



# Taranto: The Raid, The Observer, The Aftermath

*Christopher O'Conner*

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More than a year before the attack on Pearl Harbor, aircraft of the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm executed a surprise attack on ships of the Italian Fleet anchored in the harbor of Taranto. The raid on Taranto anticipated the attack on Pearl Harbor, and historians have seen it as a precursor to the larger and more devastating strike by the Imperial Japanese Navy. The Taranto raid takes on added significance with the little-known fact that an officer in the US Navy was aboard the British aircraft carrier, and reported extensively on the attack to the Office of Naval Intelligence in Washington. For the first time, this book tells the entire story of Taranto and its relevance to Pearl Harbor.

The book describes the attack in detail, and clears up mistakes and misconceptions that appeared in previous publications. The damage was done by 21 planes flown off the deck of HMS Illustrious, without any participation of the Royal Air Force. Illustrious took to sea the radar and aircraft control procedures that helped win the Battle of Britain. From British sources, the book describes the techniques used to allow successful use of aerial torpedoes in the shallow waters of Taranto harbor.

Christopher O'Connor earned a BA from Union College and an MBA from Northwestern University. For fifteen years he worked as a Hospital Administrator. In 1993 he began a new career as a full-time father to five children. His wife, Susan, is a Dentist in private practice since 1987. The development of this book began with a footnote in Prange's *At Dawn We Slept*. This is his first book, but he has previously published articles in hospital management journals and Op-Ed pieces in newspapers. The book is based on original research in the National Archives in Washington, DC. Born in Springfield, MA, Mr. O'Connor now lives in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Southwest Virginia.

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