

DEFINING MOMENTS THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR



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Chapter Three

THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR



Do you mean to say they [Japanese aircraft carriers] could be rounding Diamond Head [a volcanic mountain on the island of Oahu, Hawaii] and you wouldn't know it?

—Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, upon learning that U.S. Navy intelligence had lost radio contact with the Japanese fleet,
December 2, 1941

As Japan put together its strategy for a surprise attack on the U.S. military base in Hawaii, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and other American leaders knew that the two countries were veering dangerously close to a confrontation. Throughout the fall of 1941—and even in the hours before the attack began—there were a number of ominous warnings that war could break out at any time. But the United States largely misinterpreted or disregarded these signs and failed to prepare for the coming attack.

On the morning of December 7, 1941, therefore, American sailors and soldiers were shocked when Japanese planes suddenly appeared overhead and began dropping bombs and torpedoes on the U.S. Pacific Fleet anchored in Pearl Harbor. The attack was a tremendous victory for the Japanese. They achieved complete surprise and severely crippled American military capabilities in the Pacific.

The Japanese Attack Force Approaches

The ships of the Japanese Combined Fleet assigned to participate in the attack on Pearl Harbor gathered in Hitokappu Bay, a remote outpost in the

Kurile Islands north of Japan, in late November. The attack force consisted of 23 warships, including 6 aircraft carriers with nearly 400 planes, 9 destroyers, 3 submarines, 2 battleships, 2 heavy cruisers, and 1 light cruiser. They were accompanied by 8 oil tankers so they could refuel at sea and avoid stopping at any ports where their movements might be observed. The commander of the attack force was Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, a career officer with vast experience at sea. To preserve secrecy, he did not inform the crews of the various ships about their mission until after they had reached Hitokappu Bay.

On November 23, when the last of the ships arrived, Nagumo outlined the attack plan Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto had developed. The attack force would travel east across the northern Pacific and then turn south toward Hawaii. When they reached a point about 230 miles north of Oahu, they would stop and launch two waves of warplanes from the aircraft carriers. The first wave would consist of 189 planes: 50 Nakajima B5N2 “Kate” high-level bombers; 40 Kate torpedo bombers; 54 Aichi D3A1 “Val” low-level dive bombers; and 45 Mitsubishi A6M2 “Zero” fighters. Each Kate carried a three-man crew consisting of a pilot, a navigator-bomber, and a radioman-gunner. Each Val had a two-man crew consisting of a pilot and a gunner. Each speedy Zero carried a solo pilot.

If the Japanese planes managed to arrive without alerting the American defenses, the plan was for the torpedo bombers to strike first. They would fly low over Pearl Harbor and concentrate on destroying the largest U.S. warships—especially aircraft carriers and battleships. Then the high-level bombers would attack the ships at anchor. Meanwhile, the dive bombers would try to destroy as many American warplanes as possible at the various air bases scattered around the island. The Japanese hoped to hit the U.S. planes before they could take off and fight back against the air attack.

After the first wave of Japanese planes used up their bombs, torpedoes, and bullets, then the plan called for a second wave to take over. The second wave would consist of 171 aircraft, including 54 Kates, 81 Vals, and 36 Zeros. All of the Kates in the second wave would be equipped as high-level bombers, because it would be too dangerous to send in more low-flying torpedo bombers once American forces began firing anti-aircraft guns. The second wave was supposed to target any ships, airfields, or other facilities that had not been completely destroyed in the first wave of the attack. The overall commander of the planes in the Japanese strike force was Mitsuo Fuchida



This photo, captured from the Japanese, shows planes preparing to take off from the aircraft carrier *Shokaku* for the attack on Pearl Harbor.

(see Fuchida biography, p. 123), who would lead the first wave in a high-level Kate bomber.

Finally, the Japanese attack plan also included a separate force of twenty-seven submarines. Five of the full-size subs carried tiny, two-man midget submarines attached to their backs. The full-size submarines were assigned to lurk outside the entrance to Pearl Harbor and destroy any ships that managed to escape the air raid. The midget subs were designed to sneak into the harbor during the attack and cause further damage to the American warships. The submarine portion of the plan was added at the last minute over the objections of Nagumo and other Japanese military leaders. They worried that the subs would be detected in the waters near Hawaii and ruin their chances for achieving surprise.

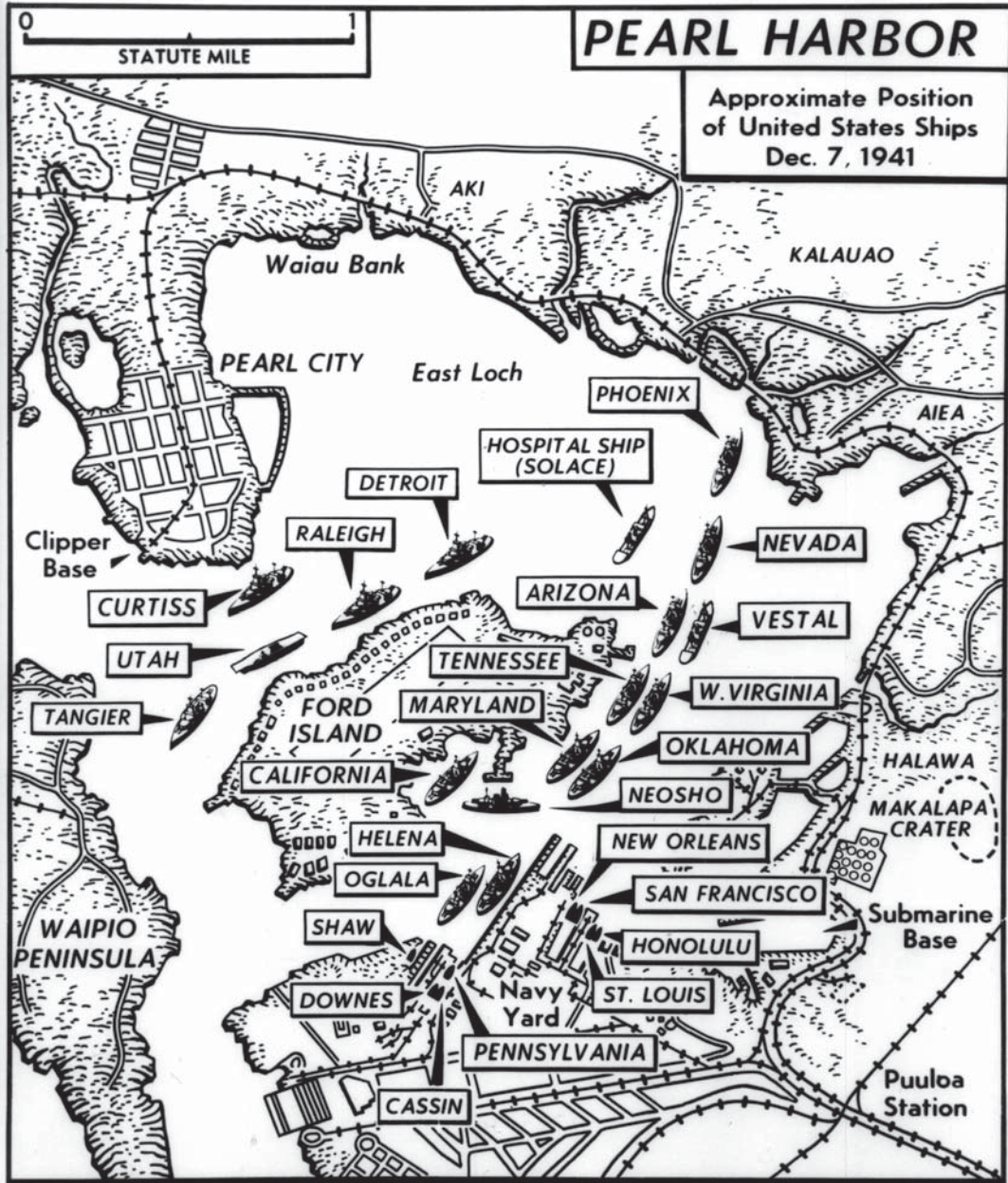
The Japanese ships set sail from Hitokappu Bay on November 26. As they headed east across the northern Pacific, they stayed well outside of the normal shipping lanes to avoid detection. They also maintained strict radio silence during the ten-day journey. Instead of using their radios, the ships in the attack force communicated with each other by flashing lights or displaying signal flags. This was why the U.S. tracking systems lost radio contact with the ships. The Japanese also tried to confuse American intelligence by leaving the carrier group's normal radio operators behind in home waters, where they sent out routine signals.

On December 2—the same day that Tokyo ordered all Japanese consulates in the United States to destroy their secret code machines and sensitive documents—Nagumo received final confirmation of his mission. Yamamoto sent him a message that said “Climb Mount Niitaka 1208.” Mount Niitaka was the highest peak in the Japanese empire. This signal meant that all diplomatic options had been exhausted and the attack was scheduled for December 8 Tokyo time, which was December 7 in Hawaii.

U.S. Forces Discount Suspicious Activity

As dawn approached on that sleepy Sunday morning, about half of the U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet was moored in Pearl Harbor. There were a total of 185 vessels, including more than 90 warships and an assortment of tugboats, repair ships, tankers, seaplane tenders, and other support vessels. The most impressive section of the anchorage was Battleship Row, located on the southeastern shore of Ford Island in the middle of the harbor. Seven heavily armored battleships with massive guns lining their decks were anchored there, alone or in pairs. Beginning closest to the harbor entrance, there was the USS *California* by itself, the *Oklahoma* anchored outside of the *Maryland*, the *West Virginia* moored outside of the *Tennessee*, the *Arizona* on the inside of the *Vestal* (a repair ship), and the *Nevada* by itself. An eighth battleship, the USS *Pennsylvania*, sat in dry dock nearby.

By sheer coincidence, none of the Pacific Fleet's three aircraft carriers were in Pearl Harbor that morning. The USS *Enterprise* was on its way back from delivering some Marine Corps fighter planes to Wake Island, and the *Lexington* had left two days earlier to deliver some scout bombers to Midway Island. The third carrier, the USS *Saratoga*, was in California undergoing repairs. In addition, 36 destroyers, 18 submarines, and 12 cruisers that were



This U.S. Navy map shows the location of ships immediately before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

normally stationed at Pearl Harbor were out of port on patrol or on various missions that day.

As the Japanese forces crept into position for the coming assault, some of the American ships patrolling outside of the harbor nearly discovered the Japanese attack plan. As Yamamoto and other military planners had feared, it was the separate submarine force that almost gave away the element of surprise. At 3:42 A.M. on December 7—about four hours before the air raid began—the minesweeper *Condor* saw a periscope while on routine patrol. The commanding officer reported it to the destroyer *Ward*, which was under orders to attack any submarines found near the entrance to Pearl Harbor. The *Ward* was unable to find anything by sonar, however, so the commander decided that the *Condor* must have been wrong and did not report the incident to headquarters.

At 6:33 A.M., however, the *Ward* received a second report of a submarine sighting from the stores ship *Antares*. This time, the *Ward* found the sub, attacked, and sank it. This attack—which was reported to Pacific Fleet headquarters at 6:53 A.M.—was technically the first hostile action in the war between the United States and Japan. A few minutes later, a U.S. Navy plane on routine patrol spotted another submarine about a mile from the entrance to Pearl Harbor. The plane dropped depth charges on the sub and reported the incident to headquarters around 7:00 A.M.

Upon learning that his forces had engaged two enemy submarines near the harbor, Kimmel could have informed Short and put the entire base on high alert. The two commanders could have ordered their forces to increase patrols or even man their battle stations. But Kimmel did not tell his Army counterpart about the submarines or take any other action to prepare for a possible attack.

The American forces at Pearl Harbor received one more clue that they were in imminent danger, but once again they did not recognize its importance. At 7:02 A.M., as Privates Joseph Lockard and George Elliott were preparing to end their three-hour shift at the U.S. Army radar station on the northern shore of Oahu, the scanner showed something very strange. It looked as if at least fifty planes were flying toward the island from the north. When the soldiers first noticed the unusual reading, the planes were about 132 miles away.

After making sure that their equipment was working correctly, Lockard and Elliott reported the sighting to Lieutenant Kermit Tyler, the officer on



A view of Pearl Harbor from a Japanese plane as the attack began: torpedo tracks and shock waves are visible in the water near Battleship Row, and white smoke can be seen rising in the distance from Hickam Field.

duty at the Army's main information center. Tyler knew that eleven American B-17 Flying Fortress bombers were expected to arrive from California that morning, on their way to the Philippines. Tyler decided that if the radar operators really did see planes on the relatively new equipment, they must actually be tracking the B-17s. Since information about the planes' arrival was classified, however, Tyler was not allowed to inform the two privates. Instead, he simply told Lockard and Elliott not to worry about the radar images.

Japan Achieves Complete Surprise

Of course, what the American radar operators really saw was the first wave of Japanese warplanes, which had taken off from the aircraft carriers north of Oahu a short time earlier. Fuchida and the other pilots had struggled

to launch their planes safely in high winds and rough seas. “We could hear the waves splashing against the ship with a thunderous noise,” the commander recalled. “Under normal circumstances, no plane would be permitted to take off in such weather.”¹ The poor conditions and mechanical problems combined to prevent ten Japanese planes from taking off. This setback reduced the attack force to 350 aircraft (183 in the first wave and 167 in the second).

Once the planes of the first wave got into the air, Fuchida led them south toward Oahu (see “Japanese Pilot Mitsuo Fuchida Leads the Attack,” p. 176). They planned to begin their attack at 8:00 A.M. local time. As they neared the coast of the island at 7:40 A.M., Fuchida fired a flare to indicate his belief that they had achieved complete surprise and should proceed according to plan. Nine minutes later, with all the planes in attack formation, the commander told his pilots, “To, to, to!” (short for *totsugekiseyo*, which means “charge”). Fuchida also sent a famous message to be relayed back to Tokyo: “Tora, tora, tora!” This code word, meaning “tiger,” informed Japanese military planners that their strategy had succeeded in catching the Americans off guard.

As the Japanese planes approached Pearl Harbor, Japanese officials sent a message to the United States formally severing all diplomatic ties between the two countries. The message outlined fourteen points of contention between the United States and Japan. It concluded with the following statement: “The Japanese government regrets that it is impossible to reach an agreement through further negotiations.”

Ambassador Nomura was supposed to deliver this message to Secretary of State Hull at exactly 1:00 P.M. Washington time (7:30 A.M. in Hawaii) on December 7—just before the attack began. Japanese leaders felt that this timing would allow them to say that they had broken off diplomatic relations before going to war. They did not realize that U.S. military code breakers had intercepted the message and provided the text to President Roosevelt the night before the attack. Even though the Japanese did not declare war in so many words, Roosevelt understood the underlying meaning. “This means war,” he told his aide Harry Hopkins.

Hopkins called Admiral Stark and General Marshall to make sure that all U.S. Navy and Army forces were fully prepared for a Japanese attack. The two chiefs agreed that it seemed suspicious that Tokyo had ordered Nomura to deliver the message at a specific time. They felt that the time might indicate when they should expect an attack to occur. But since they had already

warned all U.S. military forces in the Pacific to be prepared for a Japanese attack at any time, they decided that no further action was needed.

As it turned out, the message was delayed at the Japanese embassy in Washington. Nomura did not bring the official version to Hull's office until 2:05 P.M. (8:35 A.M. Hawaii time)—about forty-five minutes after Japanese planes launched their attack on Pearl Harbor. The secretary of state had already heard the news by the time the ambassador arrived. After glancing at the message, an outraged Hull declared, "In all my fifty years of public service, I have never seen such a document that was more crowded with infamous falsehoods and distortions on a scale so huge that I never imagined until today that any government on this planet was capable of uttering them."² Then he ordered Nomura to leave his office. The ambassador did not learn about the attack—and the role he unknowingly played in preserving its secrecy—until he got back to the Japanese embassy.

The First Wave Begins

The Japanese warplanes arrived over their targets a little before the scheduled time of 8:00 A.M. Much of the first wave concentrated on attacking the various air bases on the island, rather than the ships in Pearl Harbor. These included the Army Air Force bases at Wheeler Field in the center of Oahu, at Hickam Field near the entrance to Pearl Harbor, at Bellows Field on the east coast of Oahu, and at Haleiwa Field on the northwest shore of Oahu; the Naval Air Stations at Kaneohe Bay on the northeast shore of Oahu and at Ford Island in the middle of Pearl Harbor; and the Ewa Marine Corps Air Station on the southwest shore of Oahu.

The Japanese knew that the success of their attack strategy depended on their ability to maintain control of the air space above Pearl Harbor. In order to destroy the Navy warships, they had to prevent American warplanes from getting off the ground. Once airborne, the U.S. military planes could either engage the Japanese planes in aerial combat or locate and attack the Japanese aircraft carriers waiting offshore.

At 7:51 A.M., one of the first bombs of the Japanese attack hit the Hawaiian Air Force fighter planes lined up in neat rows at Wheeler Field. Several

Japanese pilot Mitsuo Fuchida watched the destruction of the battleship Arizona from above. "A huge column of dark red smoke rose to 1,000 feet and a stiff shock wave rocked the plane," he remembered.



Much of the first wave of the Japanese attack focused on destroying the various air bases on Oahu.

planes caught on fire, and they were parked so close together that the fire soon spread to others nearby. Most of the 153 planes at Wheeler Field were destroyed in the first 15 minutes of the Japanese attack, and 27 Americans were killed.

Around the same time, Japanese planes bombed and strafed the Kaneohe Naval Air Station. They destroyed 27 seaplanes, or flying boats, that were tied to the docks or sitting on ramps. Only the three seaplanes that happened to be out on patrol at that time escaped damage. The attack took the lives of 18 Americans, some of whom were heroically trying to save the planes.

At 7:55 A.M., 17 Val dive bombers and 18 Zeros struck the Army Air Force Base at Hickam Field. Compared to the other air bases, Hickam Field

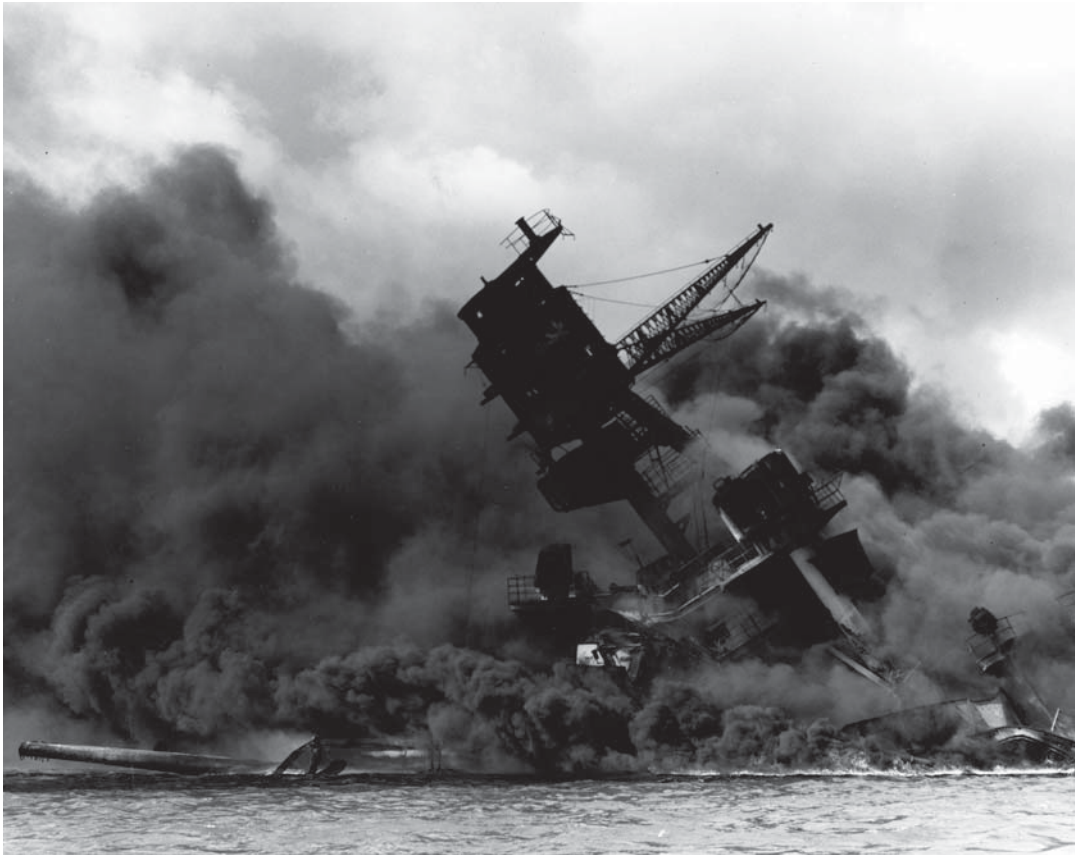
was full of activity that morning. Crews were busy preparing for the arrival of the 11 B-17 Flying Fortress bombers from California, and a number of officers had come out to watch. The Japanese attack not only destroyed most of the 57 planes that were lined up wingtip to wingtip, but also caused extensive damage to the base's runways, hangars, armory, barracks, and mess hall. The Army suffered its worst losses of the Pearl Harbor attack at Hickam Field, with 182 men killed. The expected group of B-17s also arrived in the middle of the attack—unarmed, with minimal crews, and nearly out of fuel. Remarkably, though, most of them managed to land safely at Hickam or Bellows, and one set down on a nearby golf course.

The first few minutes of the Japanese attack also saw dive bombers swoop down on the Naval Air Station at Ford Island. Nearly half of the 70 planes at the airfield were destroyed, but only one American was killed. At 7:58 A.M., the officer on duty at the Ford Island command center, Lieutenant Commander Logan Ramsey, managed to inform the outside world that Hawaii was under attack. The shocking message “Air raid Pearl Harbor! This is no drill!”³ reached top military officials in Washington, D.C., a few minutes later.

Battleship Row Is Hit Hard

Just minutes after the first bombs hit Wheeler Field, Japanese torpedo bombers began striking the U.S. Navy vessels anchored in Pearl Harbor. Since none of the Pacific Fleet's prized aircraft carriers were in port at the time, the Japanese pilots concentrated on attacking Battleship Row. They dropped their torpedoes into the shallow waters of the harbor, then watched as the deadly devices streaked toward the unprotected bellies of the American ships. One of the first torpedoes hit the *West Virginia* at 7:56, putting a gaping hole in her side. Some of her sailors had reported to their battle stations when they heard explosions coming from the airfield, and they fought hard until several more torpedo strikes managed to sink the ship.

Several Japanese torpedo bombers also attacked the ships moored on the north side of Ford Island, including the light cruiser *Raleigh* and the obsolete battleship *Utah*. The *Utah* had been dismantled and its topside covered with wooden decking to serve as a target ship. In the smoke and confusion of battle, some Japanese pilots mistook it for an aircraft carrier. The *Utah* capsized within minutes of the first torpedo hit, taking the lives of fifty-eight sailors (see “A U.S. Navy Crewman Remembers Chaos and Casualties,” p. 179).



The battleship *USS Arizona* went down in flames after a Japanese bomb exploded the gunpowder and ammunition stored in the ship's forward magazine.

The next battleship to be sunk was the *Oklahoma*, which took the first of five torpedo hits at 7:55. Jinichi Goto, commander of the Japanese torpedo bombers, recalled scoring a direct hit on the vessel: “I saw that I was even lower than the crow’s nest of the great battleship. My observer reported a huge waterspout springing up.... ‘Atarimashita! [It hit!]’ he cried.”⁴ U.S. Navy Commander J.L. Kenworthy was on board the *Oklahoma* when it came under attack. “I felt a very heavy shock and heard a loud explosion,” he remembered, “and the ship immediately began to list to port [lean over to the left]. As I attempted to get to the conning tower over decks slippery with oil and water, I felt the shock of another very heavy explosion.”⁵ Kenworthy

ordered his men to abandon ship, but many were not able to escape in time. When the *Oklahoma* rolled over eight minutes later, more than 400 sailors were trapped below deck.

Some of the worst destruction on Battleship Row was caused by bombs rather than torpedoes. The battleship *Arizona* avoided being hit by torpedoes because it was moored inside the repair ship *Vestal*. But at 8:08 A.M., it was hit by a 1,760-pound armor-piercing shell dropped from a high-level Kate bomber. The bomb struck the ship's forward magazine—a large compartment in the bow that held fifty tons of gunpowder and ammunition. The strike triggered a massive explosion that tore apart the front part of the *Arizona* and sent flaming debris, metal fragments, and human body parts raining down on nearby ships. Fuchida watched the destruction of the *Arizona* from above. “A huge column of dark red smoke rose to 1,000 feet and a stiff shock wave rocked the plane,” he remembered. “It was a hateful, mean-looking red flame, the kind that powder produces, and I knew at once that a big magazine had exploded. Terrible indeed.”⁶

The *Arizona* disaster took the lives of 1,177 sailors, or about half of the total number of Americans who died in the attack on Pearl Harbor. Only 337 crew members survived. Many of them were forced to jump overboard and swim through flaming oil and debris to reach shore. The fires from the *Arizona* burned for hours, filling the skies with thick black smoke.

The Second Wave Arrives

The first wave of the Japanese attack lasted only about thirty minutes. Then there was a brief lull before the second wave of warplanes arrived. Much of Oahu was in chaos during this lull in the attack. Military personnel rushed around trying to find and rescue survivors, treat the injured, and get ready in case of another air raid or a land invasion. By the time the second wave of Japanese planes began to attack at 8:54 A.M., American sailors and troops were ready to fight back. Some greeted the strike force with a barrage of anti-aircraft fire, while others broke into locked ammunition caches and fired away with machine guns and small arms. The Air Force even managed to launch eleven fighter planes to engage in combat with the Japanese.

The increased American resistance and the smoke swirling around Pearl Harbor targets combined to limit the effectiveness of the second wave of the Japanese attack. The warplanes struck Hickam and Wheeler air bases again.



Following the second wave of the Japanese attack, the minelayer *Oglala* lies capsized, while the destroyer *Shaw* (left) and battleship *Nevada* burn in the background.

They also destroyed five planes at Bellows Field, which had suffered only minor damage in the first wave. Looking for new targets in the harbor, the second wave attacked the battleship *Pennsylvania* as it sat in dry dock, killing twenty-four men on board. The Japanese also did severe damage to the American destroyers *Cassin*, *Downes*, and *Shaw*.

A few American warships had used the time between attacks to start up their engines and get underway. They hoped to escape the confines of Pearl Harbor and reach the relative safety of open sea. Some of the most dramatic fighting took place when the battleship *Nevada* pulled away from its moorings and steamed toward the entrance to the harbor. Although a torpedo from the

first wave had left a thirty-foot hole in her bow, the crew had managed to close off the damaged area and keep her afloat. As a moving target, though, the *Nevada* attracted a great deal of attention during the second wave. The Japanese were determined to sink her and block the entrance to Pearl Harbor. The *Nevada* took at least five direct hits but fought valiantly, shooting down two Japanese planes. Ultimately, the damage became too great and the battleship began to take on water. The crew managed to run her aground at Hospital Point, on the east side of the harbor entrance, to avoid blocking the main channel.

Casualties and Losses

Before the second wave of Japanese planes flew away at 9:45 A.M., Fuchida circled above Pearl Harbor to survey the damage. “I counted four battleships definitely sunk and three severely damaged, and extensive damage had also been inflicted on other types of ships,” he recalled. “The seaplane base at Ford Island was all in flames, as were the airfields, especially Wheeler Field.”⁷ The last of the planes that had survived the attack arrived back on their aircraft carriers by 1:30 P.M.

The officers of the Japanese attack force debated about launching a third wave of planes before they sailed for home. Although they had successfully hit all of their primary targets, a few important secondary targets had remained untouched. For example, the Pearl Harbor installation included several “tank farms” that contained 4.5 million barrels of oil to fuel the U.S. Pacific Fleet. The base also featured extensive ship-repair facilities, which would help the Americans recover from the attack more quickly. Fuchida and other officers argued that that they should go back and finish the job.

But Nagumo decided to order the attack force back to Japanese waters. In defending this decision, he noted that the Japanese attack had achieved its main objective: it had inflicted enough damage to the U.S. Pacific Fleet to prevent it from interfering with Japanese expansion plans for at least six months. The admiral also pointed out that the attack force had suffered relatively few casualties. The Japanese had lost only 29 planes (9 in the first wave and 20 in the second)—or about 8 percent of the total launched—carrying 55 airmen. Japanese losses also included 1 submarine with its crew of 65 men, and all 5 midget subs with 9 crew members (see “The First Japanese Prisoner of War,” p. 48).

In contrast, the American losses were tremendous—both in terms of lives and military capacity. A total of 2,388 Americans were killed during the

The First Japanese Prisoner of War

Ensign Kazuo Sakamaki was the pilot of one of the 78-foot-long, two-man Japanese midget submarines that took part in the attack on Pearl Harbor. Five midget subs made the journey across the Pacific to Hawaii attached to the backs of regular submarines. The midget subs were launched outside the harbor shortly before the attack began. Their mission was to sneak through the entrance and fire their torpedoes at American warships during the heat of battle. Since the battery-powered midget subs had a range of only eighteen miles underwater, however, they were not expected to be able to return to their mother ships afterward. Sakamaki and the other members of the Japanese midget sub force were fully prepared to die in the service of their country.

Unfortunately for Sakamaki, the gyrocompass on his submarine malfunctioned, making it nearly impossible for him to steer the vehicle. He struggled to control it, ran out of battery power, and ended up running aground on a coral reef without ever entering Pearl Harbor. To prevent his top-secret vessel from falling into American hands, Sakamaki tried to use explosive charges to destroy it. After he and his crewman leaped overboard, however, the fuse went out. The two men tried to swim back to

attack on Pearl Harbor, and another 1,178 were injured. The U.S. Navy suffered the highest losses, with 1,998 sailors killed, while the Army lost 233 soldiers and the Marines lost 109. In addition, 48 civilian (non-military) men, women, and children were killed in and around Honolulu during the attack. Although the Japanese only dropped one bomb on the city, it was hit by 39 American antiaircraft shells and countless spent bullets. The exploding shells tore the roofs off of several buildings and started fires that destroyed whole neighborhoods.

The Japanese attack sank or severely damaged 21 American warships. In addition, 188 warplanes were destroyed and 159 others damaged. None of the eight U.S. battleships that were moored in Pearl Harbor on December 7 escaped damage in the attack. The two that fared best were the *Maryland*, which was hit by two bombs but was protected from torpedoes by the *Okla-*

their submarine but became exhausted. His crewman drowned, while Sakamaki lost consciousness and eventually washed up on a beach.

Sakamaki woke up to find American soldiers standing guard over him. He became the first Japanese prisoner of war to be captured in the Pacific conflict. According to *bushido*—the warrior code of the Japanese samurai—any soldier who was captured alive dishonored himself, his family, and his country. Deeply humiliated, Sakamaki burned his face with cigarettes and demanded to be allowed to commit suicide, but his captors refused. Sakamaki spent the remainder of the war in prisoner-of-war camps on the American mainland. His midget sub was salvaged, examined by U.S. intelligence, and then put on public display to raise money for the U.S. war effort.

When the war ended, Sakamaki returned to Japan and took a job with Toyota. In 1969 he became president of the automaker's subsidiary in Brazil. He also wrote a memoir about his wartime experiences, which was published as *The First Prisoner in Japan* and as *I Attacked Pearl Harbor* in the United States. Sakamaki was reunited with his submarine in 1991, when he attended a historical conference in Texas to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack. He died on November 29, 1999, at the age of 81. He was survived by his wife and two children.

homa lying upside-down next to her; and the *Tennessee*, which was scarred by fires started by flaming debris from the *Arizona*, but was protected from torpedo damage by the sunken *West Virginia* alongside her.

As it turned out, though, all but three of the ships that were hit by Japanese bombs and torpedoes in the attack were later salvaged (the target ship *Utah* and the battleship *Arizona* were beyond repair and remained on the bottom of the harbor, while the battleship *Oklahoma* was raised but sold for scrap). The lightly damaged battleships *Maryland* and *Tennessee* returned to action by December 20, and the *Pennsylvania* set sail for California that same day to undergo repairs. Even the *West Virginia*, *California*, and *Nevada* eventually returned to fight in the Pacific War. In addition, Pearl Harbor remained a vital naval base because its fuel tanks and ship-repair facilities escaped damage in the attack.

Most importantly, the Japanese forces failed to locate and destroy the American aircraft carriers that operated out of Pearl Harbor. The devastating attack had proven that aircraft carriers were the key to modern naval warfare. When U.S. military leaders were forced to recognize this new reality, they still had carriers available to incorporate into their strategy. “Both services had not fully learned the lessons of the development of air power in respect to the defense of a navy and of a naval base,” wrote Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson in his diary. “It was only through such a disaster that we could all in the nation learn what modern air power can do even in the high seas.”⁹

Still, at a relatively low cost to the Japanese, the attack on Pearl Harbor had dealt a serious blow to the U.S. Pacific Fleet. In the coming months, Japan would take full advantage of this fact to expand its empire southward, conquering large areas of Asia and the Pacific islands. From a tactical standpoint, Yamamoto’s plan worked brilliantly and achieved its objectives. As the admiral predicted, however, the victory would be short-lived.

Notes

¹ Quoted in Friedrich, Otto. “Day of Infamy.” *Time*, December 2, 1991, p. 30.

² Quoted in Van der Vat, Dan. *Pearl Harbor: The Day of Infamy—An Illustrated History*. Toronto: Madison Press, 2001, p. 77.

³ Quoted in Prange, Gordon W. *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981, p. 517.

⁴ Quoted in Prange, *At Dawn We Slept*, p. 509.

⁵ Quoted in Friedrich, p. 30.

⁶ Quoted in Prange, Gordon W. *God’s Samurai: Lead Pilot at Pearl Harbor*. Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, 1991, p. 35.

⁷ Quoted in Harris, Nathaniel. *A Day That Made History: Pearl Harbor*. North Pomfret, VT: David and Charles, 1986, p. 32.

⁸ National Park Service, USS Arizona Memorial, <http://www.nps.gov/archive/usar/extendweb1.html>.

⁹ Quoted in Conn, Stetson, Rose C. Engelman, and Byron Fairchild. *Guarding the United States and Its Outposts*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2000, p. 196.

A High School Student Describes How the Attack Changed Her Life

The document below is an excerpt from the diary of a 17-year-old high school senior who was living at Hickam Field—a U.S. Army Air Force Base located near the entrance to Pearl Harbor in Hawaii—with her family in 1941. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 182 people were killed at Hickam, 57 American planes were destroyed, and the base’s runways, hangars, armory, barracks, and mess hall were severely damaged.

In her diary, E.B. (Betty) Leonard records the dramatic changes that took place in her life as a result of the Pearl Harbor attack. The entries prior to the surprise Japanese raid are full of the typical concerns of a teenage girl, such as writing out Christmas cards, doing her homework, and seeing movies with friends. The entries for December 7 describe the harrowing experience from the perspective of a civilian caught in a war zone. In the entries following the attack, Leonard writes about scenes of destruction, nightly blackouts, and the possibility of being evacuated to the mainland. When preparing the diary for publication, Leonard chose to delete the last names of people mentioned; otherwise, the content is the same as when it was written.

Saturday, December 6, 1941

Washed my hair finally. It’s warm again, so it dried real fast. Read the paper and then it was time to eat lunch. Listened to the Shriner’s football game over the radio. The University beat Willamette 20-6. I spent all afternoon reading funny books and trying to get our transportation figured out for tonight. Finally fixed it so Hester took us and Dad brought us home. We (Kay and I) were ushering at Punahou for the play “Mr. and Mrs. North.” It was pretty good. We got home about ten of twelve and I’m very sleepy. Lani invited us to dinner Tuesday.

Sunday, December 7, 1941

BOMBED! 8:00 in the morning. Unknown attacker so far! Pearl Harbor in flames! Also Hickam hangar line. So far no houses bombed here.

5 of 11:00. We’ve left the Post. It got too hot. The PX [Post Exchange, a general store on the base] is in flames, also the barracks. We made a dash dur-

Credit: © E.B. Leonard. Reprinted by permission.

ing a lull. Left everything we own there. Found out the attackers are Japs. Rats!!! A couple of non-com's [non-commissioned officers] houses demolished. Hope Kay is O.K. We're at M's. It's all so sudden and surprising I can't believe it's really happening. It's awful. School is discontinued until further notice.... There goes my graduation.

Shortwave: Direct hit on barracks, 350 killed. Wonder if I knew any of them. Been quiet all afternoon. Left Bill on duty at the U. Blackout all night of course!

[The following was typed on a separate piece of paper attached to the diary page.]

I was awakened at eight o'clock on the morning of December 7th by an explosion from Pearl Harbor. I got up thinking something exciting was probably going on over there. Little did I know! When I reached the kitchen the whole family, excluding Pop, was looking over at the Navy Yard. It was being consumed by black smoke and more terrific explosions. We didn't know what was going on, but I didn't like it because the first explosion looked as if it was right on top of Marie's house. I went and told Pop that (he in the meantime had gotten dressed and was leaving) and he said, "Who cares about Marie when you and Mom might be killed!" Then I became extremely worried, as did we all. Mom and I went out on the front porch to get a better look and three planes went zooming over our heads so close we could have touched them. They had red circles on their wings. Then we caught on! About that time bombs started dropping all over Hickam. We stayed at the windows, not knowing what else to do, and watched the fireworks. It was just like the news reels of Europe, only worse. We saw a bunch of soldiers come running full tilt towards us from the barracks and just then a whole line of bombs fell behind them knocking them all to the ground. We were deluged in a cloud of dust and had to run around closing all the windows. I got back to the front door just in time to see Pop calmly walking back to the house through it all. He said we could leave if a lull came. Also that a Mrs. B was coming down to our house and to wait for her. Then he left again. In the meantime a bunch of soldiers had come into our garage to hide. They were entirely taken by surprise and most of them didn't even have a gun or anything. One of them asked for a drink of water saying he was sick. He had just been so close to where a bomb fell that he had been showered with debris. He said he was scared, and I was too, so I couldn't say that I blamed him. I saw an officer out in the front yard,

so Mom said to ask him if he thought it would be wise for us to try to leave. He said, "I would hate to say because we don't know whether they are bombing in town or not, and besides this is your home." I no sooner got back into the house than a terrible barrage came down just over by the Post Exchange. That's just a block kitty corner from us, so the noise and concussion was terrific. Mom and I were still standing in the doorway and we saw the PX get hit. I was getting more worried by the minute about this time as they seemed to be closing in the circle they had been making around us. (The Japs were flying around in a circle bombing us, Pearl Harbor, and machine-gunning Fort Kam.) A second terrific bunch of explosions followed the first by a few minutes only. I found out later these had landed in the baseball diamond just a second after Dad had walked across it. He ran back to see if the men in a radio truck there had been hit. All but one had and they were carted off in an ambulance. I went dashing into my room to look and saw that the barracks was on fire, also the big depot hangar. I hated to go into my room because the planes kept machine-gunning the street just outside my window and I kept expecting to see a string of bullets come through my roof any minute. We had all gotten dressed in the meantime and had packed a suitcase and were ready to leave any time. Finally, after two and a half hours, the planes went away and we left. I gave the soldiers in the garage two and a half packages of my chewing gum before I left and they nearly died of joy at sight of it. Poor guys!!

As we left the Post, we looked around to see what damage had been done to the place. The barracks was all on fire, the big depot was on fire, the theater was burned to the ground already, the PX was wrecked, the whole hangar line was blown up on the far side of Operations, a couple of the non-coms' houses were very badly blown out, there was debris all over everywhere, and Pearl Harbor was just a solid wall of smoke which we found out later was burning oil from the boats that had been hit. Reports are that nothing was hit there except boats.

As we drove into town we found the highway blocked solid in all three lanes coming out to the Post as the radio had been calling for all personnel of the Army or Navy to return to their posts at once. We were forced to drive out in the gutter, and every now and then we had to move aside from there to let an ambulance go by. The people in town were standing along the street watching it all with very dazed looks. Of course, they didn't know what was going on as the radio hadn't said a thing about it. (We turned it on at home before we left and there amidst all the concussion and noise all we could get

was church music.) We ran into Bill on the way into town and made him come back with us. (He had been at the University practicing shooting and had missed it all.) He was mad because he wanted to go and see the fireworks. Ha! Lowyd was with us so we dumped him at the U. where he had a room. Left Jack with him, and Mom and I went up to the M's in Moana Valley. Decided to stay there until further notice so we went back and got Jack. Bill stayed at the U. on duty in the ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps].

Monday, 8 December 1941

War was declared by Congress!!!

Dad called last night. He's OK. Said the barracks was completely destroyed. Soldiers are being quartered in houses. Hope they enjoy my room. Mom, Gaye, and I went down town. Bought me a toothbrush. Sent wires to the folks back in the States. Went to the U. to see Bill and Lowyd. Saw Lowyd, but not Bill. He was at the Armory. He's signed up in the Home Guard for three years or until the war is over. The Dope! Now if we have to leave, he'll have to stay here. Dad came up to see us. He's tired!! Poor guy looked as if he were about to fall over. Julia and Pat M. came to visit us, too. Still wonder where Kay, Jane, Pat F, and Marie are. Dad says there aren't any women or kids on the Post.

Tuesday, 9 December 1941

Slept for a few hours last night. We all sang songs in the dark so we didn't have to go to bed so early.

Mom, Jack, and I went out to the Post to get some clothes and pack a suitcase or two in case we get sent back to the States real sudden like. Mrs. B. went with us. She stayed there, however, and Dad made us leave. The Post is a wreck. The PX is all smashed and so is the depot and the barracks. Every single wing of the barracks! I can't see how it could be so thoroughly gone!

Stopped in town to see the D's. Mrs. D. is of course very worried. Came back to M's for dinner. Brought my accordion back and tried to play during blackout, but I couldn't.

Wednesday, 10 December 1941

Got up and took a shower (my first since the war began). Mom and I went to town. All is running as usual there, but they evidently weren't work-

ing yesterday or the day before. The dime store was crowded, but the counters were terribly bare. Except the Xmas gifts counters. Christmas shopping seems to have dropped off for more vital shopping.

Found out Kay is staying at Cerana's. Tried to call, but she wasn't home. Dad says they're building bombproof shelters around the houses on the Post so the families can move back. Hope they hurry! (Think I should go down for a music lesson today. Ha!) All the windows downtown are taped to prevent breaking. Some are very artistically done. Some very sloppy.

Thursday, 11 December, 1941

War declared against us by Germany and Italy.

Went out to the Post at nine. Dad is feeling much better. In fact, he seems quite cheerful. We picked up Elaine and took her out with us. She worked like a fiend cleaning up the house. Mom and I fixed up Jack's room with tarpaper so the men could read or something after blackout. Dad said it was a relief to have a clean house for a change.

Went on a tour of the Post. Boy, is it a mess. The hangars on the Kam. side of the Post were all smashed. I've never seen anything quite so wrecked. A lot of cars parked over that way were burned and smashed too.

Got all packed in suitcases and the wardrobe trunk in case we are evacuated. Hope we aren't! I feel safer on dry land!

Source: Leonard, E.B. "Ginger's Diary." December 6-11, 1941. Available online at <http://www.gingersdiary.com/diary.html>.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE, PLACES, AND TERMS

Allied Powers

The alliance between France, England, Russia, the United States, and other countries during World War II.

Amphibious

A type of military operation using a combination of air, land, and sea forces.

Atomic bomb

A powerful explosive device created in 1945 through a top-secret project and used by the United States to destroy the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan.

Axis Powers

The alliance between Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperialist Japan during World War II.

Bataan Death March

An atrocity committed in May 1942 when Japanese soldiers forced captured American and Filipino troops to march 65 miles across the Bataan peninsula in the Philippines in extreme heat with no access to food, water, or medicine, causing the death of an estimated 20,000 prisoners.

Battleship Row

An area in the center of Pearl Harbor, along the southeastern shore of Ford Island, where the battleships of the U.S. Pacific Fleet were anchored on the day of the attack.

Cold War

A period of intense political and military rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union that began in the aftermath of World War II and lasted until the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991.

CHRONOLOGY

1880

Douglas MacArthur is born in Little Rock, Arkansas, on January 26.

Walter C. Short, commanding officer of U.S. Army ground and air defenses at Pearl Harbor, is born on March 30 in Fillmore, Illinois.

1882

Husband E. Kimmel, commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet during the Pearl Harbor attack, is born in Henderson, Kentucky, on February 26.

1884

Isoroku Yamamoto, mastermind behind the Pearl Harbor attack, is born on April 4 in Nagaoka, Honshu Province, Japan.

1885

Chester W. Nimitz is born on February 24 in Fredericksburg, Texas.

1898

Hawaii is annexed by the United States.

1902

Mitsuo Fuchida, lead pilot in the Pearl Harbor attack, is born in Nara Prefecture, Japan, on December 2.

1908

The Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard opens on the Hawaiian island of Oahu.

1914

World War I begins in Europe.

1917

The United States enters World War I.

1918

The Allied Powers (France, England, Russia, and the United States) defeat the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire) to end World War I.

1922

Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini rises to power in Italy.

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