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## “WINNING” THE PACIFIC WAR

### The Masterful Strategy of Commander Minoru Genda

*Angelo N. Caravaggio*

Criticisms leveled at the Japanese for their “ill conceived” or “poorly planned” attack at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 have failed to consider the true depth of vision and professional intellect of its principal architect, Commander Minoru Genda.<sup>1</sup> Charges of failure to execute follow-on attacks against the harbor facilities, if any such attacks were planned at all, or to exploit the immediate advantages created in the Central Pacific after the attack are commonly made by both academic and professional military scholars. Genda has suffered the brunt of this criticism. But in fact Genda’s plans were neither ill conceived nor poorly assembled—they were just not executed as originally envisioned.

The generally understood intent behind the Pearl Harbor attack was to delay

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the westward advance of the U.S. Pacific Fleet for up to six months, allowing Japan to complete the occupation and consolidation of the area it had designated the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere.<sup>2</sup> The attack at Pearl Harbor accomplished this aim. In the overall Japanese plan, the Southern Operation—the army’s offensives toward the East Indies and Southeast Asia—was the main military effort. However, for Genda, the Pearl Harbor attack had to be much more than just a tactical strike; it had to be the decisive action of the war, and he conceptualized his operational plans accordingly.<sup>3</sup> A veritable treasure of unexamined transcripts of interviews conducted by the

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historian Gordon Prange reveals the depth of foresight and professional wisdom of Genda's concept of operations.

Between 1946 and 1951 Prange conducted no fewer than fifty-three interviews with Genda and other key Combined Fleet staff planners, especially Commander Yasuji Watanabe, the staff logistics officer, and Captain Kameto Kuroshima, the senior staff officer. The majority of English-language authors researching and writing on the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor have cited Prange's own *At Dawn We Slept* and documents collected by Prange—affidavits and planning materials—published after his death.<sup>4</sup> Few authors have referenced the original Genda, Watanabe, or Kuroshima interviews.

A detailed review of Prange's interviews with Genda reveals a singular focus on what Genda viewed as the centerpiece for any war in the Pacific between Japan and the United States—that is, Pearl Harbor. Genda's "war winning" strategy rested on concentration of military efforts against the Americans, with an invasion of the Hawaiian Islands as the opening move. Genda realized the military potential inherent in Pearl Harbor. The base and its central geographical position in the Pacific were the key to winning the war in the Pacific. His original concept of operations for attack against Pearl Harbor was designed to deliver the base to the Japanese or, alternatively, deny it to the Americans. A detailed analysis of his original and subsequent plans reveals a depth of professional understanding remarkable for someone of the relatively junior rank of commander as to the strategic context of the war that Japan was about to start. Had his proposals been followed, the initial conditions in which the United States would have been compelled to wage war would have been significantly altered. As it was, however, Genda's plans ran counter to traditional Japanese military strategy and were considered unpalatable by the other members of the Combined Fleet staff. Ultimately, the defeat of Japan was culminated before the foresight and validity of Genda's original vision could be appreciated.

To understand better the strategic relevance of Genda's vision, it is necessary to grasp the larger context of Japanese military planning and decision making. In particular, two issues need to be understood: the unique nature of the military within the government, and the role of the Philippines in Japanese military thinking. Under the Japanese constitution, the civil and military functions of the government were separated, with clearly delineated lines of authority—one through the cabinet to the civil agencies of the government, the other through the service chiefs to military forces. Each was independent of the other and acted in the name of the emperor. In actual practice, however, the military exercised a veto over the civil government, by virtue of the fact that the war and navy ministers could force the resignation of the prime minister and the formation of a new government simply by resigning themselves. No cabinet could exist without

the war and navy ministers.<sup>5</sup> In time of war, moreover, the nation was completely dominated by the military—not only militarily but economically and politically.

The military was divided into two independent entities, the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) and the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN). The two services had their own organic air forces and in the interwar years saw the coming conflict from completely different perspectives.<sup>6</sup> Japan envisioned three enemies: China, Russia, and the United States. The first two were viewed as the IJA's problem, while any war with the United States would be fought at sea and therefore would be, for the most part, a matter for the IJN. From the IJA perspective, war began on 7 July 1937, with the sudden expansion of ongoing fighting in China and commitment of a significant portion of the army's resources there. The number of Japanese troops in China rose from 700,000 in 1937 to 850,000 by the end of 1939.<sup>7</sup>

Continuing the war in China and maintaining the gains won there largely underpinned Japanese strategic thinking both politically and militarily. However, by late 1941 the success of German armies in Europe and the weakened states of the Netherlands and Britain presented a perfect opportunity to expel British and Dutch influence from East Asia. The conditions, in fact, were favorable for Japan to construct, having consolidated its sphere of autonomy and security in China, a new order in Greater East Asia under Japanese rule.<sup>8</sup>

Operations aimed at securing that new order beyond China would primarily be the task of the navy, waged against not only the British and Dutch but necessarily the Americans as well, and the Philippines would be strategically critical for their first phase. The Philippines represented a key factor in the concept of the "decisive naval battle" between battleships, which was the centerpiece of IJN doctrine and planning in the interwar period. Supporters of this theory believed that a war with the United States would be decided by one great naval battle. To win it, the IJN had two problems: it had to find a way to lure the U.S. Pacific Fleet into waters close to Japan, where the Japanese planned to fight the battle, and it had to reduce the American advantage in battleships. The capture of the Philippines was viewed as the "bait" necessary to entice the Americans westward. From bases in the Marshalls, Marianas, Carolinas, and other mandated islands, Japanese submarines and aircraft would attack the approaching Pacific Fleet to reduce its strength. When the opposing forces finally met for the decisive engagement, there would be parity, or even a Japanese advantage, in battleships.<sup>9</sup>

The other strategic value of the Philippines Islands was their location between Japan and the coveted resources of the Dutch East Indies. Once the Dutch East Indies were occupied, the bulk of the raw materials needed to sustain the Japanese economy would have to be transported north past the Philippines to Japan.<sup>10</sup> The Japanese faced in this respect an operational dilemma of risk management.

Two options were available:

- Option one: attack and take the Dutch and British territories only, accept the operational risks posed by American forces astride sea lines of communications, and if the Americans engaged militarily, only then attack U.S. assets and territories.
- Option two: take the Philippines at the outset, reducing the operational risk to Japanese sea-lanes, and plan for the war with the United States that this action would bring.

Deciding on the first option would mean that such key American possessions as Wake and Guam could not be attacked at the outset.

On 18 October 1941, Emperor Hirohito directed Prime Minister Hideki Tōjō to conduct a far-reaching and comprehensive policy review of Japan's position from an economic, political, and military perspective. The resulting review consisted of responses to eleven questions posed by the emperor, of which the eighth was the most critical: "Could one limit the war adversaries only to Holland or only to Great Britain and Holland?" Politically the answer was yes, but military reasoning held sway, and the answer given was no. In the end, the Japanese military was unwilling to accept the operational-level risks associated with leaving the Philippines in American hands during its initial operations.<sup>11</sup> The decision was therefore made to take them, for the following purposes, as listed in the Japanese plans:

- To deny to American ground, sea, and air forces the use of the Philippines as an advance base of operations
- To secure the line of communications between the occupied areas in the south and Japan proper
- To acquire intermediate staging areas and supply bases needed to facilitate operations in the southern area.<sup>12</sup>

Given that war with the United States was now inevitable, the Japanese had to design a campaign that would acquire the territories needed to sustain Japan's economy; destroy the American, British, and Dutch ability to project power in the Pacific; and then transport the raw materials of the acquired territories back to the home islands. It is important to note that there was no broad strategic plan to prosecute the war so as to achieve these objectives, coordinating all aspects of the effort and the national resources needed. This reality deterred joint campaign planning. The IJN and IJA prepared their own plans, negotiating with each other only as necessary to execute them. These discussions were limited to specific operations and did not generate a national focus. Since the IJA was the more powerful of the two services, it usually had its way and could veto proposed IJN

plans. When consensus was reached on the methodology of a specific operation, Imperial General Headquarters issued an "agreement," not an operational order.<sup>13</sup> Critically, large-scale amphibious operations could not be conducted without the consent of the IJA, which would be providing the troops.

The planning equation was complicated even further by the fact that the Naval General Staff (NGS) and Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander in chief of the Combined Fleet, had differing views as to the sequencing and priorities of the initial operations.<sup>14</sup> Yamamoto's greatest priority was the destruction of the threat posed by the U.S. Pacific Fleet. He wanted its battleships crippled or destroyed as early as possible, which would then facilitate operations to the south. The NGS, however, focused on Southeast Asia and the southwestern Pacific. It wanted all effort concentrated on the capture of these areas as soon as possible, so that their raw materials could be acquired. In the NGS plans, the Pacific Fleet would be dealt with as needed when it decided to appear.<sup>15</sup>

The problem for Yamamoto was that the NGS strategy did not deal with the major threat posed by the Pacific Fleet, then stationed in Hawaii. The NGS plan, operationally offensive in the south, was operationally defensive in the east against the Americans. It did not include a strike on Pearl Harbor. The NGS strategy was designed to win early in the south but reflected no clear understanding of how to terminate the conflict at that point, with Japanese gains intact. It also had the disadvantage of relinquishing the initiative in the Central Pacific to the United States.

Yamamoto, however, was convinced that the Japanese could not penetrate the southern region successfully without a prior strike against the Pacific Fleet.<sup>16</sup> He and a selected group of naval officers who had visited the United States and witnessed its industrial capacity knew that Japan could not win a protracted war with that nation. They realized that Japan's operational advantage would be at its peak at the very beginning of the war. Its operations, in attacking a decidedly stronger opponent, had to maximize the elements of speed, concentration of force, and surprise, and above all else they had to retain the initiative. Yamamoto concluded that he had to do his best to decide the fate of the war at its outset.<sup>17</sup> He believed that this could be achieved only if Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on the very first day of the war and destroyed the Pacific Fleet there. The task of developing the plan to attack Pearl Harbor was eventually assigned to Commander Minoru Genda.

### THE "MAD" MINORU GENDA

Gordon Prange (writing in 1947) describes Genda as follows:

He was quite small in stature with a peculiar Filipino [*sic*] expression and manner in his gesture and conversation. I noticed too that he had a pair of sharp penetrating

eyes and a quick and agile mind; in fact he impressed me as having somewhat of a trigger brain; he thinks much more quickly and more to the point than the average Japanese. After he warmed up to the subject [during his interviews with Prange] I found that his whole attitude was sympathetic. It is my honest conviction that he was truthful in everything he said.

Prange adds that Genda seemed a shrewd observer, a keen judge of men and of situations, and the possessor of more penetration and liberalness of thought than one would expect of a man of the Japanese military caste of that era.<sup>18</sup>

Genda graduated from the Cadet School in 1924 at the top of his class, listing mathematics, strategy, and tactics as his favorite subjects. He had a reputation for having a progressive mind and being full of ideas, traits that placed him in stark contrast to his typically conservative classmates. In December 1928 he began a year of flight training at the Kasumigaura Air Corps; subsequently he became a member of the naval fighter corps and received numerous assignments to the Yokosuka Air Corps and the carriers *Akagi* and *Ryūjō*.<sup>19</sup>

In 1935, Genda was selected to attend the Naval War College and in 1936 submitted a report in response to a call for papers on the theme of a suitable armament of the Japanese navy for an encounter with the United States. Genda proposed that the navy focus on airpower—carriers and land-based bombers and fighters should become the new capital elements of the fleet. He advocated directing the navy's expansion efforts toward the enlargement of the carrier, and also submarine forces, essentially making battleships irrelevant, by giving opposing battle fleets "nothing to shoot at." In fact, his proposal involved scrapping battleships. Genda felt that Japan could achieve control of the sea only if it went on the offensive and could achieve victory only if it had air superiority over any potential enemy fleet or base.<sup>20</sup> Genda would later claim that the students and instructors could not defeat his theories but still called him "mad." Despite the obvious unpopularity of his academic writings, however, Genda graduated second in his class, in July 1937.<sup>21</sup>

The idea that the main elements of the Japanese fleet should be aircraft carriers protected by lighter ships was suggested almost simultaneously by two other sources within the IJN as well: Captain Takijiro Onishi (commander of the Yokosuka Naval Air Force) and several pilots assigned to the Combined Fleet. While an airpower focus was roundly dismissed by the mainstream IJN, the concept motivated the creation of an Airpower Research Committee to study "air effectiveness" for naval operations. In particular, its members were to investigate the effectiveness of air attacks against warships with bombs and torpedoes. The data obtained from experiments conducted by the committee were later used in conceptualizing the attack against Pearl Harbor.<sup>22</sup>

After graduation, Genda was sent to China on the staff of the 2nd Combined Fleet Air Corps. The air corps employed thirty-six fighters, thirty-six dive-bombers, and thirty-six horizontal bombers in operations throughout China. During his short tenure in that theater (July–December 1937), the Chinese were able to challenge Japanese air superiority. Genda experimented with numerous ways of using naval fighters to support air operations, in particular as escorts for long-range bombing attacks. Genda is credited with developing the concept of advanced refueling bases close to Chinese lines. Such bases extended the shorter combat radius of naval fighters, allowing them to refuel on the way either to or back from their targets.<sup>23</sup>

The lessons learned from the operations over China fundamentally shaped Genda's thinking about air warfare. The Japanese were experimenting with the projection of naval airpower ashore, utilizing long-range strategic bombing, fighter escort, and strafing as deliberate missions.<sup>24</sup> The fundamental rule of any air battle, in turn, was to gain immediate control of the local air by eliminating the defensive activity of enemy fighter planes.<sup>25</sup> China convinced Genda that fighters were a more powerful factor than he had previously realized and that they were most effectively used offensively, to control the air war: "The most effective and wise way of making use of fighter units was to use them positively in seeking a decisive engagement with enemy fighters in the air. To this end, the use of fighters on other missions such as escorting bombers or surface forces should be limited as much as permissible."<sup>26</sup> Genda's conclusions reinforced the propensity of Japanese fighter pilots to seek duels with other fighters at the expense of protecting bombers.

The second important lesson that Genda learned from China concerned mass: "Facts evidently proved that piecemeal attacks could not inflict destructive damage; in order to launch effective bombings, a destructive blow should be given in a short while [i.e., over a short period of time], using a great number of planes at one time." Genda's China experience reinforced his belief that without a sizable air fleet, both carrier- and land-based, Japan could not engage in modern warfare.<sup>27</sup>

In December 1938 Genda was appointed as the assistant naval attaché at the Japanese embassy in London. He arrived there in March 1939 and remained until September 1940. Genda's mission was to gather as much information as he could on British air forces. The outbreak of war in Europe and the air combat that developed allowed Genda to crystallize his thoughts on airpower. Once again he witnessed the impact of mass, whereby "the Nazis' use of air forces en masse, in one wave or in successive waves, evidently proved very effective in spite of their inferior abilities."<sup>28</sup>



Genda was convinced by all this that air superiority was the key to success in any campaign, land or sea, and that air superiority was a function of mass and possession of superior fighter aircraft.<sup>29</sup> (At this point, Genda was unaware of the existence and performance capabilities of the Japanese Zero fighter.) He feared that Japanese naval authorities would draw the wrong conclusions from the air war in Europe, since Japanese naval officers kept pointing out that even Germany's huge air fleets were unable to defeat or damage the ships of the Royal Navy. Genda countered with the fact that German pilots were trained to participate in land-centric campaigns and not over the seas.<sup>30</sup> On his return to Japan, Genda began a campaign to change thinking about aircraft design. In particular, Japanese naval aircraft were not protected by armor; their fuel tanks and pilots were exposed. He pointed out that the German planes protected both and argued that these changes were necessary for all Japanese planes.<sup>31</sup>

In November 1940 Genda was posted on board the aircraft carrier *Kaga* as the air staff officer of the 1st Carrier Division and tasked with preparing a new training program for carrier warfare. His experiences in both China and the United Kingdom had convinced Genda that to attack an enemy effectively, airpower had to be concentrated. If carriers were scattered—as they currently were, in different fleets—it would be too difficult to concentrate combat power on one objective. The carriers had to be grouped together, and they had to maneuver as a unit. He reasoned that a massed formation would enhance both the defensive and offensive natures of carrier warfare. Concentration would allow the carriers to pool fighter resources for their own defense, making remaining fighters available to be used offensively in support of torpedo and bombing planes.

The new concept of concentrating carriers was accepted by the commander of the Tateyama Naval Air Detachment, Rear Admiral Michitaro Totsuka, but what “concentration” meant with respect to numbers and tactical dispositions of carriers needed to be determined. The concept was tested with the carriers *Kaga*, *Hiryū*, and *Sōryū* of the 1st and 2nd Air Squadrons.<sup>32</sup> *Akagi* had begun an overhaul in November 1940 and was unavailable. The formal realization of carrier concentration came with the formation of the 1st Air Fleet, composed of the 1st (*Akagi*, *Kaga*), 2nd (*Hiryū*, *Sōryū*), and 3rd (light carriers *Zuihō*, *Hōshō*) Carrier Divisions, under the command of Vice Admiral Chūichi Nagumo, on 10 April 1941.<sup>33</sup>

In February 1941, Genda was called to a meeting with Takijiro Onishi, now a rear admiral and chief of staff of the Eleventh Air Fleet. Besides enjoying Yamamoto's trust and confidence, Onishi was rated as one of Japan's few genuine “air admirals.” Though primarily concerned at the time with land-based aviation, Onishi was a vigorous advocate of carrier warfare.<sup>34</sup> Yamamoto had asked

Onishi to begin a study on the possibility of using the air squadrons of the 1st and 2nd Carrier Divisions for a surprise attack against the American fleet at Pearl Harbor.

Onishi showed Genda a three-page letter that Yamamoto had sent him. In it Yamamoto proposed the use of torpedo bombers on a one-way mission. The torpedo bombers were to be launched five hundred miles from Pearl Harbor, a distance that was beyond their normal combat radius. Once they were launched, the carriers would return to Japan. The torpedo planes would complete the attack and then fly back in the direction of the task force and ditch at sea; destroyers would pick up the aircrews. Yamamoto wanted to target only battleships. He appreciated the importance of destroying aircraft carriers but believed that the psychological effect on the American people of destroying all the American battleships would be greater than that of the destruction of carriers.<sup>35</sup>

Genda returned to *Kaga* and worked on a plan of his own for about two weeks. Genda supported Yamamoto's concept of a surprise attack but bitterly opposed the proposed tactics. A one-way attack would not allow for follow-on attacks, which were necessary to achieve decisive effect. Using only torpedo bombers made the attack one-dimensional, which meant that if conditions were not perfect—if, for example, the weather or visibility were poor or the Americans were alerted—the effects would be minimized. Genda wanted a coordinated attack, one that combined torpedo, dive-, and horizontal bombers, protected by fighters. His approach provided for multiple methods of attack and could deal with almost any situation, including, if necessary, the aircraft having to fight their way in to the target. A coordinated attack had greater flexibility and a higher probability of success. Genda opposed Yamamoto's plan also because he viewed it as a terrible waste of aircraft and probably of highly trained pilots as well (the proposed rescues at sea being highly problematic), which Japan could not easily replace.<sup>36</sup>

The basic elements of Genda's proposed plan were as follows:

- The main objectives of the attack should be the American carriers (because he felt that they would be the real capital ships of the coming war) and land-based planes.
- The blow had to be strong enough to eliminate the American fleet as a threat for at least six months—the time considered necessary to occupy the Dutch East Indies.
- All of Japan's carrier strength should be used, without exception. Torpedo bombers would deliver the main attack, but because it was not known whether torpedoes could be successfully launched in the shallow waters of Pearl Harbor, shorter-range dive-bombers also had to be employed.

- The range of Japanese carriers was not enough to permit a trip to Pearl Harbor and back; therefore Japan had to study and perfect at-sea replenishment in the harsh conditions expected of the North Pacific.
- The operation had to be a complete surprise.

Genda concluded that the operation would be difficult but not impossible.<sup>37</sup>

Genda briefed his proposal to Onishi, and the two officers discussed it for about two hours. Genda argued that it was desirable to land forces on Oahu immediately after the air raid, thus making the attack decisive by denying the Americans the means to project power across the Central Pacific. Onishi dismissed the idea, holding that Japan's power was not sufficient to permit simultaneous operations in the Philippines, the Indies, and Oahu.<sup>38</sup>

Onishi submitted Genda's draft unedited to Yamamoto, adding his own comments and thoughts separately, in March 1941. Onishi's ten-page (according Genda in postwar interviews) report does not survive, and it is not clear whether—though the paper included all of Genda's recommendations and a few of Onishi's own—the idea of invading Oahu was part of it. Onishi wanted to target U.S. cruisers, in order to unbalance the American fleet. Also, he favored horizontal bombing over dive-bombing, because bombs dropped by dive-bombing did not have sufficient velocity to penetrate the armor of battleships, and horizontal bombing would minimize Japanese casualties.<sup>39</sup>

While the concept of an attack against Pearl Harbor remained in the fore-fronts of the minds of those who were aware of what Yamamoto was thinking, formal, detailed planning for the attack did not happen until the fall of 1941. In the interim, the 1st Air Fleet concentrated on improving the tactical dispositions and maneuvering of the carriers and the bombing accuracy and technique of aircrews. Yamamoto eventually accepted the idea of repeated attacks to achieve a decisive result.<sup>40</sup> That having been decided, Yamamoto did not interfere with the planning effort. He now focused on convincing the NGS to allow him to execute the operation.<sup>41</sup>

## THE JAPANESE PLAN FOR WAR

Commander Yasuji Watanabe, a trusted member of Yamamoto's Combined Fleet staff, later described the conceptual foundation of the opening Japanese operations in this way:

In Japanese tactics we are told when we have two enemies, one in front and one in the back, first we must cut in front by sword. Only cut and not kill but make it hard. Then we attack the back enemy and kill him. Then we come back to the front enemy and kill him. This time we took that tactic, having no aim to capture Pearl Harbor but just to cripple it. We might have returned to capture later.<sup>42</sup>

The basic Japanese plan for war, placed into effect in December 1941, consisted of three phases:

Phase One: The seizure of the Southern Areas; the attack on the United States Fleet in Hawaii, and the seizure of strategic areas and positions for the establishment of a perimeter for the defense of the Southern Resources Area and the Japanese Mainland. The area to be seized was that within the line which joins the Kuriles, Marshalls (including Wake), Bismarcks, Timor, Java, Sumatra, Malaya, and Burma.

Phase Two: Consolidation and strengthening of the defensive perimeter, and

Phase Three: The interception and destruction of any attacking strength, which might threaten the defensive perimeter or the vital areas within the perimeter. Concurrently with intercept operations the activation of plans to destroy the United States will to fight.

Through these three phases, the Japanese hoped to attain their strategic goal of economic self-sufficiency.<sup>43</sup>

The NGS's existing orders to Yamamoto contained two main tasks: one, the destruction of the enemy fleet or fleets; and two, coordination with the army in capturing and gaining control of the southern area. The methods to be employed in the destruction of the enemy fleet were up to Yamamoto, but he could not activate any plan without the approval of the NGS. Regarding the second task, the duty of the navy was to support the army's efforts with both its fleet and its land-based air force.<sup>44</sup>

Japanese military planners were now faced with moving forces rapidly over long distances to acquire the key strategic territories of the Co-Prosperity Sphere while defeating any Allied forces present. Gains would have to be defended against the inevitable Allied counterattacks. Having limited warships, transports, and ground forces for the tasks envisioned, the planners had to use key forces for multiple tasks.<sup>45</sup> This necessity resulted in the decision to sequence the elements of Phase One. Success was dependent on Japan's ability to seize and maintain the initiative. Maximum use would have to be made of airpower to prepare and shape the battle space. Phase One was to be completed in 150 days.

The following critical assumptions guided Japanese planning and decision making leading up to the outbreak of war:

- That the threat of Russia on the Manchurian flank had been neutralized by decisive German victories in Europe.
- That Great Britain was in an irretrievably defensive position.
- That the forces that the United States and its allies could immediately deploy in the Pacific, particularly in the air, were insufficient to prevent Japan from occupying within three or four months the entire Co-Prosperity Sphere.

- That China—the Burma Road having been severed—would be isolated and forced to negotiate.
- That the United States, committed to aiding Great Britain and weakened by the attack on Pearl Harbor, would be unable to mobilize sufficient strength to go on the offensive in the Pacific for from eighteen months to two years. During this time, the perimeter could be fortified and the required forward airfields and bases established. The perimeter would be backed by a mobile carrier striking force based on Truk.
- That Japan would speedily extract in the captured territories and ship to home islands for processing essential metals to sustain and strengthen its industrial and military machine.
- That the weakness of the United States as a democracy would make it impossible for it to sustain any all-out offensive action in the face of the losses that would be imposed by fanatically resisting Japanese soldiers, sailors, and airmen, and the elimination of its allies. The United States would therefore compromise and allow Japan to retain a substantial portion of its initial territorial gains.<sup>46</sup>

Unfortunately for the Japanese, the fifth and seventh assumptions were to prove false.

On 5 November the following operational objectives were issued:

- a. In the Eastern Pacific, the American fleet would be destroyed and her supply route and line of operation to the Orient severed,
- b. In the Western Pacific, the campaign in Malaya shall be conducted to sever the British line of operation and supply to the Orient as well as the Burma Route,
- c. The enemy forces in the Orient shall be destroyed, their strategic bases captured, and the important areas endowed with natural resources shall be occupied,
- d. Strategically important points shall be captured, expanded in area and strengthened in defensive forces in order to prepare for a prolonged war,
- e. Enemy invading forces shall be intercepted and annihilated, and
- f. Successful operations shall be exploited to crush the enemy's will to fight.<sup>47</sup>

The one significant constraint imposed was that Japanese operations had to begin before the British and Americans could supplement their forces in the theater and thereby alter the balance of power.

Strategic success would be achieved, because Japan would escalate the material and moral costs of war beyond what the Western powers, America in particular, would be willing to pay. The strategy was predicated on American

rationality—that is, the Americans would perform a cost-benefit analysis and come to terms with the realities created by Japanese success.<sup>48</sup>

The conventional narrative on the Pacific War has it that Japan never intended to invade Hawaii. This view asserts that the Japanese leadership felt Hawaii was too difficult to capture and retain and that it was in any case outside the desired limits of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.<sup>49</sup> However, we now know that Hawaii was in fact explicitly included within the sphere in both public and classified wartime documents and was the focus of Genda's thinking from the beginning.<sup>50</sup>

Genda understood that Pearl Harbor was the headquarters of the Pacific Fleet, a crucial logistics and repair facility, a vital intelligence center, and an ideal springboard for any counteroffensive against Japan. Hawaii was also the anchor for air and maritime communications between the United States and the southwestern Pacific. From the moment Genda began preparing his draft, he favored a full-scale landing of Japanese troops on Oahu. "We should follow up this attack on Hawaii with a landing," he said. "If Hawaii is occupied, America will lose her largest and best advance base and, furthermore, our command of future operations will be very good." American fighting forces on Hawaii would have to retire to the West Coast, and Japan would dominate the Central Pacific.<sup>51</sup> Genda's conceptualized plan, that is, took Yamamoto's intent one step farther—to take Pearl Harbor away from the Americans and thereby eliminate their ability to project power from the Central Pacific. Once in Japanese hands, the Hawaiian Islands could be used militarily to threaten the continental United States and, politically, as a bargaining chip in negotiations to end the war.<sup>52</sup> The key to Genda's vision was not what Japan would gain by acquiring the islands but what the United States would lose.

It is in this plan that the true nature of Genda's operational-level thinking is manifest. Genda believed that without seizing and holding Oahu, Japan could not hope to win the war. Oahu had to be taken at the outset of the conflict, while surprise and initiative still worked in Japan's favor. Once it had been occupied, conditions would be favorable for subsequent operations in the south, and Japan would have time to figure out how to maintain and resupply the islands. Genda believed that Hawaii, not the Philippines, should have been Japan's major military objective at the outset. Where Yamamoto saw a delaying action, Genda saw a knockout punch—the annihilation of the enemy's operational center of gravity with one decisive, joint operation.<sup>53</sup>

Assuming that the initial air strikes were successful and that the Japanese had air superiority and given intelligence estimates of approximately two American divisions on Oahu, Genda believed ten to fifteen thousand well equipped troops would suffice for its capture.<sup>54</sup> Genda realized the risks involved in moving a large

task force across the North Pacific to attack Oahu, but he felt that even if (as the Japanese expected) a portion of the force was destroyed, the loss of shipping and troops would not materially impact operations in the south.<sup>55</sup>

Predictably, so innovative a plan, coming originally from a mere commander (though possibly over the signature of a rear admiral), did not survive contact with the senior planners of the Combined Fleet staff, particularly at a time when the concept of a carrier air attack, backed by Yamamoto himself, was itself experiencing stiff opposition. But during naval war games to test the planned Phase One operations in September 1941, the idea of invading Oahu resurfaced. In preparation for the event, Commander Watanabe conducted a detailed study of a possible invasion of Oahu. He estimated that a successful invasion would require at least two Japanese divisions, about thirty thousand men. Transporting them, with their equipment and supplies, would require eighty transports and escort vessels, including thirty-two destroyers, eight cruisers, four battleships, two aircraft carriers, six to eight submarines for reconnaissance, and ten tankers. These would be in addition to the carrier strike force.<sup>56</sup>

Watanabe laid out two landing sites: one on the northwest coast on both sides of Haleiwa, the other in the area of Kaneohe Bay. The southern coast was best suited to an invasion, but it was also the most heavily defended area of Oahu. The west coast was eliminated, because the U.S. Navy had held invasion maneuvers off the west coast a year before, and the Americans were likely well prepared to defend that part of the island.<sup>57</sup>

The two landings would happen simultaneously at midnight of 7/8 December. Half a division would land at Haleiwa, to take Schofield Barracks. The objectives of this attack were not only to take the barracks but to draw American forces northward, by giving the impression that it was the main effort. The actual main attack, however, was planned for the east coast, at Kaneohe Bay, with one and a half divisions. Two-thirds of this force would occupy that, the remainder the region below Laie. The objective was to cross the Koolau Range, using horses, and then descend on Pearl Harbor, cutting off any retreat to the mountains of Oahu. The Japanese knew from intelligence that the Koolau mountains were not fortified and in fact were open to the public. Given complete air superiority, Watanabe estimated, it would take from two to four weeks to capture the island.<sup>58</sup>

Watanabe tried to discuss the study with Captain Kuroshima but the latter was not interested, considering an invasion infeasible and to be going against the concept of operations for Phase One. After the war, Kuroshima would declare that the “biggest mistake” of his life was this refusal to consider invasion of Oahu after the carrier attack.<sup>59</sup> Genda’s and Watanabe’s superiors, for their part, always considered the idea in the context of the invasions of the Philippines and Malaya, also to be accomplished at the outset. Considered accordingly, an invasion of

Oahu was easily dismissible from a resource perspective. Genda himself, in contrast, viewed the invasion as either instead of or before the Philippine operation, with the intent of denying American ground, sea, and air forces the use of the Hawaiian Islands as an advance base.

Regardless, any invasion of Oahu would have needed the support of the army, which was firmly focused on China and willing to provide only the smallest number of divisions necessary to acquire the territories identified in Phase One. In fact, the IJA planned to commit only ten of its fifty-one divisions and four of its fifty-nine brigades to the Southern Army for these operations.<sup>60</sup> Notably, however, and reflecting the important role envisioned for airpower, the IJA allotted seventy of its 151 air squadrons to support the Southern Operation.

The mistrust that existed between the two services is evident from the fact that the Combined Fleet never approached the IJA to discuss a Hawaiian invasion option. The Combined Fleet was so concerned with the secrecy of the Pearl Harbor carrier attack that it did not want to divulge the plan to the army. The Combined Fleet's fear was based on the IJA's strong influence over governmental decision making—if the IJA objected to the attack, it could easily force its cancellation. Watanabe lamented that "once they [IJA] rejected something, nothing could be carried out."<sup>61</sup>

For all these reasons, and despite repeated attempts by Genda to drive home the importance of taking the islands, the idea of invading Oahu as part of the initial attack was dead. Knowing that there was no stomach for invading Oahu as he had wanted, Genda moved to the next best course of action available, which was to design a plan that would deny Pearl Harbor to the Americans, through the destruction of the base and its facilities. "In my opinion, Japan had to neutralize American bases in the Pacific if she was to carry on the war successfully."<sup>62</sup> Genda's modified plan involved repeated attacks against the infrastructure of Pearl Harbor and the Pacific Fleet at its moorings, and a possible fleet engagement against any American warships found outside the harbor. A significant problem for Genda was that Vice Admiral Nagumo, who commanded the 1st Air Fleet, had little faith in or understanding of naval airpower or the potential of the air arm at his disposal.<sup>63</sup>

Nagumo was aligned with the IJN's "fleet faction." These officers—politically right-wing, pro-Axis, virulently anti-British and anti-American—were ardent expansionists and favored the rapid buildup of Japan's naval strength. They believed in the supremacy of the battleship in naval warfare, were deeply schooled in the theories of Alfred Thayer Mahan, and were committed to the vision of decisive battle by surface fleets.<sup>64</sup> Since 1934 they had purged the Japanese naval hierarchy and now held almost all the key command and institutional positions, particularly in the NGS.



The conventional explanation of the decision to give Nagumo command of the 1st Air Fleet is that it came down to seniority, not expertise. Nagumo was a surface fleet officer and specialist in torpedo attack. Even his longtime friend Admiral Tsukahara Nishizo, later commander in chief of the 11th Air Fleet, would recall, “He [Nagumo] was wholly unfitted by background, training, experience, and interest for a major role in Japan’s naval air arm.”<sup>65</sup> In fact, the feeling of many in the carrier community, including key members of the Combined Fleet staff, was that Nagumo’s background and personality made him completely unsuitable as the commander of the Japanese carriers. Nagumo’s appointment, however, was made by the NGS, not the Combined Fleet. Yamamoto’s choice was Vice Admiral Jisaburō Ozawa, but at this point Yamamoto did not have a strong enough case to induce the NGS to remove Nagumo.

The Pearl Harbor portion of the Combined Fleet plan met stiff opposition from all quarters, including the NGS, Nagumo, and Nagumo’s chief of staff, Rear Admiral Ryūnosuke Kusaka. They viewed the plan as too risky, as beyond the technical capability of the IJN (primarily because of the need for at-sea refueling), and as denying carrier airpower to the vital Philippines operation. Genda realized that there were significant tactical issues to be resolved but felt that they were not insurmountable.<sup>66</sup> It would be early November, however, before the attack was finally approved at the joint and thus national level.

The IJN held a series of war games from 5 to 17 September 1941 to test Phase One of its operational plan. Two days were set aside for a separate and secret test of the proposed outline of the Pearl Harbor plan. Genda had yet to complete any detailed planning, but at this point the plan used all six “fleet carriers”—that is, *Hiryū*, *Sōryū*, *Akagi*, *Kaga*, *Shōkaku*, and *Zuikaku*. The Pearl Harbor game suggested that the attack was feasible but involved significant risk and would very likely result in the loss of Japanese carriers.<sup>67</sup> Ultimately, however, these results were overshadowed by a greater operational concern raised by the main war-game series—air superiority over the Philippines.

At the conclusion of the games, 11th Air Fleet representatives raised serious concerns over their ability to supply sufficient strength, especially fighters, for the Southern Operation. Air superiority was in jeopardy, because the distances between the Philippine targets and Japanese bases were beyond the combat radius of the Zero fighter.<sup>68</sup> On 24 September, senior officers of the Combined Fleet, 1st Air Fleet, and NGS met to discuss this problem. The 1st Air Fleet chief of staff, Kusaka, and senior members of the NGS spoke out against the Pearl Harbor plan, arguing that naval strength assigned to the Southern Operation was insufficient and that all air resources, including the 1st Air Fleet, should be concentrated on that.<sup>69</sup> Admiral Onishi, formerly the conduit for the Pearl Harbor attack concept, now vehemently opposed it. He too argued that the carriers were needed by the

Southern Operation. The NGS subsequently directed that fleet carriers from the 1st Air Fleet be made available to support the southern attacks.

It is important at this point to take a quick step backward in time. On 19 August 1941, Genda met with the senior staff officer of the 11th Air Fleet, Captain Chihaya Takahashi, to discuss the overall strategy for air operations, both Pearl Harbor and the Southern Operation.<sup>70</sup> The IJA and IJN agreed that the major role in the Philippine air campaign was the responsibility of the IJN, because of the greater combat range of naval aircraft. Army fighters had been designed to fight on the mainland of China and had a nominal combat radius of three hundred miles. Army bombers, carrying a normal bomb load, could not make the round trip between southern Taiwanese bases and Lingayen Gulf, the principal landing point on Luzon.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, it had been agreed between the two services that IJA planes would be responsible for targets north of the sixteenth parallel (which crosses Luzon north of Manila), while IJN air forces would take care of targets south of that line. The major American air strength, some 208 fighters and bombers, was stationed below that line and therefore the responsibility of the IJN.<sup>72</sup>

The Philippine invasion air plan involved virtually every Zero fighter the navy had except for those of the 1st Air Fleet. The Zero possessed a combat radius in excess of 420 miles, but there were serious doubts that it could support attacks on targets in the Manila area, 550 miles from Japanese bases on Taiwan. Navy planners now found themselves confronted with an urgent operational problem, for which two possible solutions presented themselves. Either the fleet aircraft carriers had to provide the necessary fighter cover, the more likely option, or means would have to be found to increase the Zero's range, which seemed improbable.<sup>73</sup>

Either way, fighter cover for the bombers was imperative, if Pearl Harbor was to be attacked on the first day of the war. The Philippine air attack had to happen in daylight, and there was a five-and-a-half-hour time difference between there and Pearl Harbor. Consequently, the Japanese expected that Philippine-American defenses would be ready for any Japanese attack on 8 December.

The conflict over the simultaneous requirements for air superiority over Pearl Harbor and the Philippines came to a head in October.<sup>74</sup> During the final war games held on 4 and 5 October, the NGS directed that the fleet carriers be split, with the 2nd Carrier Division (*Hiryū* and *Sōryū*), plus *Akagi*, supporting the Philippine invasion and the remaining three carriers attacking Pearl Harbor. The NGS wanted more airpower for the Philippine attack and held that it had priority. The results of the war games indicated, however, that three carriers could not generate enough combat airpower to achieve the desired results at Pearl Harbor. If the Pearl Harbor attack were to be forced to use only three carriers, Genda recommended that it be scrapped.<sup>75</sup>

Repeated attempts by the Combined Fleet to have all six carriers reassigned to the Pearl Harbor attack failed, until on 17 October Yamamoto sent Captain Kuroshima to NGS headquarters in Tokyo to convey the message that if the Pearl Harbor plan were not approved with six carriers, Yamamoto and his entire staff would resign. On 22 October, Rear Admiral Matome Ugaki, Yamamoto's chief of staff, recorded that Kuroshima had returned with the plan approved as the Combined Fleet wanted it.<sup>76</sup> Most narratives have taken Yamamoto's threat of resignation as the major factor in the decision of Admiral Osami Nagano, chief of the Imperial Japanese Navy General Staff, to approve, at the navy level, the Pearl Harbor plan with six carriers.

But if taking the carriers of the 2nd Carrier Division away from the Philippine operation solved the Pearl Harbor problem, it did not resolve what was in the minds of the NGS the more critical operational problem: the need to attain and maintain air superiority over the Philippines. It is not reasonable to infer that Admiral Nagano would have knowingly placed his top priority, the Philippine operation, in jeopardy by removing the carrier airpower that had been regarded as vital for supporting its initial attacks. We must therefore look elsewhere to determine why Nagano changed his mind—and why, therefore, Genda's plan was actually carried out.

The operational requirement on 8 December was fifteen minutes of combat time for Zeros over Clark Airfield, the main American airfield in the Philippines. By mid-October, experimentation by the 11th Air Fleet had achieved a combat radius of five hundred miles for its Zeros without any modification to the plane's engine or equipment. This was accomplished by reducing cruising speed, adjusting propeller pitch, and setting the fuel mixture as lean as possible. Pilot skill would be counted on to deliver the remaining fifty miles to the target. Plans were made for the occupation of Batan Island, 125 miles north of Luzon, on the morning of 8 December so that the Zeros could make an emergency fueling stop there on the return trip if necessary.

The Zero was now capable of providing the requisite air cover for the initial attacks from Taiwan.<sup>77</sup> This development is more compelling than Yamamoto's threat of resignation as a reason why Nagano changed his mind. The Japanese could now simultaneously commit the six fleet carriers to the Pearl Harbor operation and provide the required Zero cover over the Philippines.

On 29 October, two officers of the NGS—Captain Sadatoshi Tomioka and Commander Yugi Yamamoto, of the Operations Section—visited Admiral Yamamoto on board the battleship *Nagato*. They brought the general war instructions of the NGS and the relevant “agreement” between the navy and the army. The attack on Pearl Harbor was not part of this document. On 3 November, the staff of the Combined Fleet flew to Tokyo to put the finishing touches on

Combined Fleet Order No. 1. There, on 3 November, Yamamoto talked to Nagano; the final decision to allow the attack on Pearl Harbor was made on that day.<sup>78</sup>

The evolution of the detailed Pearl Harbor attack plan needs to be clarified. Until the end of September the plan existed as a conceptual attack that began with a two-wave integrated assault using dive-bombers, torpedo bombers, horizontal bombers, and fighters. The main targets were to be the airfields, carriers, and battleships. Little detail existed beyond that. Commander Mitsuo Fuchida was told of the plan and target on 1 October. Genda and Fuchida began putting details to the attack during October. Their plan involved all six fleet carriers, but as noted above, this was not a foregone conclusion.

On 2 November, Nagumo informed the senior commanders of the 1st Air Fleet of the intent to attack Hawaii and had Fuchida and Genda brief the "general plan."<sup>79</sup> The general concept was tested by the 1st and 2nd Carrier Divisions during Combined Fleet maneuvers on 3 and 5 November. Lessons learned from the attacking formations and observations from Genda, Fuchida, and the Combined Fleet staff were then used to refine the plan. There were many technical details that had yet to be resolved. Chief among these was the fact that the torpedoes were still running too deep to be effective in the shallow waters of Pearl Harbor.

The final details were hammered out at Hitokappu Bay just prior to departure. Genda conceptualized the plan (answering the "who, what, and why" questions), identified and worked to resolve the technical deficiencies in torpedoes and bombs, and organized the training along functional lines to facilitate the attack. The details of the "how" portion of the attack for each aircraft type were left to the respective flight commanders. Lieutenant Commander Shigeharu Murata worked out the torpedo attack plan, Lieutenant Commanders Takashige Egusa and Kakuichi Takahasi the dive-bombing attacks, and Lieutenant Commanders Shigeru Itaya and Saburo Shindo the fighter attack plan. Fuchida and Lieutenant Commander Shigekazu Shimazaki worked out the horizontal-bombing plan.<sup>80</sup> These inputs were then integrated by Genda to form the finalized plan.<sup>81</sup> The final attack plan was briefed to all aircrews at Hitokappu Bay on 23 November. The 1st Air Fleet departed for Pearl Harbor at six o'clock in the morning of 26 November.

## THE ATTACK AND ITS IMMEDIATE SEQUEL

Nagumo, in command of the 1st Air Fleet, had opposed the attack on Pearl Harbor from the very beginning and was not comfortable with his responsibility in executing it. He was being ordered to carry out a plan that he did not believe in. Japanese naval doctrine, however, allowed considerable latitude to on-scene commanders to modify plans as they saw fit; Nagumo, unbeknownst to anyone on the Combined Fleet staff, decided even before leaving Japan that he would execute

the plan to the minimum extent possible, making the American battleships the primary targets. Nagumo was unprepared to go beyond his doctrinal comfort zone to make the conceptual leap that Genda's plan envisioned.

Nagumo's personal and professional inclinations convinced him that his job was to inflict enough damage on the American battleships to make them unable to interfere with Japanese operations in the south. Genda, the visionary and air-power advocate, had designed the attack to eliminate the base at Pearl Harbor and thereby deny the Americans the use of the base and its inherent ability to support the projection of power across the Central Pacific. Genda's focus comprised the base and aircraft carriers. The planner and the executor were driving toward different ends. Unfortunately for Genda and ultimately the Japanese, Nagumo, as the tactical commander, would decide what conditions or results defined success.

The preamble to Carrier Striking Task Force Operations Order No. 3, issued on 23 November 1941, includes the following statement:

Immediately after the return of the first and second attack units [the "waves" constituting the first attack], preparations for the next attack will be completed. At this time, carrier attack planes capable of carrying torpedoes will be armed with such as long as the supply lasts. If the destruction of enemy land-based air strength progresses favorably, repeated attacks will be made immediately and thus decisive results will be achieved.<sup>82</sup>

This order, over Nagumo's signature, was probably written by Genda and therefore congruent with Genda's concept of operations for the attack. Most importantly, it conveys the expectation of repeated attacks. The contradiction between what Nagumo issued as his intention in this order and his personal conviction to launch only the first attack is evident and has caused confusion.

The order was issued while the 1st Air Fleet was still in Japanese waters. This means that the Combined Fleet would have been aware of, and approved of, its contents. It is quite possible that Nagumo was content to make it appear that he intended to act aggressively in executing his orders until he left the home islands and the scrutiny of the Combined Fleet. Rear Admiral Ugaki had chastised both Nagumo and Kusaka for their lack of support for the Pearl Harbor plan and had declared that if they "were not prepared yet to advance in the face of death and gain results two or three times as great as the cost by jumping into the jaws of death with his [*sic*] men," they both should resign.<sup>83</sup> Once the task force was sequestered in the Kuriles, at Hitokappu Bay, Nagumo made it known to Genda that he would launch only the first attack.<sup>84</sup>

En route to Pearl Harbor Genda tried three times to persuade Nagumo that more than one attack would be needed. On the day of the attack, when Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, leader of the strike, landed on *Akagi* after the first two

waves had returned and reported two battleships sunk and four battleships and four cruisers severely damaged, Nagumo determined that he had accomplished his task and decided to retire, leaving the base and its vital infrastructure intact.<sup>85</sup> The missing carriers would have to wait for another time.

Conceptually, Genda had designed the first two waves to achieve two aims: to gain air superiority over Oahu and to deny the Americans the ability to hit back at the Japanese task force. For these purposes, carrier-based and land-based air forces were the priority targets, then carriers, battleships, cruisers, etc., in descending order. Over half of the attacking aircraft in each wave were committed to the air-superiority task, as providing combat air patrol or attacking airfields.<sup>86</sup> The war diary of the 5th Carrier Division (*Shōkaku* and *Zuikaku*) reported, "The division's air force attacked enemy air bases on Oahu Island, destroying most of the enemy air forces and hangars. Thus enemy fighter interception and counter-attacks upon our force was crushed."<sup>87</sup>

Genda's plan envisioned, air superiority having been established and the Americans denied the means to strike back, follow-on attacks to deny the use of Pearl Harbor as an operating base. Their targets were the naval installations first, then the remaining ships (Genda did not specify the oil- or fuel-storage tanks as specific targets). Genda felt that the potential reward of the follow-on attacks was worthwhile even if they cost another hundred planes.<sup>88</sup>

In the event, the extent of the damage that the two attack waves had inflicted on the U.S. air forces in Hawaii would not be known for a number of days.<sup>89</sup> The Japanese battle-damage assessment listed sixteen hangars and 222 parked airplanes set on fire, and fourteen planes shot down, with a total of 450 airplanes on fire.<sup>90</sup> The Japanese after-action study of the Pearl Harbor operation concluded that 265 planes had been completely destroyed or shot down.<sup>91</sup> Before the attack the United States had had over four hundred planes of all types on Oahu, including twelve B-17 heavy bombers and over a hundred P-40 fighters. Immediately after the attack it could count only four B-17s and twenty-seven P-40s as combat ready.<sup>92</sup> The Japanese attacks had significantly degraded the Oahu-based air forces, leaving the American carriers as the only remaining threat to the Japanese task force.

Genda's original plan had the carrier task force staying in the area of the Hawaiian Islands for several days, continually pounding Pearl Harbor and running down any American surface ships at sea. To ensure unity of command, the operation orders had placed a submarine force of some twenty-four boats under Nagumo's command for a three-day period after the initial attack. It anticipated that the two forces would be operating together in the Hawaiian area for that time.<sup>93</sup> These details confirm the high, operational-level aims of the original plan, in contrast to the much lower, tactical aim of the strike ordered by Admiral Nagumo.

The Combined Fleet had known from intelligence reports that the American battleships and carriers alternated weekends in port at Pearl Harbor. Genda expected that the attack would be timed to take place when the battleship group was in harbor.<sup>94</sup> Consequently, during October and November 1941 Genda had formulated two plans for searching out and dealing with the American carriers if they were not found in Pearl Harbor, having had calculated that there were enough fuel and ammunition after the initial attack for at least forty-eight hours of further operations.<sup>95</sup>

The first was to stay close to Pearl Harbor and control the air over Oahu. He felt that the Japanese force could not engage successfully the American carriers in the vicinity of Pearl Harbor if it had simultaneously to fight an American carrier group and land-based planes. To prevent that, the task force would close Oahu and blanket it with fighters to maintain complete air superiority over the island while the American carriers were engaged.<sup>96</sup> The other plan was to search out the American carriers and attack them beyond the range of American land-based bombers. This plan too was designed to avoid air attacks from multiple sources. Extensive patrols were to be carried out on 8 December to find the American carriers. If they were found, the Japanese would attack them regardless of their location or distance. If they were not found, the task force would return to Japan, via the Marshall Islands.

Genda's job during the attack was to coordinate all information from the planes and submarines and to prepare contingency plans in case of a counterattack. Genda knew from the advance aerial reconnaissance report that the U.S. carriers were not at Pearl Harbor, and search planes had already been sent out to find them. In preparation for the expected news that one or more had been sighted, the returning horizontal bombers were rearmed with torpedoes for use against the carriers. Even the onset of darkness had been accounted for. The Japanese had trained night torpedo-bombing teams on the veteran carriers *Akagi*, *Kaga*, *Sōryū*, and *Hiryū*; twelve bombers on each of the first two ships and eight bombers on each of the latter were certified in night attack.<sup>97</sup>

Rough seas prevented the strike aircraft from being recovered in a timely manner. Genda felt that, even if Nagumo could have been persuaded to order one, it was virtually impossible to launch another attack on Pearl Harbor that day unless the force proceeded southward, closer to Oahu. That would take maximum advantage of the remaining daylight. Genda was intent on instigating a running battle with American targets using smaller groups of aircraft, even at night if necessary.<sup>98</sup> Beyond that prospect, he had articulated three options for the withdrawal of the carrier task force from the Pearl Harbor area:

- A withdrawal in the direction from which it had approached (i.e., to the north and then west)
- Westward, passing north of Midway
- Southward, passing west of Oahu, then to the Marshall Islands.

Genda preferred the last option. This route allowed repeated attacks against Pearl Harbor over the next three days as the Japanese steamed southward, and it offered the best chance of engaging remaining elements of the Pacific Fleet. Consistent in all his plans for the initial attack's sequel was the notion of the task force remaining in the area of Oahu for several days to exploit whatever situation arose.<sup>99</sup> Nagumo, however, chose the first option, since it quickly put his carriers beyond the reach of counterattack.

The Combined Fleet headquarters in the home islands received many of the attack reports within minutes of their transmission. A weighty discussion occurred among the staff members as to whether Yamamoto should order Nagumo to carry out the "second attack." Captain Kuroshima, along with most of the staff, felt that not enough damage had been inflicted—Pearl Harbor had to be hit again. Yamamoto felt that the tactical-level commander was in a better place to judge whether a second attack was possible or required and denied Kuroshima's request to issue the second attack order. Kuroshima remained convinced, however, that the Pearl Harbor attack was incomplete and told Yamamoto later that Nagumo was not a suitable commander for the 1st Air Fleet.<sup>100</sup>

Indeed, the initial jubilation over the results of the Pearl Harbor attack soon faded. While the damage inflicted against the Pacific Fleet had created the conditions that would allow the Southern Operation to be carried out without immediate interference from it, Yamamoto and his senior staff realized that they had missed an excellent opportunity to seize Hawaii. On 9 December 1941, less than forty-eight hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Yamamoto ordered his staff to prepare plans for an invasion of Hawaii.<sup>101</sup>

The new Japanese plan, known as the Eastern Operation, was designed to establish Japanese dominance in the Central Pacific. Its timeline began with the capture of Midway in June 1942 and ended with the occupation of Oahu in March 1943.<sup>102</sup> In this process, Rear Admiral Ugaki ordered Watanabe to conduct another study of an invasion of Oahu. The new study concluded that Japan would now need four divisions and 1.5 million tons of shipping to capture the island, assuming that the American carriers had been eliminated as a threat beforehand.<sup>103</sup> This new staff assessment, conducted in mid-January 1942, highlighted the enormity of the opportunity missed on 8 December.



## OPPORTUNITY LOST

Genda observed after the war, “In my opinion, Japan had to neutralize American bases in the Pacific if she was to carry on the war successfully. Air bombardment alone would not neutralize an enemy base; complete neutralization could only be achieved if it was occupied by ground troops.”<sup>104</sup> He realized even at the time that the effects of the Pearl Harbor attack would be transitory and that further strikes were needed immediately. Even after Nagumo ordered the task force to retire, Genda continued to urge him to stay in the area, to carry out an all-out search for the U.S. carriers and, finding them, to attack them day or night.<sup>105</sup> His protests were to no avail.

During the return trip to Japan, however, Genda presented Nagumo with another plan to strike while the Japanese had the Americans off balance. The Japanese 4th Fleet had run into unexpected opposition in its initial attempt to occupy Wake Island on 11 December. The assault had had to be called off, and the 4th Fleet had asked for immediate assistance. Instead of returning directly to Japan, Genda’s new plan was to take the entire carrier task force to Truk; refuel, resupply, and pick up there the landing troops that had occupied Guam, plus those used in the first attempt at Wake and the South Seas Fleet troops earmarked for the seizure of Rabaul; and then swiftly invade and occupy Wake, Midway, and Johnston Islands. Troop transports had already assembled at Truk for other operations and could be easily reassigned.<sup>106</sup> Genda’s new plan employed all of the 1st Air Fleet’s considerable power in a manner consistent with the concept he had employed in designing the attack on Oahu—concentration for maximum impact.

The entire strength of the 1st Air Fleet would engage any American ships that tried to oppose it. With Johnston Island and Midway in Japanese hands, air coverage could be pushed out to interdict routes across the Central Pacific, and land-based aircraft would be within striking distance of Oahu. These islands could be used as stepping-stones for the future occupation of Hawaii, which Genda thought could be undertaken in 1942, after the occupation of the southern area.<sup>107</sup> The scale of Genda’s plan and his confidence in the flexibility of Japanese naval power are clear indications of his impressive ability to connect the strategic imperative with the tactical necessity.

The Japanese carriers were several hundred miles north of Midway when Genda discussed his new plan with Nagumo. The admiral was at first in favor of the plan and took steps to execute it.<sup>108</sup> On 13 December Nagumo signaled his intent to the carrier task force. His message, issued at 8:20 that morning, conveyed two options: the “First Plan” stated that after refueling the force would “speed down to south, and, in cooperation with the Fourth Fleet, invade Wake. Then Midway, Johnston and Palmyra will be occupied, enemy land based air forces

destroyed, paving the way for an invasion of Hawaii." The "Second Plan" was to return straight to Japan.<sup>109</sup>

There is no indication that the Combined Fleet was aware of this new idea. Kusaka, Nagumo's chief of staff, was against it; he wanted the carriers to return immediately to Japan. Genda planned to fly to Tokyo while the carriers were replenishing at Truk to brief Yamamoto and the Combined Fleet staff on the proposal. On 15 December, however, Nagumo received orders from the Combined Fleet to support a planned new attempt to invade Wake Island, by destroying enemy forces with "an appropriate air force."<sup>110</sup> Nagumo that day issued Task Force Order No. 32 to proceed to Truk, where the force was to arrive on or about 22 December, refuel, and then attack Wake Island.<sup>111</sup> Nagumo also canceled an attack on Midway that had been ordered (without Genda's input) by the Combined Fleet.

However, on 16 December Nagumo changed his mind completely. He canceled all previous orders, now directing only the 2nd Carrier Division and supporting units to attack Wake Island, the remaining ships to return back to Japan.<sup>112</sup> His sudden change of mind did not result from direction from Combined Fleet headquarters; it can only be assumed that Kusaka had swayed him.

From an operational perspective, by 13 December the main air and sea threats to Japanese expansion in the south had been eliminated. British Force Z—the battleship *Prince of Wales* and the battle cruiser *Repulse*—were sunk on 10 December. The American air forces in the Philippines, in particular the B-17 bombers, had been hard hit. The remaining Dutch, British, and American naval units in the southern region, lacking direction or cohesion, did not represent a serious problem. The only remaining credible naval threat was that of the carriers of the Pacific Fleet.

The Japanese plan of seizing airfields and then moving air units progressively forward to cover subsequent invasions of new territories worked perfectly. The Japanese enjoyed the advantage of air superiority across most of the theater, and their amphibious and land operations proceeded as anticipated. The temporarily thwarted invasion of Wake Island had been the only setback.<sup>113</sup> Given the reality of the operational environment on 16 December when Nagumo ordered the return to Japan, Genda felt that Nagumo's force had to remain in the Central Pacific to concentrate on the U.S. Navy and its carriers. Once they were dealt with, "the rest of the Pacific would fall like ripe fruit."<sup>114</sup> Events were to show that once more he had an impressive grasp of the situation.

Meanwhile, Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet, had ordered carriers to support the movement of troops and aircraft to reinforce Wake. The United States had three carriers available in the theater, but each was

operating as a single-carrier task force.<sup>115</sup> Unfortunately for the garrison on Wake, Kimmel was relieved on 17 December, and the new acting commander in chief, Vice Admiral William S. Pye, was not willing to commit his carriers against the Japanese 2nd Carrier Division, which was known to be supporting the renewed invasion of Wake.<sup>116</sup> Pye had to choose between the relief of Wake and the protection of Hawaii from possible further attack. Pye chose to conserve the carriers for future operations and abandoned Wake Island.

The implementation of Genda's new plan would have posed a very interesting dilemma for Pye and his successor (from 31 December), Admiral Chester Nimitz. Instead of just one carrier division, the Pacific Fleet would have confronted all six Japanese carriers, working with a now-proven doctrine for mass carrier airpower. Successive invasions of Wake, Midway, and Johnston Islands in December 1941 and January 1942 would have forced Nimitz to choose between conserving his carriers and protecting Hawaii, in which case not only Wake but Midway and Johnston Islands as well would have fallen, or committing his carriers to protect one of or all these islands before his theater had received any appreciable reinforcements in men, planes, or ships. Japanese control of the three points, let alone the destruction of any of or all the American carriers in December 1941 or early 1942, would have altered the course of subsequent events in 1942.

Nagumo's order tasking only the 2nd Carrier Division to attack Wake Island is telling. His actions reflected a fundamental misunderstanding of the Japanese operational-level center of gravity—the six-fleet-carrier task group. As long as the Japanese kept their six fleet carriers operating together, they could defeat any combination of American carriers then available. Reverting to two-carrier divisions, as was done at Wake and in a number of other operations in Phase One, negated that operational advantage and demonstrated that neither the Combined Fleet nor Naval General Staff yet understood the fundamental concepts of carrier warfare. Had Vice Admiral Pye acted in a more aggressive fashion in the relief of Wake Island and reached it before the second landing on 23 December, Admiral Yamaguchi's carriers would have been outnumbered three to two, and the Americans would have had a two-to-one advantage in aircraft.<sup>117</sup>

Only Genda realized the importance of keeping the fleet carriers together. In essence, the Japanese should have recognized two types of operations—those of enough value to commit all six fleet carriers, and all the others.<sup>118</sup>

But Genda's influence over future Japanese operational plans ended when Nagumo canceled the move to Truk. Genda remained on board *Akagi* and planned air operations for the 1st Air Fleet until April 1942. Interestingly, the mistake of failing to attack shore installations was corrected in attacks on British bases at Darwin, Australia, in February 1942, and in the Indian Ocean, in March and April. Also of note in subsequent Phase One carrier operations was the

Combined Fleet's tactic of deploying a lightly screened carrier division ahead of heavy surface units.<sup>119</sup> For example, on 16 January the 2nd Carrier Division, with one heavy cruiser and two destroyers, was sent into the Banda Sea to spearhead the assault against Amboina, while Vice Admiral Nobutake Kondō's force of two battleships, three heavy cruisers, and six destroyers patrolled an outer ring well to the rear, between Mindanao, Palau, and northern New Guinea. This tactic of deploying carriers as screening forces, however, would cost the Japanese dearly at the battle of Midway.

Genda was not available to provide his airpower perspective for the follow-on Japanese operations planned for Phase Two, including the renewed NGS and Combined Fleet operations to do what Genda had originally intended after Pearl Harbor—to take Midway and Johnston Islands. In particular, the Combined Fleet plan for Midway, put together by Kuroshima and Watanabe, violated two of Genda's cardinal rules—concentration of force and advancing under air cover. These oversights contributed to the Japanese disaster at Midway.<sup>120</sup>

The opening Japanese operations of the Pacific War were complex but well coordinated. They were characterized by innovative tactics, phased operations, and rapid exploitation of success. Although Japanese forces were not strong everywhere, elements of the IJA and IJN were able to combine when required to provide local superiority. They achieved the strategic intent, acquiring the main area of the Co-Prosperity Sphere by the end of Phase One. But they had not destroyed the combat capability of the Pacific Fleet. When the Japanese once again faced forward to finish off their wounded adversary, they found the Americans much more capable, organized, and willing to engage.

Minoru Genda realized that Japan's long-term success depended on bases but also, most importantly, on Pearl Harbor and the Hawaiian Islands. Hawaii in Japanese hands was a safeguard against American power projection into the Central Pacific. Genda felt that Japanese control over the Hawaiian Islands, and only that, would set the conditions for a favorable settlement to the war.<sup>121</sup> While others in the IJN understood the importance of the Hawaiian Islands to a war in the Pacific, only Genda had the vision and foresight to conceptualize a means of delivering them to the Japanese or, alternatively, denying them to the Americans.

Genda saw Pearl Harbor as what we would now call the operational center of gravity for the war in the Pacific. He generally framed his thoughts in this way: he who controls or denies Pearl Harbor to the other side wins the war. There were actually three plans for the attack against Pearl Harbor: two developed by Genda and the one actually executed by Nagumo. The earlier of the two produced by Genda called for the carrier task force to remain near Pearl Harbor for a number of days to support the landing of Japanese troops on Oahu on 8 December. This

plan was in keeping with Genda's firm belief that the base was the target, not the Pacific Fleet. When the senior members of the Combined Fleet refused to consider this option, Genda switched to a plan to deny the use of Pearl Harbor to the Americans by destroying its base and infrastructure.

Genda later felt that the failure to attack Pearl Harbor repeatedly and to occupy Midway and Johnston Islands in the first months of the war were two of Japan's greatest "tactical" errors. Genda believed at the time that his Pearl Harbor plan held the greatest chance for Japanese success. When that opportunity was missed he tried to capitalize on the tactical situation to maintain the initiative and occupy Midway and Johnston Islands as quickly as possible.<sup>122</sup> This clear and immediate threat would have forced Nimitz to respond, fundamentally changing the course of events in 1942.

Had the Japanese followed either of Genda's original plans, the progress of the initial stages of the Pacific War would have been significantly different. What would have come next is unknowable, and the final outcome would have been the same. But within Genda's operational vision was the best possible "war winning" strategy for Japan. However, only after a considerable period of reflection after the war would the true brilliance of Genda's vision be understood.

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#### NOTES

The author wishes to express his appreciation to Cdr. Ken Hansen (Ret.), whose naval warfare expertise was invaluable in the conceptualization of this article. Japanese names are given throughout in Western fashion, surnames last.

1. Alan D. Zimm, *Attack on Pearl Harbor: Strategy, Combat, Myths, Deceptions* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2011).
2. The Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere proposed a new regional bloc of nations encompassing Japan (including the territories of Korea, Taiwan, and Sakhalin), China, Manchukuo, French Indochina, and the Dutch East Indies. Akira Iriye, *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War, 1941-1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981), p. 143.
3. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 2 June 1947, interview no. 8, transcript, Gordon W. Prange Papers, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries [hereafter Prange Papers].
4. Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon, eds., *The Pearl Harbor Papers: Inside the Japanese Plans* (New York: Brassey's, 1993).
5. Louis Morton, "Japanese Policy and Strategy in Mid-war," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (February 1959), p. 53.
6. The right of "access to the throne" was enjoyed only by the titular heads of the military services, the chiefs of staff of the army and navy, and the war and navy ministers. The war powers of neither army nor navy were subject to control by any other governmental body. Naval Analysis Division, *United States Strategic Bombing Survey: The Campaigns of the Pacific War* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office [hereafter GPO], [1946]).
7. The Marco Polo Bridge Incident was an unexpected battle between IJA troops and Chinese National Revolutionary Army units that escalated into all-out war. The stone bridge is fifteen kilometers southwest of the Beijing city center. Paul Kennedy, *Pacific Onslaught: 7th*

- Dec 1941/7th Feb 1942* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1972), p. 6.
8. The Americans were involved in this equation because the IJA viewed the Philippines as a vital part of the new sphere. Iriye, *Power and Culture*, p. 161.
  9. Hiroiyuk Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral: Yamamoto and the Imperial Navy* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1969), p. 195.
  10. Timothy Kutta, "Japanese Strategy and the Opening Moves of the Pacific War, 1941–42," *Strategy & Tactics* 215, p. 42.
  11. Peter Wetzler, *Hirohito and War: Imperial Tradition and Military Decision Making in Prewar Japan* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1998), p. 48.
  12. Supreme Commander Allied Powers, *Reports of General MacArthur: Japanese Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1966), vol. 2, part 1, p. 79.
  13. Forces of one service were subordinated to the command of another only three times during the war, and these were all in connection with amphibious landings during the first year. There were no joint logistical arrangements. Also, Japan never developed the concept of theater or joint commands based on geography, so there was never one commander responsible for an area of operations. Naval Analysis Division, *United States Strategic Bombing Survey: The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, p. 1.
  14. Yamamoto studied at Harvard University (1919–21) and had two postings as a naval attaché in Washington, D.C. In 1924 he changed his specialty from gunnery to naval aviation and became a strong proponent of the latter. He served as head of the Japanese Aeronautics Department, where he shaped the future doctrine for Japanese naval aviation before accepting a post as commander of the 1st Carrier Division.
  15. John J. Stephan, *Hawaii under the Rising Sun: Japan's Plans for Conquest after Pearl Harbor* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1984), p. 81.
  16. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 7 April 1947, interview no. 7, transcript, Prange Papers.
  17. Sadao Asada, *From Mahan to Pearl Harbor: The Imperial Japanese Navy and the United States* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2006), p. 247.
  18. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 21 March 1947, interview no. 1, transcript, Prange Papers.
  19. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 22 March 1947, interview no. 2, transcript, Prange Papers.
  20. Owing to the limited capabilities of the aircraft of the day, fighter tactics were primarily escort and defensive in nature—providing air cover for the battleships and carriers. In Japanese naval doctrine, the torpedo bombers and dive-bombers were the offensive weapons in the air. Genda was successful in convincing his superiors that fighters too should be used in the attack role. *Ibid.*
  21. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 23 March 1947, interview no. 3, transcript, Prange Papers.
  22. Minoru Genda, "Tactical Planning in the Imperial Japanese Navy," *Naval War College Review* 22, no. 2 (October 1969), pp. 46–47. Peattie states that "in reality [the committee was] set up by the navy's mainstream to keep the heterodox views of Onishi and the like-minded within carefully monitored channels"; Mark A. Peattie, *Sunburst: The Rise of Japanese Naval Air Power, 1909–1941* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2001), p. 148.
  23. Okumiya Masatake and Jiro Horikoshi, with Martin Caidin, *Zero: The True Story of Japan's Air War in the Pacific—as Seen by the Enemy* (New York: Bantam Books, 1997), p. 8.
  24. For a detailed account of the lessons learned and not learned by the Japanese in China, see Peattie, *Sunburst*, pp. 122–28.
  25. Masatake and Horikoshi, *Zero*, p. 48.
  26. Minoru Genda and Masataka Chihaya, "How the Japanese Task Force Idea Materialized," in *Pearl Harbor Papers*, ed. Goldstein and Dillon, p. 8.
  27. Genda, interview no. 3.
  28. Genda and Chihaya, "How the Japanese Task Force Idea Materialized," p. 9.
  29. Genda believed that Britain would win out, because "British fighters were superior to German fighters." *Ibid.*

30. In addition, the sinking of the British aircraft carrier *Glorious* by the German battle cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* on 8 June 1940 reinforced the belief that airpower would not be decisive in naval warfare and that doctrine that favored battleships was in fact correct. Genda traveled back to Japan via the United States, where he was astonished by the nation's commercial airlines and industrial capacity. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 24 March 1947, interview no. 4, transcript, Prange Papers.
31. Ibid.
32. Peattie states, "While Genda's claim to the authorship of this important tactical innovation may indeed be valid, it is worth noting that it rests entirely on his own account. One finds no corroboration of his assertion in two of the most authoritative works on Japanese Naval Aviation, *Kaigun Koku Gaishi*, and *Ni hon Kaigun Kokushi*"; Peattie, *Sunburst*, p. 335 note 54. Genda in an interview argued that the carriers should maneuver in a "block formation" and stated that he came up with the concentration concept while watching a newsreel that showed American carriers steaming in a box formation. Since a box formation is what the Japanese eventually preferred for their carriers, many authors have assumed a direct relationship. Genda, however, is very clear that the box formation was arrived at after much experimentation; Genda, interview no. 4.
33. In September the newly commissioned *Shōkaku* and *Zuikaku* of the 5th Carrier Division would be added and the 3rd Carrier Division detached. Peattie, *Sunburst*, p. 151.
34. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 15 March 1948, interview no. 6A, transcript, Prange Papers.
35. The U.S. Doolittle raid was the same type of attack. Other members of the Combined Fleet, including Nagumo, felt the same. The target priority was changed only in the last war games, at the Naval Staff College in September. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 9 March 1948, interview no. 2A, transcript, Prange Papers.
36. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 4 November 1950, transcript, Prange Papers.
37. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 25 March 1947, interview no. 5, transcript, Prange Papers.
38. Ibid.
39. Genda, interview no. 6A.
40. Genda, interview, 4 November 1950.
41. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 6 April 1947, interview no. 6, transcript, Prange Papers.
42. Yasuji Watanabe, interview, 15 October 1945, Nav. no. 13, USSBS no. 96, on "Pearl Harbor–Midway–Solomons, 1945."
43. Naval Analysis Division, *United States Strategic Bombing Survey: The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, p. 3.
44. Shigeru Fukudome, interview, 9–12 December 1945, Nav. no. 115, USSBS no. 503, on "The Naval War in the Pacific, 1945."
45. A comparative analysis of the two opposing fleets as of 1 December 1941 is as follows: Pacific Fleet, nine battleships, Japan ten; Pacific Fleet three carriers, Japan ten (including four light carriers); Pacific and Asiatic Fleets thirteen heavy and eleven light cruisers, Japan eighteen and seventeen, respectively; Pacific and Asiatic Fleets eighty destroyers and fifty-five submarines, Japan 111 and sixty-four, respectively. On the American side, both the *Enterprise*- and *Lexington*-class carriers could operate eighty-plus aircraft each; Samuel E. Morison, *The Two-Ocean War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), p. 39. The aircraft complement of the six Japanese carriers varied: *Akagi* and *Kaga* ninety-one, *Sōryū* sixty-eight, *Hiryū* seventy-three, and *Shōkaku* and *Zuikaku* eighty-four; Peattie, *Sunburst*, pp. 223–43. Genda's estimate of planes aboard the six carriers is as follows: *Akagi* twenty-one fighters, eighteen dive-bombers, and twenty-seven horizontal bombers; *Kaga* twenty-one fighters, twenty-seven dive-bombers, and twenty-seven horizontal bombers; *Sōryū* and *Hiryū* twenty-one fighters, eighteen dive-bombers, and eighteen horizontal bombers; *Shōkaku* and *Zuikaku* eighteen fighters, twenty-seven dive-bombers, and twenty-seven horizontal bombers. This gives for the Japanese 120 fighters, 135 dive-bombers, and 144 horizontal bombers, for a total of 399 aircraft; Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 28 December 1947, interview no. 25, transcript, Prange Papers.
46. Naval Analysis Division, *United States Strategic Bombing Survey: Summary Report (Pacific War)* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, [1 July 1946]).

47. The specific operational objectives that flowed from these assumptions and policy were to clear the seas of enemy forces in the Far East, secure the South and North Pacific, take the Philippine Islands, take the Dutch East Indies, take Wake and Guam Islands, secure coastal areas of China, and protect the homeland and strategic sea-lanes. Nobutake Kondo, "Some Opinions Concerning the War," in *Pearl Harbor Papers*, ed. Goldstein and Dillon, p. 233.
48. Dennis Showalter, "Storm over the Pacific: Japan's Road to Empire and War," in *The Pacific War Companion: From Pearl Harbor to Hiroshima*, ed. Daniel Marston (Oxford, U.K.: Osprey, 2005), p. 37.
49. Stephan, *Hawaii under the Rising Sun*, preface.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
51. Genda, interview no. 5.
52. It was felt that the spectacle of four hundred thousand Americans living under Japanese rule would force Roosevelt to the negotiation table. Stephan, *Hawaii under the Rising Sun*, p. 93.
53. Gordon Prange, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 27.
54. Lt. Cdr. Suguru Suzuki, a Japanese intelligence officer, visited Hawaii in November 1941 and determined that two divisions would suffice for an invasion. He conveyed this assessment to the Combined Fleet on his return, during a meeting on 17 November 1941. Stephan, *Hawaii under the Rising Sun*, p. 85.
55. Genda, interview no. 8.
56. Yasuji Watanabe, interview by Gordon Prange, 8 January 1948, interview no. 9, transcript, Prange Papers.
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Ibid.*
59. Kameto Kuroshima, interview by Gordon Prange, 28 November 1964, interview no. 1, transcript, Prange Papers.
60. Twenty-two divisions and twenty brigades were dedicated to China, while thirteen divisions and twenty-four brigades were dedicated to Manchuria. Demobilization Bureau, *Organization and Disposition of Japanese Army, 07 December 1941* (n.p.: Reports and Statistical Division, 14 January 1952), available at [Globalsecurity.org](http://Globalsecurity.org). See also Kennedy, *Pacific Onslaught*, p. 19.
61. Yasuji Watanabe, interview by Gordon Prange, 15 July 1947, interview no. 1, transcript, Prange Papers.
62. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 19 March 1951, transcript, Prange Papers.
63. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept*, p. 107.
64. David Evans and Mark Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1997), p. 460.
65. *Ibid.*
66. From a technical perspective, the Japanese had to perfect at-sea refueling for all ship types, modify their torpedoes so that they would operate in the shallow waters of Pearl Harbor, and develop bombs that would penetrate the deck armor of the U.S. battleships. These capabilities were nonexistent when the planning started.
67. The 1st Air Fleet was composed of six carriers divided into three carrier divisions: the 1st Carrier Division (*Akagi* and *Kaga*), the 2nd Carrier Division (*Hiryū* and *Sōryū*), and the 5th Carrier Division (*Shōkaku* and *Zuikaku*). The Pearl Harbor attack plan was tested twice. In the first test, the attack was discovered before it was launched; in the second, the surprise attack was successful. In that game losses on the Japanese side were two carriers sunk, two slightly damaged, and 127 aircraft lost. American losses were four capital ships sunk and one badly damaged; two carriers sunk and one damaged; six cruisers sunk or damaged; and 180 aircraft shot down. Agawa, *Reluctant Admiral*, p. 228.
68. Shigeshi Uchida, "Extracts from Diary and Duty Book of Capt. Shigeshi Uchida," in *Pearl Harbor Papers*, ed. Goldstein and Dillon, p. 81.
69. As tensions increased, the Japanese began to perceive the buildup of American airpower in the Philippines as a significant threat, specifically the B-17 bombers. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 11 March 1948, interview no. 4A, transcript, Prange Papers.
70. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept*, p. 24.
71. Koichi Shimada, "The Opening Air Offensive against the Philippines," in *The Japanese*



- Navy in World War II: In the Words of Former Japanese Naval Officers*, ed. David C. Evans, 2nd ed. (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1986), p. 76. The U.S. air strength in the Philippines was estimated at one fighter group of four squadrons (108 planes) at Nichols Field; one bomber group at Clark Field, comprising three bomber squadrons (about thirty-eight planes), one fighter squadron (twenty-seven planes), and two reconnaissance squadrons (thirteen planes); and twenty fighters based on other, subsidiary fields—an aggregate total of 206 aircraft. Besides these, the Navy was believed to have about seventy scout planes and carrier-borne fighters at Olongapo and Cavite. Supreme Commander Allied Powers, *Reports of General MacArthur*, p. 80.
72. In 1941, the average first-line Japanese pilot had between five hundred and eight hundred flying hours. About 50 percent of Japanese army pilots and 10 percent of navy pilots had had actual combat experience on the continent. The carrier air groups were led by the most experienced combat veterans available. Naval Analysis Division, *United States Strategic Bombing Survey: Summary Report (Pacific War)*, p. 2.
73. Shimada, “Opening Air Offensive against the Philippines,” p. 76.
74. *Ibid.*, pp. 76–78.
75. The 2nd Carrier Division and *Akagi* were chosen because of their shorter ranges. It was felt that it would be very difficult for them to refuel in the rough seas of the North Pacific. Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 12 March 1948, interview no. 5A, transcript, Prange Papers, and Prange, *At Dawn We Slept*, p. 282.
76. Matome Ugaki, *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941–1945*, trans. Masataka Chihaya (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), p. 13.
77. Planes would fly from there to cover the landings at Aparri scheduled for 10 December. The landings at Aparri and Camiguin Island were executed to establish air bases to support the main Lingayen Gulf landing. Shimada, “Opening Air Offensive against the Philippines,” p. 81.
78. Yasuji Watanabe, interview by Gordon Prange, 31 October 1949, interview no. 3, transcript, Prange Papers.
79. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept*, p. 327.
80. Lieutenant Commander Itaya commanded the fighter unit on *Akagi* and Lieutenant Commander Murata the torpedo bombers. Lieutenant Commander Takashige Egusa commanded the dive-bombers on *Sōryū*, Lieutenant Commander Takahashi those of *Shōkaku*. Lieutenant Commander Shimazaki was from *Zuikaku*, Lieutenant Commander Shindo from *Akagi*.
81. Japanese carriers could not launch all their aircraft at once; therefore, the attacks had to be launched in waves. The raid at Pearl Harbor comprised one attack of two waves, the first of 183 aircraft and the second of 167. The second attack would have been made by horizontal bombers, dive-bombers, and fighters. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 29 December 1947, interview no. 26, transcript, Prange Papers.
82. H. P. Willmott, *Empires in the Balance: Japanese and Allied Pacific Strategies to April 1942* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1982), pp. 13–14.
83. Ugaki, *Fading Victory*, p. 13.
84. For the covert transit of the force toward Hawaii, see Marty Bollinger, “Did a Soviet Merchant Ship Encounter the Pearl Harbor Strike Force?,” *Naval War College Review* 60, no. 4 (Autumn 2007), pp. 93–110.
85. For the most incisive examination of the details of the attack, see Zimm, *Attack on Pearl Harbor*. This author does not agree, however, with all its conclusions.
86. Ninety-four of 183 aircraft in wave one and eighty-nine of 167 in wave two were assigned air-superiority targets. H. P. Willmott, Tohmatsu Haruo, and Spencer W. Johnson, *Pearl Harbor* (London: Cassell, 2001), p. 180.
87. Masataka Chihaya, trans., “War Diary of the 5th Carrier Division, 1–31 December, 1941,” in *Pearl Harbor Papers*, ed. Goldstein and Dillon, p. 221.
88. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 4 June 1947, interview no. 9, transcript, Prange Papers.

89. Specific numbers vary, but the figures most often quoted are ninety-seven naval and seventy-seven army aircraft destroyed, with another 121 army and thirty-one naval aircraft damaged; Willmott, Haruo, and Johnson, *Pearl Harbor*, p. 134. Zimm quotes the following for aircraft and losses: of 143 Army Air Corps operational aircraft with eighty-eight under repair, after the attack eighty-seven were operational, seventy-nine repairable, and sixty-five destroyed, for a net loss of fifty-six operational aircraft. Of the 301 Navy aircraft, before the attack 202 were operational, fifty-two were in storage, thirty-one in overhaul, and sixteen under repair. Of these, eighty were destroyed and 169 damaged; Zimm, *Attack on Pearl Harbor*, p. 215.
90. The difference in the number between 222 parked aircraft and the 450 total is the aircraft believed to have been in the destroyed hangars. CO Task Force, message to task force, 0400 12 December, in "War Diary of the 5th Carrier Division, 1–31 December, 1941," trans. Chihaya, p. 228.
91. Goldstein and Dillon, eds., *Pearl Harbor Papers*, p. 308.
92. "Aircraft at Pearl Harbor," *WW II Pacific*, Dec 7, 1941, updated 25 July 2004, [www.ww2pacific.com/](http://www.ww2pacific.com/). See also Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, *Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack: Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack to the Congress of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1946) [hereafter *Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*], pp. 59, 65, available at [www.ilibrio.org/](http://www.ilibrio.org/).
93. Tatsuwaka Shibuyu, "Japanese Monograph no. 102: Submarine Operations, December 1941–April 1942," in *Pearl Harbor Papers*, ed. Goldstein and Dillon, p. 272.
94. Yasuji Watanabe, interrogation by Lt. Col. B. E. Sackett, 26 November 1945, transcript, Watanabe IPS Int. no. 2, box 20, Prange Papers.
95. *Ibid.* In fact, Task Force 8, based on the aircraft carrier *Enterprise*, was about two hundred miles west of Oahu en route to Pearl Harbor, and Task Force 12, with the carrier *Lexington*, was about 460 miles southeast of Midway en route to Midway. *Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, p. 64.
96. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 30 December 1947, interview no. 27, transcript, Prange Papers.
97. *Ibid.*
98. *Ibid.*
99. Minoru Genda, "Analysis no. 2 of the Pearl Harbor Attack," in *Pearl Harbor Papers*, ed. Goldstein and Dillon, p. 40.
100. Kameto Kuroshima, interview by Gordon Prange, 13 December 1964, interview no. 3, transcript, Prange Papers.
101. Stephan, *Hawaii under the Rising Sun*, p. 1.
102. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
103. Yasuji Watanabe, interview by Gordon Prange, 3–4 February 1966, transcript, Prange Papers.
104. Genda, interview, 19 March 1951.
105. Genda, interview, 4 November 1950.
106. It was Genda's plan to fly to Tokyo once the task force reached Truk, to discuss the plan with the Combined Fleet and the NGS. Genda later felt that Yamamoto would have agreed but that the NGS would have been opposed. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 3 February 1950, interview no. 4B, transcript, Prange Papers.
107. Minoru Genda, interview by Gordon Prange, 20 March 1948, interview no. 10A, transcript, Prange Papers.
108. Kusaka was against the plan. Genda, interview no. 27.
109. CO, message to task force, 0820 13 December, in "War Diary of the 5th Carrier Division, 1–31 December, 1941," trans. Chihaya, p. 229.
110. Combined Fleet telegram, Operational Order No. 19, 0200 15 December, in "War Diary of the 5th Carrier Division, 1–31 December, 1941," trans. Chihaya, p. 230.
111. Task Force Signal Order No. 32, 0805 15 December, in "War Diary of the 5th Carrier Division, 1–31 December, 1941," trans. Chihaya.
112. Task Force Signal Order No. 34, 1600 16 December 1941; Genda, interview no. 4B.
113. At the end of four months of war, they had executed the majority of their initial program and with greater ease than they had foreseen. Naval Analysis Division, *United States Strategic Bombing Survey: Summary Report (Pacific War)*, p. 3.

114. Genda, interview no. 10A.
115. The U.S. relief attempt centered on Task Force 11, with the carrier *Saratoga*, and Task Force 14, centered on *Lexington*.
116. Admiral Kimmel was relieved of command on 17 December 1941 and replaced temporarily by Vice Admiral Pye. Adm. Chester Nimitz would take over permanent command on 31 December 1941 as Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet and Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Area.
117. *Enterprise* normally carried eighty to ninety aircraft, while *Lexington* and *Saratoga* normally carried between eighty-one and eighty-three aircraft each; Globalsecurity.org. *Hiryū* and *Sōryū*, according to Genda, started the operation with fifty-seven aircraft each but had suffered casualties during the Pearl Harbor attack; Genda, interview no. 25.
118. This fact was readily revealed at the battle of the Coral Sea, 4–8 May 1942, where two carriers on each side fought each other to a stalemate. Coral Sea has rarely been seen for what it really was: the battle that destroyed the Japanese operational center of gravity. Jonathan Parshall and Anthony Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2005), p. 405.
119. Willmott, *Empires in the Balance*, p. 285.
120. The Midway plan called for the carriers to depart Japan and sail alone toward Midway, approaching the island from the northwest. Genda recommended that the plan be changed to have the carriers sail from the Marshall Islands and so approach Midway from the southwest. This track would have given the carriers support from the air forces on all the Japanese-held islands of the Central Pacific. Mitsuo Fuchida and Masatake Okumiya, “The Battle of Midway,” in *Japanese Navy in World War II*, ed. Evans, p. 8.
121. Stephan, *Hawaii under the Rising Sun*, p. 2.
122. Genda, interview no. 10A.