

# 1190 CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATION PEARL HARBOR ATTACK

I would be glad if you would show Admiral Meach this and also my last letter—or I want to keep him informed.

Rest assured that just as soon as I can give you anything more specific I will. Meanwhile keep cheerful and with every good wish as ever.

Sincerely,

Admiral J. O. NATHANSON, USN,  
Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet,  
USS PENNSYLVANIA,  
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

P. S. The European situation is extremely critical. Italy may act by 5 June which seems to be another deadline drawn on information which once again looks authentic. However, it still is a guess.

[1]

## EXHIBIT No. 27

SECRET

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CinC File No. A16/01705

UNITED STATES FLEET

U. S. S. NEW MEXICO, Flagship

U. S. NAVY YARD, BREMERTON, WASH.

October 22, 1940

From: The Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Fleet.

To: The Chief of Naval Operations.

Subject: War Plans—Status and readiness of in view of the current international situation.

1. Since the return of the Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Fleet, from his recent conference in Washington, and in view of the conversations that took place there, additional thought and study have been given to the status and readiness of the U. S. Fleet for war operations. As a result of this study, the Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Fleet, feels it to be his solemn duty to present, for the consideration of the Chief of Naval Operations, certain facts and conclusions in order that there may be no doubt in the minds of higher authority as to his convictions in regard to the present situation, especially in the Pacific.

2. In order to bring out more clearly all the aspects of this situation, it is necessary to review certain factors affecting it and to discuss them in the light of present events.

3. On the occasion of his first visit to Washington, in July, and in personal letters to the Chief of Naval Operations, the Commander-in-Chief stressed his firm conviction that neither the Navy nor the country was prepared for war with Japan. He pointed out that such an eventuality could only result in a long drawn out, costly war, with doubtful prospects of ultimate success. He left Washington with three distinct impressions:

*First.* That the Fleet was retained in the Hawaiian area solely to support diplomatic representations and as a deterrent to Japanese aggressive action;

*Second.* That there was no intention of embarking on actual hostilities against Japan;

[2] *Third.* That the immediate mission of the Fleet was accelerated training and absorption of new personnel and the attainment of a maximum condition of material and personnel readiness consistent with its retention in the Hawaiian area.

4. On the occasion of his second visit to Washington, in October, 1940, an entirely different impression was obtained. It is true that the international situation, between the two visits, had materially changed, principally in that the danger of invasion of the British Isles was considerably less imminent, with consequent reduced chances of the loss or compromise of the British Fleet; in that the United States had more closely identified itself with Great Britain; in that Japanese aggression had progressed to the domination of Indo-China and gave signs of further progress toward the Dutch East Indies; and, in the open alliance between Germany, Italy and Japan, reportedly aimed at the United States.

5. As a result of these changes, it now appears that more active, open steps aimed at Japan are in serious contemplation and that these steps, if taken now, may lead to active hostilities. It is in connection with this eventuality that the Commander-in-Chief is constrained to present his present views.

6. The present O-1 Plan (ORANGE), WPUSF 44 and WPUSF 45, in the light of the present international situation, is believed beyond the present strength of the U. S. Fleet and beyond the present resources of the U. S. Navy. This is believed true for the following reasons:

(a) The present strength of the U. S. Fleet is not sufficient "to establish, at the earliest practicable date, the United States Joint Asiatic Force in the Marshall-Caroline Islands area in strength superior [3] to that of ORANGE and ready for further advance to the Western Pacific in condition to operate offensively in that area."

While recognizing the qualifying phrase "at the earliest practicable date," it is firmly believed that we cannot, at this time, even with Great Britain assuming responsibility for our Atlantic interests, denude that ocean of sufficient forces to protect our coastal trade and to safeguard our more vital interests in South America. Nor can we neglect the protection of our own and the interdiction of Japanese trade in the Southeastern Pacific. With these commitments adequately cared for, our remaining force is barely superior to ORANGE at the beginning of our westward campaign. It will undoubtedly be subject to attrition losses en route.

(b) The Army is not now prepared and will not, in the immediate future, be prepared to support our western advance. The Fleet Marine Force is not sufficient to support the necessary operations alone.

(c) The capture of BASE ONE is a major military operation requiring detailed knowledge of the area, detailed planning based on such knowledge, and the taking over, conversion, manning, training and organization of a large number of merchant ships. The establishment of the BASE, after its occupation, requires: (a), the transport of large quantities of material; (b), the organization, transport and maintenance of construction units capable of accomplishing the [4] necessary development; and (c), the defense and supply of the base during the construction period. The Plan requires the completion of this BASE forty-five days after the arrival of the first material at the site.

We do not, at present, have the detailed knowledge of the area requisite for proper planning of these manifold activities. It is true that some knowledge, possibly sufficient for initiation of operations and general planning for the attack, may be obtained by reconnaissance after hostilities have commenced, and the Plan provides for such operations. However, it is not now known, nor can it be determined, until after actual occupation, whether or not the hydrography of the area permits the establishment of a fleet anchorage, what construction is possible on the land areas under consideration and whether or not adequate defensive installations, particularly air fields for land-based aircraft, can be established. Granting that the base seized offers possibilities for the establishment of these facilities, it appears certain that the assembly of material and the organization for construction must await the actual occupation. To the knowledge of the Commander-in-Chief, no material has as yet been assembled for this purpose, nor have any but the vaguest ideas for the ultimate accomplishment of this objective been advanced.

[5] Present Fleet plans, due chiefly to lack of sufficient knowledge as a basis, and partly to the preoccupation of staffs of forces afloat with routine matters of administration and training, have been most general in nature and have extended chiefly to the assignment of tasks and forces. Only tentative ideas, (based largely on unsupported assumptions) for the actual accomplishment of the objectives, have been advanced.

(d) The time element, in the present Plan, is believed greatly out of proportion to the tasks to be accomplished. While a definite time limit does not actually appear (except for the forty-five day limit mentioned above), it is strongly implied in the tables in Appendix II of WPL 14 and throughout the O-1 Plan itself, that the operations visualized up to the establishment of BASE ONE can be accomplished in a period or some sixty to ninety days after mobilization.

It is the firm belief of the Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Fleet, that even if energetic, single-purpose steps toward the first objective (BASE ONE) of the Plan were initiated promptly, a period of some six months to one year would be required for its accomplishment. With the knowledge now available, the time required for subsequent operations can not even be guessed at. It is believed to be of the order of years rather than months.



[6] (a) I know of no flag officer who wholeheartedly endorses the present ORANGE Plan. It is the general conception that the Plan had its inception primarily in the desirability of having a guiding directive for the development of the Naval Establishment to meet any international situation that might be thrust upon it. It is my belief that the impracticabilities of the ORANGE Plan, in the absence of a better one, have been periodically overlooked in order that the Department might have for budget purposes and presentation to Congress the maximum justification for the necessary enlargement of the Navy. In my opinion, the development of the Naval Establishment has not yet proceeded to the point essential to the successful prosecution of the Plan.

7. In addition to the ORANGE Plan, the Commander-in-Chief has available to him an approved Navy Basic War Plan, Rainbow No. I, and a tentative draft, not as yet approved, of a Joint Army and Navy Basic War Plan, Rainbow No. II. The assumptions of neither of these Plans are applicable to the present situation, nor, to the knowledge of the Commander-in-Chief, is the assistance from allies visualized in the tentative draft of Rainbow No. II a likely possibility.

8. The foregoing considerations are set forth in some length in order to focus attention upon the fact that the Commander-in-Chief finds himself, in what he is led to believe may suddenly become a critical situation, without an applicable directive. He cannot, in the absence of a clear [7] picture of national policy, national commitments and national objectives, formulate his own plans other than for obvious measures of security and defense and for accelerated preparation for further eventualities. He is of the firm belief that successful operations in war can rest only on sound plans, careful specific preparation and vigorous prosecution based upon confidence in the success of the course being pursued.

9. There is no intention or desire on the part of the Commander-in-Chief to evade his legitimate responsibilities nor is it desired that anything in this letter be so construed. It is fully realized that no plan can foresee or provide for every possible situation, and that adjustments and re-estimates must be made to fit the actual situation presented. At the same time, it is most strongly believed that the Commander-in-Chief must be better informed than he is now as to the Department's plans and intentions if he is to perform his full duty.

10. The foregoing is briefly summarized as follows:

(a) Unsuitability of ORANGE Plan in present situation and present development of Naval Establishment;

(b) Inapplicability of other Plans available to the Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Fleet (Rainbow Nos. I and II);

(c) Vital necessity for (1) new directive (possibly Rainbow No. III) based on present realities, national objectives and commitments as far as these are known or can be predicted at the present time; (2) coordination of plans developed with National Policy and steps to be taken to implement that policy;

[8] (d) In the light of information now available to him, the Commander-in-Chief is of the conviction that the elements of a realistic plan should embody:

(1) Security and defense measures of the Western Hemisphere;

(2) Long-range interdiction of enemy commerce;

(3) Threats and raids against the enemy;

(4) Extension of operations as the relative strength of the Naval Establishment (may be influenced by allied strength and freedom of action) is built up to support them.

11. Please acknowledge receipt of this letter by despatch.

12. It is hereby certified that the originator considers it to be impracticable to phrase this document in such a manner as will permit a classification other than secret.

13. The exigency of delivery of this document is such that it will not reach the addressee in time by the next available officer courier. The originator, therefore, authorizes the transmission of this document by registered mail within the continental limits of the United States.

J. O. RICHARDSON