Lest We Forget: Wiretapping in Another Era

Description

In reference to the current debate over the NSA â€œwiretappingâ€• issue, we have been here before.

The situation is in many ways similar, but, it was a different time. It was a time when an attack on American soil awakened a sleeping giant, that then, with a crippled, and barely adequate military, travelled across two large oceans and set their youth into harmâ€™s way, with the will of the people firmly behind them.

The first engagement in the Pacific was Pearl Harbor. The enemy took the initiative and caught us unprepared for the challenge, despite General Billy Mitchell having shown us we were not able to protect our national security in the late 30â€™s.

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The next engagement in that theater was the Battle of the Coral Sea, where a non aviation admiral, Admiral Raymond Spruance, took a new type of battle force against a powerful enemy and he held the line of the Japanese advance into the southern Pacific. As a side note, much has been written critisizing Adm Spruance for his perceived lack of agressiveness with his fleet, but the bottom line is we had suffered major blows and his conservative approach acheived a turning point, where they progressed no more.

Next came a tiff in the vicinity of a very small island, big enough for little more than an airstrip and populated by gooney birds named Midway. It was an incredible naval victory for the US, where we caught the Japanese carriers by surprise. Heroism was a common virtue in that battle, with famous names of ships such as USS THATCH and USS McCLUSKEY being named after valiant aviators who carried the day in that moment.

What allowed us to sink four Japanese carriers to the loss of our one (YORKTOWN)? It began with what we might call â€œwiretappingâ€• today: Interception and reading of the Japanese Naval Code.

The story is incredible, how a group of Navy code breakers struggled to break the code, then had a dummy â€œin the clearâ€• message sent from Midway, saying the island was running out of fresh water. In subsequent intercepts, the Japanese coded messages reported this â€œcondition,â€• and therefore our experts were then confident they had the right methods to ensure other coded messages â€œbreaksâ€• could be given the highest degree of confidence.

Read this excerpt from a site discussing the history of the Midway Atoll:

> During World War II, the U.S. utilized a great military intelligence advantage over the Japanese, in both their radar capabilities and code breaking. The radar on Midway gave position, bearing, and altitude. Intelligence experts discovered that the Japanese planned to attack an unknown site referred to as â€œAF.â€• To test the theory that Midway was the target, a disinformation message regarding Midwayâ€™s freshwater supply was sent out

over open communication channels. The Japanese intercepted the message and redistributed it in their JN 25 code, saying that â€œAFâ€• needed freshwater. This strengthened intelligence allowed Admiral Nimitz to reinforce Midwayâ€™s defenses and station additional bombers, fighters, and torpedo aircraft on Eastern Island in preparation for the suspected attack.

Clearly, our govenrment officials, with the sanction of the President, had listened in on the tactical and strategic messages of the enemy, who intended to harm us, in this case, once more, as a follow up to the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Across time, this method has been hailed as the runing point of the War in the Pacific, and how in less than a year, a underdeveloped Navy had come back from a major blow, devised entirely new strategies, and had taken the fight to the enemy. Pretty impressive.

Should we now impunge the character of President Roosevelt (who had the Bill of Rights as a restriction on his actions) and demand a reversal? No, that would be ludicrous.

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Look at the common threads:

1) Japan wanted resources. We blocked them with embargos. They decided to destroy us in order to be able to go to the areas of the world where oil, metal and rubber resources were, and take them via a military presense. We reacted with economic sanctions on them, thus causing shortages of the strategic materials of the day.

2) Japan, acting as the agressor, attacked our soverign territory.

3) Japan planned another attack on our territiory.

4) Government officials, acting on official orders, listened in on the conversations of the enemy (Japan) in order to find out how to defend our nation.

5) Japan lost the war, yet is now a major democratic and economic powerhouse, and is not occupied by the United States, in fact, they are one of our closest allies.

See the connection? The difference is the modern day agressors in this story do not have the covering of a soverign nation status, and defined borders, but otherwise, they still desire to attack and destroy us, for we interfere with their expansionist plans, and desire for major power status on the worldâ€™s stage. The Islamic terrorists do not want the strategic materials, they just want sharia law spread worldwide and have proven they will kill those who are 1) weak and 2) those who resist.

Polish mathematicians broken the German Enigma Codes, and turned that information over to the British, who exploited it throughouot the way, and shared the intelligence with us to re-route naval convoys of troops and material around U-Boats in the Atlantic.

We also were reading the Berlin-Tokyo diplomatic message, as a result of breaking that Japanese set of codes.

In each of these three cases, this effort produced free people and not more oppression. Why canâ€™t anyone see that in the current situation?

Thanks to Little Green Footballs for the Open Thread!

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Category

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