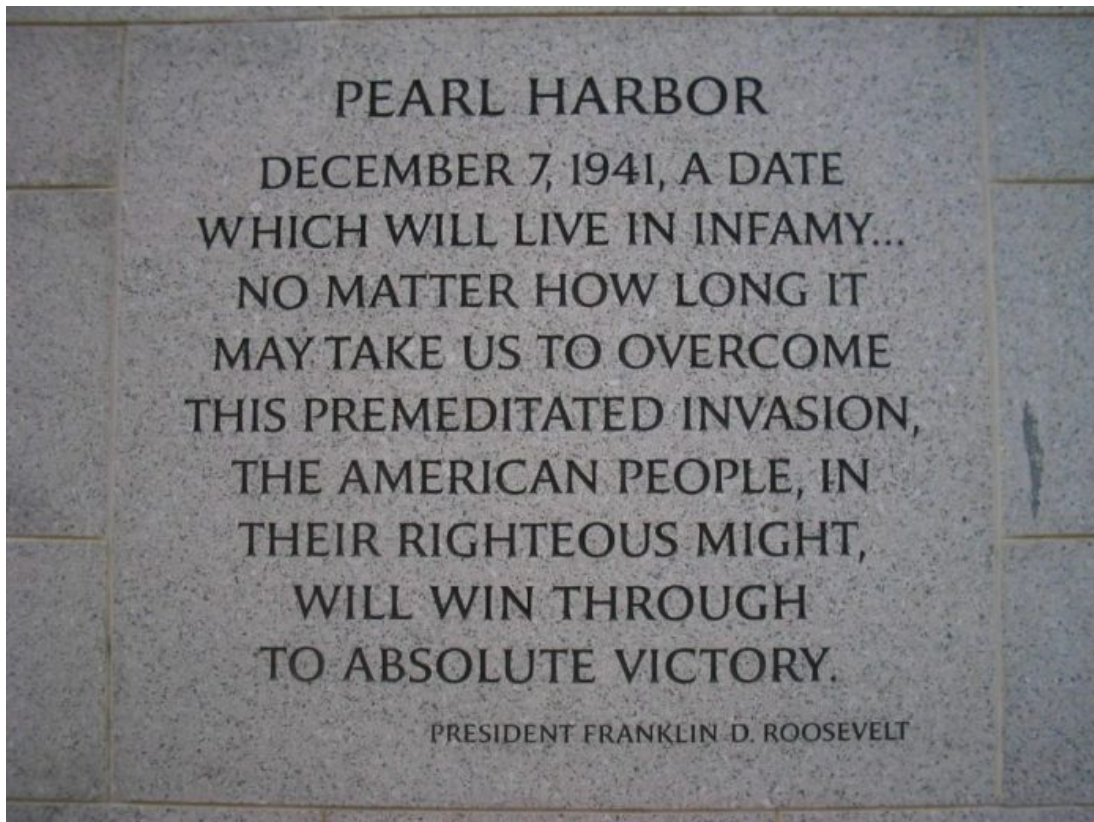
A minority report issued by Senators Homer Ferguson (R-MI) and Owen Brewster (R-ME) placed ultimate blame for Pearl Harbor with the commander-in-chief, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was “responsible for the failure to enforce continuous, efficient and appropriate cooperation” among his high officials “in evaluating information and dispatching clear and positive orders to the Hawaiian commanders as events indicated the growing imminence of war.”

Roosevelt, according to the report’s assessment, had advanced knowledge of Japanese

designs early Sunday morning at least two hours before the Japanese attack. This made it his duty to put the war administration in Washington on war alert and, through his agents in that administration, also to put all the American outpost commanders on full war alert—which he did not do.<sup>[57]</sup>

### Myth of the Good War

The myth of Pearl Harbor as a surprise attack serves to validate the popular perception of World War II as a morally righteous or “good war.” This perception has provided legitimacy to U.S. overseas pursuits for the last 80 years.



Plaque commemorating Franklin Roosevelt's words. [Source: [cen10news.com](http://cen10news.com)]



Sailors commemorate Pearl Harbor by honoring the flag. [Source: [kdrv.com](http://kdrv.com)]

Historian Stephen Sniegoski wrote in his 2004 essay, "The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism," that "the good war scenario still serves a vital purpose as America...marches forward to make the world safe from terrorism." Or institutionalizes a new Cold War with China and Russia.

It is no surprise as such that [popular commemorations of Pearl Harbor's 80-year anniversary](#) have repeated the official narrative and focused on the victims of the attack rather than raising critical questions about U.S. governmental conduct.

Thomas A. Bailey, a historian sympathetic to Roosevelt, acknowledged that Roosevelt "repeatedly deceived the American people during the period before Pearl Harbor," though he claimed that "posterity would thank Roosevelt because our statesmen are forced to deceive [the masses] into an awareness of their own long-run interests."<sup>[58]</sup>

The American public today is coming to recognize, however, that its long-term interests have not been served by forever wars, which have cost the country dearly in blood and treasure.

*A longer version of this essay is available at the [author's website](#).*

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## Notes

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

To embroil this republic in the wreck of Europe

have got their bargain—

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

fly the national flag from the top of the

tower?

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



Stare, little tower,  
 Confidently across the Pacific, the flag on your  
 head. I built you at the other war's end,  
 And the sick peace; I based you on living rock,  
 granite on granite; I said, "Look, you gray  
 stones:  
 Civilization is sick: stand awhile and be quiet  
 and drink the sea-wind, you will survive  
 Civilization."

2. Anthony Summers and Robbyn Swan, *A Matter of Honor: Pearl Harbor: Betrayal, Blame, and a Family's Quest for Justice* (New York: Harper Collins, 2016), 279.
3. Morrison quoted in John Prados, *Combined Fleet Decoded: The Secret History of American Intelligence and the Japanese Navy in World War II* (New York: Random House, 1995), 197.
4. See Craig Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness* (New York: Scribner, 2016).
5. See William L. Neumann, "How American Policy Toward Japan Contributed to War in the Pacific," in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace: A Critical Examination of the Foreign Policy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Its Aftermath*, Harry Elmer Barnes, ed. (New York: Ostara Publications, 2013, orig. 1953), 243, 244, 245.
6. William L. Neumann, *The Genesis of Pearl Harbor* (Philadelphia: The Pacifist Research Bureau, 1945), 48. Former President Herbert Hoover (1928-1932) was convinced that by instituting the oil embargo, FDR and his associates were "certainly doing everything they can to get us into war through the Japanese back door."
7. Richard N. Current, "How Stimson Meant to 'Maneuver the Japanese,'" *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (June 1953), 67. Stimson's comments about knowing the "Oriental mind" are in Nelson, *Pearl Harbor*, 41.
8. Jeannette Rankin, "Two Votes Against War: 1917 and 1940," *Liberation*, March 1958 reprinted in *We Who Dared Say No to War: American Antiwar Writing from 1812 to Now*, Murray Polner and Thomas E. Woods, Jr., eds. (New York: Perseus, 2008), 168.
9. Manfred Jonas, *Isolationism in America 1935-1941* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), 1. Even after Hitler attacked Poland, France and England, the numbers opposing the war remained around the same.
10. George Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor: The Story of the Secret War* (New York: The Devin Adair Company, 1947), 253; Morgenstern, "The Actual Road to Pearl Harbor," in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, Barnes, ed., 371; Testimony of James O. Richardson, Pearl Harbor Attacks, Hearings Before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of Pearl Harbor Attacks, 253. Richardson, a former naval commander was in Yokohama during the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War and witnessed the war's outbreak from there.
11. See Robert B. Stinnett, *Day of Deceit: The Truth About FDR and Pearl Harbor* (New York: Touchstone Books, 2001); David Ray Griffin, *The American Trajectory Divine or Demonic?* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2018), 143, 144.
12. In *Freedom Betrayed: Herbert Hoover's Secret History of the Second World War and Its Aftermath*, edited and with an introduction by George Nash (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2011), 310. See also Captain Russell Grenfell, *Main Fleet to*

Singapore (New York: Macmillan Company, 1952), 107, 108.

13. Neumann, *The Genesis of Pearl Harbor*, 14, 30. Grew had warned similarly to Herbert Hoover that the sanctions policy “carried through to the end may lead to war.” See also Jonathan G. Utey, *Going to War with Japan, 1937-1941* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985) and Grew’s memoir, *Ten Years in Japan* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1944).
14. William Henry Chamberlin, “The Bankruptcy of a Policy” in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, Barnes, ed., 486, 488; Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor*, 176; Kazuo Yagami, *Konoe Fumimaro and the Failure of Peace in Japan, 1937-1941: A Critical Appraisal of the Three-Time Prime Minister* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006). Joseph Grew had encouraged FDR to accept Konoye’s peace overture but to no avail. FDR instead listened to Stanley K. Hornbeck, a leading Far-East expert in the State Department. *Pearl Harbor Reexamined: Prologue to the Pacific War*, Hilary Conroy and Harry Wray, eds. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990).
15. Herbert Feis, *The Road to Pearl Harbor: The Coming of the War Between the United States and Japan* (New York: Atheneum, 1964), 310; Charles Callan Tansill, *Back Door to War: The Roosevelt Foreign Policy, 1933-1941* (Chicago: Regnery, 1952), 628. The United States also did not want to cut aid to Chiang Kai-Shek as Japan wanted if he did not agree to peace terms.
16. Sir Robert Craigie to Mr. Eden, Blackboys, Sussex, February 4, 1943, appendix 9, in James Rusbridger and Eric Nave, *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor: How Churchill Lured Roosevelt into World War II* (New York: Summit Books, 1991).
17. George Victor, *The Pearl Harbor Myth: Rethinking the Unthinkable* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007), 15.
18. John Toland, *Infamy: Pearl Harbor and Its Aftermath* (New York: Berkley Books, 1982), 15; Ronald Clark, *The Man Who Broke Purple: The Life of Colonel William F. Friedman, Who Deciphered the Japanese Code in World War II* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), 170.
19. Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 45.
20. Rusbridger and Nave, *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor*, 117; John Costello, *Days of Infamy: MacArthur, Roosevelt, Churchill – The Shocking Truth Revealed: How Their Secret Deals and Strategic Blunders Caused Disasters at Pearl Harbor and the Philippines* (New York: Pocket Books, 1994), 47.
21. Robert A. Theobald, *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor: The Washington Contribution to the Japanese Attack* (Old Greenwich, CT: The Devin-Adair Co., 1954), 78, 79, 80.
22. Steve Sniegowski, “The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism,” *The Occidental Quarterly*, Winter 2001; Victor, *The Pearl Harbor Myth*, 50.
23. Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor*, 198, 199; Toland, *Infamy*, 69; Justus D. Doenecke and John E. Wiltz, *From Isolation to War: 1931-1941*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 170; Nelson, *Pearl Harbor*, 79; Theobald, *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor*.
24. Toland, *Infamy*, 176-177; Sniegowski, “The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism.”
25. Victor, *The Pearl Harbor Myth*, 54, 55.
26. Tim Tzouliadis, *The Forsaken: An American Tragedy in Stalin’s Russia* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 240.
27. Daryl S. Borgquist, “Advance Warning? The Red Cross Connection,” *Naval History*, 13:3 (May/June 1999); Sniegowski, “The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism.”
28. Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 144; Sniegowski, “The Case for Pearl Harbor Revisionism.”
29. Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 144, 145. An alternative Trans-Pacific route was designated through the Torres Strait in the specific area between Australia and New Guinea.
30. Rear Admiral T.B. Inglis, *Pearl Harbor Attacks, Hearings Before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of Pearl Harbor Attacks*, 160. See also “Testimony of Lt. Gen. Walter C. Short before the Navy Court of Inquiry,” in Roland H. Worth, *Pearl Harbor: Selected Testimonies*

- from the *Congressional Hearings* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013), 289. Short stated that his forces had access to only 20 out of 140 anti-aircraft guns that were supposed to have been allotted and 180 out of 345 .50 caliber guns. He said that “we required approximately 200 pursuit planes,” but had “I think, something like 105 P-40s and 80 of them were in commission.” Short had also asked for a garrison at Kaneohe Bay which was not fulfilled.
31. William F. Halsey, foreword to Theobald, *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor*, viii.
  32. Theobald, *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor*, 46.
  33. Testimony of Admiral James O. Richardson, Pearl Harbor Attacks, Congress of the United States, 277.
  34. *Congressional Record*, September 6, 1944, 7670; Charles Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941: A Study in Appearances and Reality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 290; John T. Flynn, “The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor,” October 1945, <https://www.antiwar.com/rep/flynn1.html>; Harry Elmer Barnes, *Pearl Harbor After a Quarter Century*, rev. ed. (Institute for Historical Review, 1980), 23.
  35. Flynn, “The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor.”
  36. *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, 221.
  37. *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, 232, 233.
  38. Morgenstern, “The Actual Road to Pearl Harbor,” in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, Barnes, ed., 374; Tansill, *Back Door to War*, 351.
  39. Victor, *The Pearl Harbor Myth*, 178; Barnes, *Pearl Harbor After a Quarter Century*, 38, 39.
  40. *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, 224.
  41. Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor*, 239. See also Morgenstern, “The Actual Road to Pearl Harbor,” in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, Barnes, ed., 374; Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 228; Harry E. Barnes, “The New York Times Whitewash of General Marshall,” in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, 387-395.
  42. Barnes, “The New York Times Whitewash of General Marshall,” 395; *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, 227.
  43. Roland H. Worth, *Pearl Harbor: Select Testimonies, Fully Indexed, From the Congressional Hearings (1945-1946) and Prior Investigation of the Events Leading Up to the Attack* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1993), 283; Summers and Swan, *A Matter of Honor*, 319, 320, 321; Barnes, “The New York Times Whitewash of General Marshall,” in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, 395, 396. Major General Henry Russell, who was on the Army Board and author of a lengthy account that surfaced only 57 years later in 2001, 28 years after Russell’s death, wrote of Marshall giving investigators the “brush off technique” and claiming he had another meeting to attend when questioned seriously. Marshall’s career did not suffer, however, as he was later appointed Secretary of State. A defense of Marshall’s conduct is presented by his official biographer, Forrest C. Pogue, in *George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope, 1939-1942* (New York: Viking, 1966).
  44. Toland, *Infamy*, 272; Summers and Swan, *A Matter of Honor*, 354.
  45. Toland, *Infamy*, 320. On deception regarding Marshall’s whereabouts the night of December 6, see *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, 219; Costello, *Days of Infamy*, 207; Barnes, *Pearl Harbor After a Quarter Century*, 37.
  46. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO INVESTIGATE AND REPORT THE FACTS RELATING TO THE ATTACK MADE BY JAPANESE ARMED FORCES UPON PEARL HARBOR IN THE TERRITORY OF HAWAII ON DECEMBER 7, 1941, 77<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2nd Session, January 26, 1942 (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1942), <http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/pha/roberts/roberts.html>. Kimmel and Short were subjected to stinging public rebuke, with some even demanding that they be executed for treason
  47. Toland, *Infamy*; John T. Flynn, *The Truth About Pearl Harbor* (Glasgow: The Strickland Press,

1945); Griffin, *The American Trajectory*, 147. Witnesses were struck by the chumminess of the proceeding, headed by Roosevelt and Marshall cronies. Kimmel was shocked by the lack of professionalism, epitomized by the proceeding's stenographers—one a teenager, the other with almost no court experience—who omitted much of his testimony and left other parts badly garbled. Permission to correct the errors was refused.

48. Andrew J. Bacevich, *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2013), 117, 118, Toland, *Infamy*, 176-177; William H. Standley and Arthur A. Ageton, *Admiral Ambassador to Russia* (Chicago: Regnery, 1955), 82, 83.
49. Toland, *Infamy*, 43, 44; Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 255.
50. Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*, 255. Since the documents are of the public record, they could only be destroyed through an act of Congress. Senator Owen Brewster (R-ME) was blocked from obtaining intercept records that he requested.
51. Percy L. Greaves, Jr., "The Pearl Harbor Investigations," in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, Barnes, ed., ch. 7. See also Percy L. Greaves, Jr., *The Seeds and Fruits of Infamy* (Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2010). Sen. Scott Lucas (D-IL) became the Senate Majority Leader and John W. Murphy (D-PA) and Samuel H. Kaufman were both appointed to lifetime federal judgeships.
52. Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*, 365.
53. Toland, *Infamy*, 112, 113.
54. *Freedom Betrayed*, Nash, ed., 302.
55. Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack: Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, Congress of the United States, July 20, 1946 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946), 252; Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*, 367; Toland, *Infamy*, 235.
56. Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack: Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, Congress of the United States, July 20, 1946 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946), 228, 252; Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*, 368.
57. *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*; Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*, 359, 360. The Minority report further noted that General Douglas MacArthur, who had access to the MAGIC intercepts, was in a better position to judge the situation than Admiral Kimmel, who was unfairly scapegoated.
58. Thomas A. Bailey, *The Man in the Street: The Impact of American Public Opinion on Foreign Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 13.

Featured image: Following a direct hit from Japanese war planes, the USS Arizona burns and sinks in Pearl Harbor. [Source: [chiff.com](http://chiff.com)]

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