MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

Subject: Secret Canal Zone Maps.

1. Acquisition of subject maps by the Italian Minister to Panama, and Japanese plans to take them by fast means to Japan, are indicated in the attached memorandum which, based on highly reliable information, gives the substance of a report, dated 17 June, 1941, from the Japanese Minister in Panama, and a directive, dated 23 June, 1941, from Foreign Minister Matsuoka to the Japanese Minister in Mexico City.

A. G. KIRK,
Captain, U.S. Navy,
Director of Naval Intelligence.

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MEMORANDUM

OZ-18

Report dated 17 June, 1941
from the Japanese Minister in Panama
to Foreign Minister Matsuoka and
the Japanese Ambassador in Washington

The Italian Minister showed me many secret charts
made by the Canal Zone Administration, showing the locations
of equipment, guns, and other military establishments in the
Canal Zone.

I glanced through them, and found them to be ex­
tremely detailed. In considering the process by which these
charts were obtained, I feel that it would be absolutely im­
possible to obtain them in the future. Accordingly, I ap­
proached the Italian Minister regarding them. It appears
that he has no objections to our making copies of them, prov­
ided that this is done in Tokyo, after we have delivered them
to the Italian Embassy there. However, as all ports here are
being very closely watched, there is no other way of taking
these charts out except by plane.

I wonder if it would not be possible to have some
Japanese merchant in South America, who is either returning
to Japan or is being transferred to some other country, take
these charts out; or to have one of our office-staff deliver
them to a designated place? At present, all the places where
recent defense operations are being carried out are being
marked on these charts. This work is estimated to take about
one week to finish.

The Italian Minister stated that if handling of
this in Japan caused too much delay, there is no other way
than to take them by plane from _______ to Washington (?).
In this case, he stated that he would want to have it cop­
ied (?) at Washington (?). Please send instructions without
fail. Secret.

Directive dated 23 June 1941
from Foreign Minister Matsuoka
to the Japanese Minister in Mexico City.

Regarding the plans for procuring maps of the Panama
Canal and vicinity, please have career attache Kihara make an
official trip to Panama. (It might be well to have secretary
Yoshimizu accompany him.)

Have the maps taken out by plane, and then have Sato,
the Naval Attache, bring them to Tokyo with him when he returns.
Furthermore, since the Panama Legation, in their report of 17 June to me, mentioned the question of a trip, get in touch with them regarding date and time of arrival. (American surveillance will unquestionably be vigilant. There are also some suspicions that they read some of our codes; therefore, we wish to exercise the utmost caution in accomplishing this mission. Also, any telegrams exchanged between you and Panama should be very short, for security, or be in innocuous plain language.