

# Example of research paper on film analysis on the film tora! tora! tora

[War](#), [World War 2](#)



Tora! Tora! Tora! Is a 1970 film based on the American-Japanese war that ensued after the Japanese attack on the Pearl Harbor. The film was directed by Richard Fleischer. The title of the film is a Japanese code-word used to imply that the Japanese managed to completely surprise the Americans. In English, Tora! Tora! Tora! means Tiger! Tiger! Tiger! read as totsugeki-raigeki (attack-torpedo-attack) and thus the code word to-ra, to-ra, to-ra . This movie is an epic recreation of the events that preceded and actually led to the Japanese attack on the Pearl Harbor and the eventual occurrence of the Second World War.

The film Tora! Tora! Tora! depicts the chronological and historically accepted events that led to the Pearl Harbor attack on 8th December 1941. The film opens by a scene showing the new appointed commander-in-chief of the combined Japanese fleet- Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto (played by So Yamamura) aboard a battleship named Nagato as he takes command from the outgoing commander Zengo Yoshida (played by Junya Usami). The two men discuss America's trade barrier with the US which starved Japan of vital raw materials. Japan was poor in natural resources and the threat of trade barriers especially in oil posed a real threat to the survival of the country. This is an actual depiction of the historical context in which there was a simmering rivalry between Japan and the United States since early 1930s. The rivalry and competition between the United States and Japan had started in the 1930s when the latter conquered Manchuria-a part of China and went ahead to attempt conquering the rest of China and several parts of East Asia. The US had economic and political interests in East Asia and Japan's move fueled the US's interests in East Asia which saw it increase financial and

military aid to East Asia while it (US) cut off supply of oil and raw materials to Japan.

Junya and Admiral Yamamoto discussed that going to war with the US would end up in complete disaster but they were pushed by politicians and hotheads to seek an alliance with Germany's Nazi army in preparation for war with the US. The US pacific naval base at the Pearl Harbor was regarded as strategic base that would be used for war. The Japanese therefore targeted the base in order to weaken American retaliatory attacks. In the film, the Admiral Yamamoto discusses the use of torpedoes to attack Pearl Harbor but he realizes that dropping torpedoes from aircrafts would cause them to submerge at least 23 meters below the surface but since the harbor is only 12 meters deep, Americans felt that they were naturally immune to torpedo attacks. The Japanese are unrelenting and decide to modify their torpedoes. In the process, America intelligence based in Washington manages to break the Japanese Purple Code thereby intercepting secret radio transmissions. The American Intelligence instructs base commanders at the Pearl Harbor to intensify air patrols and places hem on high alert before the attack. In spite of the alert Admiral Yamamoto managed to pull surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.

The Japanese commanders enlisted the help of Minoru Genda who was an air staff officer and tasked him with masterminding the attack on Pearl Harbor. Genda's classmate at the Japanese Naval Academy was chosen to lead the attack. Using the intelligence reports gathered, general Short and Admiral Kimmel tried to enhance their defenses. General Short orders his aircraft to the middle of the airfields in order to prevent sabotage. A heated argument

ensues between Short and Kimmel until one object to an argument by the other saying, “suppose there is an air raid?” This statement turns to be preemptive of the plans being hatched by the Japanese forces because at that moment they were at the advanced stages of planning torpedo attacks on the Pearl Harbor.

The film depicts meticulous planning and the perfection of an element of surprise in the attack. In spite of ongoing discussions on how to solve diplomatic tensions occasioned by the trade barriers, the Japanese went ahead with their plans to attack Pearl Harbor. The Japanese ambassador to the United States even goes ahead to ask for information which could lead to the avoidance of war. An army general named Tojo was adamantly opposed to last minute efforts to bring peace between the two countries. With the negotiations ongoing, Japanese forces led by Genda and Fuchida, commence a series of 14 radio messages from Tokyo to the Japanese embassy in Washington were to culminate in the attack on Pearl Harbor (Darman, 16). American intelligence managed to decode and translate the messages faster than the staff at the Japanese embassy. The Americans get to know of the attack before the Japanese ambassador informs them. This is accurately in line with the actual recording of the events before the attack which assert that American intelligence was able to decode the messages but could not clearly tell of the date and other crucial details of the planned attack on Pearl Harbor.

The film shows that on the morning of December 7th 1941, decision makers based in Washington and Hawaii enjoying a leisurely moment while the American Intelligence is seen working feverishly to decode the messages

being transmitted to the Japanese embassy. American Intelligence manages to decode that the final message of the intended 14 was to be received at 1pm Washington time. The Japanese were then instructed to destroy the code machines after receiving the last message. The intelligence officers make frantic attempts to send the decoded messages to the US army commanders but their efforts fail because the commanders are out horse riding and playing golf. This film depiction shows matches the reluctance with which American army commanders handled the threats to the US army bases by Japan in spite of growing diplomatic tensions and a looming war. Finally colonel Bratton managed to convince the US Army Chief of staff General George Marshall of a “great” threat. General Marshall orders that the Pearl Harbor as well as all the other Pacific installations be alerted of an impending attack. An American destroyer spots a Japanese submarine, sinks it and alerts the command base. There is reluctance in the response by the command base and 30 minutes later on 7th December 1941, Japanese fighter approach Pearl Harbor ready to attack. There is nothing like anti-aircraft fire as they approach and the attack is to go on as planned-surprise attack! It is at this point that the Japanese squad leader radios to their command centre to-ra! to-ra! to-ra meaning that a complete surprise had been achieved.

The film shows that in spite of there being some government errors on both the American and the Japanese sides the Japanese were sharper and managed to carry out a catastrophic attack. The film shows the use of aircraft carriers as well as naval aviation by the Japanese to an unprecedented scale. The film shows the attack as it was executed using six

heavy aircraft carriers and 24 supporting vessels. There were also a separate group of submarines that were used to sink American warships that managed to escape the aerial attacks. The actual attack was carried out using 181 planes which were transported to the attack base using the six aircraft carriers. The planes carried torpedo bombers, horizontal bombers, dive bombers and a variety of fighters. The attack targeted the eight battleships that were anchored at the Pearl Harbor. The film shows the attacks on each of the battleships. In the actual attack, explosions and fires killed 1, 177 crew men and the film shows numerous fires and explosions to match the actual events of the attack. According to Davenport, at the end of the attack, the Pearl Harbor attack the number of American casualties numbered more about 2, 403 (89). This figure included 68 civilians that were killed by aircraft shells landing in Honolulu. In addition more than 1, 178 civilian and military personnel were wounded. As depicted in the film, the number of Japanese casualties was minimal. Actual figures show that that Japanese lost 29 planes while the Americans lost more than 300 planes! Though the Japanese mission was largely successful, they did not manage to damage American aircraft carriers which were not in the harbor at the time of the attack.

## **Bibliography**

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