

Germany's Declaration of War on the United States, 1941

by Derwin Mak

On December 11, 1941, Germany declared war on the United States. Why did Hitler risk war with the U.S.?



Japan attacked the U.S. at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The U.S. and Japan declared war on each other. However, the U.S. was still neutral in the European war. Neither the U.S. nor Germany had attacked each other's territory. (U.S., 1991)



The U.S., though neutral, was supplying weapons to Britain through the Lend-Lease Program. Churchill was worried that now the U.S. would stop aiding Britain and keep its weapons to use against Japan. (Canada, Picture Postage/personalized stamp, 2016)



← Under the Tripartite Pact of 1940, Germany was obligated to ally itself with Japan if Japan was attacked but not if Japan started the conflict. However, Hitler was angry at U.S. aid to Britain. On his own initiative, Hitler declared war on the United States on December 11, 1941. Italy also declared war on the U.S. that day.



↑Germany, 1941

From December 7 to 10, 1941, Britain was fighting two simultaneous but separate wars with different allies and enemies: a war allied with the USSR against Germany and Italy in Europe and a war allied with the United States against Japan in Asia. After Hitler declared war on the U.S., Churchill was relieved that he had the U.S. as an ally in Europe as well as Asia. Now both wars merged into World War II.

↑Canada, 2008

Cover postmarked in Los Angeles, California, on December 11, 1941 (day that Germany declared war on U.S.) with BUY DEFENSE SAVINGS BONDS AND STAMPS slogan cancel on 3-cent U.S. National Defense stamp. Addressed to Alfred Ernest Stafford Smythe (journalist and father of Conn Smythe, owner of the Toronto Maple Leafs).

