

Maptalk

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Blame Scattered

The report stated that "the extent of the Pearl Harbor disaster was primarily due to two causes: (1) the failure of the Commanding General of the Hawaiian Department adequately to alert his command for war, and (2) the War Department's failure, with the knowledge of the type of alert taken by the Commanding General of the Hawaiian Department, to direct him to take an adequate alert, and the failure to keep him adequately informed as to the developments of the United States-Japanese negotiations which in turn might have caused him to change from inadequate alert to an adequate one."

The board implied a criticism of the State Department when it charged that Secretary Hull's counter-proposals in the negotiations with the Japanese on 26 November 1941 were used by the Japanese as the signal to start the war and that to the extent that it hastened the attack, it was in conflict with Army and Navy efforts to gain time.

Reinforcements were being rushed to the Philippines at the time when Japan attacked, the report said, but practically all responsible officials "estimated the situation incorrectly" and predicted that the Japanese would strike southward instead of eastward because "the Japanese Army and Navy were concentrating and moving in that direction."

"There was complete ignorance of the task force which attacked Pearl Harbor," the Army report added. "Intelligence officers in high places made the estimate and reached conclusions in the light of these known facts. They followed a sane line of reasoning. These statements are in explanation, not justification."

President Truman backed up the report to the extent that he announced he had no intention of ordering a court-martial for the officers involved, but at the same time he made it plain that he had no objections to such a court being held. He also made the obvious comment that there was no longer anything to stop the criticized military and naval leaders from making public statements in defense of their actions.

Cordell Hull, aging ex-Secretary of State, snapped back in reply to the section of the report which had implied that he was partly at fault for the disaster because his actions had precipitated a crisis. In a hitherto unpublished letter, Hull pointed out (1) that he had personally advised the general staff on 25 November 1941 that war was imminent, and (2) that his final negotiations with the Japanese had not included any ultimatum that was a spark to set off the Asiatic conflagration.