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President Roosevelt told him that the American people would never agree to enter the war in Europe unless they were attack [sic] within their own borders.

. . . He [Smith] was privy to Top Secret operations and worked directly with all of our outstanding leaders. He followed the orders of his President and spent many later years contemplating this action which he considered ethically and morally wrong.

I do not know the Kimmel family, therefore would gain nothing by fabricating this situation, however, I do feel the time has come for this conspiracy to be exposed and Admiral Kimmel be vindicated of all charges. In this manner perhaps both he and my father may rest in peace.1

Smith first told his story to his daughter and granddaughter in the 1970s, Hamman said, and it bothered him a great deal. Hamman had herself served in the Red Cross on the West Coast during World War II and never had heard anything about this before. She was surprised by the story, but she knew, she said, that "Papa would not lie." Unfortunately, her father had left no papers and never told her of any specific actions he took to fulfill President Roosevelt's request. She had not thought about her father's story again until she read about efforts to restore the ranks of Kimmel and Short.

Because Hamman had nothing but her recollections to corroborate the story, without further evidence it was still only a story. Even if it were true, it would appear to have been a merely quiet shift of employees, equipment, and supplies within the overall massive buildup of the Red Cross in preparation for war, paralleling a similar effort in the military from the 1940 Soldier and Sailors Act. Supporting information turned up in Red Cross records at the National Archives, but no "smoking gun" indicated that such an effort had taken place. Ultimately, however, a copy of the Hawaii Chapter's *Annual Report* for the fiscal year ending 30 June 1942 confirmed the secret receipt of medical supplies by the Red Cross at Pearl Harbor immediately before attack. In part, it reads:

In the latter half of 1941, and indeed prior thereto, the Hawaii Chapter took the definite position that there was serious trouble ahead in the Pacific. In spite of peaceful cooings from both American and "enemy" sources, and suggestions to slow down, we stepped up.

. . . We obtained from National Headquarters of the American Red Cross in Washington vital medical supplies and drugs to the value of some \$50,000, which were here before December 7th, unbeknown save to a very few, and were stored in cooperation with the Army. We likewise obtained from Washington First Aid

equipment and supplies to the value of about \$25,000, which were also available.<sup>2</sup>

This seems to correspond with Hamman's recollection of what her father had told her. So why did the story not come out at the time? And what about the cooperative efforts with the Army to store the supplies? Who in the Army knew, and where were the supplies stored? Did General Short, the Army commanding officer for the Hawaiian Department, know about these supplies? If he did, then he also would have been better prepared for the attack. The best answer to these questions is that Hawaiian Red Cross officials must have thought the secret transfer of supplies was in response to previous requests for assistance from national headquarters. Additional evidence indicates, however, that a few Hawaiian officials may have received an advance warning.

The supplies might have been kept secret for several reasons. Hawaiian Red Cross officials might have wanted to protect them from potential Japanese saboteurs, about whom military officials had been duly warned. Those officials also were soliciting donations and volunteers from the community to help in preparing supplies. Publicizing receipt of the medical supplies might have dampened enthusiasm and support for Red Cross projects.

Regarding the question of Army cooperation, the Army had been supportive of the Red Cross and civilian defense preparations and was undoubtedly supporting these efforts at the time. General Short's Army Day Speech to the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce on 6 April 1941 corroborates this. The subject of this major speech was civilian defense preparation—including preparations that should be made by the Red Cross—and was deemed important enough by the Army board and the joint congressional committee to have been included in the official record.<sup>3</sup>

### Personnel

Red Cross personnel activities and assignments appear to support the Hamman story as well. A select number of experienced people were tapped to go to Hawaii in fall 1941—all of them directed from Washington. Some arrived as regular transfers; others appear to have been special transfers. Almost all arrived just in time to prepare for the Pearl Harbor attack in the rapid and massive buildup that resulted from the Selective Service Act of 1940.<sup>4</sup>

From required Red Cross monthly field reports, nurses recruited for the military by the Red Cross and those who had received commissions as Army nurses filed reports, noting their times of arrival. One of the two new Red Cross nurses at Station Hospital Hickam Field in Honolulu, on duty the morning of 7 December 1941, wrote in a 16 February 1942 letter to Major Julia O. Flikke,

Superintendent of the Army Nurse Corps in Washington:

. . . As you may recall, there were just six of us, who, on November 15th were transferred to Station Hospital, Hickam Field. We felt that we were the happiest group of nurses anywhere—a new 30 bed hospital, lovely quarters—just two blocks from the Officer's Club, nice working hours, more social activity than we could possibly crowd in, the hospitality of our Medicos, and above all—the grandest chief nurse, Miss A[nnie Gayton] Fox, who enjoys everything as much as we do.5

The writer, who is not identified in the correspondence but who was one of the two nurses on duty the morning of 7 December (along with a Miss Boyd, according to the text), had transferred from Walter Reed Army Hospital in July 1941 and had been transferred again from somewhere else, arriving for duty in Hawaii at the new hospital on 15 November 1941.

Red Cross Field Director Nell Ennis, at the U.S. Naval Hospital in Pearl Harbor, filed her first narrative report for November to December 1941. She wrote:

The greatest difficulty was the fact that the supplies ordered in October had not been received. This was a real handicap, for, as we were expecting this shipment daily we did not want to make local purchases thereby duplicating the order.

. . . the following month [December] brought an avalanche of work entirely foreign to any previous services I have ever been called upon to do.

. . . The Red Cross volunteers were my only workers and without them I could not have carried on.

. . . There were six Gray Ladies who had received training at other naval stations and the medical staff frequently spoke of their efficiency and endurance.6

On 22 November 1941, William Carl Hunt, acting manager of the Eastern Area, sent a memorandum on American Red Cross National Headquarters letterhead to the Eastern Area headquarters staff and New England field staff that read:

Mr. Robert Shepard has accepted an emergency assignmant [sic] as Executive Director of the Hawaii Chapter. He will be leaving for this post about the first of December. . . . in these times such changes of assignment are necessary in order to bring the full strength of the Red Cross to bear upon whatever emergencies arise.7

According to the National American Red Cross Human Resources office, Shepard was one of the organization's most experienced and capable people. He arrived in Hawaii a few days after the Pearl Harbor attack, but he never became executive director. *The Honolulu Advertiser* recorded his arrival and qualifications on Christmas Day 1941.

Shepard is not the only national office staff member sent to Hawaii during this critical period, as a 12 December 1941 national office press release states. These staff members are not named or identified, but another Red Cross document indicates their titles.

Mr. Castle's [Alfred Castle, chairman, Hawaii Red Cross Chapter] cable also stated that co-operation between the Red Cross and the local Civilian Defense in the emergency was excellent. The Hawaiian Red Cross was equipped with large supplies of clothing, made by women volunteers in the islands, and also had stores of food and medical supplies. Five members of the national Red Cross staff from Washington, were sent to the islands some time ago.<sup>8</sup>

#### Red Cross Activity in Hawaii

The secret cache of medical supplies appears to have had a bearing on a discrepancy concerning the number of first aid stations established between 8 December and 12 December. An 8 December 1941 press release of the American Red Cross News Service states that, "Prior to the beginning of hostilities the American Red Cross established 10 emergency medical stations on the islands and made other plans for emergency operations."<sup>9</sup>

According to a 12 December 1941 press release from American Red Cross News Service-based Hawaiian Red Cross Cables, "Twelve 50-bed Red Cross first aid stations had been set up in Hawaii, completely equipped with doctors, nurses and first aid personnel, the Red Cross stated."<sup>10</sup>

As difficult as it was to get equipment and supplies to Hawaii, two extra 50-bed first aid stations represented either a large expectation of casualties or a large error on someone's part, particularly in light of Ennis's complaint that by November she had not received all of her supplies ordered in October.

The site where the medical supplies were stored continues to be elusive. The most complete account for 7 December 1941 is by Betty MacDonald, the social page editor of *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, in an article published on Saturday, 13 December 1941. "To the Women of Hawaii—There Is Work To Be Done" states that the Red Cross Motor Corps was mobilized completely

by 1400 on the 7th at their headquarters in the Castle Kindergarten Building in downtown Honolulu. The activities of the motor corps in evacuating civilians through that night and into the next morning is well documented.

MacDonald, now Betty McIntire, remembers nothing more than what she wrote in her article, except that the editor had cut out all graphic details of the condition of the wounded. The editor had revised significantly what she wrote and may have added material, because McIntire did not remember some of the points in the article.

The most probable location of the secret supplies was in downtown Honolulu, somewhere that was accessible from the motor corps headquarters. An outbuilding at the then-sprawling Fort DeRussy is the most likely site. The existence and location of the surgical dressings made by the Hawaii Chapter are well documented and known; these also were distributed by the motor corps. The motor corps probably began its 7 December trips downtown, picking up supplies and delivering them to hospital and medical sites and then picking up evacuees or wounded and delivering them to medical facilities or civilian relocation centers on the return trip to Honolulu.

In the book *At His Side: The Story of the American Red Cross Overseas in World War II* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1945), George Gershon Korson writes that the motor corps' "first assignment on 7 December was the delivery of Red Cross surgical dressing and medical supplies to the Army and naval hospitals and civilian emergency hospitals set up in school and government buildings." None of the first-hand accounts from military hospital personnel and commanding officers records the delivery of any Red Cross supplies or the work of Red Cross ambulances, nor can any reference be found for Korson's statement.

#### War Volunteer Study and Staffing Levels

In his monthly report for November 1941, American Red Cross Director of Personnel J. Blaine Gwin made a significant statement about the escalation in staffing:

It is interesting to note that we have reached the point where the total number of temporary staff members exceeds the number of permanent or regular staff members, being 1,505 temporary employees as compared with 1,029 permanent or regular employees.<sup>11</sup>



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With Betty MacDonald's article, "To the Women of Hawaii—There Is Work To Be Done," the 13 December 1941 issue of *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin* included photos of the Red Cross at work in the city—with plenty of supplies. Above, W. W. G. Moir, head of the motor corps unit—and one who might have known where the secret supplies were stored—takes a call for bandages, as Eileen Waterman signs out on an assignment. According to the article, "While the shooting was still going on, Alfred Castle, head of the American Red Cross in Hawaii, met with a group of workers at city hall." For the first time that year, Castle and his family mysteriously had stayed home for the weekend.

In order to determine how many volunteers would be needed, the National Headquarters conducted a study on the "proposed utilization of volunteers on the national organization staff." It was completed on 29 October 1941, sent to the chairman, and subsequently forwarded to Red Cross national office area directors by Director of Domestic Operations DeWitt Smith on 2 December 1941.<sup>12</sup> Only a few positions could be identified as suitable for volunteers at the national headquarters, where full-time permanent employees were needed, but many volunteers would be needed by the Red Cross chapters.

While it is noteworthy that the study was completed a month in advance of the Pearl Harbor attack and forwarded to the area directors just five days before it, the most significant fact seems to be that the Red Cross national office had for all practical purposes already staffed up to wartime operational levels by November 1941, even though war had not yet begun.

Red Cross Home Service Director Sanderson opened his November 1941 monthly report, dated 3 December 1941, with the statement: "Every phase of our Home Service program has continued to develop new interests and a tremendous increase in activity has been in evidence during the month." All of the Home Service field representative staffs had been called in on 10 November for "instructions regarding the study now being made of Chapters in areas adjacent to military centers." Buried in this

report is another statement worthy of note:

The report from the Pacific Area shows that the Home Service staff has been augmented for the special study by the Director of Disaster Relief, Director of Personnel, Administrative Assistant, and three General Field Representatives, all of whom met with the Home Service group on the 10th and 11th [November 1941].<sup>13</sup>

These must be the Washington people mentioned in the previously cited 12 December press release, even though the release said five were from Washington and six are named here. This group met with the Home Service group early in the month as part of a special Pacific emphasis. When they were deployed to Hawaii is not stated, but it was in time to be on-site for the Pearl Harbor attack. The national Red Cross office was giving particular attention to the Pacific, which could be expected. But does any evidence support the notion that they were given advance planning information of the Pearl Harbor attack? A possible answer can be found in the diaries of William Castle, a former Under Secretary of State whose brother Alfred was the Chairman of the Red Cross in Hawaii. On 26 December 1941, William received his first correspondence from brother Alfred after the bombing on 7 December and recorded in his diary:

This morning I actually had letters from Alfred in Honolulu. . . . Alfred and his family always go to the country for the week-end; this was the first time this year they had not gone. Alfred said that he felt the moment to be exceedingly critical and that he did not want to be out of town. This remark made me think very hard, because it would suggest that they knew in Honolulu, far better than we did here, how critical the situation was.<sup>14</sup>

Alfred Castle's daughter Gwendolyn remembers an unusual conversation with her father about going to the Laie house on Friday, 5 December. She wrote:

Indeed, I do know why Father and Mother didn't go to Laie the weekend of December 7th. Father felt that, from news he had received from letters from Uncle Billy [William Castle] in Washington war with Japan was imminent. Charlie (my then-husband) and I wanted to use the Laie house that weekend as we had been invited to the Spaldings' (nearby) for tennis and lunch on Sunday. On Friday Father called me and said he would rather we wouldn't go to Laie as he felt a Japanese attack was imminent. I told Charlie that when he came home that evening, and he said that as the navy had its patrol planes 2,000 miles out there was no way the Japanese could have a surprise attack. I told Father this the next day, and he reluctantly agreed to let us go. So of course that is where we were when the attack came that Sunday morning.

The timing of this conversation two days before the Pearl Harbor attack raises a question, especially since William Castle's diary entries do not support the reason given by Alfred for knowing that an attack by the Japanese was imminent. It appears that Alfred was covering another confidential source by using his brother's name. No one would question that the former Under Secretary of State would have confidential sources and that he might convey such information. The Castle family has indicated that the former Hawaii Red Cross chairman had many confidential sources, and much of his correspondence or notes of conversations no longer exist.

Taken alone, this might mean nothing and be merely coincidental, but the comments reflect a striking correlation with actions by some of President Roosevelt's closest staff 6,000 miles away. The President's Naval Aide, Captain John R. Beardall, had come unannounced to the White House in full uniform for Sunday duty, a first since his arrival in May 1941. Beardall testified in the congressional hearings on the Pearl Harbor attack in 1946 that he also put his staff on 24-hour duty for the first time beginning Friday, 5 December 1941. His response to questioning from Senator Homer Ferguson (R-MI) used almost the same language as Castle, even though they were recorded years apart and no evidence exists that the two had never conversed: "The situation was getting more tense in the diplomatic relations, and I wanted somebody to be there in case I was going out for dinner or somewhere else . . . ."15 Beardall was someone with direct access to MAGIC—the deciphered intercepts of Japanese diplomatic messages. So how was it that Alfred Castle came up with this language and stayed home that weekend in Honolulu? This appears to be evidence of contact with someone who either had access, or was being advised by someone with access, to MAGIC intelligence.

As Hamman pointed out in her letter, her father had top-secret clearance and was privy to other secret operations during the war. Why not this one?

### *Budget Activity*

In fall 1941, the Red Cross conducted its most aggressive peacetime annual "Roll Call" fundraising campaigns, with national coverage and using well-known personalities and heavy business involvement. Most of the cabinet officers, particularly high military officials, gave significantly throughout the fall on behalf of the Roll Call. Behind the scenes, some unusual budgetary activity was taking place. Red Cross records show the change from peacetime to wartime before the Pearl Harbor attack.

At the meeting of the American Red Cross Central Committee on 24 June 1941, committee members adopted its first resolution moving it to a war footing:

That the Central Committee hereby approves the following general provisions with reference to a possible campaign for a national Defense Fund, or for a War Relief Fund in the event of the involvement of this country in war. It is recognized that the development of events and other unforeseen conditions may require some adaptation of these general provisions and the Chairman is authorized to take such steps in this connection as seem to him wise and necessary.<sup>16</sup>

The provisions that follow the resolution recognize:

That the National Defense activities or the War Relief activities, if this country becomes involved, will require the participation of practically the entire organization and activities of the Red Cross, and that it is not practicable to segregate these activities in such a way as to finance some of them from the General Fund and others from the National Defense or the War Relief Fund or the Foreign War Relief Fund.

The Chairman is authorized, if in his judgment the timing of events makes such a step necessary, to combine the fund raising campaign with the regular annual Roll Call and the Junior enrollment, under such terms and conditions as he may approve.

At the 16 September 1941 meeting of the central committee, the chairman was authorized to make special arrangements for the national office to receive more than the usual 50 cents from some of the larger membership gifts in the intensified Roll Call drive.<sup>17</sup> A member was defined as anyone giving more than one dollar. The standard peacetime practice was for the national office to receive 50 cents per membership, and the remainder of the gift would remain with the chapters to fund their activities. The reason for the change appears in the statement approved by the central committee:

It was recognized that major emergencies might develop before the Roll Call which would require changes in the fund raising plans and the Chairman was authorized to take appropriate steps should such emergencies occur.

On Saturday, 29 November 1941, DeWitt Smith sent three memos to key Red Cross managers with an attachment for \$1 million to finance expenditures not covered in the current budget. This had been approved by the chairman the day before, using the emergency authority. Smith also wrote in the cover memo that

they should not wait until the end of December as planned to revamp the budget but should do so at the end of November. The date of the memo being 29 November, this was an order to make an immediate revision of the budget, because the next day was the end of the month.<sup>18</sup> Most of the materials were for running a massive support system for servicemen after the war had begun. But the war had not begun; this was eight days before the Pearl Harbor attack.

### Assessment

The role played by the Red Cross at Pearl Harbor has been neglected by historians, mostly because accounts inevitably focus on the military attack. In all of the confusion after the Japanese attack and with military censorship, the arrival and activities of Red Cross medical workers at all of the major military locations immediately before the Pearl Harbor attack were not questioned, most likely because of the high esteem in which the organization always had been held. Their arrival had been coordinated quietly from Washington and even most of the workers themselves—although some seem to have had more information—thought it a mere coincidence that they were there just before the attack. But thanks to Don Smith's daughter, it is now known that it was no accident that specific pieces were in place in the nick of time. It appears to have been part of a planned operation within the rapid overall growth of the Red Cross.

In 1941, only a small group of people close to President Roosevelt were the real players and were actually part of the decision-making process. Many of these same people were also on the Red Cross Board. In effect, the Red Cross became an extension of their policy-execution process, which explains why the personnel and budget activities so closely paralleled White House insiders' knowledge and decision-making. They could operate quietly, without the rest of Washington knowing. The location of the Red Cross two blocks from the White House and the State Department (now the Old Executive Office Building) made this even easier. And in the case of the Red Cross, some of President Roosevelt's closest war advisers and some who received MAGIC intelligence were the same ones who served on the Red Cross board and sat on its central committee. This included the President's physician, Rear Admiral Ross T. McIntire, the Navy Department representative and the Navy Surgeon General; Sumner Wells, the Under Secretary of State; and Harry Hopkins (who was closely involved with the Red Cross Roll Call in fall 1941 and was appointed to the central committee in 1942).<sup>19</sup>

The relationship between the Red Cross, the military, and the White House always has been close, but at no time does it appear

to have been closer than just before the outbreak of the Pacific War at Pearl Harbor.

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Mr. Borgquist is media affairs officer for the Community Relations Service Headquarters, U.S. Department of Justice. He also is a U.S. Naval Reserve public affairs officer. The views reflected here are his own. This article was not prepared as part of any of his official duties.

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1. Department of Defense Investigation, "Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense: Advancement of Rear Admiral Kimmel and Major General Short" (also known as the "Dorn Report") signed by Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Edwin Dorn, 15 December 1995. ([back to article](#))

2. *Annual Report for the Year Ending June 30, 1940*, Hawaii Chapter of the American Red Cross, p. 1. The Hawaii Chapter and the National Archives do not have copies in their collections. What is likely the last existing copy of the document is in the Hawaii War Records Depository, University of Hawaii, Manoa, document #59.02. ([back to article](#))

3. LGEN Walter C. Short, Army Day Speech, Exhibit 1-O, "Proceedings of the Army Pearl Harbor Board," found at pp. 2607-2610, Part 30, in the *Hearings before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, U.S. Congress*, 1946. ([back to article](#))

4. *American Red Cross, 1935-1946*, National Archives Record Group 200 (Hereafter cited as ARC 1935-1946, RG 200), "1940-1941 Annual Report of Military and Naval Welfare Service." The general history of the ARC in World War II is in Box 1. ([back to article](#))

5. *ARC 1935-1946*, RG 200, Box 1705 Serial Code 900.11/6131 P.O.A., File: "Station Hospital, Hickam Field, TH." ([back to article](#))

6. *ARC 1935-1946*, RG 200, Box 1705, Serial Code 900.11/6131, P.O.A., File: "Hawaii Area—218th General Hospital." ([back to article](#))

7. *ARC 1935-1946*, RG 200, Boxes 456-457, Serial Code 187.211 (C 141.02). ([back to article](#))

8. *ARC 1935-1946*, RG 200, Box 14, Serial Code 020.1801, Press Release # 67107, 12 December 1941. The success of the civilian defense organization and credit for its planning belongs to LGEN Short, who devoted great effort to this throughout 1941.

Correspondence from a major Hawaiian business owner after the war in Short's papers at the U.S. Army Military History Institute and Army War College Library, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, attest to this. ([back to article](#))

9. ARC 1935-1946, RG 200, Box 14, Serial Code 020.1801, Press Release #67047, 8 December 1941. ([back to article](#))

10. Same citation as in endnote 8. ([back to article](#))

11. ARC 1935-1946, RG 200, Box 164, Serial Code 140.18. ([back to article](#))

12. ARC 1935-1946, RG 200, Box 591, Serial # 300.02. Memorandum of 2 December 1941, with attachments; to Mr. Hunt, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Schafer; from DeWitt Smith, "Subject: Proposed utilization of volunteers on the national organization staff." ([back to article](#))

13. ARC 1935-1946, RG 200, Box 185, Serial Code 140.14 Document at this location is coded 140.18 H.S. ([back to article](#))

14. Diaries of William Richardson Castle, unpublished, Houghton Library, Harvard University, ms Am 2021, vol. 42, page 320. ([back to article](#))

15. *Hearings before the Joint Committee of the Pearl Harbor Attack, U.S. Congress*, Part 10, 15, 16, 18, 19, and 20 February 1946, pp. 5280-5283. ([back to article](#))

16. "Minutes of the Central Committee Meeting," 24 June 1941, memorandum dated 25 June 1941. ARC 1935-1946, RG 200, Box 112, Serial Code 114.22, File:"Central Committee." ([back to article](#))

17. "Minutes of September 16, 1941, Meeting of the ARC Central Committee," memorandum dated 18 October 1941. ARC 1935-1946, RG 200, Box 112. ([back to article](#))

18. ARC 1935-1946, RG 200, Box 579, Serial code 240.12 S.A. 7. Memorandum from DeWitt Smith, Director, Domestic Operations to Mr. Betts, dated 29 November 1941, "Additional Appropriations." ([back to article](#))

19. Two American Red Cross lists provide a good overview of board composition during this critical time period: "Members of the Central Committee During the World War II Period" and "Members of the Central and Executive Committee for 1941." ARC 1935-1946, RG 200, Box 110. McIntire's whereabouts on 7 December 1941, are described generally in his autobiography, *Ross T. McIntire, White House Physician* (New York: G.P.

Putnam's Sons, 1946), pp. 136-137. ([back to article](#))

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