

Fred Borch and Daniel Martinez, **Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor: The Final Report Revealed**. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005. 215 pp., photographs, maps, appendices, annotated bibliography, index.

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Within the many books produced on the topic of the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, a variety of opinions subsequently emerged as to the degree of responsibility that should be apportioned to the two key commanders, Admiral Husband E. Kimmel and Lieutenant General Walter C. Short. Perhaps less well-known is the record of efforts to rehabilitate the reputations of both officers and more specifically, to restore them while alive, and later posthumously, to the ranks they held on December 7, 1941 and until their retirement in their lower permanent grades in early 1942.

Borch and Martinez have collaborated in providing not only the full report of the Department of Defense investigation mounted in 1995, but in providing germane background information relative to this and previous inquiries, and in supplementing the basic report with a well-researched commentary on the report's findings. The report has become unofficially known as the Dorn Report, named after Edwin Dorn, the then-Under-Secretary of Defense who headed the investigation and submitted the final report to the Secretary of Defense. Borch and Martinez are especially well-equipped to author this book since Borch, a military lawyer, served as the Army's representative to the investigating team, and Martinez has served for some years as the Chief Historian for the U.S. Park Service at the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial.

While there has been a plethora of books on the attack, previous authors have relied upon results of investigations and inquiries conducted in the 1940s. While the approved Dorn Report recommended no posthumous restoration of grade on the retired list of the respective services, it breaks new ground by holding neither officer liable for the totality of the debacle of December 7<sup>th</sup>. The report is also unsupportive of a variety of conspiracy theories though it departs from prior inquiry-based conclusions in allocating a degree of culpability to others such as Admiral Stark, General Marshall, and General Gerow.

An interesting sidelight commented upon, and not well-known, was the 1944 action of the Army Board for the Correction of Military Records (ABCMR) whose three member panel voted with one dissent, to restore General Short, on the retired list, to his highest grade held on the basis that the 1944 Army Board of Inquiry had determined Short not to have been derelict in the performance of duty. Unfortunately for the long-deceased Short whose appeal was filed by his son, the lone dissenting view on the panel was adopted by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army who denied the relief sought. This position was again sustained by the Secretary of the Army in 1995.

Borch and Martinez are not only intimately familiar with the various reports of inquiries and investigations but also with the vast literature associated with the 1941 attack. The often erroneous conclusions of many of these authors are refuted by Borch and Martinez who relate their assessment to the cited reports. One can conclude that along with this publication of the Dorn Report, there are really only two other books deemed to have achieved the requisite degree of objectivity and comprehensiveness. The authors comment favorably upon Gordon W. Prange's *At Dawn We Slept* and Roberta Wohlstetter's *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision*.

The central finding of the Dorn Commission is that Kimmel and Short failed to recognize that their primary mission was preparation for war with Japan, a reasonable expectation in light of the rapidly deteriorating relationship between the two powers in the months, weeks and days prior to December 7<sup>th</sup>. By failing to heed the likelihood of war's outbreak, Kimmel and Short failed to institute reasonable readiness measures, especially in light of the November 27, 1941 message which suggested the imminence of hostilities. While General Marshall, General Gerow, and Admiral Stark are the more significant members of a supporting cast of those contributing to the disaster, their shortfalls in transmitting sufficient and more precise information to Kimmel and Short do not absolve the two. The ultimate conclusion is that both those Oahu-based commanders were mentally unready, focused on divining Japanese intent rather than their operational capabilities, and in general displaying a lack of imagination as a result of which they became unable or unwilling to institute appropriate measures in the face of a clearly escalating threat.

In reading this work, this reviewer was also struck by the degree to which Kimmel and Short were, sadly, of an early 20th century mentality in which the lessons of modern warfare and recognition of the added value inherent in some of the latest technological developments did not resonate appreciably with either man. Both failed to display air-mindedness, in part evident by their disregard of the dangerous potential of an enemy mounting a carrier-based aerial attack. Neither seemed to pay much if any attention to the lessons learned from the November 1940 attack by the British on the Italian fleet at Taranto, notwithstanding a June 13, 1941 memorandum by the deputy of the Chief of Naval Operations to commanders of all U.S. Naval Districts, with a copy to Kimmel. This memorandum highlighted the results of torpedo plane attacks. Furthermore, the concept of an aerial attack on Pearl Harbor was not new, having been surfaced by the late General Billy Mitchell in 1924 at time of a visit to the islands. He in fact had predicted an aerial attack. Subsequent fleet exercises and war games in the 1930s incorporated simulated air attacks, clearly sounding a warning bell.

Relative to technology, radar held no apparent promise for Short or Kimmel. Finally, it is apparent that Kimmel and Short were, as a result of their inherent bureaucratic tendencies nurtured over many years, unwilling to engage in adequate information-sharing or to ask pointed questions that deserved airing. Both were poor choices for creating the degree of joint cooperation essential to planning realistically and in a timely manner for the growing Japanese threat.

Of the two officers that are at the center of the Dorn Report, Kimmel appears more guilty of errors of judgment while Short comes across as a general of unusual caution and lack of imagination which of course contributed to his own errors of judgment. One wonders about the thought that went into his assignment, given his primary career focus as a trainer. In the wake of the disaster, both men appear to have taken refuge in obsessing over what they saw as the failure of Navy and Army leadership to provide them adequate warning of war's imminence.

In adversity, both men supported each other but the Dorn Commission report clearly identifies Admiral Kimmel as being more culpable by virtue of withholding key information from General Short, and in the wake of the November 27, 1941 war warning from the Chief of Naval Operations, failing to execute an appropriate defensive deployment, albeit a step he should have begun comprehensively implementing long before the Sunday morning surprise arrival of Commander Mitsuo Fuchida and his fleet of aircraft.

Interest in Pearl Harbor seems not to have dimmed with the passage of the years. However *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor* seems destined to be one of the trio of best-researched treatments available and essential reading.