

Independent Administrative Agency
National Archives of Japan
Director
Kato Takeo

Japan Center for Asian Historical Records
Director
Hatano Sumio

April 8, 2020

Dear Mr. Sugihara Seishiro,

We would like to state our response again in reply to your letter of March 16, 2020, concerning your Open Letter of December 10, 2019, regarding our Special Internet Exhibit “Archives Reveal Diplomatic Negotiation between Japan and the United States—the Process Leading to the Outbreak of the War.”

Allow me to repeat our explanation. Based on the Cabinet decision “Promotion of Asian Historical Records Project,” made on November 30, 1999, the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records has been assigned to disseminate, in digital format, Asian historical materials held by the National Archives of Japan, Diplomatic Records Center of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Defense Research Institute Library of the Ministry of Defense and other state organs through the Internet. The Special Internet Exhibit, “Archives Reveal Diplomatic Negotiation Between Japan and the United States—the Process Leading to the Outbreak of the War” is also a Web exhibit, which aims to have archival materials held by the Center widely known to people.

We, at the Japan Center, fully understand that your book, *Study on Japan’s Diplomacy after the Opening of the War between Japan and the United States*, is a very important scholarly work with respect to US-Japan negotiations. However, this Special Internet Exhibit aims to follow the process of negotiations between Japan and the United States before the opening of the War through archival materials. At the beginning of the Web Exhibit, it is stated that the Exhibit started, aiming to have beginners learn basic facts and not to introduce excellent academic studies.

As you pointed out, we perfectly agree that there are no books on history or academic issues without specific “interpretations.” However, when it comes to dealing with issues regarding the circumstance of decoding the enemy’s messages, on both sides, and the actual use of decoded messages and the delay in the delivery of the Ultimatum before and after the attack on Pearl Harbor, these subjects are still controversial, involving the assessment of Japan’s diplomatic capability and responsibility. Therefore, we have chosen not to state “interpretation” in our Web exhibit and stated clearly at the beginning of the Exhibit, “This Exhibit does not aim to present specific interpretations or images to viewers.”

It is very difficult to present specific interpretations, one by one, regarding controversial themes, such as this case, from a “fair and just” point of view, and to do so is not in accordance with the aim of our special Web Exhibit. When we started the Exhibit, we emphasized on introducing basic archival materials, which we believe was right judgement as a public organ.

This Internet Exhibit is a project of the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records and the Japan Center takes full responsibility for production of the Web Exhibit. Therefore, we cannot comply with your request to identify the person who created the Web pages so that you may ask the person directly about the intention of making the exhibit and selecting “references.” We ask for your understanding.

We truly hope that you will understand our response. Thank you very much for your valuable opinion. When we renew the Special Internet Exhibit “Archives Reveal Diplomatic Negotiation Between Japan and the United States—the Process Leading to the Outbreak of the War,” we believe that your suggestion will be very helpful.

Sincerely yours,

Kato Takeo

Hatano Sumio