

Villa Kerillon on the outskirts of Lorient. Dönitz and his staff were stretched as they organised and controlled operations in the eastern Atlantic, west coast of Africa, the Mediterranean (after Hitler decided to send submarines to support his ailing Italian ally), and the western Atlantic after the US entered the war following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Equally of concern for Dönitz was the morale and welfare of his submariners, many of whom were tired and well overdue for relief with many U-boats lost due to inexperienced crews or over-worked veterans. The overtaxed Allied convoy escorts also had the fair share of issues as well and Commander, later Captain Walker, died before the war ended due to exhaustion and ill health.

Apart from some minor proof-reading issues this is an excellent book and highly recommended for those interested in the Battle of the Atlantic. For those who wish to further immerse themselves in this topic, I would also recommend watching the movies *The Cruel Sea* for the British point of view, and *Das Boot* for the German experience.

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**Lardas, Mark; illustrated by Edouard A. Groult. *US Navy Pacific Fleet 1941: America's mighty last battleship fleet*
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80 pp., illustrations, further reading, index

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Osprey Publishing has produced another highly readable and informative book by the prolific US historian Mark Lardas. For the general reader of naval history, the Osprey Series is a good first start, or primer, to understand the basics of what happened when, where, and why.

The US Pacific Fleet was created in early 1941 in response to Imperial Japan's increasingly belligerent posture in Asia and the Pacific region. Its first commander was Rear Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, who was elevated to four-star admiral for the period of his tenure. The fleet was based at Pearl Harbor but its "beat" was the entire Pacific Ocean ranging from the US west coast to the Philippines (but it was expected that in any war with Japan that the Philippines would be "under siege" from day one). The US Navy also operated five gunboats in Chinese waters, and these were ordered by the US Navy to quietly leave in late November 1941 and to steam to the Philippines as US-Japan relations continued to degrade. Wake Island was technically a forward

operating base, as were Midway and Johnston Islands, but were difficult to defend. That said, they would be handy “speed-bumps” or “tempting bait” in the impending conflict.

By late 1941, war with Japan was expected but the US Navy was also committed to a campaign in the Atlantic. An issue, that is only given a few sentences in the book, is that by mid-1941 the Atlantic was also a priority for the US Navy and drew ships – including an aircraft carrier – away from the Pacific. In mid to late 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt provided US warships as escorts for convoys bound for the United Kingdom. The US was not yet at war with Germany but US warships, operating from Iceland, became involved in Allied convoy escort duties in the western Atlantic. This became a real shooting war for the US Navy on 17 October 1941 when the destroyer USS *Kearny* was torpedoed by a German U-boat as the destroyer was conducting convoy escort duties and could not be identified as a US Navy vessel. *Kearny* was damaged and 11 crew members were killed. A few weeks later, on 31 October, the destroyer USS *Reuben James*, also on convoy escort duty, was sunk by a U-boat (U-552) with 100 of her crew killed. In comparison, the Pacific was still a backwater and while the Japanese were a known threat, they had not yet undertaken any hostile acts against the US, although the crew of the gunboat USS *Panay*, “mistakenly” sunk in Chinese waters in 1937 by Japanese aircraft, would probably disagree!

The author describes the order of battle for the US Navy as well as the doctrine they intended to use in the impending war with Japan. In several cases, the doctrine proved to be outdated and was quickly discarded or modified. The Pacific Fleet initially consisted of 12 battleships, four aircraft carriers, and a variety of cruisers, destroyers, submarines, mine warfare vessels, and the fleet train – the essential support vessels such as tankers, supply ships, destroyer and submarine tenders that provided the floating workshops as well as the bullets, beans, and black oil that would keep the fleet at sea.

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor Kimmel was replaced by Chester Nimitz, with Kimmel relegated to a staff job in Washington. According to some sources, following the attack Kimmel removed his four-star rank slides and replaced them with two-star insignia as he predicted, correctly, that he would soon be replaced.

The book describes the battleship versus aircraft carrier “conflict” within the US Navy as to which was the most important asset in war. Lardas also examines the vital work behind the scenes of the intelligence units, especially the code-breaking work of then lieutenant commanders Joseph Rochefort and Edwin Layton (both fluent in Japanese) that provided vital data on what the Japanese were doing. The Office of Naval Intelligence rated a good mention

as well as an essential part of the US capability in the eventual defeat of Japan (that said, the communications silence employed by the Japanese prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor robbed the US of the forewarning of the Japanese intentions). Some might say that “no news is good news,” but when your enemies’ signal traffic increases dramatically or stops completely then they are on the move.

Hawaii was not just a naval base; there were two infantry divisions (25th Division [Army] and 2nd Marine Division) as well as US Army Air Force aircraft based at several airfields (Bellows, Haleiwa, Hickham, and Wheeler). By late 1941 Hawaii was the major US defence installation for the projection of power into the Pacific region. There were other naval bases and shipyards on the US west coast between Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians to the north and San Diego to the south, but they were many days of steaming from the central Pacific where the US expected to fight the Japanese as part of War Plan Orange.

I especially liked the section on US Navy personnel. Naval personnel prior to the entry of the US into the war were of high quality as the Navy could pick and choose who they wanted. The story of the Patten family (father and seven sons from Iowa who served on the USS *Nevada*) rates an honourable mention. They all survived the war and are often overshadowed by the more well-known Sullivan family of five brothers (also from Iowa) who were killed in the Solomon Islands campaign when the cruiser USS *Juneau* was sunk in November 1942.

The logistics capability and facilities at Pearl Harbor such as dry docks, airfields, repair facilities, and fuel and munitions storage are also described but the narrative is somewhat vague as to when the construction of this vital infrastructure took place other than references to the expansion of the navy’s shore facilities in 1938 and its readiness for use by 1940. Noting the often “glacially slow” peacetime building rates of the western democracies, the background on when the decisions to undertake this major logistics work would have been very interesting to know.

Following the attack, all the damaged and in some cases destroyed ships were repaired with the exception of the battleships USS *Arizona* and USS *Utah*; they were left where they had sunk. Some of the other ships were well beyond repair but the US Navy ensured they returned to service so that the Japanese could not claim them as “sunk.” As is well known, the US carriers were at sea and avoided the attack. Had they been alongside on the morning of 7 December 1941, the outcome of the initial battles at Coral Sea and Midway might well have been different or not occurred at all.

My only real criticism is the language used can shift from “academic

description” to almost slang at times and this detracts from the overall quality of the book. That said, it is well worth the read, especially as a primer for readers with limited knowledge of US naval preparations for the war in the Pacific and the eventual attack on Pearl Harbor.

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López, Ruth Mandujano. *Steamships across the Pacific: Maritime Journeys between Mexico, China, and Japan, 1867-1914*

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The history of transoceanic voyages has always been one of the most prominent topics of maritime history and the development of passenger liners in the late 19th and early 20th century has especially been the subject of many well-known historical studies and books. Nevertheless, the vast majority of these works deal with the history of transatlantic navigation, leaving transpacific navigation a topic nearly dwarfed in comparison. Thus, Ruth Mandujano López’s new book focusing on maritime journeys between Mexico, China, and Japan contributes to a field of inquiry rarely visited by maritime historians, despite being a topic having the potential to contribute substantially to the understanding of today’s globalized world.

Focusing on connections between Mexico and the nations on the Asian side of the Pacific, López shows that transpacific navigation was by no means just an affair of the US and Canada, but that other American nations were also interested in building up transpacific navigation to support their economic development and to bring in (cheap) labor for national projects like the construction of railroads. Opposite to many other studies on transoceanic navigation history, López does not focus too much on navigational aspects themselves or the technological developments of the ships but on the consequences of a maritime link being established for the nations involved and especially the consequence of an influx of Asian people upon Mexico. She clearly showcases how and why immigrants from Asia could build up economically successful lives in Mexico but not become fully integrated members of Mexican society. By doing so, she provides not only a relevant historical analysis but also offers an analysis that might be helpful for understanding the issues of today’s migrants all over the globe, including Mexican emigrants to North America. Thus, her book is one of the few works which are of high importance not only in the context of