

## The Road to Pearl Harbor: Intrigues That We Watched

Story of the Prewar Scheming by the Japanese  
As Revealed by Decoding of Secret Messages

**Chronology of the events that led to opening attack  
against U. S. on Dec. 7, 1941**

It now becomes apparent that the U. S. Government, long before Pearl Harbor, knew Tokyo's war plans almost as thoroughly as did the Japanese. To all practical purposes, Washington had ears attuned to the most intimate, secret sessions of Japan's Cabinet.

The U. S. knew, for example, that diplomatic conversations in Washington were futile, that Japanese spies were recording the most detailed information of defense in Pearl Harbor, the Philippines, the Panama Canal Zone and the far reaches of the Southwest Pacific. And, toward the end, Tokyo knew that we knew her whispered secrets. War was inevitable.

The intriguing story of spying and counterspying came out with the release of Japanese diplomatic and military messages, deciphered by U. S. intelligence experts who broke Japan's master code as long ago as December, 1940. The text of some of the important diplomatic messages appears in this issue of *The United States News*, beginning on page 93.

**Missing link.** The messages show the U. S. knew the whole two-faced story, save for one all-important point. The Japanese decision and order to attack Pearl Harbor is missing. Operation Order No. 2 of the Japanese fleet, issued Nov. 7, 1941, now known to U. S., said that "Y day will be December 8" (Tokyo time), but did not mention Pearl Harbor as the point of attack. This date was reaffirmed December 2, and the plan carried out as scheduled.

Japanese codes were cracked at least a year before Pearl Harbor. From then on, U. S. diplomatic, military and counterespionage agents occupied what amounted to



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... cracking the code wasn't enough

front-row seats in the Tokyo war councils.

**Double talk.** As a result, the U. S. had definite knowledge that diplomatic negotiations between the Tokyo Foreign Office and our State Department were sham. Two days before Ambassadors Nomura and Kurusu replied to the final U. S. proposal, Tokyo advised her negotiators that a note was coming declaring U.S.-Japanese negotiations "ruptured." The note cautioned against a premature break, but it was no secret to the State Department. Thus, Secretary of State Hull probably knew, soon after he offered the final proposals, that Japan was determined to spurn them.

Long before that, however, Japanese military and diplomatic secrets were coming into Washington through other decoded messages. When Hitler urged Tokyo to hurry into war with the United States, we knew it.

**War plans.** While U. S. code experts busily pulled the secrets from outwardly innocent Japanese messages, Tokyo charted her war plans in detail. Here is the story chronologically:

On July 19, 1941, the U. S. listened while Japan advised her representatives that the Government planned to extend its military occupations from Indo-China to the Netherlands Indies and Singapore.

On July 26, Tokyo detailed the Government decision to drive the United States

and Britain out of China, forcing them to leave all military assets behind.

On September 22, Ambassador Nomura sent his Government a report on the U. S. civilian attitude. Americans, he said, were "happy-go-lucky," and only a few appeared conscious of the approaching war. About that time, Tokyo must have had a start from one message. A Japanese agent reported that the U. S. was receiving reliable reports that the Japanese Army and Navy soon would be on the move. He got the information from a U. S. Cabinet officer, but apparently Tokyo never suspected that the "reliable reports" came from her own decoded messages.

On November 14, Japanese agents in Hong Kong were advised that, when trouble came, a first step would be to take over all U. S. and British property. Five days later, Tokyo told Nomura "things are automatically going to happen," and the next day Tokyo advised Hitler that war with the U. S. was about to break out.

**False weather.** The U. S. listened while Tokyo militarists explained to their agents that a fictitious weather message would be dubbed into a routine dispatch as the tip-off to where and when Japan would attack. If such a tip-off message actually was sent, it is missing from the decoded files now released.

While all this was going on, and for more than a year before, Japanese spies were giving Tokyo information on U. S. military strength. They reported on everything in the Pacific. They reported on Pearl Harbor as early as Dec. 2, 1940.

**Pearl Harbor.** As war approached, the Pearl Harbor reports became more frequent and more precise. Finally, on Dec. 6, 1941, the Japanese consul in Honolulu sent a message giving the location of every ship at the big Navy base. That message was not decoded until Dec. 8—a day after Japanese planes attacked Pearl Harbor.