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Commentary

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COMMENTARY

DIRECT FROM GENDA PRIMARY-SOURCE EVIDENCE FROM GENDA BEARING ON PARSHALL-BENNETT EXCHANGE REGARDING FUCHIDA AT PEARL HARBOR

Norman Polmar

In a Research & Debate (R&D) item in the Winter 2013 issue of the *Naval War College Review*, Martin Bennett authored a scathing—and correct—attack on Jon Parshall's R&D item "Reflecting on Fuchida," which had appeared in the Spring 2010 issue of the *Review*. A key point of the original article and the subsequent commentary was Fuchida's alleged "demands" that the Japanese carrier task force that attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, undertake a third strike—primarily to destroy the fuel tanks.

As Bennett states, there was no such discussion or debate on the flag bridge of the carrier *Akagi*. My sources for this contribution are my lengthy correspondence and personal discussions with Minoru Genda, who was on the flag bridge as the carrier force's air operations officer and had been one of the two initial planners of the Pearl Harbor strike. (After the war, with the rank of general, he commanded the Japan Air Self-Defense Force.)

I recently found a letter from Genda to me from September 1965, at which time he was assisting me with my book *Aircraft Carriers: A History of Carrier Aviation and Its Influence on World Events*. In the letter Genda stated:

Norman Polmar has authored or coauthored more than fifty published books, including extensive writings on carrier aviation. He also writes a column on historic naval aircraft for Naval History magazine. Previously, Mr. Polmar wrote a column for the U.S. Naval Institute's Proceedings for thirty-eight years.

There were no hot discussions on board the *Akagi*. Commander Fuchida might [have] expressed his opinion about the further attacks, I do not know. The only thing I know is "If they come out [of Pearl Harbor], we will strike again," Commander Fuchida said just after he landed on the deck.

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Anyhow, Adm. Nagumo [the task force commander] and Rear Admiral Kusaka (chief of staff, 1st Air Fleet) made up their minds, “No Second Attack,” long before we started the attack.

Genda later confirmed these recollections in personal discussions with me in Annapolis in May 1969. A specific concern he mentioned to me was the unknown locations of the three U.S. aircraft carriers in the Pacific. With search planes from Oahu seeking the Japanese carriers and the U.S. carriers possibly in the area, Admiral Nagumo (1) was concerned about being surprised by the U.S. carriers, and (2) feared that the surviving aircraft on Oahu could mount strikes against his ships if they remained in the area.