

WHY WAS PEARL HARBOR ATTACKED?

The Japanese dreamed of an Empire in Asia and began their quest in early 1931. They overran Manchuria and established it as a state, which they named Manchukuo. Moving into China, the Japanese were initially successful, but ultimately encountered the resistance of the Chinese, under the government Chiang Kai-shek. A crisis arose in 1937, when Japan launched a major offensive in an effort to reduce China into submission.

When this tactic was unsuccessful, Japan adopted a policy of economic strangulation. By 1939, major coastal ports were seized and the Chinese capital was forced to move from Nanking to the inland area of Hankow.

In 1940, the French allowed the entry of Japanese troops into Indochina. A treaty was made with Thailand (Siam). By the end of 1940 the Japanese were threatening the Burma Road, China's last supply line from the outside world. By July 1941, they had completed their occupation of French Indochina and turned their sights to Thailand, Burma and the Philippines.

Concerned over Japan's ambitions, the US, Netherlands and Great Britain froze Japanese assets in their countries and imposed stringent economic restrictions, cutting off 90% of raw materials required by Japan for war production. The US demanded the aggressive actions against China and Indonesia be halted. Japan was forced to choose between abandoning her efforts or seizure of other areas rich in raw materials. Abandonment was unthinkable and Japan chose the latter.

By December, 1941 the Japanese Army had a force of 2,400,000 trained ground troops and an air fleet of 7,500 planes. The US had a force of 1,500,000 of which 1,000,000 were not completely trained, 1,157 combat aircraft and 347 war ships. However, America had already committed to a large portion of war production in the European Conflict.

Japan moved forward with war plans. They believed the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor was their only threat and set out to neutralize the fleet by means of a surprise air attack.

COMMANDERS OF THE US PACIFIC FLEET

The US, and specifically the Army defenses at Pearl Harbor, was under the Command of Lt. General Walter Short. Short's military career began during World War I and lasted almost 40 years. After the attack on December 7, 1941, Short requested retirement and was relieved of his duty by Lieutenant General Delos Emmons.

Admiral Husband Kimmel, who served as Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet after a long run in the military beginning in 1915, also quickly ended his career after the Pearl Harbor attacks. He served during World War I. He stepped down on December 17, 1941 and was replaced as commander of the Pacific Fleet by Admiral Chester W. Nimitz.

Admiral Kimmel and Lt. General Short shared the same belief: neither expected an attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese. Short was consumed by his mission to train his command. Both Short and Kimmel failed to heed any warnings and seldom got together to coordinate efforts between the Army and the Navy.

Throughout the four years that followed the Pearl Harbor Attacks, both Short and Kimmel underwent scrutiny for the choices they made while in command. For years each tried to clear their names. It was not until 2000 that Congress issued a resolution saying that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was not a result of their "dereliction of duty" and found that both had acted in a competently and professional manner.

WHY WAS THE US UNPREPARED?

The first warning Hawaii received that Japan might attack the US was sent by the Navy to its fleet commanders on October 16, 1941. The Army staff in Washington disagreed with the Navy's warning and the War Department sent a supplementary message to commanders advising they did not see an abrupt change in Japanese foreign policy in the near future. The War Department did not believe that Japan was on the verge of attacking the United States. Under the circumstances commanders of the Pacific Fleet saw no need to do anymore than what was already being done.

There was also an assumption in Washington that Japan had no seaborne aircraft capable of catching the Army's B-24 bombers. They further believed that Japan had overextended their military in other regions and could not concentrate their

military forces for a large scale strategic offensive in the Pacific. On the eve of the attack, the Honolulu press reflected the belief of Washington that Japan was too weak to pose a really serious threat to the United States.

There was a complete lack of cooperation between the Army and Navy and no one in authority believed in the dangers to which Pearl Harbor was exposed. Training activities preoccupied the Commanders to the exclusion of adequate preparedness against attack and as they prepared for war, they saw no need for Hawaii to be ready for a large-scale attack.

On December 7, 1941, Washington intercepted a written message from Japan threatening war. The United States did not appreciate the full implications of the 7:30 am Hawaii deadline. A last minute warning was sent to the Pacific commanders, however General Short did not receive the message until hours after the attack. Poor communications between Washington and Hawaii helped the Japanese achieve the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.

Two early warnings of the approaching Japanese attack came, but however both were ignored. At approximately 6:30 a.m., a Japanese midget sub was spotted and sunk near the entrance to Pearl Harbor. Shortly thereafter, an Army radar station on Oahu's north shore reported the sighting of planes about 50 miles away to the Watch Commander at Army information center at Fort Shafter. It was then reported to a Navy lieutenant. The Navy lieutenant believed they were US planes returning from a reconnaissance flight or B-17's scheduled to arrive from California and the sighting was ignored.

TWO WAVES

The Japanese began their air attack. The first wave arrived over Pearl Harbor at approximately 7:45 a.m. to find seven U.S. battleships moored along "Battleship Row", on the east side of Ford Island. Another battleship was in dry dock in the nearby Navy Yard. Other moorings which the Japanese believed might include battleships, or the equally important aircraft carriers, were at the Navy Yard's 1010 Dock and along Ford Island's western side.

The Japanese initially hit the airfields, destroying many aircrafts located on the southern tip of Ford Island. This attack followed by the dispatch of communications was the World's first notification that war had begun in the Pacific.

Moments thereafter, torpedo planes attacked from west hitting the USS Helena, USS Utah and USS Raleigh, all on the west side of Ford Island. From the east, torpedo planes came in and hit the USS California, the USS Nevada, USS Oklahoma and West Virginia located on the east side of Ford Island.

As the torpedo planes continued the first wave attacks, additional bombs were dropped on "Battleship Row", hitting several ships. The USS Arizona received a death blow followed by a huge explosion. As the first wave departed, the Japanese telegraph operator taped out Tora, Tora, Tora: the code word for surprise attack achieved.

The second wave of planes further attacked some of the ships already hit, further destroying the Navy Yard. The battleship Pennsylvania and three destroyers were bombed in dry dock. Other bombers went after the Nevada, which had left her berth and was trying to get to sea. Anti-aircraft gunfire met these ships, causing losses which were far greater than those of the first attack wave.

Fortunately, neither wave had the opportunity to hit American aircraft carriers, all of which were out at sea. Fuel storage tanks, maintenance areas and most destroyers and submarines were not targeted. However, in less than two hours the Japanese had ruined the U.S. Pacific Fleet's battleship force, ensuring the US would not interfere with further plans for conquest.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE ATTACK?

A crippled Japanese plane landed that afternoon on the isolated island of Niihau. The plane was disarmed by a native Hawaiian. A message was sent to the island of Kauai asking for help. The Japanese pilot convinced one Japanese descendant on the island to set him free and return his weapons, after which a rampage ensued. Meanwhile, a Hawaiian, Benhakaka Kanahale, and his wife were captured by the two Japanese. They jumped their captors and escaped. Kanahale was shot in his stomach, groin, and leg, and in anger, picked up the Japanese pilot and smashed his head against a stone wall. The pilot shot himself, ending the "Battle of Niihau".

Shortly after the attack, the Army anticipated the Japanese may land on Hawaii. Troops took up positions around the perimeter of all main Hawaiian islands. Barriers were placed on beaches in an effort to obstruct a landing. All Hawaii airports were taken over by the Army and private planes were grounded. The Hawaii Territorial Guard and ROTC units from the University and high schools were mobilized. Martial Law was declared in spite of opposition by Hawaii's Territorial Governor Poindexter. General Walter C. Short issued a declaration in which he announced that he was taking over the Hawaii Territorial Government as the Military Governor of Hawaii. With martial law came curfews, blackouts, and many other restrictions including censorship of the news and mail.

Government buildings including the Iolani Palace were turned into military offices. Military courts replaced the civil courts and military law was the law of the land for both civilians and military personnel. The Hawaiian islands were essentially turned into one large military base. All Japanese owned businesses were shut down. Local police, FBI and Army arrested many residents who were considered dangerous.

Residents were fingerprinted and identification cards were issued, which had to be carried at all times. Residents and businesses could not hold more than \$200 in cash.

Although originally it was believed that martial law would last only a short time, it lasted for almost three years. After it was terminated, curfews and blackouts still remained in effect until July 1945.

In Hawaii, many residents of Japanese descent were moved to detention centers, but there were so many, they could not hold everyone. Although a plan was devised to move up to 100,000 Japanese from Hawaii, it was never executed.

However, in February 1942 shortly after the outbreak of World War II, President Roosevelt signed an Executive Order, authorizing Japanese-American citizens to be picked up and placed in one of 10 "relocation centers" located in California, Idaho, Utah, Arizona, Wyoming, Colorado, and Arkansas. This affected approximately 120,000 Japanese, of which approximately 80,000 were US Citizens.

Conditions in the US internment camps were poor and there was extreme overcrowding. There were no plumbing or cooking facilities and food was rationed out to the detainees. Eventually, the US government offered to release the detainees but only if they agreed to serve in the US Army. This offer was not widely accepted and only approximately 1,200 people were enlisted.

In 1944, President Roosevelt rescinded the Executive order. It took until the end of 1945 to close down all of the internment camps. It was not until 1968 that the US Government began paying compensation to Japanese American citizens for property they had lost. It was only provided to approximately 60,000 of those who had survived to receive it.

"Pearl Harbor, Oahu - The Attack: Facts and Information." Pearl Harbor Tours. Pearl Harbor Oahu, 2013. Web. 11 Feb. 2014.