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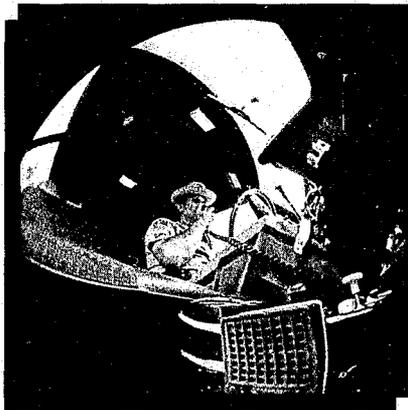
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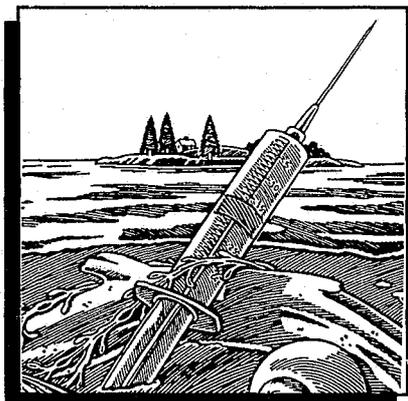
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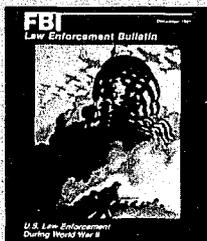


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Cover: The Bulletin commemorates the 50th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor with an article describing the changes on American law enforcement brought about by World War II. All posters and photos used with this article were obtained from the National Archives.

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U.S. Law Enforcement During World War II

By
ANDREW DIROSA



*The bombing of Pearl Harbor
on December 7, 1941.*

The bombing of Pearl Harbor is one of a handful of events that, by its drastic nature, produced immediate and profound change. Within days of the attack, the United States was at war with the three Axis powers—Germany, Italy, and Japan—that had collectively overrun Europe, much of North Africa, and the Far East. America's major allies in the war effort—England and the Soviet Union—had been battered by the lightning speed of Hitler's war and needed help badly. The United States, for its part, was just begin-

ning to recover from the devastating depression that had drained capital, as well as hope, for more than a decade.

However, as American industry, guided by the War Department, began to deliver the weapons of battle in staggering quantities, the tide of war gradually turned. To accomplish this manufacturing miracle, American society was almost completely transformed. Every aspect—from entertainment to government, from sports to product research—was vastly affected by the war.

Law enforcement, too, changed dramatically during the war years. Just as the "gangster era" was coming to a close, the war heralded different criminal opportunities and new anxieties for the public. Espionage, little more than a remote concept during much of American history, became a national concern. New regulations were developed to provide effective rationing enforcement. Even traditional crimes, such as burglary or interstate transportation of restricted goods, were enforced with increased vigilance, usually with an eye toward the war

effort. And, as with most other social institutions, the changes brought about by the war continued to shape law enforcement into the postwar era.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Even before the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, American law enforcement agencies began preparing for the possibility of war. Officials from Federal, State, and municipal agencies, as well as the Army and Navy, held conferences to begin formulating a wartime strategy.¹

When the war in Europe began, concerns mounted for the integrity of American borders. During the summer of 1940, the size of the Border Patrol doubled. On May 22, 1940, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, responsible for the administration of the 3.5 million legal aliens residing in the United

States, was made part of the Department of Justice.²

As the war continued to rage in Europe, Federal authorities began to track nationals from Axis countries residing in the United States who could pose a threat to national security. This also included Americans suspected of engaging in pro-Axis activities.³

However, U.S. Government officials, remembering the mistreatment of German-Americans during the last war, warned against victimization of citizens from Axis Nations. As noted in the January 1942, *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*:

"The FBI has continuously cautioned against any attitude that suggests every alien as a fifth columnist. Oppression of the innocent, it has maintained, only makes recruiting of such forces easier....The FBI has, since the fall of

1939, urged citizens to remain calm, to avoid hysteria, to discourage vigilantism, to report all suspected fifth columnists to the FBI and to act as the eyes and ears of Uncle Sam to spot subversive activities, but to leave the actual investigation of cases to duly qualified police officers."⁴

AMERICA AT WAR: CHALLENGES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

While the American military mobilized for the two-front war in Europe and the Pacific, U.S. law enforcement agencies on the Federal, State, and local level confronted the problem of crime on the homefront. Though espionage and sabotage were a constant concern, there were remarkably few incidents of foreign-directed activity on American soil during the war.

Often overlooked, however, were the domestic problems either created or intensified by the war. By and large, these potentially disastrous problems were faced on the local level by small police and sheriff's departments. In most cases, officers from these departments had volunteered or were drafted into the military, leaving agencies with fewer officers to confront the new demands of wartime law enforcement.

As a result, many departments activated auxiliary and reserve police units to help augment depleted forces. These units were largely made up of men who, because of age or health requirements, could not serve in the military. These indi-



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**Police departments
around the Nation rose
to meet the challenges
of wartime law
enforcement and newly
emerging criminal
activity.**
”

Espionage on the Homefront

During the First World War, German agents and Americans sympathetic to the German cause succeeded in staging acts of sabotage on American soil. To avoid a recurrence of this, President Franklin Roosevelt, on September 6, 1939, signed into law a directive giving the FBI responsibility for all matters relating to espionage, sabotage, and violations of neutrality laws.

In early 1940, the FBI learned of an extensive ring of German spies attempting, among other things, to smuggle blueprints for American weapons to Germany. A citizen named William Sebald first brought the ring to the attention of American authorities after he was contacted by the Gestapo, the German secret police, who had threatened harm to his relatives living in Germany if he did not cooperate with them. With his assistance, the Bureau set a trap for the members of the ring, complete with phony shortwave messages, doctored defense documents, offices with two-way mirrors, and hidden cameras.

For nearly 2 years, FBI Agents collected information on the German spy ring. Then, during the weekend of June 28, 1941, the FBI sprang the trap, seizing 33 people involved in the conspiracy, including Frederick Joubert Duquesne—a professional German spy for 40 years. In January 1942, the spies received combined prison terms exceeding 300 years.

The FBI also sought to safeguard the production of war materials by providing security training

to defense plant managers. With the cooperation of the War Department (later the Department of Defense), the FBI contacted factories producing war materials. Agents alerted plant managers of Axis recruitment strategies and sabotage techniques. This program proved very effective not only in making defense plants more secure but also in establishing a cooperative relationship between Federal authorities and industry.

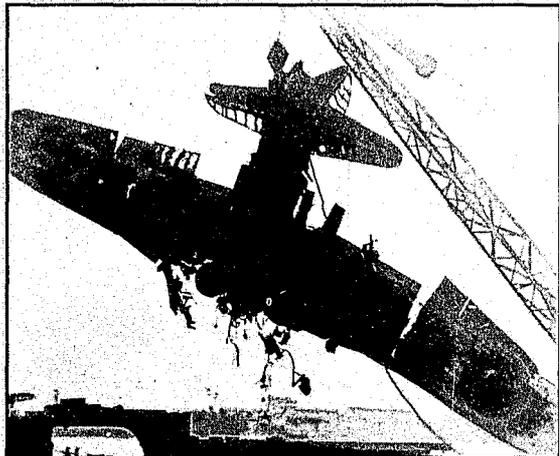
However, the threat of German sabotage remained. During the summer of 1942, Nazi U-Boats landed two teams of saboteurs on the American east coast. One group paddled ashore in New York, landing on Long Island; the other on a deserted beach near Jacksonville, Florida.

The two groups carried a large amount of American currency and enough explosives to last years. They were directed by their superiors in Germany to spread terror—to dynamite the HellGate Bridge in New York, to place timebombs in railroad stations, to start fires in department stores, and to make it appear as if an army of saboteurs was at work.

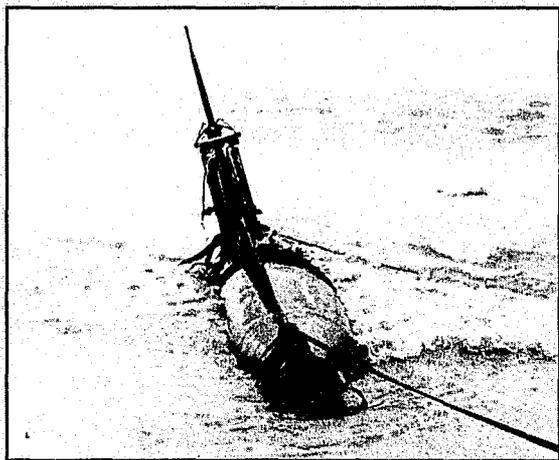
Within weeks of landing on American soil, however, all of the saboteurs were in FBI custody. None had succeeded in committing any act of sabotage before they were apprehended. Although a few other attempts were made, there were no successful acts of enemy-directed sabotage committed on American soil during World War II.



LEB



The wreckage of a Japanese Zero being raised shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor.



One of several Japanese two-man submarines that were either captured or ran aground on the American west coast during the months following the attack.

viduals did, however, make an invaluable contribution to the war effort by bolstering agencies and by freeing full-time officers to combat criminal activity.⁵

While departments across the country had to confront the special challenges produced by the war, the demands placed on the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Police Department, though in some ways unique, were emblematic of problems facing departments in communities around the country. Over 340 officers from the department were

called to join the Armed Services during the war, leaving a reduced force to protect the power plants, bridges, and other vital strategic sites in the city. In addition, many officers were assigned to augment the White House police force, as well as to guard embassies and other government buildings.

These responsibilities, of course, were in addition to the department's regular patrol functions. Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, 50 additional officers were hired to alleviate the personnel

shortage. However, it was the selfless civic spirit of thousands of citizens, volunteering to form auxiliary police units, that freed officers for patrol duties. The new Washington Police Academy was built and helped to train 6,000 recruit volunteers. These auxiliary officers assisted in administrative and technical, as well as patrol, functions throughout the war.⁶

CRIME PROBLEMS

Although the rates for many crimes fell and prison populations actually declined during the war, law enforcement was faced with a change in crime patterns brought on by the war effort.⁷ Police departments around the Nation rose to meet the challenges of wartime law enforcement and newly emerging criminal activity.

Juvenile Delinquency

The strains placed by the war on the social fabric of America were dramatic. Thousands of men—fathers, sons, brothers, and uncles—were called into military service, leaving women, most of whom had never worked outside the home, to fill positions on the assembly lines and in the offices. These women usually worked long hours and spent the time they had away from the job tending to household tasks.

The resulting lack of parental control contributed to a sharp rise in juvenile delinquency. Without effective supervision, many children began engaging in criminal activity ranging from seemingly petty crimes—shoplifting and annoying neighbors—to more serious

ones, such as illegal gambling, burglary, and vandalism.

Other factors also contributed to this increase in lawlessness among the Nation's youth. Many families had to move far from their hometowns in order to be near the defense plants that offered employment. The uprooting of so many families caused a general decline in the adherence to social norms and to invisible codes of community behavior.⁸ In addition, the unlikely, but constant, threat of enemy air attacks also helped to create an atmosphere of bewilderment and disorientation among children.

In an effort to confront the growing problem of juvenile delinquency, law enforcement agencies began to establish crime prevention bureaus and to assign officers special duties aimed at deterring juvenile crime.⁹ Officers were also urged to stop and talk to any youths encountered during patrols, reinforcing positive codes of behavior.

Blackouts and Traffic Control

Although the likelihood of air attack was extremely remote, American law enforcement and civil defense agencies prepared for the possibility with steadfast vigilance. During the first months of the war, especially, citizens on both coasts feared an air blitz was imminent and looked toward law enforcement to offer leadership and direction.

In this area, American officials could learn from the events occurring in Europe. Throughout the summer of 1940, England was subjected to devastating air raids by the Luftwaffe, the German Air Force. While these raids caused consider-

able destruction, there was little panic among the population due to effective civil defense strategies and well-developed evacuation plans. American intelligence officials stationed in England witnessed the raids and the almost methodical response of the British public.

When America entered the war, the FBI sponsored several regional conferences, called traffic schools, in which local and State law enforcement officials were briefed on traffic control procedures during blackouts and/or air raids. Nonilluminating traffic signals, developed at the urging of the War Department, replaced standard traffic lights in some cities. In addition, the sale of even simple street maps was restricted since they could assist enemy agents attempting to locate defense plants or other sensitive installations.

Gasoline rationing, however, limited the number of cars on the road, easing the burden of traffic enforcement. And the development of radar, crucial to England's victory in the Battle of Britain, reduced the likelihood of a sneak air attack in the skies over America. While blackouts continued throughout the war (New Year's Eve celebrations were cancelled in Times Square through 1945), they were generally accepted as little more than an inconvenience by the American public.

Rationing Enforcement

The rationing of consumer goods caused by the war, however, had a profound effect upon the daily lives of most Americans. In addition to gasoline, the sale of almost all consumer products from basic food stocks, such as sugar and flour, to metal screws and nails was re-



stricted. Although most Americans accepted rationing as a sacrifice necessary for the war effort, others sought to capitalize on the shortage of goods caused by these restrictions.

These criminals ranged from small time hoods who raided warehouses and delivery trucks to organized crime figures who used the war to further entrench themselves into society. All of these opportunists tried to profit illegally from the shortages caused by the war.

However, due to increased cooperation between law enforcement agencies at all levels, many of these rings were broken before they could adversely effect the war effort. For example, a black market operation that attempted to divert nylon—essential to the manufacture of parachutes—from military use to the production of hosiery was typical. The ring, operating from sites in

Pennsylvania and New Jersey, was smashed by Federal agents before its activities could significantly effect the supply of nylon for the military.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

World War II induced a transformation in American society that changed many institutions dramatically, including law enforcement. The war opened new opportunities to criminals but also helped to forge a closer relationship between Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies which, at all levels, confronted common adversaries to the war effort.

Products and technologies developed during the war, from synthetic rubber to radar, had a direct impact upon law enforcement. Other factors, including the large number of wartime juvenile delinquents who entered adulthood dur-

ing the 1950s and 60s—when crime rates began to rise dramatically—had a more subtle effect.

The war affected law enforcement in other ways, too. Many returning servicemen would seek employment in the police departments serving the sprawling suburbs that developed after the war. Espionage—and the fear of communist subversion—continued to be a national preoccupation for many years following the war.

During the war, law enforcement agencies at all levels contributed significantly to eventual victory. Law enforcement authorities confronted changing crime trends, as well as new public needs and expectations. Together, Federal, State, and local agencies provided the American people with effective law enforcement and a sense of security during some of the darkest days of this Nation's history.

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Footnotes

¹ J. Edgar Hoover, "America at War," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, 11, January 1942, 1.

² U.S. Department of Justice, *Proceedings: Federal-State Conference on Law Enforcement Problems of National Defense, August 5-6, 1940*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1940).

³ "FBI and War Department Apprehend Axis Nationals," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, 11, January 1942, 32.

⁴ *Supra* note 2.

⁵ William J. Bopp, M.A. and Donald O. Schultz, M.P.A., *Principles of American Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1975), 117-119.

⁶ *Ibid*, reprinted therein with editorial adaption from Howard V. Covell's "A Brief History of the Metropolitan Police Department," (Washington, DC, 1946), 7-9.

⁷ *Supra* note 5.

⁸ John Edgar Hoover, "Juvenile Delinquency Strikes Home," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, May-June 1943, 1.

⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰ *FBI Facts and History*, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, printed by the U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990, p. 14.