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# The Round Tablette

Founding Editor: James W. Gerber, MD (1951–2009)

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Thursday, 8 December 2016  
30:06 Volume 30 Number 6  
Published by WW II History Round Table  
Edited by Dr. Joseph Fitzharris  
[www.mn-ww2roundtable.org](http://www.mn-ww2roundtable.org)

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**Welcome to the December meeting of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table.** Tonight, the second part of our remembrance of the Japanese attacks at Pearl Harbor and in the Philippine Islands, our speaker is John A. Adams, author of *The Fightin' Texas Aggie Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor*. He will join with veterans of the Philippines, to discuss the less-publicized Japanese attacks there beginning on 8 December 1941.

The overwhelming success of the Japanese attacks upon the United States forces at Hawaii and in the Philippine Islands, with near-total surprise and devastation in Hawaii generated a multitude of Congressional investigations, spawned a legion of conspiracy theorists, and attracted the attention of historians and failure analysts. The intelligence community, often blamed for the debacles, had its own series of internal analyses while being analyzed, both critically and viciously, by external parties.

We can assert that the failure to accurately *anticipate* the location(s) and timing(s) of the Japanese attacks was a failure of intelligence. The failure to be adequately prepared, both at Pearl Harbor and in the Philippines, was due to failure by the national command authority – a failure of *leadership*. Similarly, the local commands were not at proper alert status and there was no coordination worthy of mention between the army and navy (*leadership*). In the Philippines, the lack of resources and manpower were *decision* failures, first by the US national authorities and secondly by local officials. The decision not to reinforce and resupply the Philippines was based first in necessity and secondarily in national strategic policy, and was not a failure point.

Where did intelligence fail? First, and most important, we had inadequate, disorganized, and uncoordinated *collection* of information. Human Intelligence in Japan and in the Japanese communities in the Philippines (more were prone to aid the Homeland) and Hawaii (few were willing to overtly aid the Homeland) was difficult for numerous reasons, starting with the concept of

*gaijin* – politely translated as “foreigner,” it truly means “barbarian” – and fairly obvious “racial” differences between most Americans and the Japanese. Some Americans learned the Japanese language and did access open source intelligence, and attaches did do their best to travel and observe, but the Japanese plans were neither public nor observable since the main fleet anchorages were inaccessible. This meant dependence upon electronic intelligence gathering by tapping undersea telegraphic cables (easily done in Manila) and intercepting radio transmissions, then decrypting them, and then *properly translating* the messages. Given how closely the Imperial Japanese Navy’s (IJN) plans were held, and the radio silence observed during the operation, there wasn’t a whole lot to intercept. Our decryption efforts were badly funded and uncoordinated; the army did not talk to the navy, and neither dreamed of sharing with State. We had too few cryptanalysts, translators, and intelligence analysts.

Strategic analysis suggested Hawaii as a possible, low order target – the logistics of an attack on Hawaii in the absence of a fleet train and underway oilers were staggeringly difficult, even for the US Navy of 1941. While we war-gamed such things, no reasonable naval strategist would have expected the IJN to try the impossible, particularly since we stereotyped the Japanese (and other non-caucasian “races”) as inferior, both mentally and physically, and militarily. Given the superiority of the IJN’s aircraft carriers and naval pilots and aircrews, this was a bad assumption.

Most expected attacks in Asia, but the risks to the Japanese economy from attacking American interests were great. Despite the embargo, they depended on us for many critical imports. Admiral Yamamoto noted, the risks from failing to destroy American capabilities, given our economic potential, witnessed in World War I, for producing war materiel. Both militate in favor of bypassing the Philippines to attack British and Dutch colonies in Southeast Asia. This leads to the second intelligence failure: the failure to *analyze* the available information.

That is, we had too few analysts - who perforce had to know the language and the culture as well as they did their own, and had to be able to set aside their own cultural blinders. Analysis can be driven by either the data or by

**If you are a veteran, or know a veteran, of one of these campaigns** – contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or [coldpatton@yahoo.com](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)

theory. When theory or expectations drive your collection and your analysis, you **will** be wrong. When the data drives your analysis, you **might** be right.

What about the *failures of leadership*. By late November, the President, the Secretaries of State, War, and Navy, and the relevant army and navy leaders, all saw by late November the likelihood of war but failed to provide proper war warnings to Adm. Kimmel and Gen. Short and failed to urge/require coordinated planning for the defense of the Islands. That Kimmel and Short were cooperating was fortuitous, but not terribly effective, but Kimmel's order ending reconnaissance flights and the peacetime level of readiness reflect local command failures.

The attacks in Hawaii preceded the attacks on American forces in the Philippines by hours. Given MacArthur's familiarity with the relevant war plans and his own plans for the defense of the Islands, and knowing that he was to hold out until the Navy arrived from Hawaii to crush the IJN in the Mahanian decisive battle (the IJN *wanted* such a battle), we still expect better of him. The aircraft were lined up rather than in revetments – the easier to protect them from sabotage. Washington (FDR and Congress) provided too few troops and too little equipment, mostly obsolete. The war warnings Mac Arthur got from Washington were a bit stronger but qualified: officially the Japanese were expected to bypass the Islands in favor of the British and Dutch. After learning of the attack on Hawaii, MacArthur did not move any of his units to the positions they were to hold in case of attack/invasion, and no logistics preparations were made in the hours prior to attack.

Discussion of the Japanese attack brings out the conspiracy theorists. They forget that FDR, what ever his failings, loved his navy and would not willingly see it broken. He wanted a war with Germany and he needed men, ships, planes to fight it. Sunk ships and dead men would defeat that purpose.

**Further Readings:**

John Adams, *Fightin' Texas Aggie Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor*, Texas A&M, 2016.  
 William Bartsch. *December 8, 1941: MacArthur's Pearl Harbor*, Texas A&M, 2003.  
 William Bartsch. *Doomed at the Start: American Pursuit Pilots in the Philippines, 1941-1942*, Texas A&M, 1995.  
 William Bartsch, *Every Day a Nightmare: American Pursuit Pilots in the Defense of Java, 1941-1942*, Texas A&M, 2010.  
 James Hornfischer. *Ship of Ghosts: The Story of the USS Houston*. Banta, 2006  
 Adrian Martin and Larry Stephenson. *Operation Plum; The Ill-fated 27th Bombardment Group and*

*the Fight for the Western Pacific*, Texas A&M, 2015  
 James Belote and William Belote. *Corregidor: the Saga of a Fortress*, Harper & Row, 1967  
 Edward Miller. *War Plan Orange*, Naval Institute Press, 2007.  
 Gordon Prange. *At Dawn We Slept*. Penguin, 1981.

**Announcements:**

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table - 20 Dec. 2016 – *Archeology of USS Maple Leaf* - [www.tccwrt.com](http://www.tccwrt.com) - [info@tccwrt.com](mailto:info@tccwrt.com)  
 St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - 23 Jan. 2017 – *Lincoln/Bixby Letters* - 715-386-1268 - [rossandhaines@comcast.net](mailto:rossandhaines@comcast.net)  
 Cannon Valley CWRT - 15 Dec. *Potluck Dinner place tba* – [dnl1.peterson@gmail.com](mailto:dnl1.peterson@gmail.com)  
 Fort Snelling Civil War Symposium - 8 April 2017  
 Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345, 320-616-6050, <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>  
 World Without Genocide, 651-695-7621, <http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/>  
 Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - [crazyjerry45@hotmail.com](mailto:crazyjerry45@hotmail.com) - 651-338-2717  
 CAF - Commemorative Air Force - [www.cafmn.org](http://www.cafmn.org) 651-455-6942  
 Minnesota Air Guard Museum - [www.mnangmuseum.org](http://www.mnangmuseum.org) 612-713-2523  
 Friends of Ft. Snelling, [www.fortsnelling.org](http://www.fortsnelling.org)  
 Fagen Fighters WWII Museum, Granite Falls, MN, 320-564-6644, <http://www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org>.  
 Airshow - Eden Prairie - 15-16 July 2017 [www.wotn.org](http://www.wotn.org) 952-746-6100  
 Military History Book Club, Har Mar Barnes & Noble: 25 Jan. 2017, Atkinson, *Guns at Last Light* - [sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com](mailto:sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com)

**We need volunteers to drive our veterans to and from meetings. Please contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or [coldpatton@yahoo.com](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)**

**Round Table Schedule 2017**

- 12 Jan Battle of Koenigsburg
- 9 Feb Nazi Hunters
- 9 Mar Arsenal for War
- 23 Mar Gen. Lesley McNair
- 13 Apr Last Mission of the 93rd Bomb Group
- 11 May Corps Commanders of the Battle of the Bulge



Cavite Navy Yard, small-arms shells explode (left) as the torpedo-loaded barge (center) burns. Louis Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines* (USA CMH, 1953)