



The War Starts Tomorrow

*You know I am a juggler, and I never let my right hand know what my left hand does.
I'm perfectly willing to tell untruths.*

Franklin D. Roosevelt

FDR IS FRUSTRATED.

In the wake of the Great Depression he had launched a huge federal relief effort, but the economic distress that had bedeviled him throughout his presidency continues.

What's more, despite running for an unprecedented third term on a pledge to keep the country out of the war in Europe, he had already secretly assured the British that the U.S. would join, but has yet to persuade the 90% of Americans opposed to intervention.

FDR knows the answer to both problems is the same. Going to war will keep his pledge to Churchill, while a huge national rearmament effort will rescue the economy

and head off social unrest at home.

At first, FDR attempts to provoke Germany into declaring war, but Hitler stubbornly fails to retaliate even after U-boats are depth charged and German merchant ships seized in violation of U.S. neutrality.

The solution arrives in September 1940, when Japan, Germany and Italy join together as the Axis powers. The terms of the Tripartite Treaty ensure that should Japan attack the U.S. and the U.S. respond by declaring war against Japan, it would automatically be at war with Germany and Italy.

In October 1940, FDR begins putting into effect a detailed eight step plan designed to provoke Japan into attacking. He orders the Pacific fleet moved to Pearl Harbor and a blockade put in place to prevent Japanese ships from resupplying their war effort in the Far East. The fleet commander objects, telling FDR that this will be viewed by Japan as an act of war. (He is later fired.)

By late 1940, all major Japanese communication codes have been broken by U.S. intelligence. Decoding machines are sent to Britain and U.S. bases all over the world, with the curious exception of Hawaii.

In March 1941, a U.S. Navy report warns that in the event of war, Japan could strike Pearl Harbor without warning, with planes launched from as many as six aircraft carriers stationed in the Pacific.

FDR orders all Japanese assets in the U.S. frozen and Japanese ships denied the use of the Panama Canal, cutting off 95% of Japan's oil supply. He also orders that future intelligence information be withheld from civilian and military authorities in Hawaii "to prevent unnecessary alarm."

In July, diplomatic sources in Tokyo report that miniature Japanese submarines are practicing aircraft torpedo attacks against target ships in Ariake Bay, which closely resembles Pearl Harbor.

In September, the Navy intercepts messages from Japanese Naval Intelligence requesting the precise locations of all American warships stationed in Pearl Harbor. The chief of U.S. Naval Intelligence is fired after he insists on warning Hawaii.

By October, sources in Britain, Russia, Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and Peru have separately informed Washington of an impending Japanese attack on Hawaii.

In November, FDR secretly assures the Allies that "*everything is being done to force an incident to justify hostilities.*" Later that month, Pearl Harbor's two aircraft carriers and all 21 of its newer warships are put out to sea, stripping the harbor of half of its aerial defenses and leaving only what the Navy later calls "pre-World War I junk."

To "prevent sabotage," FDR orders the base's remaining aircraft parked in tight circles with their propellers facing inwards, despite the planes having *no reverse gear*.

On November 25th, the day the Japanese fleet sails, the Secretary of State writes in his diary, "*FDR stated that we were likely to be attacked as soon as next Monday. In order to have the full support of the American people, it was considered desirable to make sure the Japanese fire the first shot.*"

The following day, Churchill sends FDR an urgent message, and FDR wires back, "*Negotiations off. Services expect action within two weeks.*" The Navy orders all Pacific shipping redirected to the South, away from the route of the Japanese fleet.

On November 29th, an FBI wiretap of the Japanese Embassy in Washington intercepts a message from Tokyo informing the ambassador that "*zero hour is December 7 [Hawaii time] at Pearl Harbor.*"

Even as the Japanese attack force is steaming towards Hawaii, U.S. military command in the Philippines informs Pearl Harbor that the fleet is in the South China Sea, over 2,000 miles from its actual position.

On December 4th, the Navy intercepts the final Japanese attack directive, code named 'East Winds, Rain' and alerts all Pacific stations with the sole exception of Hawaii. A U.S. general stationed in Java sends four urgent messages alerting Washington of an impending attack on Pearl Harbor, before being ordered to stop sending warnings.

On the evening of December 6th, aides to the Chief of Naval Operations beg him to send a warning via telephone to Hawaii, but he fails to make the call. The Army Chief sends a warning telegram, but via low priority channels, ensuring that it won't be received until late the following day.

FDR and a few close advisors would sit up through the night waiting, but on the calm and fateful evening before dawn on December 7th, 1941, FDR confidently tells his thirty-four White House dinner guests, "The war starts tomorrow."