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Attack on Pearl Harbor



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The **attack on Pearl Harbor** was a surprise [military strike](#) by the [Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service](#) against the [United States naval base](#) at [Pearl Harbor](#), [Hawaii Territory](#), on the morning of December 7, 1941. The attack, also known as the **Battle of Pearl Harbor**,^[11] led to the United States' entry into [World War II](#). The [Japanese military leadership](#) referred to the attack as the **Hawaii Operation** and **Operation AI**,^{[12][13]} and as **Operation Z** during its planning.^[14]

[Japan](#) intended the attack as a [preventive](#) action to keep the [U.S. Pacific Fleet](#) from interfering with its planned military actions in [Southeast Asia](#) against overseas territories of the [United Kingdom](#), the [Netherlands](#), and the United States. Over the course of seven hours there were coordinated Japanese attacks on the U.S.-held [Philippines](#), [Guam](#) and [Wake Island](#) and on the [British Empire](#) in [Malaya](#), [Singapore](#), and [Hong Kong](#).^[15]

The attack commenced at 7:48 a.m. [Hawaiian Time](#) (18:18 GMT).^{[nb 3][16]} The base was attacked by 353^[17] Imperial Japanese aircraft (including [fighters](#), [level and dive bombers](#), and [torpedo bombers](#)) in two waves, launched from six [aircraft carriers](#).^[17] All eight U.S. Navy battleships were damaged, with four sunk. All but the [USS Arizona](#) were later raised, and six were returned to service and went on to fight in the war. The Japanese also sank or damaged three [cruisers](#), three [destroyers](#), an anti-aircraft training ship,^[nb 4] and one [minelayer](#). One hundred eighty-eight U.S. aircraft were destroyed; 2,403 Americans were killed and 1,178 others were wounded.^[19] Important base installations such as the power station, [dry dock](#), [shipyard](#), maintenance, and fuel and torpedo storage facilities, as well as the submarine piers and headquarters building (also home of the [intelligence section](#)), were not attacked. Japanese losses were light: 29 aircraft and five [midget submarines](#) lost, and 64 servicemen killed. One Japanese sailor, [Kazuo Sakamaki](#), was captured.

The surprise attack came as a profound shock to the American people and led directly to the American entry into World War II in both the [Pacific](#) and [European theaters](#). The following day, December 8, the United States [declared war](#) on Japan,^{[20][21]} and several days later, on December 11, [Germany](#) and [Italy each declared war on the U.S.](#) The U.S. responded with a [declaration of war against Germany](#) and [Italy](#). Domestic support for [non-interventionism](#), which had been fading since the [Fall of France](#) in 1940,^[22] disappeared.^[21]

There were numerous historical precedents for unannounced military action by Japan, but the lack of any formal warning, particularly while negotiations were still apparently ongoing, led President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) to proclaim December 7, 1941, "[a date which will live in infamy](#)". Because the attack happened without a declaration of war and without explicit warning, the attack on Pearl Harbor was later judged in the [Tokyo Trials](#) to be a [war crime](#).^{[23][24]}

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Attack on Pearl Harbor	
Part of the Asiatic-Pacific Theater of World War II	
Photograph of Battleship Row taken from a Japanese plane at the beginning of the attack. The explosion in the center is a torpedo strike on USS West Virginia . Two attacking Japanese planes can be seen: one over USS Neosho and one over the Naval Yard.	
Date	December 7, 1941; 77 years ago
Location	Primarily Pearl Harbor , Hawaii Territory , U.S.
Result	Major Japanese tactical victory; precipitated the entrance of the United States into World War II , other consequences
Belligerents	
 United States	 Japan
Commanders and leaders	
 ADM Husband E. Kimmel	 VADM Chūichi Nagumo
 LTG Walter Short	 ADM Isoroku Yamamoto
	 CDR Mitsuo Fuchida
Strength	
8 battleships	Mobile Unit:
8 cruisers	6 aircraft carriers
30 destroyers	2 battleships
4 submarines	2 heavy cruisers
3 USCG cutters ^[nb 1]	1 light cruiser
47 other ships ^[4]	9 destroyers
≈390 aircraft	8 tankers
	23 fleet submarines
	5 midget submarines
	414 aircraft
Casualties and losses	
4 battleships sunk	4 midget submarines sunk
4 battleships damaged	1 midget submarine grounded
1 ex-battleship sunk	29 aircraft destroyed
1 harbor tug sunk	74 aircraft damaged
3 cruisers damaged ^[nb 2]	64 killed
3 destroyers damaged	1 sailor captured ^[7]
3 other ships damaged	
188 aircraft destroyed	
159 ^[6] aircraft damaged	
2,335 killed	
1,143 wounded	
Civilian casualties	
68 killed ^{[8][9]}	
35 wounded ^[10]	
3 aircraft shot down	

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Background to conflict

Main article: [Events leading to the attack on Pearl Harbor](#)

Diplomatic background

War between Japan and the United States had been a possibility that each nation had been aware of, and planned for, since the 1920s. The relationship between the two countries was cordial enough that they remained trading partners.^{[25][26]} Tensions did not seriously grow until [Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931](#). Over the next decade, Japan expanded into [China](#), leading to the [Second Sino-Japanese War](#) in 1937. Japan spent considerable effort trying to isolate China, and endeavored to secure enough independent resources to attain victory on the mainland. The "[Southern Operation](#)" was designed to assist these efforts.^[27]



Pearl Harbor on October 30, 1941, looking southwest ↗

Starting in December 1937, events such as the Japanese attack on [USS *Panay*](#), the [Allison incident](#), and the [Nanking Massacre](#) swung Western public opinion sharply against Japan. Fearing Japanese expansion,^[28] the United States, United Kingdom, and France assisted China with its loans for war supply contracts.

In 1940, [Japan invaded French Indochina](#), attempting to stymie the flow of supplies reaching China. The United States halted shipments of airplanes, parts, [machine tools](#), and [aviation gasoline](#) to Japan, which the latter perceived as an unfriendly act.^[nb 5] The United States did not stop oil exports, however, partly because of the prevailing sentiment in Washington: given Japanese dependence on American oil, such an action was likely to be considered an extreme provocation.^{[26][29]}

In mid-1940, President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) moved the Pacific Fleet from [San Diego](#) to Hawaii.^[30] He also ordered a military buildup in the

[Philippines](#), taking both actions in the hope of discouraging Japanese aggression in the Far East. Because the Japanese high command was (mistakenly) certain any attack on the [United Kingdom's Southeast Asian colonies](#), including Singapore,^[31] would bring the U.S. into the war, a devastating preventive strike appeared to be the only way to prevent American naval interference.^[32] An [invasion of the Philippines](#) was also considered necessary by Japanese war planners. The U.S. [War Plan Orange](#) had envisioned defending the Philippines with an elite force of 40,000 men; this option was never implemented due to opposition from [Douglas MacArthur](#), who felt he would need a force ten times that size.^{[33][self-published source]} By 1941, U.S. planners expected to abandon the Philippines at the outbreak of war. Late that year, Admiral [Thomas C. Hart](#), commander of the [Asiatic Fleet](#), was given orders to that effect.^[34]

The U.S. finally ceased oil exports to Japan in July 1941, following the seizure of French Indochina after the [Fall of France](#), in part because of new American restrictions on domestic oil consumption.^[35] Because of this decision, Japan proceeded with plans to take the oil-rich Dutch East Indies.^[nb 6] On August 17, Roosevelt warned Japan that America was prepared to take opposing steps if "neighboring countries" were attacked.^[37] The Japanese were faced with a dichotomy—either withdraw from China and lose face, or seize new sources of raw materials in the resource-rich European colonies of Southeast Asia.

Japan and the U.S. engaged in negotiations during 1941, attempting to improve relations. In the course of these negotiations, Japan offered to withdraw from most of China and Indochina after making peace with the Nationalist government. It also proposed to adopt an independent interpretation of the [Tripartite Pact](#) and to refrain from trade discrimination, provided all other nations reciprocated. Washington rejected these proposals. Japanese Prime Minister Konoye then offered to meet with Roosevelt, but Roosevelt insisted on reaching an agreement before any meeting.^[38] The U.S. ambassador to Japan repeatedly urged Roosevelt to accept the meeting, warning that it was the only way to preserve the conciliatory Konoye government and peace in the Pacific.^[39] However, his recommendation was not acted upon. The Konoye government collapsed the following month, when the Japanese military rejected a withdrawal of all troops from China.^[40]

Japan's final proposal, delivered on November 20, offered to withdraw from southern Indochina and to refrain from attacks in Southeast Asia, so long as the United States, United Kingdom, and Netherlands ceased aid to China and lifted their sanctions against Japan.^[40] The American counter-proposal of November 26 (November 27 in Japan), the [Hull note](#), required Japan completely evacuate China without conditions and conclude non-aggression pacts with Pacific powers. On November 26 in Japan, the day before the note's delivery, the Japanese task force left port for Pearl Harbor.

Military planning

Preliminary planning for an attack on Pearl Harbor to protect the move into the "Southern Resource Area" (the Japanese term for the Dutch East Indies and Southeast Asia generally) had begun very early in 1941 under the auspices of Admiral [Isoroku Yamamoto](#),

then commanding Japan's **Combined Fleet**.^[41] He won assent to formal planning and training for an attack from the **Imperial Japanese Navy General Staff** only after much contention with Naval Headquarters, including a threat to resign his command.^[42] Full-scale planning was underway by early spring 1941, primarily by Rear Admiral **Ryūnosuke Kusaka**, with assistance from Captain **Minoru Genda** and Yamamoto's Deputy Chief of Staff, Captain Kameto Kuroshima.^[43] The planners studied the **1940 British air attack on the Italian fleet** at **Taranto** intensively.^{[nb 7][nb 8]}

Over the next several months, pilots were trained, equipment was adapted, and intelligence was collected. Despite these preparations, **Emperor Hirohito** did not approve the attack plan until November 5, after the third of four **Imperial Conferences** called to consider the matter.^[46] Final authorization was not given by the emperor until December 1, after a majority of Japanese leaders advised him the "**Hull Note**" would "destroy the fruits of the China incident, endanger Manchukuo and undermine Japanese control of Korea."^[47]

By late 1941, many observers believed that hostilities between the U.S. and Japan were imminent. A **Gallup poll** just before the attack on Pearl Harbor found that 52% of Americans expected war with Japan, 27% did not, and 21% had no opinion.^[48] While U.S. Pacific bases and facilities had been placed on alert on many occasions, U.S. officials doubted Pearl Harbor would be the first target; instead, they expected the Philippines would be attacked first. This presumption was due to the threat that the air bases throughout the country and the naval base at Manila posed to sea lanes, as well as to the shipment of supplies to Japan from territory to the south.^[49] They also incorrectly believed that Japan was not capable of mounting more than one major naval operation at a time.^[50]

Objectives

The Japanese attack had several major aims. First, it intended to destroy important American fleet units, thereby preventing the Pacific Fleet from interfering with Japanese conquest of the Dutch East Indies and Malaya and to enable Japan to conquer Southeast Asia without interference. Second, it was hoped to buy time for Japan to consolidate its position and increase its naval strength before shipbuilding authorized by the 1940 **Vinson-Walsh Act** erased any chance of victory.^{[51][52]} Third, to deliver a blow to America's ability to mobilize its forces in the Pacific, battleships were chosen as the main targets, since they were the prestige ships of any navy at the time.^[51] Finally, it was hoped that the attack would undermine American morale such that the U.S. government would drop its demands contrary to Japanese interests, and would seek a compromise peace with Japan.^{[53][54]}

Striking the Pacific Fleet at anchor in Pearl Harbor carried two distinct disadvantages: the targeted ships would be in very shallow water, so it would be relatively easy to salvage and possibly repair them; and most of the crews would survive the attack, since many would be on **shore leave** or would be rescued from the harbor. A further important disadvantage—this of timing, and known to the Japanese—was the absence from Pearl Harbor of all three of the U.S. Pacific Fleet's aircraft carriers (***Enterprise***, ***Lexington***, and ***Saratoga***). IJN top command was attached to **Admiral Mahan's "decisive battle"** doctrine, especially that of destroying the maximum number of battleships. Despite these concerns, Yamamoto decided to press ahead.^{[55][page needed]}

Japanese confidence in their ability to achieve a short, victorious war also meant other targets in the harbor, especially the navy yard, oil tank farms, and submarine base, were ignored, since—by their thinking—the war would be over before the influence of these facilities would be felt.^[56]

Approach and attack

*See also: **Order of battle of the Attack on Pearl Harbor***

On November 26, 1941, a Japanese task force (the **Striking Force**) of six aircraft carriers—***Akagi***, ***Kaga***, ***Sōryū***, ***Hiryū***, ***Shōkaku***, and ***Zuikaku***—departed Hittokapu Bay on Kasatka (now Iterup) Island in the Kurile Islands, *en route* to a position northwest of Hawaii, intending to launch its 408 aircraft to attack Pearl Harbor: 360 for the two attack waves and 48 on defensive **combat air patrol** (CAP), including nine fighters from the first wave.

The first wave was to be the primary attack, while the second wave was to attack carriers as its first objective and cruisers as its second, with battleships as the third target.^[57] The first wave carried most of the weapons to attack capital ships, mainly specially adapted **Type 91 aerial torpedoes** which were designed with an anti-roll mechanism and a rudder extension that let them operate in shallow water.^[58] The aircrews were ordered to select the highest value targets (battleships and **aircraft carriers**) or, if these were not present, any other high value ships (cruisers and destroyers). First wave **dive bombers** were to attack ground targets. Fighters were ordered to strafe and destroy as many parked aircraft as possible to ensure they did not get into the air to intercept the bombers, especially in the first wave. When the fighters' fuel got low they were to refuel at the aircraft carriers and return to combat. Fighters were to serve CAP duties where needed, especially over U.S. airfields.^[citation needed]

Before the attack commenced, two reconnaissance aircraft launched from cruisers ***Chikuma*** and ***Tone*** were sent to scout over Oahu and Maui and report on U.S. fleet composition and location. Reconnaissance aircraft flights risked alerting the U.S.,^[59] and were not necessary. U.S. fleet composition and preparedness information in Pearl Harbor was already known due to the reports of the Japanese spy **Takeo Yoshikawa**. A report of the absence of the U.S. fleet in Lahaina anchorage off Maui was received from the fleet submarine ***I-72***.^[60] Another four scout planes patrolled the area between the Japanese carrier force (the **Kidō Butai**) and **Niihau**, to detect any counterattack.^[61]



Route followed by the Japanese fleet to Pearl Harbor and back



An Imperial Japanese Navy Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighter on the aircraft carrier *Akagi*

Submarines

Fleet submarines *I-16*, *I-18*, *I-20*, *I-22*, and *I-24* each embarked a [Type A midget submarine](#) for transport to the waters off Oahu.^[62] The five I-boats left [Kure Naval District](#) on November 25, 1941.^[63] On December 6, they came to within 10 nmi (19 km; 12 mi) of the mouth of Pearl Harbor^[64] and launched their midget subs at about 01:00 local time on December 7.^[65] At 03:42 [Hawaiian Time](#), the minesweeper *Condor* spotted a midget submarine periscope southwest of the Pearl Harbor entrance buoy and alerted the destroyer *Ward*.^{[66][67]} The midget may have entered Pearl Harbor. However, *Ward* sank another midget submarine at 06:37^{[67][nb 9]} in the [first American shots in the Pacific Theater](#). A midget submarine on the north side of Ford Island missed the [seaplane tender Curtiss](#) with her first torpedo and missed the attacking destroyer *Monaghan* with her other one before being sunk by *Monaghan* at 08:43.^[67]

A third midget submarine, *Ha-19*, grounded twice, once outside the harbor entrance and again on the east side of Oahu, where it was captured on December 8.^[69] Ensign [Kazuo Sakamaki](#) swam ashore and was captured by [Hawaii National Guard](#) Corporal [David Akui](#), becoming the first Japanese [prisoner of war](#).^[nb 10] A fourth had been damaged by a depth charge attack and was abandoned by its crew before it could fire its torpedoes.^[70] Japanese forces received a radio message from a midget submarine at 00:41 on December 8 claiming damage to one or more large warships inside Pearl Harbor.^[71]

In 1992, 2000, and 2001, [Hawaii Undersea Research Laboratory](#)'s submersibles found the wreck of the fifth midget submarine lying in three parts outside Pearl Harbor. The wreck was in the debris field where much surplus U.S. equipment was dumped after the war, including vehicles and landing craft. Both of its torpedoes were missing. This correlates with reports of two torpedoes fired at the [light cruiser St. Louis](#) at 10:04 at the entrance of Pearl Harbor, and a possible torpedo fired at destroyer *Helm* at 08:21.^[72]

Japanese declaration of war

See also: [Japanese war crimes](#)

The attack took place before any formal declaration of war was made by Japan, but this was not Admiral Yamamoto's intention. He originally stipulated that the attack should not commence until thirty minutes after Japan had informed the United States that peace negotiations were at an end.^[73] However, the attack began before the notice could be delivered. Tokyo transmitted the 5000-word notification (commonly called the "14-Part Message") in two blocks to the Japanese Embassy in Washington. Transcribing the message took too long for the Japanese ambassador to deliver it on schedule; in the event, it was not presented until more than an hour after the attack began. (In fact, U.S. code breakers had already deciphered and translated most of the message hours before he was scheduled to deliver it.)^[74] The final part is sometimes described as a declaration of war. While it was viewed by a number of senior U.S. government and military officials as a very strong indicator negotiations were likely to be terminated^[75] and that war might break out at any moment,^[76] it neither declared war nor severed diplomatic relations. [A declaration of war was printed on the front page of Japan's newspapers in the evening edition of December 8,](#)^[77] but not delivered to the U.S. government until the day after the attack.

For decades, conventional wisdom held that Japan attacked without first formally breaking diplomatic relations only because of accidents and bumbling that delayed the delivery of a document hinting at war to Washington. In 1999, however, Takeo Iguchi, a professor of law and international relations at [International Christian University](#) in Tokyo, discovered documents that pointed to a vigorous debate inside the government over how, and indeed whether, to notify Washington of Japan's intention to break off negotiations and start a war, including a December 7 entry in the war diary saying, "[O]ur deceptive diplomacy is steadily proceeding toward success." Of this, Iguchi said, "The diary shows that the army and navy did not want to give any proper declaration of war, or indeed prior notice even of the termination of negotiations ... and they clearly prevailed."^{[78][79]}

In any event, even if the Japanese had decoded and delivered the 14-Part Message before the beginning of the attack, it would not have constituted either a formal break of diplomatic relations or a declaration of war. The final two paragraphs of the message read:

Thus the earnest hope of the Japanese Government to adjust Japanese-American relations and to preserve and promote the peace of the Pacific through cooperation with the American Government has finally been lost.

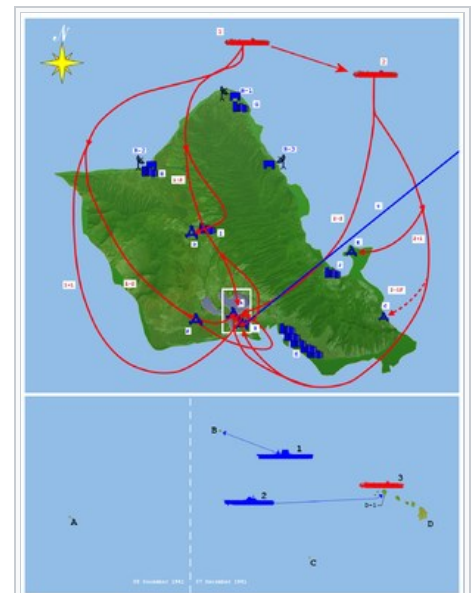
The Japanese Government regrets to have to notify hereby the American Government that in view of the attitude of the American Government it cannot but consider that it is impossible to reach an agreement through further negotiations.^[80]

First wave composition

The first attack wave of 183 planes was launched north of Oahu, led by Commander [Mitsuo Fuchida](#).^[81] Six planes failed to launch due to technical difficulties.^[61] It included:^[nb 11]

- **1st Group** (targets: battleships and aircraft carriers)^[83]
 - 49 [Nakajima B5N Kate](#) bombers armed with 800 kg (1760 lb) [armor-piercing bombs](#), organized in four sections (1 failed to launch)
 - 40 B5N bombers armed with [Type 91 torpedoes](#), also in four sections
- **2nd Group** – (targets: [Ford Island](#) and [Wheeler Field](#))
 - 51 [Aichi D3A Val](#) dive bombers armed with 550 lb (249 kg) [general-purpose bombs](#) (3 failed to launch)
- **3rd Group** – (targets: aircraft at Ford Island, Hickam Field, Wheeler Field, Barber's Point, Kaneohe)
 - 43 [Mitsubishi A6M "Zero"](#) fighters for air control and [strafing](#)^[82] (2 failed to launch)

As the first wave approached Oahu, it was detected by the U.S. Army [SCR-270 radar](#) at [Opana Point](#) near the island's northern tip. This post had been in training mode for months, but was not yet operational.^[84] The operators,



Privates George Elliot Jr. and Joseph Lockard, reported a target.^[85] But Lieutenant **Kermit A. Tyler**, a newly assigned officer at the thinly manned Intercept Center, presumed it was the scheduled arrival of six **B-17** bombers from California. The Japanese planes were approaching from a direction very close (only a few degrees difference) to the bombers,^[86] and while the operators had never seen a formation as large on radar, they neglected to tell Tyler of its size.^[87] Tyler, for security reasons, could not tell the operators of the six B-17s that were due (even though it was widely known).^[87]

As the first wave planes approached Oahu, they encountered and shot down several U.S. aircraft. At least one of these radioed a somewhat incoherent warning. Other warnings from ships off the harbor entrance were still being processed or awaiting confirmation when the attacking planes began bombing and strafing. Nevertheless, it is not clear any warnings would have had much effect even if they had been interpreted correctly and much more promptly. The results the Japanese achieved in the Philippines were essentially the same as at Pearl Harbor, though MacArthur had almost nine hours warning that the Japanese had already attacked Pearl Harbor.

The air portion of the attack began at 7:48 a.m. Hawaiian Time^[16] (3:18 a.m. December 8 **Japanese Standard Time**, as kept by ships of the *Kido Butai*),^{[88][nb 3]} with the attack on Kaneohe. A total of 353^[17] Japanese planes in two waves reached Oahu. Slow, vulnerable torpedo bombers led the first wave, exploiting the first moments of surprise to attack the most important ships present (the battleships), while dive bombers attacked U.S. **air bases** across Oahu, starting with **Hickam Field**, the largest, and **Wheeler Field**, the main U.S. Army Air Forces fighter base. The 171 planes in the second wave attacked the Army Air Forces' **Bellows Field** near Kaneohe on the windward side of the island, and **Ford Island**. The only aerial opposition came from a handful of **P-36 Hawks**, **P-40 Warhawks**, and some **SBD Dauntless** dive bombers from the carrier *Enterprise*.^[nb 12]



A destroyed **Vindicator** at **Ewa field**, the victim of one of the smaller attacks on the approach to Pearl Harbor

In the first wave attack, about eight of the forty-nine 800 kg (1760 lb) armor-piercing bombs dropped hit their intended battleship targets. At least two of those bombs broke up on impact, another detonated before penetrating an unarmored deck, and one was a dud. Thirteen of the forty torpedoes hit battleships, and four torpedoes hit other ships.^[89] Men aboard U.S. ships awoke to the sounds of alarms, bombs exploding, and gunfire, prompting bleary-eyed men to dress as they ran to **General Quarters**

stations. (The famous message, "Air raid Pearl Harbor. This is not drill."^[nb 13] was sent from the headquarters of Patrol Wing Two, the first senior Hawaiian command to respond.) The defenders were very unprepared. Ammunition lockers were locked, aircraft parked wingtip to wingtip in the open to prevent sabotage,^[90] guns unmanned (none of the Navy's **5"/38s**, only a quarter of its machine guns, and only four of 31 Army batteries got in action).^[90] Despite this low **alert status**, many American military personnel responded effectively during the attack.^[nb 14] Ensign Joe Taussig Jr., aboard *Nevada*, commanded the ship's anti-aircraft guns and was severely wounded, but continued to be on post. Lt. Commander F. J. Thomas commanded *Nevada* in the captain's absence and got her under way until the ship was grounded at 9:10 a.m.^[91] One of the destroyers, *Aylwin*, got underway with only four officers aboard, all ensigns, none with more than a year's sea duty; she operated at sea for 36 hours before her commanding officer managed to get back aboard.^[92] Captain **Mervyn Bennion**, commanding *West Virginia*, led his men until he was cut down by fragments from a bomb which hit *Tennessee*, moored alongside.

Second wave composition

The second planned wave consisted of 171 planes: 54 B5Ns, 81 D3As, and 36 A6Ms, commanded by **Lieutenant-Commander Shigekazu Shimazaki**.^[82] Four planes failed to launch because of technical difficulties.^[61] This wave and its targets comprised:^[82]

- **1st Group** – 54 B5Ns armed with 550 lb (249 kg) and 132 lb (60 kg) general-purpose bombs^[83]
 - 27 B5Ns – aircraft and hangars on Kaneohe, Ford Island, and Barbers Point
 - 27 B5Ns – hangars and aircraft on Hickam Field
- **2nd Group** (targets: aircraft carriers and cruisers)
 - 78 D3As armed with 550 lb (249 kg) general-purpose bombs, in four sections (3 aborted)
- **3rd Group** – (targets: aircraft at Ford Island, Hickam Field, Wheeler Field, Barber's Point, Kaneohe)
 - 35 A6Ms for defense and strafing (1 aborted)

The Japanese attacked in two waves. The first wave was detected by **U.S. Army radar** at 136 nautical miles (252 km), but was misidentified as **USAAF bombers** arriving from the American mainland

Top:

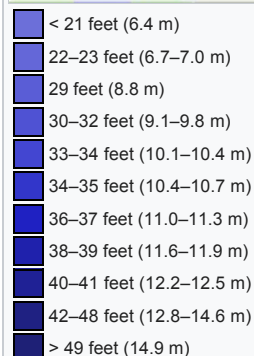
A. Ford Island NAS B. Hickam Field C. Bellows Field D. Wheeler Field E. Kaneohe NAS F. Ewa MCAS R-1. Opana Radar Station R-2. Kawaiola RS R-3. Kaaawa RS G. Haleiwa H. Kahuku I. Wahiawa J. Kaneohe K. Honolulu

0. B-17s from mainland 1. First strike group 1-1. Level bombers 1–2. Torpedo bombers 1–3. Dive bombers 2. Second strike group 2-1. Level bombers 2-1F. Fighters 2-2. Dive bombers

Bottom:

A. Wake Island B. Midway Islands C. Johnston Island D. Hawaii

D-1. Oahu 1. USS *Lexington* 2. USS *Enterprise* 3. First Air Fleet



City

Army base

Navy base

Attacked targets:

1: USS *California*

2: USS *Maryland*

3: USS *Oklahoma*

4: USS *Tennessee*

5: USS *West Virginia*

6: USS *Arizona*

7: USS *Nevada*

8: USS *Pennsylvania*

9: Ford Island NAS

10: Hickam field

Ignored infrastructure targets:

A: Oil storage tanks

B: CINCPAC headquarters building

C: Submarine base

D: Navy Yard

The second wave was divided into three groups. One was tasked to attack Kāne'ohe, the rest Pearl Harbor proper. The separate sections arrived at the attack point almost simultaneously from several directions.

American casualties and damage

Ninety minutes after it began, the attack was over. Two thousand and eight sailors were killed, and 710 others wounded; 218 soldiers and airmen (who were part of the Army until the independent **U.S. Air Force** was formed in 1947) were killed and 364 wounded; 109 marines were killed and 69 wounded; and 68 civilians were killed and 35 wounded. In total, 2,335 American servicemen were killed and 1,143 were wounded.^[93] Eighteen ships were sunk or run aground, including five battleships.^{[10][94]} All of the Americans killed or wounded during the attack were non-combatants, given the fact there was no state of war when the attack occurred.^{[23][24][95]}



USS Arizona during the attack

Of the American fatalities, nearly half were due to the explosion of *Arizona's* forward magazine after it was hit by a modified 16-inch (410 mm) shell.^[nb 15]

Already damaged by a torpedo and on fire amidships, *Nevada* attempted to exit the harbor. She was targeted by many Japanese bombers as she got under way and sustained more hits from 250 lb (113 kg) bombs, which started further fires. She was deliberately beached to avoid blocking the harbor entrance.

California was hit by two bombs and two torpedoes. The crew might have kept her afloat, but were ordered to abandon ship just as they were raising power for the pumps. Burning oil from *Arizona* and *West Virginia* drifted down on her, and probably made the situation look worse than it was. The disarmed target ship

Utah was holed twice by torpedoes. *West Virginia* was hit by seven torpedoes, the seventh tearing away her rudder. *Oklahoma* was hit by four torpedoes, the last two above her belt armor, which caused her to capsize. *Maryland* was hit by two of the converted 16" shells, but neither caused serious damage.

Although the Japanese concentrated on battleships (the largest vessels present), they did not ignore other targets. The light cruiser *Helena* was torpedoed, and the concussion from the blast capsized the neighboring minelayer



USS Nevada, on fire and down at the bow, attempting to leave the harbor before being deliberately beached



USS West Virginia was sunk by six torpedoes and two bombs during the attack.

Oglala. Two destroyers in dry dock, *Cassin* and *Downes* were destroyed when bombs penetrated their fuel bunkers. The leaking fuel caught fire; flooding the dry dock in an effort to fight fire made the burning oil rise, and both were burned out. *Cassin* slipped from her keel blocks and rolled against *Downes*. The light cruiser *Raleigh* was holed by a torpedo. The light cruiser *Honolulu* was damaged, but remained in service. The repair vessel *Vestal*, moored alongside *Arizona*, was heavily damaged and beached. The seaplane tender *Curtiss* was also damaged. The destroyer *Shaw* was badly damaged when two bombs penetrated her forward magazine.^[96]

Of the 402 American aircraft in Hawaii, 188 were destroyed and 159 damaged, 155 of them on the ground.^[17] Almost none were actually ready to take off to defend the base. Eight Army Air Forces pilots managed to get airborne during the attack^[97] and six were credited with downing at least one Japanese aircraft during the attack: 1st Lt. Lewis M. Sanders, 2nd Lt. Philip M. Rasmussen, 2nd Lt. Kenneth M. Taylor, 2nd Lt. George S. Welch, 2nd Lt. Harry W. Brown, and 2nd Lt. Gordon H. Sterling Jr. Sterling was shot down by Lt. Fujita over Kaneohe Bay and is listed as Body Not Recovered (not Missing In Action). Lt. John L. Dains was killed by friendly fire returning from a victory over Kaawa.^{[98][99]} Of 33 PBYS in Hawaii, 24 were destroyed, and six others damaged beyond repair. (The three on patrol returned undamaged.) Friendly fire brought down some U.S. planes on top of that, including five from an inbound flight from *Enterprise*. Japanese attacks on barracks killed additional personnel.

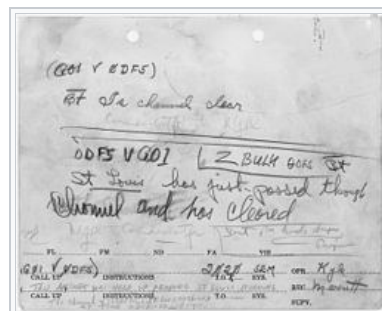
At the time of the attack, nine civilian aircraft were flying in the vicinity of Pearl Harbor. Of these, three were shot down.^[100]

Japanese losses

Fifty-five Japanese airmen and nine submariners were killed in the attack, and one was captured. Of Japan's 414^[82] available planes, 29 were lost during the battle (nine in the first attack wave, 20 in the second),^{[101][nb 16]} with another 74 damaged by antiaircraft fire from the ground.

Possible third wave

Several Japanese junior officers including Fuchida and Genda urged Nagumo to carry out a third strike in order to destroy as much of Pearl Harbor's fuel and torpedo^[nb 17] storage, maintenance, and dry dock facilities as possible.^[102] Genda, who had unsuccessfully advocated for invading Hawaii after the air attack, believed that without an invasion, three strikes were necessary to disable the base as much as possible.^[103] The captains of the other five carriers in the task force reported they were willing and ready to carry out a third strike.^[104] Military historians have suggested the destruction of these shore facilities would have hampered the U.S. Pacific Fleet far more seriously than the loss of its battleships.^[105] If they had been wiped out, "serious [American] operations in the Pacific would have been postponed for more than a year",^[106] according to Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, later



This message denotes the first U.S. ship, *St. Louis* to clear Pearl Harbor. (National Archives and Records Administration) (Note that this is in answer to question "Is channel clear?" and faint writing at bottom concerning the answer being held until *St. Louis* had successfully cleared.)

Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, "it would have prolonged the war another two years."^[107] Nagumo, however, decided to withdraw for several reasons:

- . American anti-aircraft performance had improved considerably during the second strike, and two thirds of Japan's losses were incurred during the second wave.^[108]
- . Nagumo felt if he launched a third strike, he would be risking three quarters of the Combined Fleet's strength to wipe out the remaining targets (which included the facilities) while suffering higher aircraft losses.^[108]
- . The location of the American carriers remained unknown. In addition, the admiral was concerned his force was now within range of American land-based bombers.^[108] Nagumo was uncertain whether the U.S. had enough surviving planes remaining on Hawaii to launch an attack against his carriers.^[109]
- . A third wave would have required substantial preparation and turnaround time, and would have meant returning planes would have had to land at night. At the time, only the **Royal Navy** had developed night carrier techniques, so this was a substantial risk.^[110]
- . The task force's fuel situation did not permit him to remain in waters north of Pearl Harbor much longer, since he was at the very limit of logistical support. To do so risked running unacceptably low on fuel, perhaps even having to abandon destroyers en route home.^[111]
- . He believed the second strike had essentially satisfied the main objective of his mission—the neutralization of the Pacific Fleet—and did not wish to risk further losses.^[112] Moreover, it was Japanese Navy practice to prefer the conservation of strength over the total destruction of the enemy.^[113]

At a conference aboard his flagship the following morning, Yamamoto supported Nagumo's withdrawal without launching a third wave.^[112] In retrospect, sparing the vital dockyards, maintenance shops, and the oil tank farm meant the U.S. could respond relatively quickly to Japanese activities in the Pacific. Yamamoto later regretted Nagumo's decision to withdraw and categorically stated it had been a great mistake not to order a third strike.^[114]

Ships lost or damaged

Twenty-one ships were damaged or lost in the attack, of which all but three were repaired and returned to service.

Battleships

- . *Arizona* (RADM Kidd's flagship of **Battleship Division One**): hit by four armor-piercing bombs, exploded; total loss. 1,177 dead.
- . *Oklahoma*: hit by five torpedoes, capsized; total loss. 429 dead.
- . *West Virginia*: hit by two bombs, seven torpedoes, sunk; returned to service July 1944. 106 dead.
- . *California*: hit by two bombs, two torpedoes, sunk; returned to service January 1944. 100 dead.
- . *Nevada*: hit by six bombs, one torpedo, beached; returned to service October 1942. 60 dead.
- . *Pennsylvania* (ADM Kimmel's flagship of the **United States Pacific Fleet**):^[115] in *drydock* with *Cassin* and *Downes*, hit by one bomb and debris from USS *Cassin*; remained in service. 9 dead.
- . *Tennessee*: hit by two bombs; returned to service February 1942. 5 dead.
- . *Maryland*: hit by two bombs; returned to service February 1942. 4 dead (including floatplane pilot shot down).

Ex-battleship (target/AA training ship)

- . *Utah*: hit by two torpedoes, capsized; total loss. 64 dead.

Cruisers

- . *Helena*: hit by one torpedo; returned to service January 1942. 20 dead.
- . *Raleigh*: hit by one torpedo; returned to service February 1942.
- . *Honolulu*: Near miss, light damage; remained in service.

Destroyers

- . *Cassin*: in *drydock* with *Downes* and *Pennsylvania*, hit by one bomb, burned; returned to service February 1944.
- . *Downes*: in *drydock* with *Cassin* and *Pennsylvania*, caught fire from *Cassin*, burned; returned to service November 1943.
- . *Helm*: underway to West Loch, damaged by two near-miss bombs;^[116] continued patrol; dry-docked 15 January 1942 and sailed 20 January 1942.
- . *Shaw*: hit by three bombs; returned to service June 1942.

Auxiliaries

- . *Oglala* (minelayer): Damaged by torpedo hit on *Helena*, capsized; returned to service (as engine-repair ship) February 1944.
- . *Vestal* (repair ship): hit by two bombs, blast and fire from *Arizona*, beached; returned to service by August 1942.
- . *Curtiss* (seaplane tender): hit by one bomb, one crashed Japanese aircraft; returned to service January 1942. 19 dead.
- . *Sotoyomo* (harbor tug): damaged by explosion and fires in *Shaw*; sunk; returned to service August 1942.
- . *YFD-2* (yard floating dock): damaged by 250 kg bombs; sunk; returned to service 25 January 1942 servicing *Shaw*.^[117]

Salvage



After a systematic search for survivors, formal salvage operations began. Captain **Homer N. Wallin**, Material Officer for Commander, Battle Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, was immediately ordered to lead salvage operations. "Within a short time I was relieved of all other duties and ordered to full time work as Fleet Salvage Officer."^[118]^[nb 18]

Around Pearl Harbor, divers from the Navy (shore and tenders), the **Pearl Harbor Naval**



Captain [Homer N. Wallin](#) (center) supervises salvage operations aboard [USS California](#), early 1942

[Shipyard](#), and civilian contractors (Pacific Bridge and others) began work on the ships that could be refloated. They patched holes, cleared debris, and pumped water out of ships. Navy divers worked inside the damaged ships. Within six months, five battleships and two cruisers were patched or refloated so they could be sent to shipyards in Pearl Harbor and on the mainland for extensive repair.

Intensive salvage operations continued for another year, a total of some 20,000 man-hours under water.^[120] [Oklahoma](#), while successfully raised, was never repaired, and capsized while under tow to the mainland in 1947. [Arizona](#) and the target ship [Utah](#) were too heavily damaged for salvage, though much of their armament and equipment was removed and put to use aboard other vessels. The Arizona's two after turrets and their guns were removed and installed as Coast Artillery batteries protecting Kahe Point and Kaneohe Bay.^[121] Today, the two hulks remain where they were sunk, with [Arizona](#) becoming a [war memorial](#).

Aftermath

Main article: [Consequences of the attack on Pearl Harbor](#)

In the wake of the attack, 15 [Medals of Honor](#), 51 [Navy Crosses](#), 53 [Silver Stars](#), four [Navy and Marine Corps Medals](#), one [Distinguished Flying Cross](#), four [Distinguished Service Crosses](#), one [Distinguished Service Medal](#), and three [Bronze Star Medals](#) were awarded to the American servicemen who distinguished themselves in combat at Pearl Harbor.^[122] Additionally, a special [military award](#), the [Pearl Harbor Commemorative Medal](#), was later authorized for all military veterans of the attack.

The day after the attack, Roosevelt delivered his famous [Infamy Speech](#) to a [Joint Session of Congress](#), calling for a [formal declaration of war on the Empire of Japan](#). Congress obliged his request less than an hour later. On December 11, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, even though the Tripartite Pact did not require it.^[nb 19] Congress issued a declaration of war against Germany and Italy later that same day. [The UK actually declared war on Japan](#) nine hours before the U.S. did, partially due to Japanese attacks on Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong, and partially due to Winston Churchill's promise to declare war "within the hour" of a Japanese attack on the United States.^[123]



[Pennsylvania](#), behind the wreckage of [Downes](#) and [Cassin](#)

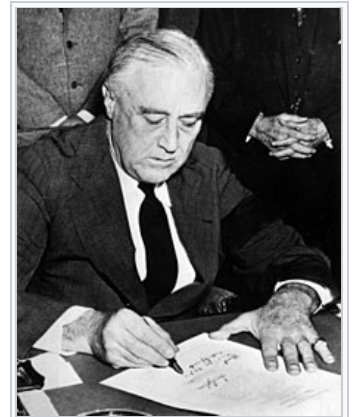
The attack was an initial shock to all the Allies in the Pacific Theater. Further losses compounded the alarming setback. Japan [attacked the Philippines](#) hours later (because of the time difference, it was December 8 in the Philippines). Only three days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the battleships [Prince of Wales](#) and [Repulse](#) were [sunk](#) off the coast of [Malaya](#), causing British Prime Minister [Winston Churchill](#) later to recollect "In all the war I never received a more direct shock. As I turned and twisted in bed the full horror of the news sank in upon me. There were no British or American capital ships in the Indian Ocean or the Pacific except the American survivors of Pearl Harbor who were hastening back to California. Over this vast expanse of waters Japan was supreme and we everywhere were weak and naked".^[124]

Throughout the war, Pearl Harbor was frequently used in [American propaganda](#).^[125]

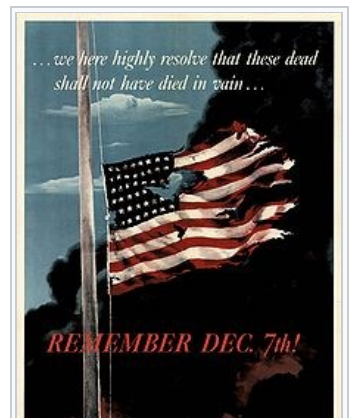
One further consequence of the attack on Pearl Harbor and its aftermath (notably the [Niihau incident](#))

was that Japanese American residents and citizens were relocated to nearby [Japanese-American internment](#) camps. Within hours of the attack, hundreds of Japanese American leaders were rounded up and brought to high-security camps such as [Sand Island](#) at the mouth of Honolulu harbor and [Kilauea Military Camp](#) on the [island of Hawaii](#).^{[126][127]} Eventually, more than 110,000 Japanese Americans, nearly all who lived on the West Coast, were forced into interior camps, but in [Hawaii](#), where the 150,000-plus Japanese Americans composed over one-third of the population, only 1,200 to 1,800 were interned.^{[128][129][130]}

The attack also had international consequences. The [Canadian province](#) of [British Columbia](#), bordering the Pacific Ocean, had long had a large population of Japanese immigrants and their [Japanese Canadian](#) descendants. Pre-war tensions were exacerbated by the Pearl Harbor attack, leading to a reaction from the [Government of Canada](#). On February 24, 1942, Order-in-Council P.C. no. 1486 was passed under the [War Measures Act](#) allowing for the forced removal of any and all Canadians of Japanese descent from British Columbia, as well as the prohibiting them from returning to the province. On 4 March, regulations under the Act were adopted to evacuate Japanese-Canadians.^[131] As a result, 12,000 were [interned](#) in interior camps, 2,000 were sent to road camps and another 2,000 were forced to work in the [prairies](#) at sugar beet farms.^[132]



U.S. President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) signing declaration of war against Imperial Japan on December 8, 1941



Remember December 7th!, by [Allen Saalburg](#), propaganda issued in 1942



Niihau Incident

Main article: [Niihau incident](#)

The Japanese planners had determined that some means was required for rescuing fliers whose aircraft were too badly damaged to return to the carriers. The island of Niihau, only 30 minutes flying time from Pearl Harbor, was designated as the rescue



Petty Officer Shigenori Nishikaichi's aircraft shown ten days after it crashed

point.

The Zero flown by Petty Officer Shigenori Nishikaichi of *Hiryu* was damaged in the attack on Wheeler, so he flew to the rescue point on Niihau. The aircraft was further damaged on landing. Nishikaichi was helped from the wreckage by one of the native Hawaiians, who, aware of the tension between the United States and Japan, took the pilot's maps and other documents. The island's residents had no telephones or radio

and were completely unaware of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Nishikaichi enlisted the support of three Japanese-American residents in an attempt to recover the documents. During the ensuing struggles, Nishikaichi was killed and a Hawaiian civilian was wounded; one collaborator committed suicide, and his wife and the third collaborator were sent to prison.

The ease with which the local ethnic Japanese residents had apparently gone to the assistance of Nishikaichi was a source of concern for many, and tended to support those who believed that local Japanese could not be trusted.^[133]

Strategic implications

Admiral [Hara Tadaichi](#) summed up the Japanese result by saying, "We won a great tactical victory at Pearl Harbor and thereby lost the war."^[134] To a similar effect, see [Isoroku Yamamoto's alleged "sleeping giant" quote](#).

While the attack accomplished its intended objective, it turned out to be largely unnecessary. Unbeknownst to Yamamoto, who conceived the original plan, the U.S. Navy had decided as far back as 1935 to abandon 'charging' across the Pacific towards the Philippines in response to an outbreak of war (in keeping with the evolution of [Plan Orange](#)).^[32] The U.S. instead adopted "[Plan Dog](#)" in 1940, which emphasized keeping the IJN out of the eastern Pacific and away from the shipping lanes to Australia, while the U.S. concentrated on defeating Nazi Germany.^[135]

Fortunately for the United States, the American aircraft carriers were untouched by the Japanese attack; otherwise the Pacific Fleet's ability to conduct offensive operations would have been crippled for a year or more (given no diversions from the Atlantic Fleet). As it was, the elimination of the battleships left the U.S. Navy with no choice but to rely on its aircraft carriers and submarines—the very weapons with which the U.S. Navy halted and eventually reversed the Japanese advance. While six of the eight battleships were repaired and returned to service, their relatively low speed and high fuel consumption limited their deployment, and they served mainly in shore bombardment roles (their only major action being the [Battle of Surigao Strait](#) in October 1944). A major flaw of Japanese strategic thinking was a belief that the ultimate Pacific battle would be fought by battleships, in keeping with the doctrine of Captain [Alfred Thayer Mahan](#). As a result, Yamamoto (and his successors) hoarded battleships for a "decisive battle" that never happened.^[136]

The Japanese confidence in their ability to achieve a short, victorious war meant that they neglected Pearl Harbor's navy repair yards, oil tank farms, submarine base, and old headquarters building.^[56] All of these targets were omitted from Genda's list, yet they proved more important than any battleship to the American war efforts in the Pacific. The survival of the repair shops and fuel depots allowed Pearl Harbor to maintain logistical support to the U.S. Navy's operations,^{[137][138]} such as the [Doolittle Raid](#) and the Battles of [Coral Sea](#) and [Midway](#). It was submarines that immobilized the Imperial Japanese Navy's heavy ships and brought Japan's economy to a virtual standstill by crippling the transportation of oil and raw materials: by the end of 1942, import of raw materials was cut to half of what it had been, "to a disastrous ten million tons", while oil import "was almost completely stopped".^[nb 20] Lastly, the basement of the Old Administration Building was the home of the [cryptanalytic unit](#) which contributed significantly to the Midway ambush and the Submarine Force's success.^[139]

Retrospective debate on American intelligence

Main article: [Pearl Harbor advance-knowledge conspiracy theory](#)

Ever since the Japanese attack, there has been debate as to how and why the United States had been caught unaware, and how much and when American officials knew of Japanese plans and related topics. Military officers including Gen. [Billy Mitchell](#) had pointed out the vulnerability of Pearl to air attack. At least two naval war games, one in 1932 and another in 1936, proved that Pearl was vulnerable to such an attack. Admiral [James Richardson](#) was removed from command shortly after protesting President Roosevelt's decision to move the bulk of the Pacific fleet to Pearl Harbor.^{[140][141]} The decisions of military and political leadership to ignore these warnings has contributed to conspiracy theories. Several writers, including journalist Robert Stinnett and former United States Rear Admiral Robert Alfred Theobald, have argued that various parties high in the U.S. and British governments knew of the attack in advance and may even have let it happen or encouraged it in order to force the U.S. into war via the so-called "back door". However, this [conspiracy theory](#) is rejected by mainstream historians.^{[142][143][144][145][nb 21]}



Arizona Memorial

In popular culture

Main article: [Attack on Pearl Harbor in popular culture](#)

See also

- . [Battle of Taranto](#)
- . [Operation K](#)
- . [Air warfare of World War II](#)
- . [Attack on Howland Island](#)
- . [List of United States Navy ships present at Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941](#)
- . [List of Medal of Honor recipients for the Attack on Pearl Harbor](#)
- . [Nagai Kita](#)
- . [Edwin T. Layton](#)
- . [National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day](#)
- . [Pearl Harbor Survivors Association](#)
- . [Winds Code](#)

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