

Independent Administrative Agency

National Archives of Japan

Director

Kato Takeo

Japan Center for Asian Historical Records

Director

Hatano Sumio

March 13, 2020

The second response dated March 13, 2020 from the National Archives of Japan

Dear Mr. Sugihara Seishiro,

We are very sorry for the delay in answering your letters dated January 17 and February 17, related to your Open Letter of December 8, 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.”

Following the receipt of your letters, we have once again confirmed the fact at the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records:

Based on the Cabinet decision “Promotion of Asian Historical Records Project,” made on November 30, 1999, the 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 Web exhibit, aiming to have archives published by the Center widely known to people.

In the Center’s special Internet exhibits, including “Archives Reveal Diplomatic Negotiation Between Japan and the United States—the Process Leading to the Outbreak of the War,” to help viewers understand archives shown under various themes, we have pages to briefly explain well-known facts regarding the status and background of the archives in question, which are then linked to the pages of the archives. We have adopted the “navigation method” in our Web pages. The reference literature in

the “reference room” you pointed out is for reference materials that the person in charge of the exhibit used in writing explanations.

As you have pointed out, the National Diet Library possesses a huge collection of excellent specialized and scholarly books. In producing brief explanations of widely known facts, the person responsible for the task referred to sources he judged necessary for the task and wrote textbook-like explanations for viewers, without referring to all the fine specialized and scholarly books available. We believe that what the person responsible for the Web pages did was appropriate.

Regarding the real circumstance of decoding the enemy’s messages on both sides and actual use of decoded messages and the delay of the Ultimatum before and after the attack on Pearl Harbor, we think that these events remain controversial to this day and there are no academically confirmed “historical facts” or “interpretation.” Therefore, we believe that it is professionally reasonable for the person in charge of a public Web exhibit to avoid affixing a specific interpretation when it came to the explanation of how the War started.

For your reference, we have attached examples of explanatory pages of archives shown in this Special Web Exhibit.

We hope that your will understand our response and wish for your further understanding and cooperation with the National Archives of Japan and the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records.

Sincerely yours,

Kato Takeo

Hatano Sumio