

January 3, 1945.

MEMORANDUM by the Secretary of War:

The attached longer form of report on the Pearl Harbor disaster was prepared by me for the purpose of making public my conclusions. This was not published for the following reasons:

1. It became apparent that the Secretary of the Navy had decided that there was much still to be done in completing the Navy investigation and he and Admiral King considered it advisable to make only a very short statement of the Secretary of the Navy's conclusions.

2. The President desired that the Army and Navy reports should be coordinated in form so far as this could be accomplished consistent with the facts and the conclusions of the two Secretaries.

3. There appeared to be a question in the minds of some whether the longer report which I had drafted might lead to a more continued public discussion and possible statements by interested parties. Some thought this might give a clue to TOP SECRET matters.

Accordingly, I determined to issue the shorter form which was made public on December 1, 1944. The longer form is to be held in the files of the War Department for publication in whole or in part at such later time as the Secretary of War may direct.

HENRY L. STAMP

Secretary of War.

DECLASSIFIED
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By E.C. NARS, Date 6-11-74

By Joint Resolution of the Congress, approved June 13, 1944, the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy were severally directed to proceed with an investigation into the facts surrounding the Pearl Harbor catastrophe of December 7, 1941, and to commence such proceedings against such persons as the facts might justify. In order to meet the wishes of Congress as expressed in this resolution, I have conducted such an investigation. In order to assist me to this end, there was appointed by order dated July 8, 1944, a Board of three general officers which was directed "to ascertain and report the facts relating to the attack made by Japanese armed forces upon the Territory of Hawaii on 7 December 1941 and to make such recommendations as it might deem proper." This Board I shall refer to in this report as the Army Pearl Harbor Board. Recorders were appointed to assist it and such other military and civilian personnel provided as the occasion required.

The Board has conducted an extensive and painstaking investigation. It has held hearings in Hawaii, San Francisco, and Washington. It has examined a total of 151 witnesses and received many exhibits. I have read its report and reviewed the recorded evidence. The Judge Advocate General of the Army, at my direction, has also examined the report and the record and has given me fully the benefit of his views.

It will be recalled that in December 1941, shortly after

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the attack on Pearl Harbor, a distinguished commission under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice Roberts of the Supreme Court was appointed by the President to investigate and report the facts relating to that attack and rendered such a report under date of January 23, 1942.* The record before the Roberts Commission as well as its report was examined and considered by the Army Pearl Harbor Board and has been reviewed by me in connection with my present study of the matter.

While setting forth their findings of facts and conclusions of opinion based thereon, neither the Roberts Commission nor the Army Pearl Harbor Board has made recommendations of disciplinary or other action.

I recognize the importance to any individual of having a decision taken as to what, if any, action is to be instituted against him and, after weighing all the considerations, I am clear that the public interest as well as justice and fairness will best be served by a statement of my present conclusions. So far as they may be made public, consonant with the public interest, my conclusions are as follows:

*This Commission consisted of Mr. Justice Roberts; Admiral W. H. Stanley, Retired; Admiral J. M. Reeves, Retired; Major General Frank R. McCoy, Retired; and Major General Joseph T. McNarney.

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I.

The primary and immediate responsibility for the protection of the Island of Oahu and Pearl Harbor insofar as the Army was concerned rested upon the Commanding Officer of the Hawaiian Department, Lieutenant General Walter C. Short. It has been and still is the prevailing policy and practice of the General Staff of the United States Army to choose with care as commanding officers of the various theaters men whose record and experience indicate their capabilities for the command and to place upon them the responsibility for the performance of their mission with as little interference from the central Army authorities in Washington as possible. This policy of decentralized responsibility in our Army has been found to produce the best results and it is still being followed in all the various theaters of the war. Thus each theater commander is charged with the preparation of his own local defense plan, including the working out of any defense operations with the local Naval authorities. Such plans are submitted to the appropriate division of the General Staff in Washington and are subject to any changes or modifications that might emanate from that source. The primary responsibility for such plans and their execution, however, rests on the commanding officer familiar with the local situation and conditions. Before December 7, 1941, detailed plans for the defense of the Hawaiian Department had been devised and worked out by General Short as well as a joint agreement with the local Naval authorities for joint action in the event of an emergency and he and the Navy

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commanding officer had the primary responsibility of putting into effect these plans or such portions thereof as the occasion demanded. This last, however, had not been done at the time of the Japanese attack.

I find that during the year 1941, and particularly during October and until the latter part of November, General Short was repeatedly advised of the critical events which were developing. I find that he was clearly warned on November 27th by the appropriate authorities in Washington that a break in diplomatic relations between the United States and Japan might occur at any time, that an attack by Japan on the United States might occur, and that hostilities were possible at any moment. I find that he was informed that the defense of his command was to be regarded as paramount to all other considerations and that he was specifically directed to take such measures of reconnaissance as he deemed necessary. In addition to the information received directly from Washington through both Army and Navy sources, General Short received continuous reports from his own Intelligence Section. General Short himself knew that it was traditionally the policy for a responsible commanding officer to anticipate and to be prepared for the worst form of a possible attack and he had received and approved military estimates from his own staff as well as from the Chief of Staff to the effect that a surprise raid by air and submarine constituted the principal perils to Hawaii.

I do not find that there was any information in the possession

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of the War Department and which was not made available to General Short which would in any way have modified the essence of the above information which was sent to him or which would have affected or increased the duties of vigilance and alertness thus already imposed upon him. As later pointed out, I believe that the War Department would have carried out its duties more helpfully if General Short had been given more complete information, but I find that he was amply warned for the performance of his paramount duty of being alert against a surprise air attack by Japan.

I find that he failed in the light of the information which he had received adequately to alert his command to the degree of preparedness which the situation demanded; and that this failure contributed measurably to the extent of the disaster, although much damage probably would have resulted from the attack in any event. I find that he failed to use fully the means at hand for reconnaissance, especially the radar air warning service, which was of prime necessity; that he failed to ascertain from the Navy the extent of its reconnaissance or to collaborate with it to the end that more adequate reconnaissance should be secured. I find that he failed to have his antiaircraft defenses sufficiently manned or supplied with ready ammunition as the situation demanded.

This failure resulted not from indolence or indifference or wilful disobedience of orders but from a vital error of judgment, viz; the failure to comprehend the necessities of the situation in the light

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of the warnings and information which he had received. He states that to put into effect a different degree of alertness than he actually did would have interfered with the training program which he was carrying out in various activities, and would have involved the danger of alarming the population, against which he had been cautioned. In weighing such considerations he entirely lost sight of the fact that the defense of his command and station against Japan was his paramount duty.

The underlying cause of this error of judgment was General Short's confidence that Japan would not then attack Pearl Harbor. In fairness to him it must be borne in mind that this belief was shared in by almost everyone concerned including his superior officers in the War Department in Washington. He was undoubtedly influenced in such a belief by the then prevailing psychology which completely underestimated the Japanese military capabilities and particularly the advance which they had made in the use of aircraft. General Short also knew that the Naval command at Hawaii, which he regarded as being better informed than he because of their facilities and the widespread nature of their operations, was confident that an air attack on Pearl Harbor was most unlikely. The information which was being received of Japanese naval activity pointed to operations in southeastern Asia, the Netherlands, East Indies, or the Philippines.

Furthermore, in Hawaii the danger of sabotage was stressed because of the large Japanese population, and General Short was expressly

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warned by the War Department against this danger. But the warning was coupled with a warning also against the danger of hostile action in general. General Short relies upon the fact that the War Department took no exception to his report of November 27, 1941, to the effect that he was "alerted against sabotage." He urges that this should be regarded as a tacit approval of his failure to alert against other dangers. I think it is probably true that the emphasis on sabotage in several War Department warnings and the Department's caution against alarming the civilian population, coupled with this failure to comment on Short's report of November 27th, confirmed him in his conviction that he had chosen the correct form of alert and might disregard all others.

But these matters, although they may make his action more understandable, do not serve to exonerate him for his failure to be fully alert and prepared against an air attack. He well knew that an air attack on Pearl Harbor, even if improbable, was possible. Yet he ordered an alert which he himself had prepared for use only in case of "no threat from without." Protection against the possibility of such an attack was his own definite responsibility.

To sum up the situation tersely, General Short was warned by Washington that there was immediate danger both of an attack from without by Japan and of an attack from within by sabotage. This warning required him to be alert against both forms of danger. He chose to concentrate himself so entirely upon a defense against sabotage as

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to leave himself more completely exposed to an attack from without than if there had been no alert at all. He so concentrated his planes as not only to make them an easy target for an attack from without but to require several hours to get any substantial number of them into the air for defense.

To such an error of judgment it is no excuse that he relied upon assurances from another service, even though he thought that that service was better informed than himself as to the disposition of the Japanese fleet. He was the responsible defender of the outpost of Hawaii. He had no right to entirely subordinate his duty to be prepared against what he knew to be the most dangerous form of attack on that outpost to the opinion of another service.

Nor had he any right, after the clear and explicit warning of the War Department of a possible attack from without, to assume from mere inference that such a warning had been entirely withdrawn and that he was thereby relieved from his independent responsibility as a theater commander.

The error of judgment thus committed by General Short was in my opinion of such a nature as to demand his relief from a Command status. He has been given no assignment to active duty throughout the war -- the greatest military struggle in the nation's history. This in itself is a serious result for any officer with a long record of excellent service, and conscientious as I believe General Short to be. In my judgment, on the evidence now recorded, it is sufficient action.

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II.

Such duties as the War Department in Washington had in the supervision of the defense of Hawaii devolved primarily upon what was then known as the War Plans Division of the General Staff. This was the division of the General Staff specifically charged with war plans and operations, and messages to or from the theater commanders were regularly handled or approved by it. The War Plans Division was in charge of an Assistant Chief of Staff and under him various officers had specially assigned duties.

The Intelligence Section of the General Staff (G-2) also had its duties in collecting and analyzing information and transmitting information to the theater commanders.

I find as heretofore stated that the messages sent to General Short gave him adequate information as to the state of the negotiations with the Japanese and the development of the situation; that he was warned that Japanese future action was unpredictable; that hostile action was possible at any moment; and that no consideration was to be permitted to jeopardize his defense. He was also expressly directed to take reconnaissance measures -- the all important measure to be taken at the time. Furthermore, as heretofore stated, I do not think that any special and detailed warnings against sabotage should have been considered by General Short as justifying his decision that an alert against any possible enemy action was not also his duty.

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There was detailed information in the War Department which if forwarded might have sharpened General Short's attention or emphasized further the imminence of war. Some part of this information was sent to Admiral Kimmel by the Navy. It was the rule that all such information should be exchanged between the Army and Navy at Pearl Harbor, and the War Department had a right to believe that this information communicated to Admiral Kimmel was also available to General Short. While Admiral Kimmel and General Short were on very friendly terms and in frequent communication, the exchange of information as well as consultation in other respects at Hawaii between the Army and Navy was inadequate.

I believe the War Plans Division made a mistake in not transmitting to General Short more information than it did. It may be that a keener and more imaginative appreciation on the part of some of the officers in the War and Navy Departments of the significance of some of the information might have led to a suspicion of an attack specifically on Pearl Harbor. I do not think that certain officers in the War Department functioned in these respects with sufficient skill. At all times it must be borne in mind, however, that it is easy to criticize individuals in the light of hindsight, and very difficult to recreate fairly the entire situation and information with which the officers were required to deal at the time of the event.

Again, as I have pointed out, General Short, in response to a message which had been sent out containing a warning of possible

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hostilities and a request for a report of action taken, had sent a message to the War Department which was susceptible of the interpretation that he was on the alert against sabotage only and not on the alert against an air raid or other hostile action. While this interpretation was not necessarily to be had from the wording of his message, nevertheless a keener sense of analysis and a more incisive comparison of the messages exchanged would have invited further inquiry by the War Plans Division of General Short, and his failure to go on the necessary alert might well have been discovered. The Chief of this division and certain of his subordinates knew that a report of the measures taken by General Short had been asked for. General Short's reply was brought to the attention of the Chief of the division. A clear and satisfactory reply should have been required. This was not done and a more efficient functioning of the division would have demanded that a careful inquiry as to the meaning of General Short's message should be made and no room for ambiguity permitted.

It must clearly be borne in mind that in November and December, 1941, the responsibilities of the War Plans Division covered many fields and many theaters. Their preoccupation with the theaters most likely to be threatened, such as the Philippines toward which the Japanese activities then appeared to be pointed, may be subject to criticism in the light of the subsequent disaster but it is understandable. All signs pointed to an attack in that direction and they were exercising particular care with respect to that theater. Their conduct

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must be viewed in an entirely different light from that of the theater commander, such as General Short, who was like a sentinel on post and whose attention and vigilance must be entirely concentrated on the single position which he has been chosen to defend and whose alertness must not be allowed to be distracted by consideration of other contingencies in respect to which he is not responsible. Under all the circumstances, I find nothing in the evidence as now recorded which warrants the institution of any further proceedings against any officer in the War Plans Division.

Since Pearl Harbor, the War Plans Division has been completely reorganized and the officers involved in the matters in question have either died or received other assignments where they have already distinguished themselves in the performance of important duties in the field. I am satisfied that proper steps were taken to correct such inadequacies of either personnel or organization as were shown to exist either in the War Department or in the field at the time of the Pearl Harbor disaster.

III.

The War Plans Division like the other divisions and activities of the General Staff in Washington was under the general direction and supervision of the Chief of Staff, General Marshall. Evidently for this reason the Army Pearl Harbor Board has been led to criticize the Chief of Staff as being responsible for some of the

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shortcomings of the officers of the General Staff which I have just enumerated. In my opinion, this criticism is entirely unjustified. It arises from a fundamental misconception of the duties of the Chief of Staff and of his relations with the divisions and activities of the General Staff. It is not the function of the Chief of Staff to specifically direct and personally supervise the execution in detail of the duties of the various sections of the General Staff. His paramount duty is to advise the President and the Secretary of War and to make plans for and supervise the organization, equipment, and training of a great army for a global war; to advise in and himself to make decisions regarding basic problems of military strategy in the many possible theaters in which the war might develop and in other fundamental and broad military problems which confront the United States. It would hopelessly cripple the performance of these great and paramount duties should a Chief of Staff allow himself to become immersed in administrative details by which the plans for defense are carried out in our many outposts.

It is true that the failure of any part of the General Staff to perform its duties efficiently may be of such a kind or reach such an extent as to become the responsibility of the Chief of Staff for not having established a more effective organization. But I do not find any such situation in this case. The scattered and individual errors which I have criticized in respect to the Pearl Harbor disaster were not of a kind or extent to imply any general inefficiency in a Staff which

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was performing the heaviest duties with great ability and with subsequent results which have produced some of the finest pages of the history of the war. The shortcomings I have pointed out thus cannot in any fairness be attributed to the Chief of Staff. On the contrary, throughout this matter I believe that he acted with his usual great skill, energy, and efficiency.

IV.

The conclusions which I have stated herein as to the responsibilities and errors of General Short are in general accord with the conclusions of both the Roberts Commission and the Army Pearl Harbor Board. My conclusions as to the responsibilities and errors of the War Plans Division are to a substantial extent, but not entirely, in accord with the conclusions of the Army Pearl Harbor Board. The Roberts Commission did not go into details in respect to these responsibilities. My conclusion as to the responsibility of the Chief of Staff is, as I have heretofore stated, at variance with the conclusion of the Army Pearl Harbor Board but it is in entire agreement with the conclusions of the Roberts Commission. Of the correctness of my conclusion in this last respect, I have not the slightest doubt.

My present decisions as to the action to be taken which I have stated herein are, of course, entirely my own. No recommendations as to action were made by either Board. Since the matters considered by the Army Pearl Harbor Board concerning Colonel Theodore Wyman, Jr.,

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pertain to construction and procurement only and did not in my opinion directly affect the Pearl Harbor disaster, I have asked the Under Secretary to review these separately and to make the necessary determinations.

V.

In the conclusions of the Board there were no other individuals charged with responsibilities who were criticized except for a suggestion which might be construed as a criticism of Secretary Hull. It is suggested that in his conduct of the negotiations with the Japanese envoys a different procedure might have prolonged the negotiations until such time as the Army and Navy were better prepared for hostile action. Not only do I strongly disagree with what amounts at best only to a conjecture, but I feel that the Board's comment in this respect was uncalled for and not within the scope of their proper inquiry.

Finally, I am absolutely clear that it would be highly prejudicial to the successful prosecution of the war and the safety of American lives to make public during the war the report of the Army Pearl Harbor Board or the record on which it is based, including also the record of the Roberts Commission.

HENRY L. STIMSON