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War



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History is unique and is full of absolutes. It either happened or it did not, and you either learn from it or not. Warfare has been and will always be a part of our history and a key reason for the way we live our lives today. When we have conflicts on other countries soil it does not affect us as Americans as an attack on our own. The outcome is complete pandemonium and will change the mindset forever, thus the attack on Pearl Harbor changed ours ceaselessly.

The attack on Pearl Harbor will be known as one of the most devastating attacks on American Soil along with the Attack of September 11, 2001. We have fought numerous wars mostly abroad, but without a shadow of doubt the attack on Pearl Harbor will never be forgotten, and changed the way the military operates to the current day. Myself being an U. S. Army Warrant Officer, it suits my personality to educate myself on historical warfare that influenced the way we as a military operate today. There is a lot of information and Historical facts about the attack on Pearl Harbor, and it seems difficult to outline everything in 8-10 pages, but a general overview of how it affected life in the United States of America can be achieved. Pearl Harbor Naval Base, Hawaii, was attacked by Japanese torpedo and bomber planes on December 7, 1941, at 7: 55 a. m. Pacific time. (U. S. History, 2009) It will always be known as “ a date which will live in infamy”. (Davidson, 2008) The purpose of the attack on Pearl Harbor was to neutralize American naval power within the Pacific.

The Japanese wanted license to do as they pleased in the Pacific and Asia, and thought they could get this by eliminating the American influence within the region. Specifically, Japan had been embroiled in a war with China; after <https://assignbuster.com/an-untamed-future-designed-by-the-past-essay-sample/>

many years of fighting eventually became a stalemate. Japan thought by cutting China off from American (as well as British) aid, China would be weakened, and the stalemate would be broken. Japan also knew that American naval power could not be neutralized indefinitely, but thought that by dealing it a heavy blow at Pearl Harbor, the American Navy could be neutralized long enough for Japan to achieve its objectives in Asia and the Pacific. In terms of its strategic objectives the attack on Pearl Harbor was, in the short to medium term, a unique and spectacular success for the Japanese which eclipsed the wildest dreams of its planners and has few parallels in the military history of any era. In the longer term, however, the Pearl Harbor attack was an unmitigated strategic disaster for Japan.

The path to war between Japan and the United States, culminating with the Battle of Pearl Harbor, began in the early 1930's when differences over China drove the two nations apart. In 1931, Japan conquered Manchuria, which until then had been a part of China. In 1937 Japan began a long and unsuccessful campaign to conquer the rest of China. In mid-1940 Japan made the inevitable move to war when the Emperor allied his country with Nazi Germany in the Axis Alliance. At that time Germany was under the eye of America, and in the following year, Japan made their move and occupied all of Indochina. The United States, which had important political and economic interests in Eastern Asia, was alarmed and amazed by actions made by Japan. The U. S. increased military and financial aid to China, and embarked on a program of strengthening its military power in the Pacific and cut off the shipment of oil and other raw materials to Japan, along with other sanctions such as " Roosevelt administration introduced economic sanctions

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to make its point clear: The United States would not facilitate Japan's expansion into the Pacific" (Past foundations, 2004).

Japan needed natural resources, especially oil, for its planned expansion. Its government viewed these indicators, especially the embargo on oil as a threat to Japan's survival as a nation. Japan's leaders responded by resolving to seize the resource-rich territories of Southeast Asia, even though that move would certainly result in war with the United States. "The U. S. fleet was perceived as an obstacle to access the oil fields in Java" (U. S. History, 2001), so the commander of the Japanese fleet Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, devised a plan that conceived to affect a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor to destroy America's Pacific Fleet. With the American naval fleet out of its path they would have free rains the Java oil fields which is what they needed in order to support the vast amount of fuel needed to support their war efforts. The key elements in Yamamoto's surprise attack plan involved meticulous preparation, the achievement of surprise, and the use of aircraft carriers and naval aviation on an unprecedented scale. In October 1941 the naval general staff gave final approval to Yamamoto's plan and the attack force would be commanded by Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo.

The strategic plan centered around 30 ships included six aircraft carriers with roughly 405 aircraft intended to be used: 360 for the two attack waves, 48 on defensive combat air patrol (CAP), including nine fighters from the first wave. At the same time, a Japanese Advance Expeditionary Force of some 20 submarines was assembled at Kure naval base on the west coast of Honshu to facilitate the attack. Admiral Chuichi Nagumo assembled his fleet in the

remote anchorage of Takan Bay within the Kurile Islands, and departed with strict secrecy for Hawaii on 26 November 1941. The ships' route crossed the North Pacific and avoided the normal shipping lanes. At dawn 7 December 1941, the Japanese task force had approached undetected to a point slightly more than 200 miles North of Oahu. Beginning at 0600 and ending at 0715, a total of approximately 360 planes were launched in the two attack waves. These planes rendezvoused to the South and then flew toward Oahu to initiate the coordinated attacks. (Wels, 2009)

Pearl Harbor is located on the South coast of Oahu Island. At the time, the naval base was about 22, 000 acres in size. The American fleet was under the command of Admiral Husband E. Kimmel and the ground troops were commanded by Lt. General Walter C. Short. The attack on Pearl Harbor took place at 0755 on December 7, 1941 and ended shortly before 1000 on a sunny Sunday morning. Most offices on the base were closed and many servicemen were on leave or pass for the weekend. The bulk of the United States Pacific Fleet was at sea, there were only about 90 ships at anchor, eight battleships, and no aircraft carriers in the port during the attack. On the several airfields there was an estimated 390 Navy and Army planes of all types, although less than 300 were available for combat or observation purposes. The Signal Corps Radio model 270 Radar (SCR-270) fixed on Opana Point were in place, manned, and functioning at the time of the attack. The radar was working properly, the incoming Japanese attack planes were detected by the radar and reported, but were mistaken for an incoming group of American planes due in route from the mainland that morning.

An American destroyer was conducting training maneuvers and spotted a Japanese submarine attempting to sneak into the harbor. The submarine was fired upon, and reported sunk by the destroyer USS Ward (DD-139) and a patrol plane. The first attack wave of 183 planes was launched, six planes failed to launch due to technical difficulties and was commanded by Captain Mitsuo Fuchida. Several U. S. aircraft returning from training were shot down as the first wave approached land, and at least one radioed a somewhat incoherent warning. There were other warnings from ships off the harbor entrance, but were still being processed or awaiting confirmation when the attacking planes began bombing and strafing. Men aboard U. S. ships awoke to the sounds of alarms, bombs exploding, and gunfire prompting bleary eyed men into dressing as they ran to General Stations. This is when the most famous message was announced “ Air raid Pearl Harbor. This is not a drill” (Chezem, 2001)! The defenders and men on deck were extremely unprepared.

The Ammunition lockers were locked, aircraft parked wingtip to wingtip in the open to deter sabotage, guns unmanned, only a quarter of its machine guns, and only four of 31 Army batteries got in action. Despite this, and low alert status, many American military personnel responded effectively during the battle. The second wave consisted of 171 planes, four planes failed to launch because of technical difficulties. The wave was divided into three groups. 1st Group consisted of 54 B5Ns armed with 550 lb and 132 lb general purpose bombs. They were to attack separate objectives. Of the 54 Bombers 27 B5Ns aircraft were to bomb hangars on Kaneohe, Ford Island, and Barbers Point, and 27 Bombers were to bomb the hangars and aircraft

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on Hickam Field. The second group targeted aircraft carriers and cruisers. It consisted of 81 D3As armed with 550 lb general purpose bombs. The third group targeted aircraft at Ford Island, Hickham Field, Wheeler Field, Barber's Point, and Kaneohe and consisted of 36 A6Ms for defense and strafing. One bomber was tasked to attack Kaneohe, and the rest to attack Pearl Harbor proper.

The separate sections arrived at the attack point almost simultaneously, from several directions. Approximately 90 minutes after it began, the attack was over. It was said that "Japan's shocking triumph over U. S. forces united Americans in a way Roosevelt never could" (Davidson, 2008). The Pearl Harbor attack immediately galvanized a divided nation into action. Public opinion had been moving towards support for entering the War during 1941, but there was considerable opposition up till the Pearl Harbor attack. Overnight, Americans united against Japan, and that response probably made possible the unconditional surrender position taken by the Allied Powers. For that reason, some historians believe that the attack on Pearl Harbor doomed Japan to defeat simply because it awakened the "sleeping U. S. behemoth", [http://www. dark-stories. com/eng/pearl_harbor. htm](http://www.dark-stories.com/eng/pearl_harbor.htm)

Although the attack inflicted large-scale destruction on US vessels and aircraft, it did not affect Pearl Harbor's fuel storage, maintenance, submarine, and intelligence facilities. The attack was an initial shock to all the Allies in the Pacific Theater. 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 so. As it was, the elimination of the battleships left the U. S. Navy with no choice but rely on its aircraft carriers and submarines; the very weapons with which the U. S. Navy halted, and eventually reversed, the Japanese advance. This sneak attack against Hawaii brought an immediate reaction of unprecedented unity from the American people. Families from every class sent their sons and daughters to war, women joined the industrial work force, and no one was untouched by the effort to bring all of U. S. resources to bear upon the war effort. The U. S. war plans strategy had been “ Europe first”, but the Japanese attack caused a far greater effort to be directed early on to the Pacific than would otherwise have been expected and fueled the will of the U. S. to completely defeat Japan regardless of the cost. <http://www.ccdemo.info/PearlHarbor/PearlHarborDayRemembered.html>

On December 8, President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed the American Congress, and the nation, to detail the attack. In that address, the President asked Congress to pass a declaration of war. Congress convened, voted on, and passed the U. S. Declaration of War on Japan, on the same day. That was America’s formal entry into World War II. “ Americans showed no such tolerance to the 127, 000 Japanese living in the United States whether citizens or not.” (Davidson, 2008) The local newspapers talked negatively about the Japanese people, and eventually the Executive Order 9066 placed over 120, 000 Japanese living within the United States into concentration camps, and over 80, 000 were American citizens, “ called Nisei, and they had no evidence indicating that they posed any threat, using terms such as a Jap’s a Jap” (Davidson, 2008)

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At the end of the day, our country was in turmoil and complete chaos, and ended with The Executive Order 9066 authorized by President Roosevelt to the Secretary of War. It seems every time there is a situation on American soil we go overboard, and isolate specific individuals. America was falling apart and becoming divided especially over the potential war in Europe. Japans attack on Pearl Harbor united us as a country, and we succeeded. We learned from our mistakes of being not cautious enough, and leaving our back door open. This changed the entire way we operate as a modern military. Not only did we learn as a military, but as a society Four years after imprisonment of the Japanese individuals it was named “ a national mistake”. We learn from mistakes, and that is a historical fact.

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