
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

Series 3: “The Four Freedoms” and FDR in World War II

File No. 1400-A

1941 December 8

Address to Congress - Declaring War on Japan

H1400

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
BROADCAST FROM THE CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, D.C.
December 8, 1941 -- 12:30 P.M., E.S.T.

MR. VICE PRESIDENT, AND MR. SPEAKER, AND MEMBERS OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES: (TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:)

Yesterday, December 7, 1941 -- a date which will live in infamy -- the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its Government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in the American Island of Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to (the) our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost. In addition American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.

Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted. SI -- IMLB, S -- separator when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

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Malaya.

Last night Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong.

Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam.

Last night Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands.

Last night the Japanese attacked Wake Island.

And this morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense.

But always will (we) our whole nation remember the character of the onslaught against us. (applause)

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to (loud and prolonged cheers and applause) absolute victory.

I believe that I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will make it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again (endanger us) endanger us (again). (applause)

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory and our interests are in grave danger.

With confidence in our armed forces -- with the unbounding determination of our people -- we will gain the inevitable triumph -- so help us God. (applause)

I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December seventh, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire. (loud and prolonged cheers and applause).

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

THE WHITE HOUSE,

December 8, 1941.

December 7, 1941.

PROPOSED MESSAGE TO THE CONGRESS

Yesterday, December 7, 1941, a date which will live in ~~infamy~~
the United States of America was ~~suddenly~~ and deliberately attacked
by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan. ~~in the Pacific~~

The United States was at the moment at peace with that nation and was
~~still in~~ continuing conversations with its Government and its Emperor looking
toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after
Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in ~~Honolulu~~ ^{Oahu}
the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered
to the Secretary of State a formal reply to a ~~former~~ message, ~~from the~~
~~While~~ ^{recent American} ~~This reply contained~~ ^{stated} ~~it seemed useless to continue to negotiate with~~
~~must be considered~~ ^{it} ~~and~~ ^{or} ~~war or~~
armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance ~~between~~ ^{across} ~~the~~ ^{was} ~~island~~ ^{island} of
Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the ~~attack~~ ^{was} ~~deliberately~~
~~or~~ ^{or} ~~was~~ ^{planned} many days ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Govern-
ment has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false
statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

~~The attack~~*the Hawaiian Islands has*

caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. Very many American lives have been lost. In addition American ~~ships~~ ships have been torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.

Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack

against Malaya.

*On last night Japanese forces attacked Sasebo.
Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending*

across the Pacific.

throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday speak for

themselves. The people of the United States have already formed

their opinions and well understand the implications ~~of these attacks~~

To us
~~on~~ the safety of our nation.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy I have ~~ordered~~ directed that all measures be taken for our defense.

Long will we remember the character of the onslaught against us.

(A) No matter how long it may take us
~~to~~ to overcome this unmitigated aggression,
the American people will in their righteous
m might win through to absolute victory.

I speak the will of the Congress and of the people ~~of this~~
~~country~~ when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to
the uttermost but will see to it that this form of treachery shall
never endanger us again. Hostilities exist. There is no mincing
the fact that our people, our territory and our interests are in
grave danger.

I, therefore, ask that the Congress declare that since the
unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December
seventh, ^{has} ~~and~~ a state of war exists between the United States and the
Japanese Empire.

~~With perfect confidence in our right~~

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 15, 1941

MEMORANDUM:

This is the first draft of the
messaged dictated by the President
to Congress. The pencilled notes are
mine.

HARRY L. HOPKINS

From the Papers of

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT LIBRARY
ALBANY, N. Y.

Harry L. Hopkins

December 8, 1941

MEMORANDUM

I saw the President at 8:30 this morning and attached is the last draft of the speech.

I suggested that he take out "at the moment" in the fourth line on page 1 and "minor menace" on page 3. I also wrote the next to the last paragraph for him.

The speech is going to be given at 12:30 and I am going down with Mrs Roosevelt to hear it.

The President was receiving the latest despatches this morning and the news is surely not good. But, as ever, he had a good night's sleep, although someone woke him up at 7:30.

He dictated to Steve a long news release to be given out at once.

I told him I thought he should invite the Supreme Court and he readily agreed. This has been done.

From the Papers of
Harry L. Hopkins

HARRY S. TRUMAN LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY PARK, PA., U. S.

HARRY L. HOPKINS

MESSAGE TO THE CONGRESS

DECEMBER 8, 1941

From the papers of
Harry L. Hopkins

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT LIBRARY
ARCHIVES, A.
1941 PAPERS

Yesterday, December 7, 1941 -- a date which will live in infamy -- the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

Not?
The United States was at the moment at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its Government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to the Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. While this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. Very many American lives have been lost. In addition American ships have been torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.

Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya.

Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam.

Last night Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands.

Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very safety of our nation.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense.

Long will we remember the character of the onslaught against us.

? No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people will in their righteous might win through to absolute victory.

I speak the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will see to it that this form of treachery shall never endanger us again.

Derby

From the Papers of

Hostilities exist. There is no mincing the fact
that our people, our territory and our interests are in
grave danger.

I, (therefore,) ask that the Congress declare that
since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on
Sunday, December seventh, a state of war has existed
between the United States and the Japanese Empire.

Honesty

With unfaltering confidence in our
armed forces - with faith in our people -
- with the ~~assurance of the rightness~~ ^{the} ~~confidence~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} cause
etc - we will smite ~~giving~~ ^{the} God
to help us God.
unswal~~l~~ ^{the} triumph

DRAFT NO. 2

December 7, 1941.

PROPOSED MESSAGE TO THE CONGRESS

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The United States was at the moment at peace with that nation and was still in conversation with its Government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in Hawaii and the Philippines, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to the Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. This reply contained a statement that it seemed useless to continue the diplomatic negotiations, but it contained no threat nor hint of war nor of an armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to

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As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy I have, of course, directed that all measures be taken for our defense.

Long will we remember the character of the onslaught against us.

I speak the will of the Congress and of the people of this country when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will see to it that this form of treachery shall never endanger us again. Hostilities exist. There is no mincing the fact that our people, our territory and our interests are in grave danger.

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Find Draft

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As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense.

Always: ~~long~~ will we remember the character of the onslaught against us.

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people will in their righteous might win through to absolute victory.

Before I interpret
I ~~will~~ the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will ~~see to it~~ make very certain that this form of treachery shall never endanger us again.

Hostilities exist. There is no ~~denying~~ the fact
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Final Draft

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P.P.E.

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HOLD FOR RELEASE

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HOLD FOR RELEASE

HOLD FOR RELEASE
Dec 6, 1941

CONFIDENTIAL: To be held in STRICT CONFIDENCE
and no portion, synopsis or intimation to be
published or given out until delivery of the
President's message to the Congress HAS BEGUN.

1710

Dec. 6, 1941. ^{12:30}
Release expected about ~~10:00~~ P. M., E. S. T.,
~~January 6, 1941.~~

CAUTION: Extreme care must be exercised to
avoid premature publication.

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

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