

JOHN EDGAR HOOVER  
DIRECTOR

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Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C.

December 12, 1941

Strictly Personal and Confidential

Honorable Stephen Early  
Secretary to the President  
The White House  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Steve:

In line with my telephonic conversation of this morning, I am enclosing herewith a memorandum containing some highly confidential information with respect to the Hawaiian situation.

You will note that there are two aspects of this information, one of which deals with information which comes from within the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the other which deals with the interception by the military authorities of a number of Japanese radio messages.

As I indicated to you, it is of the utmost importance that the enclosed information be treated in the most confidential manner because, of the necessity of protecting the source from which it was obtained.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "J. Edgar Hoover", is written below the typed name.

Enclosure

BY SPECIAL MESSENGER

DECLASSIFIED

E. O. 11652, Sec. 3(E) and 5(D) or (E)

Justice Dept. letter, 9-21-72

By SLR

Date AUG 7 1975

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MEMORANDUM

*At about 5:00 P. M., Honolulu Time, on Friday afternoon, December 5, 1941, a Dr. Mori in Hawaii talked by telephone to a relative in Japan. The exact identity of the relative to whom he talked was not known, but it is known that Dr. Mori has a close relative who is an Admiral in the Japanese Navy.*

*The transcript of this telephone call disclosed that the party in Japan inquired concerning weather conditions in the Hawaiian Islands for the past few days and was advised that the past few days had been very cold, with occasional rainfall, and that the wind was blowing very strongly, which was an unusual climatic phenomenon. The party in Japan inquired about the U. S. Fleet and was told that Dr. Mori did not know much about the fleet but that it was "deemed small." Dr. Mori indicated that some of the fleet had left the Hawaiian Islands. The party in Japan also inquired whether there were many searchlights in the Hawaiian Islands and whether they were used on planes which flew around at night. The answer to these inquiries was negative. Other inquiries of the person in Japan concerned the morale of the Japanese people, a direct inquiry as to whether there were any big factories in the Hawaiian Islands, which was answered in the negative, and a direct inquiry as to the size of the population, in answer to which Dr. Mori stated that "there seemed to be precautionary measures taken."*

*Dr. Mori also advised of the reported arrival and departure of the Russian Ambassador to the United States Litvinoff. A further inquiry of the person in Japan was as to the type of flowers in bloom in Hawaii, to which the answer was that hibiscus and poinsettia were in bloom.*

*On Saturday evening, December 6, the Special Agent in Charge of the Honolulu Field Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation transmitted the contents of the Dr. Mori conversation to Army and Navy authorities. The FBI official insisted the message was peculiar, in view of the fact that no one would talk from Japan to Hawaii eighteen minutes about flowers and the climate. The FBI official insisted the reference to flowers pertained to identification of islands. The Office of Naval Intelligence scoffed at the significance*

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of the message and did not refer it to anyone higher in the Navy. The Military Intelligence authorities referred the message to General Short at 7:00 P. M. on Saturday, insisting the message meant something, but it was dismissed by Short as having no significance. The importance of this message to the Special Agent in Charge of the Honolulu FBI office is indicated by the fact that he called an officer from his home, seven miles away, to come to his office for a copy of the Dr. Mori conversation. He attempted to reach the District Intelligence Officer around 3:00 P. M. on Saturday and finally placed a copy of the transcript of Dr. Mori's conversation in his hands at 6:00 P. M. on Saturday, prior to the raid at 8:00 A. M. the following day.

\* \* \* \* \*

About ten days prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor a number of Japanese radio messages were intercepted by Military authorities in the Hawaiian Islands. Being unable to break the code in these intercepts, the messages were sent to Washington where Military Intelligence broke the code, discovered that the messages contained substantially the complete plans for the attack on Pearl Harbor as it was subsequently carried out. The messages contained a code Japanese word which would be sent by radio to the Japanese fleet as the signal for the attack when the word was repeated three times in succession. Military authorities in Washington sent by Army radio to the Hawaiian Islands the entire plan for the information of the authorities in Hawaii. On Friday morning, December 5<sup>th</sup>, the code word previously identified as the signal for the attack was intercepted, which indicated that the attack was to be made on Saturday or Sunday, and this information was sent by Military radio to the Hawaiian Islands. At this time it is impossible to determine whether there was a breakdown in the Military radio and a failure of the messages to reach their destination, or whether the messages were delivered but not acted on by the Military authorities.