

OREGON STATE DEFENSE COUNCIL



317 STATE CAPITOL BUILDING, SALEM, OREGON

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONFIDENTIAL

TO ALL COUNTY COORDINATORS:

The first Japanese incendiary bomb has been dropped on the soil of the continental United States.

What apparently was a 50 kilogram phosphorus pellet bomb was dropped in the Siskiyou national forest not far from Brookings in Curry County, Oregon, between 6 and 6:30 a.m. Wednesday, September 9. It started fourteen fires, all of which were under control before noon.

A forest lookout observer spotted the plane, which was a small hydroplane, presumably from a submarine off the Oregon coast. Several bombs were dropped but only fragments of one have been found. It seemingly was the type of bomb which is filled with cylindrical black rubber pellets, 1-1/16 inches long by 1 inch in diameter, impregnated with phosphorus.

The war head of the bomb has been located, also the ring by which it apparently was hung from the bomb rack. The war head was marked plainly with Japanese characters and an anchor, symbol of the Japanese navy.

This information is not to be divulged except to key persons in your civilian defense organization, pending release of news by the War Department. The reason is obvious. To date, we are not certain the Japanese know their attempt to set fire to an Oregon forest was discovered.

OFFICIAL:

Jerrold Owen
Jerrold Owen,
State Defense Coordinator

September 14, 1942



September 15th, 1942

Morale of Civilian Defense Workers Raised by Jap Raid

SALEM, Sept. 15. (P) Oregon civilian defense workers will receive a tremendous boost in morale as a result of the Japanese bombing in Curry county last Wednesday, State Civilian Defense Coordinator Jerrold Owen said today.

County defense co-ordinators were alerted to danger from air by a confidential bulletin mailed early Monday from Owen's office. The bulletin described Wednesday's attack in detail.

"Morale among civilian defense workers was getting low," Owen said, "because many of them believed 'it can't happen here.' Well, it did happen last Wednesday, so the workers can see now just what they are working for."

"We have been praying for just such an attack to shake people out of their lethargy. We believe this incident will do it. Of course, the bombing was ideal, because there was no loss of life and no property damage. The bombing was a perfect answer to the many persons who claimed the Pacific Coast couldn't be bombed."

"In this gratification comes a sense of satisfaction that our volunteer workers have not relaxed their vigilance in past months

and have been in readiness for any eventuality. The spotting of the Japanese hydroplane discloses an alertness which will pay dividends in the protection of this state.

"Undoubtedly this small foray is but a forerunner of what may be expected in the future. Similar phosphorus bombs dropped on inflammable wooden buildings in our population centers may be expected to cause extensive fires—but for this possibility thousands of our citizens have been in training for more than a year and may be expected to meet the situation promptly and effectively when it develops."

Owen warned that there will be at least a month of fire weather ahead, asserting that similar raids could cause tremendous damage to forests.

The fourth fighter command, which operates the aircraft warning service, ordered all ground observers to be on constant alert against similar raids. Complete descriptions, including diagrams, of the seaplane were provided for each observation post. It is impossible for a plane to fly over the coast without being detected.

September 15th, 1942



BOMB FRAGMENTS—Mrs. Mary Reeder of U. S. forest service holds fragments of bomb that fell on Siskiyou national forest September 10, starting fires that were quickly controlled.—(AP Photo)

September 15th, 1942



AT GRANTS PASS—H. C. Obye, supervisor of Siskiyou national forest, left, holds piece from exterior of bomb that fell September 9 on Southern Oregon coastal forest. L. L. Colvill, assistant supervisor, holds piece of composition that generated great heat. On table is earth burned into slag where composition piece fell.—(AP Photo)

September 15th, 1942

Oregon Civilian Defense Morale Boosted by Jap Bombing of Curry Forest, Coordinator Owen Asserts

SALEM, Ore., Sept. 15.—(AP)—Oregon civilian defense workers will receive a tremendous boost in morale as a result of the Japanese bombing of Curry county last Wednesday, State Civilian Defense Coordinator Jerrold Owen said today.

County defense coordinators were alerted to danger from air by a confidential bulletin mailed early yesterday from Owen's office. The bulletin described Wednesday's attack in detail.

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laxed their vigilance in past months and have been in readiness for any eventuality. The spotting of the Japanese hydroplane discloses an alertness which will pay dividends in the protection of this state.

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September 15th, 1942

Oregon Coast Bombed by Plane in Attempt to Set Forests Ablaze

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 15—(AP)—A foot-deep crater, apparently caused by an incendiary bomb, gave evidence today of what may have been the first aerial assault upon United States home soil, an apparent attempt to set fire to an isolated forest on the southern Oregon coast.

The army's western defense command, in a carefully-worded communique, disclosed that an unidentified, small seaplane of a type that might have been carried on a submarine was seen coming inland just before dawn September 9, and was heard roaring out to sea about half an hour later.

Some time after the plane was seen circling the Mount Emily area nine miles northeast of Brookings, Oregon, a fire was observed, and forestry patrols who extinguished the blaze found a crater and metal

fragments which the army said bore "markings of Japanese ideographs which may have been part of a code indicating the arsenal where the bomb was manufactured."

Sub Is Bombed

Several hours after the appearance and disappearance of the seaplane was reported, an army patrol plane sighted and bombed a submarine 30 miles off the Oregon coast with "unobserved results."

The army communique noted: "It is possible a plane of this type might have been carried on a submarine."

Lieut. R. J. Runyan, area supervisor of the air raid warning system, said the plane was spotted on the filter center control board within seconds of its appearance over the coast, and observed: "It was an excellent test, and the system proved fully effective."

Forestry patrols reported the incendiary bomb left a crater about three feet in diameter and a foot deep.

Japanese submarines shelled an oil well area in southern California February 23, causing slight damage, and a beach near Seaside, Oregon, June 22, but it was the first evidence of an actual air bombing of the continental United States.

Howard "Razz" Gardner, forest service lookout, observed the plane and saw the fire break out from his post on Mount Emily, nine miles from Brookings, Oregon.

Looking into the darkness at 6 a. m., September 9, when he heard the sound of a single motor, Gardner saw a circling plane overhead—saw it so closely he identified it as a small seaplane.

Shortly afterwards he saw flame break through the tree roof below—in the same general area where a disastrous fire in the mid-

dle thirties destroyed a great forest and most of the coastal city of Bandon.

Gardner sounded the alarm on the forest telephone, gathered some equipment and plunged through the forest by a shortcut to battle the flames single handed. He succeeded so well he had them under control by the time the forest fire suppression crew arrived—a four and a half hour battle through brush and over rugged terrain from their station.

September 16th, 1942

1990 A Jap Bomb Falls on Oregon

It is a dubious distinction that accrues to Oregon, this bombing of our southwestern forest, near Brookings and in the densely wooded area of Mount Emily, by a lone sea plane presumably of Japanese character. The distinction is that we are first to be subject to such attack, of all the commonwealths of the continental United States. Alaska has been bombed by the Nipponese enemy, but we are the first of the states. And the experimental token appears to have been a single incendiary bomb which, by the vigilance of the forest patrol, effected no damage. It seems undeniable that the enemy sea plane, described as diminutive, was launched from and returned to a submarine mother-ship. Thirty miles offshore an enemy submarine subsequently was sighted and bombed by one of our patrol planes, with undetermined result. And this is all that we know of the affair, or all, at least, that the western defense command has released for our information.

In a sense good fortune was with us, for if a spark may unleash a devastating forest fire, as has befallen, the intense energy of an incendiary bomb might conceivably equal the worst of such peacetime records. There are two conclusions the layman may draw by permission of inferences inherent in the account. One is that the forest patrol is vigilant and effective; the other that our patrol of the offshore waters and the coastal area may need considerable augmenting.

Yet even to phrase it in this manner scarcely is fair to the forces of coastal defense, for it is modernly axiomatic—and lacks not for many examples—that a coastal bombing raid can be carried out almost at will, and with the odds in its favor. Thus while we have little to lament and less to regret, the incident—for it scarcely was more than that individually—nonetheless forcefully suggests to us that vigilance must never be relaxed, and that interception and defense should be augmented.

Why did the Japanese navy indulge itself in this gesture? Manifestly in the hope that a forest fire might be started, as a blow to our wealth and morale, but so relatively puny was the effort that we must cast about for more significant explanation. For one thing, the Japs would wish to boast that they had bombed continental America, so to restore face lost in the Doolittle bombing of Japan. But even with the psychopathically sensitive Japanese this would be a minor consideration. We are warranted in assuming that the attack of the little sea plane was experimental, and that our enemy desired to remark its facility and effect, with presumptive intent to be guided by the experiment. If this is true we may, in another year, for our fall rains are near, if Japan still can muster the requisite strength, and considers the exploit worth-while, witness a multiplicity of similar incendiary attacks upon our coastal forests.

Fortunately for the American cause this is a grim game at which two can play, as the British lately have taught the Germans. General Doolittle's heroic air raid on Japan also provides the requisite proof. Yet now that the acclaim of that stirring adventure has somewhat abated, we perceive that to have been effective in the fullest sense it should have been followed by even heavier American bombing raids. As it was, the Japanese scarcely were more than aroused to their peril, even though the damage was considerable, and their first reaction was to lunge at and capture the Chinese air bases within practicable bombing distance of Nippon and establish themselves on the outmost Aleutian islands. We awakened them to their vulnerability, their jeopardy, and since then have rested on our honors.

To the layman—invoking that character again—well, to Joe Pungle, the average American—the bombing of Oregon, though by no more than a single bomb, urgently requires of us that the bombing of Japan begin anew, and that it continue without respite. This may be just around the corner, but the corner seems too far and vague to most of us. And how it is to be done, we cannot say; we only state the requirement.

Owen⁷⁹⁰ Declares Bombing Of Coast Answer To 'It Can't Happen Here'

SALEM STATESMAN

September 16th, 1942

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 15-(P)—The strange attack on the Oregon coast by a tiny seaplane brought the comment Tuesday from a civilian defense executive that "the bombing was a perfect answer to the many persons who claimed the Pacific coast couldn't be bombed."

The statement was made by Terrold Owen, defense coordinator for Oregon.

The western defense command here disclosed Monday night that fragments of an incendiary bomb had been found in the forested hills of Oregon's coastal Curry county. Japanese characters cast in the fragments of the bomb casing indicated its origin.

Small fires were started by the bomb and were quickly extinguished by alert forest watchers.

Just before the bomb burst a small single-engine seaplane was seen winging in from the sea. It circled the forest region and headed out to sea again. The supposition was that it came from and returned to a Jap submarine lying offshore.

The army announced that soon after the incident was reported a plane of the coastal patrol bombed an unidentified submarine 30 miles off shore "with unobserved results." Jap submarines of the largest type are known to carry small seaplanes.

Defense Coordinator Owen said "the spotting of the Japanese hydroplane discloses an alertness which will pay dividends in protection."

"Undoubtedly," he continued, "this small foray is but a forerunner of what may be expected in the future."

The fire bomb left a three-foot crater. Typical of Japanese incendiaries, it contained phosphorus pellets. The fire patrols, even in the sparsely settled hills, were sharply alert and flames were extinguished before damage was caused.

The army here had no comment on the affair beyond the communique of Monday night which disclosed the September 9 attack.

Coordinator Owen, however, predicted the bombing would do much to lift morale. "We have been praying for just such an attack to shake the people out of their lethargy," he said. "We believe this incident will do it. Of course, the bombing was ideal, because there was no loss of life and no property damage."

"The bombing was a perfect answer to the many persons who claimed the Pacific Coast couldn't be bombed."

September 16th, 1942

Jap Bombing Found Omen

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 16 (AP)—The strange attack on the Oregon coast by a tiny seaplane brought the comment Tuesday from a civilian defense executive that "the bombing was a perfect answer to the many persons who claimed the Pacific coast couldn't be bombed."

The statement was made by Jerrold Owen, defense co-ordinator for Oregon.

Small Plane Seen

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September 16th, 1942

Oregon Bombed

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Oregon for the second time in recent months has gained national headlines because it has become a target for Japanese weapons. In June it was that a Jap submarine fired a number of shells which landed on the Clatsop beaches near Fort Stevens and last week Curry county received the first bomb dropped on continental United States, an incendiary from a tiny plane obviously launched from a submarine.

The gratifying part of the incidents is that neither attack resulted in any damage although the bombing was something more than a gesture since it might have resulted in a destructive forest fire. The promptness with which the blaze was detected and put out speaks highly of the vigilance and efficiency of the forestry lookouts and patrol which force was augmented and specially trained against just such a danger.

The state forestry department has been much concerned through the summer, fearing that the enemy would start fires in our timbered lands during the dry months, either through saboteurs or incendiary bombs. The Brookings incident proves that this was no hysterical concern but based on a real menace. We are now approaching the rainy season when the danger will be greatly lessened but there are still several weeks of potential menace. Vigilance cannot be relaxed but must be intensified.

There are of course other motives which may have actuated the Japanese in making these futile attacks. It is quite possible that they seek to draw planes away from Alaska or other points for patrol duty along the coast and undoubtedly, too, there is a face-saving element involved. The Japanese propagandists will probably make much of the fact that one of their planes has dropped bombs on the United States, exaggerating its importance as a counter to the bombing of Tokyo by American planes.

We on the Pacific may expect other such attacks and they may be something more than gestures. The danger suggests that our armed and civilian defense forces keep very much on the alert.



OREGON STATE DEFENSE COUNCIL

JERROLD OWEN, COORDINATOR
JAMES D. OLSON, ASSISTANT COORDINATOR

STATE CAPITOL
SALEM, OREGON

September 17, 1942

MEMORANDUM TO COUNTY COORDINATORS:

BOMB RECONNAISSANCE AGENTS

Dropping of enemy bombs a few days ago in Curry County, Oregon, emphasizes the importance of organizing and training an adequate number of bomb reconnaissance agents in each county. It is true that the first responsibility of a bomb reconnaissance agent lies in the identification and reporting of the existence of unexploded bombs.

However, at this particular period of the war, when our military authorities are avidly searching for exact information concerning the type of Japanese bombs likely to be used against this country, it is of prime importance that qualified, trained bomb reconnaissance agents take immediate charge of any incident similar to that which occurred in Curry County. Evidence and materials left after such bombings are of such inestimable importance that all precautions must be taken so that neither the bomb, bomb fragments, crater or any other evidence connected with an exploded, or unexploded bomb shall be removed or tampered with by any persons other than those connected with the United States Army Bomb Disposal unit.

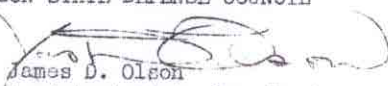
Immediate reporting by telephone of the discovery of high explosive bombs, either exploded or unexploded, by county or city Civilian Defense authorities directly to the Oregon State Defense Council in Salem is essential.

Following the dropping of a large bomb (or bombs) in Curry County, souvenir hunters, who had reached the site of the bomb crater, not only picked up and retained fragments of the bombs, but took photographs of bomb fragments--all this contrary to military regulations. Occurrences of this kind in the future must be avoided at all cost.

Other than bombs, any objects of suspected enemy origin, such as grounded aircraft, shore mines, or other unidentified objects should be carefully guarded until military personnel takes over.

OREGON STATE DEFENSE COUNCIL

By:


James D. Olson
Assistant State Coordinator

Bomb Curry County 17/5

BOMB CRASH COAST 17/5

OREGON STATE DEFENSE COUNCIL
STATE CAPITOL
SALEM, OREGON

September 29th, 1942

Mr. Jerrold Owen,
State Defense Coordinator
Oregon State Defense Council
317 State Capitol
Salem, Oregon

Dear Mr. Owen:

On Wednesday morning, September 9th, 1942, an unidentified plane, presumably Japanese, dropped an incendiary bomb near Mount Emily, about eight miles north-east of Brookings, Oregon, in a wild and heavily timbered region.

In view of the fact that many of the reports on this incident were submitted to me during your absence at the American Legion Convention in Kansas City, Missouri, I will endeavor to reconstruct the story as gathered from various sources.

To begin with, I will quote herewith the story of the actual bombing and what followed thereafter as it appeared in the Gold Beach Reporter on September 17th, 1942.

"Howard Gardner and George Widney who were on duty at the Mount Emily observation post saw the plane as it circled the mountain station, as did Bob Larson, one of the fire prevention guards, who happened to be at the station at the time.

"These men reported the plane as coming in from the west at 6:24 a.m. but did not see it drop bomb or bombs as they reported the weather was too thick for close observation. The report of sighting the plane was sent to the relay station at Gold Beach and Mrs. Reta Ganong who was on duty at the station sent the report to Mr. Marshall, in charge of the local station, who sent it through to the filter station at Roseburg.

"At 12:30 p.m. the same day Mr. Gardner reported to the Gold Beach station that smoke was rising at a distance of about three miles away airline from the ranger station, southeast on Wheeler Creek ridge, a point which could be reached by about four and one half miles of trail.

"According to the report this appeared to be a lightning fire as the smoke was rising in puffs and this belief was strengthened by the fact that there had been a severe electric storm the day before.

"Mr. Marshall instructed Gardner to proceed at once to the fire and also instructed Pete Johnson, who was at the Bear Wallow lookout, eight and one half miles away by trail, to go to the scene of the fire. The men met on the

trail and arrived at the fire at the same time, making the trip in about two hours. Also, Bob Larson and Fred Flynn went in from Brookings by way of the Winchuck Road and Wheeler Creek way trail, getting there shortly after the others, at about 3:30 p.m.

"These men quickly got the fire under control and in doing so discovered it was caused by a bomb when they found pieces of metal scattered about in the brush. This discovery was reported back to Gold Beach at 4:20 p.m. that afternoon by means of a portable radio they had carried with them.

"Leaving one man to guard against any possible spread of fire, Gardner and two of his men brought out pieces of the bomb, some pellets described as keystone shaped, and also the tail piece of the bomb on which was stamped characteristics that had the appearance of foreign origin.

"Fragments of the bomb were turned over to Forester Ed Marshall and Assistant Forester L. L. Colville who had met at Brookings, and who relayed the facts to the filter center at Roseburg and notified the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"Colville, Marshall, and Gardner returned to the scene of the fire for further search. They found that the bomb in exploding had blown a crater about three feet in diameter and somewhat less than 12 inches deep, the hole showing that it had given out an intense head, fusing the earth and rocks into a mass resembling lava.

"Marshall and Colville dug through the fused mass and soon found what appeared to be the nose of the bomb. This was about 11 to 12 inches across at the widest part and attached to the steel nose or cap was a brass shank six inches in length, with Japanese characters stamped in the collar that attached its base to the nose.

"These, with the metal fragments and pellets which had been gathered up, in all about 60 pounds (the nose alone weighing 25 or 30 pounds) were brought out and turned over to the Army Lieutenant in charge of the Army detachment at Gold Beach.

"The bomb in falling had struck a fir tree about six inches in diameter, much as though lightning had struck it, and a fin of the bomb had sheared off a tan oak tree five inches in diameter as cleanly as though it had been done with a heavy and sharp axe. Fragments of the bomb had been scattered over a radius of about 100 feet, one of the blazing pieces lodging in a decayed stub, setting it afire."

On September 14, 1942, a letter signed by S. O. Newhouse, Coordinator of the Curry County Defense Council, Wedderburn, Oregon, addressed to you was received in this office. This letter was dated September 11th, 1942, and gave a fair, but not comprehensive, outline of the incident. Based on this report, and following confirmation of the bomb by military authorities, a confidential bulletin marked "not for publication" was sent to all county coordinators notifying them of the incident and describing the type of bomb that had apparently been used by the Japs in this incident.

On the afternoon of September 16th, 1942, 1st Lieutenant W. Field, 231st Ordnance Company, Fort Lewis, Washington, called you on the telephone from Bandon, Oregon, and upon finding that you were not in the state, requested that I meet him in Salem late that night.

I met Lieutenant Field at the Marion Hotel and spent an hour or more with him. In brief, he told me that he had received his first official information of the incident on Saturday morning, September 12th, 1942, and had proceeded to Gold Beach and Brookings where he succeeded in obtaining some bits of shrapnel, together with a small amount of powdered thermit, which he took with him to Fort Lewis for laboratory tests.

Lieutenant Field requested that I endeavor to arrange with the Fourth Fighter Command so that officials of this office might be notified in the event of a future incident of the same character, in order that the trained bomb reconnaissance agents might take immediate charge of any such incident and that further, we could immediately notify the bomb disposal unit at Fort Lewis.

The following day I conferred with Captain William K. Morgan, Ground Observer Officer, Signal Corps, Fourth Fighter Command, concerning this subject and he readily agreed to the plan suggested by Lieutenant Field.

On the same day I issued a memorandum to county coordinators outlining the responsibility of bomb reconnaissance agents in dealing with both unexploded and exploded bombs. A copy of your memorandum and that of mine is attached.

Also, on this same day, September 17th, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas G. Thompson, Director of the War Department Civilian Protection School at the University of Washington in Seattle, and three of his officers, Captain Sydney Hall, Captain Edward Brolin, and Lieutenant Jack Barrows, stopped in Salem for a few moments enroute to Roseburg where Colonel Thompson was staging an incendiary bomb demonstration on the night of September 18th.

Colonel Thompson had considerable information on the incident and told me how important it was to the Chemical Warfare Service to obtain exact information concerning the type of Japanese bombs likely to be used against this country.

On Tuesday, September 22nd, 1942, Colonel George J. B. Fisher, Chief of the Civilian Protection Branch of the Chemical Warfare Service, Washington, D. C., came to this office and spent several hours reviewing all facts concerning the Curry County incident that were available.

In my talk with Captain Morgan on September 17th he informed me that the report of the incident had come through to the Portland information center on schedule and had been reported to the Fourth Fighter Command in Seattle.

Very truly yours,

James D. Olson,
Assistant State Coordinator

JDO:bbb