



The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor, The Washington contribution to the Japanese attack, by Rear Admiral Robert A. Theobald, USN, ret., © 1954 Robert A. Theobald, The Devin-Adair Company, New York, 1954.

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ADMIRAL HALSEY'S FOREWORD

Admiral Theobald's book digests and correlates the results of his painstaking research into a mass of documentary evidence. Whether or not you agree with any or all of his conclusions, his book is a "must" for every American who believes in fair play. Read it with an open mind and arrive at your own conclusions. I find it an approach different from any I have previously seen to the disaster at Pear Harbor on December 7, 1941.

At that time I was one of the three senior commanders of the Pacific Fleet, serving under Admiral Kimmel. I am sure he kept me informed of all the intelligence he possessed. Certainly I did not know of any of the pertinent "Magic Messages." All our intelligence pointed to an attack by Japan against the Philippines or the southern areas in Malaya or the Dutch East Indies. While Pearl Harbor was considered and not ruled out, the mass of the evidence made available to us pointed in another direction. Had we known of Japan's minute and continued interest in the exact location and movement of our ships in Pearl Harbor, as indicated in the "Magic Messages," it is only logical that we would have concentrated our thought on meeting the practical certainty of an attack on Pearl Harbor. I am sure I would have protested the movement of my Task Force to Wake Island in late November and early December. I am also sure no protest would have been necessary; because if Kimmel had pos-

essed this intelligence, he would not have ordered the movement.

I then had my flag in the *Enterprise*, one of the two carriers we had operating in the Pacific. The second was the *Lexington*, part of a Force under Rear Admiral Newton's command. The *Saratoga*, the third and only other carrier assigned to the Pacific Fleet, was on the West Coast of the United States, completing periodic overhaul and repair.

We were sadly deficient in long-distance scouting planes. The only Army planes available were B-18s. These planes were slow, shortlegged, and unfitted for overseas scouting. There were not sufficient PBYS – Navy scouting planes and good, old, slow, and cumbersome work horses – to run a continuous 360° search without wearing out matériel and personnel. We were further handicapped by directives requiring the training of large quotas of personnel in these planes for service in the Atlantic. This, altogether with the transfer of the carrier *Yorktown* to the East Coast of the United States, was a tremendous drain on our already slim resources. Nevertheless, had the “Magic Messages” been known to us, there can be no doubt that a 360° search would have been ordered and maintained to the breaking point of materiel and personnel. I have always considered Admiral Kimmel and General Short to be splendid officers who were thrown to the wolves as scapegoats for something over which they had no control. They had to work with what they were given, both in equipment and information. They are our outstanding military martyrs.

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The problem which faced Lincoln during March of 1861 was identical in principle – to unite the sentiment of the North behind the policy of compelling the seceded Southern states by force of arms to return to the Union. For a month after his inauguration, he made no move, and then South Carolina's insistent demands for the surrender of Fort Sumter gave him the answer to his problem. He refused to surrender the fort,

and dispatched a fleet to reprovision it. South Carolina then fired the first shots of the Civil War. Pearl Harbor was President Roosevelt's Fort Sumter.

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By the end of 1940, Congress had voted: an immediate increase of the Army to 1,000,000 enlisted men, with an eventual goal of 4,000,000; 50,000 planes for the Army Air Corps; 170,000 enlisted men for the Navy, and 34,000 for the Marines; 15,000 planes and 10,000 pilots for the Naval Air Force; and a naval building program which envisaged an eventual two-ocean navy and embraced 17 battleships, 14 heavy cruisers, 40 light cruisers, 197 destroyers and 74 submarines.

...On April 10, 1941, the United States acquired defense rights in Greenland; and in July, 1941, with the consent of that government, American military forces occupied Iceland.

...It was soon apparent that Germany did not intend to contribute to a break of diplomatic relations with the United States. American military intervention in Europe in World War I had proved decisive, and Hitler obviously was not courting a repetition in World War II.

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Note*: Throughout the fall of 1941, American destroyers attacked German submarines with depth charges with unknown results. During September and October, German submarines inflicted the following damage: USS *Greer* torpedoed; USS *Salinas*, supply vessel, torpedoed; USS *Kearney*, destroyer, torpedoed; USS *Reuben James*, destroyer, sunk.

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The Fleet then based in Hawaiian waters was neither powerful enough nor in the necessary strategic position to exert any positive influence upon Japan's plans for Eastern Asia. That could only have been accomplished by basing an adequate naval force in the Philippines. And the Fleet could not possibly operate in the western Pacific because its train (tankers, supply vessels, etc.) was totally inadequate to sustain such operations at such a distance from a permanent major base – a fact that would not escape the trained Japanese espionage in Hawaii. Certainly the Japanese did not hesitate to move into French Indo-China in July, 1941.

Furthermore, in March 1941, the already inferior Pacific Fleet was further weakened by the detachment of three battleships, one aircraft carrier, four light cruisers, and eighteen destroyers for duty in the Atlantic; and in June, 1941, Washington gave serious consideration to the transfer of three additional battleships to the Atlantic. Such changes in fleet dispositions, in those critical diplomatic days, would never have been made without the President's approval. With the effective Japanese espionage in Hawaii and in the Panama Canal Zone, changes in the strength of the Hawaiian forces and naval movements between the Pacific and the Atlantic were reported to Tokyo as soon as they happened. Consequently, the willingness to weaken the Pacific Fleet in the face of that well-known espionage, at a time when diplomatic pressure upon Japan should have been strongly maintained, is positive proof that President Roosevelt was not concerned with the Fleet's diplomatic effect upon Japan.

A passage in another of President Roosevelt's conversations with Admiral Richardson is most revealing. The Admiral asked whether or not the United States would declare war, if Japan should attack the Malay Peninsula, the Dutch East Indies, or Indo-China. The President replied that he was not sure that the United States would fight even if the Philippines were attacked. The, after a pause, he added that he was firmly convinced, however, that this country would be drawn into a Pacific war, because wars had a way of expanding, and, sooner or later, Japan would commit the act which would involve this country.

These remarks are worthy of careful scrutiny. If we would not fight for the Philippines, we certainly would not fight for Guam. The President, therefore, could foresee no Far Eastern action that would surely cause the United States to fight, and with the Asiatic eliminated, only two possible Pacific areas remained, Hawaii and the Panama Canal. It is important to note the clear proof, which we have, that by October, 1940, President Roosevelt was firmly convinced that when Japan went to war, that country would soon commit an overt act against the United States, and it was his insistence that was keeping

the Pacific Fleet in its exposed position in Hawaii.

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In August, 1945, certain opinions of the Naval Court of Inquiry and the action of the Secretary of the Navy on those opinions were published. The Court criticized Admiral Stark's judgment because: he failed, during the critical period between November 26 and December 7, 1941, to transmit to Admiral Kimmel important information which he had regarding the Japanese situation; he did not immediately transmit, on December 7, the fact that a message had been received which appeared to indicate that a break in diplomatic relations was imminent, and that an attack in the Hawaiian area might be expected soon.

The concluding paragraph of the action by the Secretary of the Navy on the Proceedings of the Court contained the following statement: "Admiral Harold R. Stark, USN (Retired), shall not hold any position in the United States Navy which requires the exercise of superior judgment."

The next day, at least one Washington, DC newspaper carried the Admiral's reply to these strictures. He said that his conscience was entirely clear, because all his official actions in the days before Pearl Harbor had been governed by orders from "higher authority." Admiral Stark repeated this statement, at least once, in private correspondence. During those days, President Roosevelt was the only naval authority higher in the chain of military command than Admiral Stark.*

* ...the Secretary of the Navy, by law, cannot exercise military command. Consequently Secretary Knox did not have the lawful authority to order Admiral Stark to withhold information from Admiral Kimmel, which could have affected that fleet Commander's military decisions, nor to alter the composition of the fleets or their dispositions, in anticipation of the outbreak of hostilities. ...On the other hand, the Secretary of the Navy exercises complete authority over the naval establishment in matters of administration and routine procedure. In such matters, the Chief of Naval operations is fully subject to the orders of the Secretary.

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As we are only interested in the information that was available to the Washington authorities before the Pearl Harbor attack, the sequence of messages which follows contains only those which were decoded before that event.

When the War and Navy Departments Intelligence Divisions were weighing the implications of Tokyo's September 24 dispatch to the Honolulu Consulate, and more especially when they were reaching the only possible conclusions from that message, their minds must inevitably have reverted to a dispatch which had been received in Washington, eight months before. For that reason, that earlier communication is the logical introduction to the Tokyo-Honolulu traffic, which immediately follows it herein.

Ambassador Grew, Tokyo, to State Department, January 27, 1941: "THE PERUVIAN MINISTER HAS INFORMED A MEMBER OF MY STAFF THAT HE HAS HEARD FROM MANY SOURCES, INCLUDING A JAPANESE SOURCE, THAT IN THE EVENT OF TROUBLE BREAKING OUT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN, THE JAPANESE INTENDED TO MAKE A SURPRISE ATTACK AGAINST PEARL HARBOR WITH ALL THEIR STRENGTH AND EMPLOYING ALL THEIR EQUIPMENT, THE PERUVIAN MINISTER CONSIDERS THESE RUMORS FANTASTIC. NEVERTHELESS, HE CONSIDERED THEM OF SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE TO CONVEY THE INFORMATION TO A MEMBER OF MY STAFF."

Tokyo to Consul General, Honolulu, September 24, 1941 (# 83): HENCEFORTH, WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE YOU MAKE REPORTS CONCERNING VESSELS ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES IN SO FAR AS POSSIBLE.

"1. THE WATERS OF PEARL HARBOR ARE TO BE DIVIDED ROUGHLY INTO FIVE SUB-AREAS. WE HAVE NO OBJECTION TO YOUR ABBREVIATING AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE.

"AREA A. WATERS BETWEEN FORD ISLAND AND THE ARSENAL.

"AREA B. WATERS ADJACENT TO THE ISLAND SOUTH AND WEST OF FORD ISLAND. THIS AREA IS ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE ISLAND FROM AREA A.

"AREA C. EAST LOCH.

"AREA D. MIDDLE LOCH.

"AREA E. WEST LOCH AND THE COMMUNICATING WATER ROUTES.

"2. WITH REGARD TO WARSHIPS AND AIRCRAFT CARRIERS WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE YOU REPORT ON THOSE AT ANCHOR, (THESE ARE NOT SO IMPORTANT) TIED UP AT WHARVES, BUOYS,

AND IN DOCK. DESIGNATE TYPES AND CLASSES BRIEFLY. IF POSSIBLE, WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE YOU MAKE MENTION OF THE FACT WHEN THERE ARE TWO OR MORE VESSELS ALONGSIDE THE SAME WHARF.”

(Decoded in the War Department, October 9, 1941)

Consul General, Honolulu, to Tokyo, September 29, 1941 (# 178): This message was in answer to Tokyo dispatch # 83, and set up a two-letter code designation for each of the five prescribed Pearl Harbor areas.

(Decoded by the Navy Department, October 10, 1941)

Tokyo to Consul General, Honolulu, September 29, 1941 (# 111): “AS RELATIONS BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES ARE MOST CRITICAL, MAKE YOUR ‘SHIP IN HARBOR REPORT’ IRREGULAR, BUT AT A RATE OF TWICE A WEEK. ALTHOUGH YOU ALREADY NO DOUBT AWARE, PLEASE TAKE EXTRA CARE TO MAINTAIN SECRECY.”

(Decoded in the Navy Department, December 3, 1941)

Consul General, Honolulu, to Tokyo, November 18, 1941 (# 222): This was a lengthy report of US vessels in the different Pearl Harbor areas.

(Decoded in the War Department, December 6, 1941)

Tokyo to Consul General, Honolulu, September 29, 1941 (# 113): “PLEASE REPORT ON THE FOLLOWING AREAS AS TO VESSELS ANCHORED THEREIN: AREA ‘N,’ PEARL HARBOR, MAMALA BAY (HONOLULU) AND THE AREAS ADJACENT THERETO. MAKE YOUR INVESTIGATIONS WITH GREAT SECRECY.”

(Decoded in the War Department, December 5, 1941)

*Tokyo to Consul General, Honolulu, September 29, 1941 (#111):** “PLEASE INVESTIGATE COMPREHENSIBLY THE FLEET ... BASES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE HAWAIIAN MILITARY RESERVATION.”

(Decoded in the War Department, December 4, 1941)

* Note: Tokyo dispatches of both November 15 and 20 carried the same serial number.

Tokyo to Consul General, Honolulu, September 29, 1941 (# 122): “WE HAVE BEEN RECEIVING REPORTS FROM YOU ON SHIP MOVEMENTS, BUT IN THE FUTURE WILL YOU ALSO REPORT EVEN WHEN THERE ARE NO MOVEMENTS.”

(Decoded in the Navy Department, December 5, 1941)

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On May 17, 1951, the New York *Daily News* and many other papers, to which the column is syndicated, carried a feature article by its Washington reporter, Mr. John O’Donnell, which told of various Far Eastern police and intelligence reports which were then reposing under close guard on Capitol Hill in Washington. Among these documents were the Japanese secret police reports which were surrendered to General MacArthur in Tokyo in September, 1945, and the confession of the famous Russian spy, Dr. Richard Sorge, who had organized and directed the operations of a widespread spy ring in Japan, until his arrest by the Japanese on October 18, 1941.

The article on the New York *Daily News* had very interesting comments on the police and intelligence reports, but our present concern centers in the Sorge confession and the secret Japanese police reports. Before his execution in early 1942*, Dr. Sorge made a complete 32,000-word confession of his activities to his Japanese captors. This confession was forwarded to the Pentagon in Washington by General MacArthur, so that the account of the Sorge *activities* are to be found in the secret files in our national capital in both the Sorge confession and the Japanese secret police documents.

The following is a verbatim extract from Mr. O’Donnell’s article in the New York *Daily News* of May 7, 1951:

“When the spy’s confession was sent here, somebody in the Pentagon deleted from the original the damning statement by Sorge that he had informed the Kremlin in October, 1941, that the Japs intended to attack Pearl Harbor within 60 days and that he had received thanks for his report and the notice that Washington – Roosevelt, Marshall, Adm. Stark, *et al* – had been advised of the Japanese in-

tentions. There is no record that this information was acknowledged here. But the (Japanese) police documents make it clear that Stalin & Co. had this accurate information and passed it back to us in return for our information about the impending attack by Germany on Russia.”

In reply to a direct question, Mr. O’Donnell says, “Before writing the column, the complete record of Sorge’s confession had been made available to me although I was never in possession – except for the time required for reading the documents.” It will be noted that Mr. O’Donnell positively states that the “complete record of Sorge’s confession” was available to him before he wrote the article. That means both documents – the 32,000-word Sorge confession and the police document which related to the Sorge activities and confession. This statement is especially important because certain portions of the Sorge confession had been deleted from the file copy in the Pentagon, obviously for the purpose of preserving the secret of Pearl Harbor and President’s Roosevelt’s part therein from the knowledge of anyone who might see that file copy.

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Rear Admiral Turner testified that he “thought” the Hawaiian Commanders were receiving Magic, and that this understanding on his part was the result of talks he had had with Rear Admiral Noyes. As Admiral Turner was responsible for all Magic sent by the Navy Department to the outlying commands after April, 1941, he knew that the Hawaiian Commanders had received none of that information from that source, between mid-August and December 7, 1941. The only means by which Hawaii could obtain Magic was to intercept and decode it on the spot, and Admiral Noyes well knew that the commands and that mid-Pacific base did not have the requisite facilities to do that. It is difficult to understand how he could have failed to make that fact clear to Admiral Turner. Neither of the officers was questioned to develop how the misunderstanding could have arisen.

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...Admiral Stark’s decisions on that Sunday morning, even if they had not been supported by

the wealth of earlier evidence, would reveal, beyond question, the basic truth of the Pearl Harbor story, namely that these Sunday messages and so many earlier ones, of vital importance to Admiral Kimmel's exercise of his command, were not sent because Admiral Stark had orders from the President, which prohibited that action. This deduction is fully supported by the Admiral's statement to the press in August, 1945, that all he did during the pre-Pearl Harbor days was done on order of higher authority, which can only mean President Roosevelt. The most arresting thing he did, during that time, was to withhold information from Admiral Kimmel.

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APPENDIX

Actually, the ships in Hawaii, during 1940 and 1941, with their crews at peacetime strengths, were hollow shells as far as readiness for all-out battle was concerned. There were two main reasons for this, viz: (1) the available men in peacetime have to be stationed and trained in those battle duties which demand a higher order of technical skill; (2) the lower-deck ammunition parties, and other lower-deck battle stations in the same category, are largely skeletonized in peacetime, because handling powder and shell from the magazines and shellrooms to the power hoists, which deliver the ammunition to the vicinity of the guns, requires physical endurance but very little skill, so that recruits can quickly be made proficient in those duties. This meant that the rate of fire required for success in battle could not possibly be met until the crews of these ships were raised to their war complements – a very long process, unless the ships retired to their West Coast mobilization ports, either upon the issuance of the Mobilization Order or of orders to augment the ships' crews to war-complement strengths. The number required by each type of ship to accomplish this was: battleships, 700 to 800; heavy cruisers, 350 to 400; light cruisers, 275 to 300; destroyers, 75 to 100.

None of these considerations particularly affected the rate of anti-aircraft fire on December 7, 1941, because with the ships in harbor, the turret and broadside batteries could not possibly go into action, so that the crews for these guns could be used to augment the anti-aircraft am-

munition parties. At sea, however, all batteries must be ready for instant action, whenever there is the slightest prospect of contact with the enemy, and that contingency must be considered ever-present in any active theatre of operations.

* This is a typo, Richard Sorge was executed in Japan on 7 November 1944.