

# Pearl Harbor Revisited: Dispelling Surprise Attack Mythology

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*December 7, 2019 is the 78th anniversary of what Franklin Roosevelt called “a date which will live in infamy (when) the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.”*

“I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.”

Around one hour after Roosevelt’s December 8 address before a joint congressional session, the body declared war on Japan with one dissenting vote, signed into law by FDR the same day.

All wars are unjustifiably justified based on Big Lies and deception, WW II is no exception. Roosevelt wanted involvement in Europe’s war. He wanted legislation requiring US neutrality reversed.

On July 4, 1941, he said:

“(S)olemnly (understand) that the United States will never survive as a happy and fertile oasis of liberty surrounded by a cruel desert of dictatorship.”

His July 25 Executive Order froze Japanese assets, claiming

it was “(t)o prevent the use of the financial facilities of the United States in trade between Japan and the United States in ways harmful to national defense and American interests, to prevent the liquidation in the United States of assets obtained by duress or conquest, and to curb subversive activities in the United States.”

In 1937, he planned a naval blockade of Japan, the idea dropped because of opposition. In 1938, it resurfaced because he knew strangling Japan economically assured war he wanted.

From 1933 to late 1941, he spurned Japanese peace overtures that would have protected all American interests in the Pacific.

By November 25, 1941, the die was cast. War Secretary Henry Stimson said war depended only on how to maneuver Japan to attack with the lowest number of US casualties.

Roosevelt encouraged an attack on Pearl Harbor by stationing the Pacific Fleet there — against the advice of its commander and chief of naval operations.

After the Japanese code was broken, intercepted cables confirmed an attack was coming. The US tracked its fleet from the Kurile Islands to its North Pacific refueling point en route to Pearl Harbor on or about December 7.

At a December 5 cabinet meeting, Navy Secretary Frank Knox said: “Well, you know Mr. President, we know where the Japanese fleet is?”

“Yes, I know,” said Roosevelt, adding: “Well, you tell them what it is Frank.” Naval intelligence reports indicated it was in Pacific waters heading toward Hawaii. On December 6, the attack was imminent. It came the next morning at 7:55AM Hawaii time.

Pearl Harbor commander Admiral HE Kimmel got no intelligence about what was coming. Roosevelt wanted isolationist congressional members and the public transformed into raging Japan haters. He got the war he wanted.

Ahead of the attack, Red Cross officials were secretly told to send large amounts of medical supplies and personnel to Hawaii. By November 1941, they were in place.

Japan’s December 7 “surprise attack” was no surprise. On November 29, Secretary of State Cordell Hull told the UK envoy to Washington that “the diplomatic part of our relations with Japan was virtually over and the matter will now go to the officials of the Army and Navy.”

Ahead of the attack, three US Pacific Fleet aircraft carriers were at sea on maneuvers to avoid the coming attack.

Around 3,500 US military personnel were killed or wounded, 68 civilians killed, others wounded.

Nineteen US warships were destroyed or damaged, including eight battleships, along with 188 aircraft destroyed, another 159 damaged.

US blockade and embargo toughness on Japan during the preceding months pushed its ruling authorities to war.

In his book, “The Good War: An Oral History of World War II,” the late Studs Terkel explained its good and bad sides through people experiencing it.

The good was America “was the only country among the combatants that was neither invaded nor bombed. Ours were the only cities not blasted to rubble,” said Terkel.

The bad was WW II “warped our view of how we look at things today, (seeing them) in terms of war” and the notion that they’re good or why else fight them.

This “twisted memory...encourages (people) to be willing, almost eager, to use military force” to solve problems, never mind how they exacerbate them.

Wars are never just or good. In the nuclear age they’re “lunatic” acts – horrific by any standard.

December 8, 1941 was the last time the US waged war legally, declared by Congress as constitutionally required.

Today, Security Council members alone may authorize war by one nation against others — not heads of state, legislatures or courts.

It's permitted only in self-defense if attacked, never preemptively, how all US post-WW II wars were and continue to be waged — flagrant UN Charter and constitutional violations under its Supremacy Clause (Article VI, Clause 2).

Commenting on WW II, the late historian Howard Zinn, who served aboard a US bomber in Europe during the war, said “war brutalizes everyone involved, begets a fanaticism in which the original moral factor (like fighting fascism) is buried at the bottom of a heap of atrocities committed by all sides,” later adding:

“(W)hile there are certainly vicious enemies of liberty and human rights in the world, war itself is the most vicious of” all.

“And that while some societies can rightly claim to be more liberal, more democratic, more humane than others, the difference is not great enough to justify the massive, indiscriminate slaughter of modern warfare.”

Atrocities are weapons of war. In his book titled “War Without Mercy,” John Dower documented viciousness by both sides in the Pacific — the US as unprincipled as the Japanese.

US forces mutilated its war dead for body part souvenirs. They sank hospital ships, shooting sailors abandoning them.

Japanese pilots bailing out of warplanes were killed in cold blood. So were wounded enemy soldiers.

Prisoners were tortured and killed, other combatants buried alive, civilians slaughtered as mercilessly as military personnel.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki were two of history's greatest crimes — gratuitous mass murder months after Japan sought surrender, the war lost to superior US military might.

The Big Lie that won't die is that nuking both cities hastened war's end and saved many lives. Harry Truman falsely claimed that bombing Hiroshima “destroyed its usefulness to the enemy,” adding:

“It was to spare the Japanese people from (further) utter destruction...If they do not now accept our terms they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the likes of which has never been seen on this earth.”

Ignored by Truman was War Secretary Stimson saying “Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary.”

Calling the atomic bomb “a barbarous weapon” after the attacks, Joint Chiefs chairman Admiral William Leahy said: “The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender.”

WW II launched Washington's permanent war policy, an agenda contributing to its decline.

In his book titled "The World in Crisis," Gabriel Kolko said it "began after the Korean War, was continued in relation to Cuba, and was greatly accelerated in Vietnam – but (Bush/Cheney did) much to exacerbate it further," the Obama and Trump regimes escalating what they inherited.

US power is declining, said Kolko, "the world...no longer dependent on its economic might." At the same time, China, Russia, India and other nations are rising.

America's "century of domination is now ending," Kolko added. Others share similar views.

The US was at the height of its power post-WW II, maintained for some years in the post-war era, decline beginning and continuing in recent decades, notably post-9/11.

It's the same dynamic that doomed other empires – a nation in decline because of its imperial arrogance and rage for dominance, waging endless wars against invented enemies, and its unwillingness to change.

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*Featured image: A destroyed Vindicator at Ewa field, the victim of one of the smaller attacks on the approach to Pearl Harbor (Source: Wikimedia Commons)*

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