Before December 7, 1941, there was little need for either the Germans or the Japanese to establish clandestine radio transmitters within the United States, territories, and island possessions. The commercial radio and cable circuits were open for the transmission of messages through ordinary commercial channels to these countries. Codes could be, and were, freely used. When a message was so secret that the Germans and Japanese did not desire to trust it to the communication companies, even in their intricate top secret diplomatic codes, it could be sent by diplomatic pouch with entire secrecy. Failing this, it could very easily be sent by courier on the trans-oceanic planes and vessels which continued to traverse between these two countries until the very outbreak of the war. Under such circumstances, there was little incentive for the enemy to seek to establish clandestine radio stations in the United States, with all the risks that they entailed, while safer channels of communication were still open.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, however, the situation changed. The ordinary means of communication was immediately closed down so that the only practicable way for an enemy spy in the United States to establish rapid and direct communication with his home country was by means of clandestine radio. This was tried in the United States two days after Pearl Harbor.
Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor I had assigned three mobile units in the District of Columbia to provide a special surveillance over certain embassies. In the wee hours of Tuesday, December 9, 1941, Monitoring Officer Morris Blum in charge of one of the units radioed my office (I had slept in my office from December 8th going to a hotel when I could for a bath and change of clothes) stating that his aperiodic receiver, which I previously described, had sounded off on a strong signal with the call letters UA. With another receiver he identified the frequency and I immediately alerted the other mobile units to guard the frequency and take bearings on any transmissions.

Figure 43: Plot of bearings taken by RID monitoring stations showing the location of a clandestine transmitter in Washington, DC on December 9, 1941, two days after Pearl Harbor.
I had no sooner done this when my watch officer informed me that the primary monitoring station at Portland, Oregon, had printed on the teletypewriter that it had intercepted a station calling UA and furnished the frequency. It was the same as that reported by Monitoring Officer Blum. I immediately issued orders to sound a nationwide alert on the teletypewriter and radio nets. We use both nationwide and regional alerts. A short time later, bearings from Adcock high frequency direction finders started to come into the communication center and they were rapidly projected and made a fix embracing the District of Columbia with the most intersections in the city of Washington. They were followed by bearings taken by loop direction finders at the mobile units and produced a fix in the vicinity of Massachusetts Avenue at Thomas Circle, which was the location of the German Embassy. There was no doubt in my mind then that the chief operator of the German steamer Columbus, which had been interned after a chase down the Atlantic Coast, had placed a transmitter on the air in violation of existing agreements concerning embassies. The State Department had permitted the Embassy at their request to have an operator on duty there for what they said was to copy press from the homeland. The staff of the Embassy were in fact sealed in after December 7th and deprived of their diplomatic pouch privileges and commercial channels of communications. On the next transmission we confirmed that the transmitter was in the German Embassy.

**Figure 44:** Plot of bearings taken by RID mobile units dispatched to Washington, DC on December 9, 1941.
I immediately notified the State Department and the FBI. After consultation in the early hours of the morning in my office, it was decided that the transmitter should be seized. However, there was a fly in the ointment. There were two buildings on the property, one the Embassy, the other was the Chancellery and a pole on each supported an antenna with a lead-in taken off at each end. I was of the opinion this was done to deceive us or to make it difficult to pinpoint the location of the transmitter. The FBI wanted me to go in first and like a quarterback put the transmitter in their hands. During the conference I told them I could not tell in which building the job was located as it was not advisable to go too close and show our hand. However, I informed them that if I could ascertain from the power company if there were separate feeders to each building, switches could be placed in each line and when a transmission was in progress, the building could be positively identified by interrupting their power. So it was agreed that this should be done. I got my friend, Mr. Ferris, the Chief Engineer of the Potomac Electric Power Company, out of bed before daybreak and, with his men, we went down in a manhole in front of the buildings installing switches. In the end, however, because the State Department was afraid of reprisals to our diplomatic missions still in Germany, it was decided not to enter the building but set up two transmitters to jam signals should they try once more to contact Germany.

The jammers were devised by ordering the staff at the primary stations at Millis, Massachusetts and Laurel, Maryland, to remove the filters from their highest power transmitters and convert them to the rhombic antennas which were beamed to Europe. They never tried another transmission. In the meantime, we were requested to provide a special 24 hour watch over the Embassy, which I did by moving my secretary Miss Neva Bell Perry and her mother out of their apartment as they lived within a block of the Embassy buildings. The FBI provided us with the most powerful binoculars I had ever seen, so powerful they had to be mounted on a tripod. With this instrument and our receivers we did a good job of surveillance.

![Figure 45: Hellschreiber printer](image)

During 1940 the Treasury Department said that an instrument had arrived for the Embassy and requested my assistance in identifying it before they permitted it to be delivered. To do this they first told me I had to be sworn in as a special customs officer, which was duly performed. I identified the instrument as a Hellschreiber.
printer, a system of radio communication that prints letters and words. I hooked it up in my office and with a makeshift antenna I had it printing both German and Russian messages from overseas.

Figure 46: June 1945- George Sterling (left) and Al McIntosh inspecting radio equipment in the German Embassy.

Figure 47: June 1945 - Al McIntosh inspecting radio equipment in the German Embassy.

After the war Al McIntosh and I, at the request of the State Department, went into the Embassy and there was the Hellschreiber and other radio gear.
This case was an excellent example of how well our monitoring system worked as planned, that is, the Adcock high frequency direction finders at the primary stations obtaining bearings on the sky wave, and the mobile units doing likewise on the ground wave with loop direction finders, and fixing the precise location of a transmitter.

Figure 48: May 12, 1944 newspaper article revealing RID involvement in the German Embassy case.