

REMARKS OF PROFESSOR MICHAEL GANNON
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In reply to the Kimmel family's petition to the Secretary of Defense for restoration of Admiral Kimmel's honorable standing on the Navy's Retired List, Under Secretary David S.C. Chu stated on July 16, 2002 that no new "extraordinary evidence" had surfaced to support the petition. In fact, much new evidence of an extraordinary character has been uncovered of late by historian-researchers. President Harry S. Truman once said; "The only thing new in this world is the history you don't know." Of the many recent findings by historians here are three of the most significant.

First, on the question of distant aerial reconnaissance:

After Kimmel was relieved of his Pacific command he was subjected to investigation by a so-named Roberts Commission, which, after only 34 days of study and with minimal attention to communications intelligence, charged Kimmel with "dereliction of duty." In 1944 a more thoroughly informed Navy Court of Inquiry exonerated Kimmel of that charge. Later in the same year, however, Admiral Ernest J. King, Chief of Naval Operations, single-handedly overturned the findings of the Court and reinstated the charge of "dereliction." It is the cloud of that single flag officer's peremptory judgment that the Kimmel name lives under to this day.

Why did King act as he did? Because, he wrote in his denial of the court's findings, Kimmel, even with his limited patrol plane assets, had not conducted as he could long-range aerial reconnaissance over the "more dangerous" sectors of approach to Oahu Island. Which sectors were the more dangerous? He did not say.

Recent research has disclosed that there were **no** Navy-specified "more dangerous" sectors. A Hawaiian Islands Army-Navy study, endorsed in Washington by both the War and Navy Departments, acknowledged as much. Both Kimmel and his relief Admiral Chester W. Nimitz believed that only a 360° search around an island base was a search deserving of the name. Said Nimitz on January 7, 1942: "Neglect of any sector is apt soon to be known." For such a complete sweep 200-to-250 patrol aircraft would be required. How many did Kimmel have? Forty-nine. Recent research has also found that Kimmel's few available operational patrol planes, Navy PBY Catalinas could not conduct full-range surveillance over any one or two sectors for more than "four or five days." This was so because the PBYs were prone to mechanical breakdown and the crews similarly would be incapacitated by daily 18-hour flights. Thus, if, following the so-called "War Warning" of November 27--a warning that pointed away from Pearl Harbor rather than toward it--Kimmel had thrown all his patrol aircraft into a one or two sectors search, the entire force would be down for repair or overhaul by December 2, or a day or so thereafter, leaving the balance of days prior to December 7 unattended. Instead of throwing his patrol force away on a token search, Kimmel saved his aircraft for offensive

actions specified in the Navy's Pacific War Plan. As Vice Admiral William F. Halsey said, "Any admiral worth his stars would have made the same choice."

This was hardly dereliction of duty.

The second example of extraordinary new information relates to Japanese use of shallow water torpedoes:

As is well-known, the most widespread damage done to the Pacific Fleet battleships on December 7th was inflicted by shallow water aerial torpedoes. Admiral Kimmel had been shipped no anti-torpedo nets, nor did he have the capacity at Pearl to manufacture them. More to the point, he had twice been advised by the Navy Department (February 15, 1941 and June 13, 1941) that an aerial torpedo attack was "likely" only in water that was 60 to 75 feet deep. (Pearl's waters were only 30 to 45 feet in depth.) Torpedo nets were not necessary, Kimmel was told by the Department, because any aerial torpedo known to exist in the world's navies would dive into the muck before striking its target.

Recent research, however, conducted in National Archives documents that stand outside the usually consulted Pearl Harbor collection, reveals that in July 1941 the U.S. Navy attaché in London reported to the Navy Department a detailed description of the new Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm's 18-inch Mark XII aerial torpedo, then in operational use in the Mediterranean, which, the attaché reported, "may be dropped in water as shallow as 24 feet [4 fathoms]."

This was truly critical new information: namely, that shallow water torpedoes were possible, that they existed, and, what was more, that they had been proved effective in battle. This knowledge, which was in the hands of the Navy Department five months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, was **withheld** from Admiral Kimmel. Had it been sent forward alarm bells would have sounded insistently in Kimmel's staff offices.

But the knowledge was deep-sixed--until found by a researcher 60 years later. Where now is the dereliction?

Shamefully, when, in October 1945, Admiral Kimmel, while preparing his testimony before the Joint Congressional Hearings that began that year, asked to see intelligence reports of British aerial torpedo developments prior to December 7, he was denied **even then** the July 1941 description of the shallow water Mark XII. What the British had accomplished, the Japanese could accomplish, too--and did. But it was Kimmel who would be hung out to dry for Washington's failure to understand that fact and communicate it to Hawaii

The third example I can offer of extraordinary new evidence concerns Admiral Kimmel's state of military readiness:

For sixty-plus years writers of the Pearl Harbor story have promoted the charge that the Fleet in harbor on December 7th was not in a state of readiness. One recent writer, in the

pay of the Navy Department, stated that Kimmel's navy, with many if not most of its enlisted personnel on liberty, was in a "peacetime mode." Another, a Pentagon legal officer, recently stated that Kimmel's navy was in a "peacetime in Hawaii mentality" with "sailors on liberty."

That is the official line as the Department of Defense continues to deflect any responsibility for the success of the Japanese attack and to maintain Kimmel as a responsible agent. It is a policy sometimes aided by individual historians, such as Gordon W. Prange, the title of whose best-known book, *At Dawn We Slept* (1981) reflects the widely spawned belief that as the Japanese air fleet bore down on Pearl, Kimmel's crews were mostly ashore or asleep in their bunks. At a symposium on Admiral Kimmel held in this city on December 7, 1999 another historian asserted that no more than 600 of a normal complement of 1400 to 1500 sailors were on board each battleship that fateful morning. That claim, of course, is hard to square with the fact that 1,177 men died on the *Arizona*, and 357, including the wounded, survived.

The lesson here is that nothing substitutes for examination of the original documents. If we go to the archives we find that on the battleships five out of eight commanding officers were on board, and that 95% of enlisted personnel were mustered on station. These numbers have not been reported before.

Comparatively few men were on liberty. And at 0755, attack time on the 7th, and ten minutes after the forenoon watch relieved the morning watch, ship's complements were not asleep, as Prange would have us believe. Their ships were beehives of activity, white-uniformed officers and sailors seen everywhere about their decks and tops, performing their watch-keeping, gunnery, engineering, cleaning and polishing duties. Bands and guards were assembling for morning colors. The morning watch was below chowing down.

As for the Navy being in a "peacetime mode:" Following the war warning of October 16, 1941 Admiral Kimmel put the Battle Force on 12-hour sailing notice; delayed the sailing of *West Virginia* to Puget Sound for overhaul; dispatched two submarines to Wake Island; dispatched additional Marines to Wake, Johnston, and Palmyra Islands; dispatched 12 patrol planes to Midway; and placed six submarines on short notice for departure to Japanese home waters. That was over a month before alerts were declared by Navy commanders in the Philippines, Alaska, Panama, or the Caribbean.

Following the November 27th war warning, Kimmel issued orders to the fleet to "exercise extreme vigilance" against submarines in the operating areas and to depth charge all contacts. He gave that attack order in direct violation of a restraining order from Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Harold R. Stark, dated September 23rd. It was thanks to Kimmel's counter order that USS *Ward* and PBY14 P1 were able to make their joint attack on the midget submarine outside the entrance channel at 0645 on December 7th.

Kimmel also dispatched two task forces "under complete war conditions." They were TF8 with the carrier *Enterprise* under Vice Admiral William F. Halsey to deliver Marine

F4F fighters to Wake, and TF12, built around *Lexington*, under Rear Admiral John H. Newton, to deliver Marine scout bombers to Midway. Both forces were to observe radio silence: to arm all torpedoes and bombs; to sink any submarine sighted or otherwise detected; and to shoot down any aircraft not identified as American. Furthermore, the carrier aircraft were to conduct en route morning and afternoon air searches out to 300 miles from their positions for any sign of hostile ships. Thus, Kimmel **did** in fact have distant air reconnaissance in the western and northwestern sectors, and to a greater distance than could have been achieved by patrol planes based on Oahu. Add to that the patrol plane searches that Kimmel ordered from Midway to Wake, from Johnston to Midway, and from Midway to Pearl and you have air coverage over some 2-million square miles of ocean.

At Oahu itself, three PBYs flew **armed** dawn patrols over the approaches south of Pearl. At Oahu, too, Kimmel established an offshore patrol of the island perimeter by ship; activated the harbor patrol post; deployed sonobuoys to detect submarines; instituted regular sweeping of channels; and updated daily a memorandum entitled "Steps to Be Taken in case of American-Japanese war within the next 24 hours."

Today's historian might well ask, does all that sound like a Navy in "peacetime mode?" or, in a "peacetime in Hawaii mentality?"

Does all that sound like a commander-in-chief who was "derelict in his duty?" The terms Kimmel and dereliction, this historian submits, were antithetical.

While the primary responsibility for anti-aircraft protection of the naval station and the Fleet was the army's, not the navy's, and while Kimmel thought that a submarine attack was more likely than an air attack, he ordered that all ships must have a sufficient number of officers and men trained for the job in each watch to man all anti-aircraft batteries. Ships were to be moored by sectors in such a way as to provide each a clear arc of fire. And there had to be on board at all times, day and night, a sufficient number of officers and men to repel enemy aircraft, to get the ships underway, to go to sea, and to fight the ship. On the morning of December 7th Admiral Kimmel's navy met all those numbers, and more so.

Each battleship had two machine guns continuously manned day and night, with two cases of .50-caliber ammunition, and crews standing by two 5-inch AA guns with fifteen rounds of ammunition for each. Kimmel had ignored *Navy Regulations* and made the critical decision to have "ammo at the guns." The result was that gun action on battleships engaged the enemy within four minutes and Vice Admiral Nagumo Chuichi, commander of the attacking Japanese force, wrote in his after-action report that "the enemy's anti-aircraft fire reaction had been so prompt as virtually to nullify the advantage of surprise."

As we know, on the 16th of December, Admiral Kimmel was relieved of his command and replaced by Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. What was interesting to me about that change of command was my recent discovery in the Kimmel papers at the University of

Wyoming of a communication from Nimitz at Pearl to the new Commander-in-Chief United States Navy Admiral Ernest J. King at Washington, dated January 7, 1942, in which Nimitz stated his conviction that the Japanese carriers would return for a second strike, perhaps more. "The attack of 7 December will be followed by others," he wrote King. What was even more interesting was that, in the face of such immediate expectations, Nimitz maintained *the same state of readiness* that Kimmel had in place on December 7th. Indeed, Nimitz re-issued without change Kimmel's Pacific Fleet Confidential Letter on port security, No. 2CL-41, entitled "Security of Fleet at Base and in Operating Areas," dated October 14, 1941.

The 2CL-41 letter with Kimmel's name on it was re-issued by Nimitz *without change* as to watches and conditions of readiness, and it remained in force throughout 1942. I mention this because the critic who would skewer Kimmel on his state of readiness must be prepared to take on Admiral Nimitz as well.