Public Law No. 339, 78th Congress, approved 13 June 1944, directed the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy, severally, to proceed forthwith with an investigation into the facts surrounding the Pearl Harbor catastrophe, and to commence such proceedings against such persons as the facts might justify.

A Court of Inquiry, consisting of Admiral Orin G. Murfin, USN, (Retired), Admiral Edward C. Kalbfus, USN (Retired), and Vice Admiral Adolphus Andrews, USN (Retired), with Commander Harold Biesseler, USN, as Judge Advocate, was appointed on 13 July 1944. The Court was directed to convene on 17 July 1944, or as soon thereafter as practicable, for the purpose of inquiring into all circumstances connected with the attack made by Japanese forces on Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii, on 7 December 1941; to inquire thoroughly into the matter, and to include in its findings a full statement of the facts it might deem to be established. The Court was further directed to state its opinion as to whether any offenses were committed or serious blame incurred on the part of any person or persons in the Naval service, and, in case its opinion was that offenses had been committed or serious blame incurred, to recommend specifically what further proceedings should be had.

The Court of Inquiry commenced its proceedings on 31 July 1944, and submitted the record of its proceedings on 20 October 1944. During its investigation, the Court took the testimony of thirty-nine witnesses, and received seventy-seven exhibits. Certain portions of the record of proceedings before the Court, including the findings and opinion of the Court, have been classified "TOP SECRET," and the balance "SECRET."

By letter dated 21 October 1944, the Secretary of the Navy requested the Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Fleet, and Chief of Naval Operations to advise as to how much of the records of the Pearl Harbor Court of Inquiry bear such a relation to present military operations as to require high security classification.

The Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Fleet, and Chief of Naval Operations advised, in a letter dated 3 November 1944, that a substantial part of the records of Pearl Harbor Court of Inquiry bears such a relation to the national security and to current military operations as to make it essential that that information not be revealed publicly.

After thorough review of the record of proceedings of the Pearl Harbor Court of Inquiry, the Secretary concurs with the views of the Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Fleet, and Chief of Naval Operations, as expressed in his letter of 3 November 1944, and accordingly has directed that in the best interests of the present and future military operations of the United States, the existing "TOP SECRET" and "SECRET" classifications of the record must be continued. The record of the Court will not be made public while the war is in progress.
DRAFT #2
November 30, 1944

The Secretary in his findings upon the evidence before the Court of Inquiry and all the other proceedings in the matter, has found that there were serious errors of judgment on the part of certain officers in the Naval Service.

The net result of the findings of fact and opinions of the Pearl Harbor Naval Court of Inquiry, as reviewed by the Judge Advocate General of the Navy, and the Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations, and by the Secretary of the Navy is that the evidence now available does not warrant and will not support the trial by general court martial of any person or persons in the Naval Service.

The Secretary is not satisfied that the investigation before the Court of Inquiry has gone to the point of exhaustion of all possible evidence. Accordingly, he has decided that his own investigation should be further continued until the testimony of every witness in possession of material facts can be obtained and all possible evidence exhausted. Some of the testimony will be much delayed because certain witnesses who are actively engaged in combat against the enemy are not available and will not be available within the predictable future. The present decision of the Secretary will be reviewed when the investigation has been finally completed in the light of the evidence then at hand.

The Secretary added: "In reaching the above conclusions and decisions I am fully mindful of the wide and legitimate public interest in the Pearl Harbor attack. However, there is one consideration which is paramount to all others, and that is: What will best serve the continued successful prosecution of the war? The actions I have taken, in my judgment, are taken in the light of that consideration, and I am quite willing to take full and complete responsibility for them."