

# Causes and impacts of the attack on pearl harbor



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The attack on Pearl Harbor was a horrible event which cost America a lot of precious lives. After several years of America and Japan growing apart, America pulled the final straw by ending oil trade with Japan. When this happened, America knew that an attack was coming for them, they just didn't know where it would take place. Because Japan's attack was so expertly hidden with code and dummy broadcasts, telling them the wrong places to defend, America was grossly unprepared for the siege that Japan would lay down on Pearl Harbor. As a result, the Pearl Harbor naval base suffered a great deal of casualties in men, women, aircraft, and sea vessels. A day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, then President Franklin D. Roosevelt gave his famous, "Day of Infamy" Speech comforting America, while also urging congress to declare war on Japan. A little bit after America joined the war, they started by organizing a surprise attack on the main island of Japan in revenge for Pearl Harbor. When the plan was acted out not that much damage was done, however none of the bombers were shot down, so the attack was still worth it. Even farther into the war, the Americans "Project Manhattan" finally bears some fruit creating the atomic bombs "Little Boy" and "Fat Man." In a final attack that would end the war, America drops an atomic bomb on two heavily populated Japanese locations. The attack on Pearl Harbor, while not the sole cause, certainly got America to join the Second World War, and they certainly went on to end it as well.

While Japan's siege on Pearl Harbor Oahu would happen as a result of America cutting off oil trades, it was just the climax to their altercations over the years. For example, after the end of World War One, Japan was getting cut out of the deal in the Treaty of Versailles by America's then President

Woodrow Wilson, who was known to be very stubborn. In the end Japan got their money, but only after Tokyo threatened to walk out of the treaty. This was something that Wilson was quite bitter about stating “ We gave them what they should not have”. Later, at the Washington Naval Conference of 1921, America convinced Britain to end their 20 year alliance with Japan, causing negative relations between America and Japan which only built tensions further than they already had. Henceforth, after tensions with Japan kept growing and they had just joined the Second World War as a part of the Axis powers, it only made sense that America would cut trades off with Japan during the war. The Japanese saw this is a final straw for America, and decided that it was time to do something about them, even though they were so much more powerful. <sup>1</sup> Overall, the attack on Pearl Harbor happened because America stopped trading oil with the Japanese, even though it is a bit more complicated than that.

While America did stop Japan from buying oil from them, that was not Roosevelt’s original intention. FDR knew, and was open about the fact, that if America cut oil trades with Japan it would cause war. However, while he did know Roosevelt didn’t want to cut trades, that Dean Acheson, a State Department Lawyer, would bend the rules and stop Oil trades with Japan.

[1]So after Japan heard the news that they could no longer receive oil shipments from America. It made sense that, after receiving a request for permission to attack the American naval base a Pearl Harbor, Japan’s 126<sup>th</sup> Emperor, Emperor Hirohito, would allow the attack to happen. Although he later stated that he didn’t have a real voice in the decision to attack.

However, it should be noted that the man who concocted the attack was

Japan's Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, who was said to be a massive advocate for the use of air planes in war, because he believed they were the deciding factor in modern warfare.[2]In the end, it was never America's intention to stop selling oil to Japan, because they knew it would cause war, but after cutting oil trades by accident, it only made sense for Japan to react the way they did.

The siege on Pearl Harbor was, not only a massacre of American soldiers and vessels, but also a massive surprise to the Americans stationed there.

Japan's effort to keep their attack a secret was a huge success for them. The important codes they sent did not get decoded, and the United States fell for some false leads as to where the Japanese would attack. America was under the impression that Japan would either strike the Philippines, or Singapore.

So when the men stationed at Pearl Harbor realized that they were under siege and were not in a fighting position they knew that they were in trouble.

[3]When the Japanese aircrafts got to Pearl Harbor the first thing they did was survey the area to see if America had intercepted their coded messages and defended accordingly. Once the Japanese Captain, Mitsuo Fuchida, who was sent to scout of this mission, knew that the Americans had not been alerted, he signaled the Japanese fleet with the message " Tora, Tora, Tora," which meant that the surprise had been successful, and to move in.[4]While the Japanese's attack on Pearl Harbor was a low blow, and a slap in the face, to the American forces, it can still be appreciated as one of the most well-hidden, and expertly coordinated, attacks in history.

The Japanese siege, as a result of being so secretive, came out of no where for the American soldiers stationed there, and ended up being an extremely

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deadly battle. In the very beginning of the siege, the USS Arizona was blown up and sunk killing 1, 177 American soldiers. An hour and a half later, The Japanese sent out a second wave of aircraft killing many more American Soldiers and destroying a lot more American battleships. The total damage of the siege was 19 U. S. ships sunk, or badly damaged, 328 American aircrafts destroyed or badly damaged, and 2, 403 American soldiers' killed, with 1178 wounded.[4]Overall the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was a very deadly battle to say the least.

While Japan was hoping that America would be discouraged after the attack at Pearl Harbor, it had quite the opposite effect. After the attack, America's then President Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave his famous " Day of Infamy" speech where he said the famous line " December 7, 1941 — a date which will live in infamy" Riling up the American public and exciting and inspiring the young generation to fight this war. In his speech, Roosevelt requested, for all of America, that Congress would declare war on Japan promptly.

[5]America declared war the same day that President Roosevelt's " Day of Infamy" speech was given. In reality the attack on Pearl Harbor, instead of discouraging America as a whole, gave them a staggering determination to take down Japan.

As a result of the outrage that Pearl Harbor caused in America, the U. S. Military was looking for a way to hit back at Japan. Only two weeks later, they decided to launch a surprise bombing raid on Japan in revenge for Pearl Harbor. The attack would be led by celebrated stunt pilot James H. Doolittle, and would be executed in 20, 000-ton *Hornet* Bombers. They chose the *Hornet* s because they were the lightest planes they had available and they

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needed light planes to conserve fuel for the long trip. Doolittle's raid took place in Tokyo Japan, targeting the military bases of Yokohama, Kobe, and Osaka. They targeted these places because they are where the Japanese would least expect to be hit. While one of the planes did take some fire, none of the planes dispatched for this mission were totaled, they did not do a whole lot of damage to the Japanese homeland other than send a message of superiority in military.[6]In the end, the U. S. Military got their job done, and while it may not have been the most impactful mission it was certainly an important one to the people of America.

Another result of the attack on Pearl Harbor was the discrimination of Japanese people in the new world. Two months after the bombing raid on Tokyo took place, America placed executive order 9066 placing people of Japanese descent into internment Camps. In the internment camps you could still have a job and still make money, however you could not make any more than an army private. Soon after America started the order 9066, Canada and Mexico started sending Japanese Immigrants into America to be placed into camps.[7]Along with the internment camps came the strengthening of the racism against Japanese Americans that we even still see in America today. All together order 9066 was one of the biggest disgraces in modern American history.

The events that occurred after Pearl Harbor made sure that Japan would overall lose World War Two, however even if they had not happened the U. S. still would have come out victorious. The year after the attack on Pearl Harbor, America put together the "Manhattan Project" lead by J. Robert Oppenheimer, a physicist. He and his team were working on the world's first

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atomic weapon. The original reason for it was the fight against Germany. However, by the time this “ Manhattan project” had a successful test, at the trinity test site in a desert in New Mexico, Germany had surrendered. So, Instead of keeping the bomb as a trick up their sleeve, President of the time, Harry S. Truman, in an effort to end the war for good sent the atomic bomb “ Little Boy” to the Japanese military base of Hiroshima, where it was dropped and instantly killed around 80, 000 people. Three days later America sent out another atomic bomb, because Japan had not yet surrendered, named “ Fat Man.” The original target for this bomb was Kokura, however due to cloudy weather the bombing was moved to Nagasaki, where it was dropped and instantly killed 75, 000.[8]Overall, even if Japan had managed to hold their own in the fight against America after Pearl Harbor, they still would have been ended by the catastrophic events of “ Little Boy,” and “ Fat Man”.

Japan’s siege on Pearl Harbor was a larger event in history then most people give it credit, and has caused a whole lot of major events in the history of America and Japan. Someone might say that in the grand scheme of the Second World War, 2, 403 deaths is not that much. However, the attack on Pearl Harbor can also be considered the cause of the two atomic bombs dropped onto Japan. Which is extra annoying when you start to think of all the ways that Pearl Harbor could have been avoided. For example, the thing that annoys me the most about the lead up to Pearl Harbor is that all it took was one State Department Lawyer, named Dean Acheson, deciding that the U. S. should not be trading oil with Japan.[9]If he had not made this ridiculous decision, there is a very real chance that the attack on Pearl Harbor would never have happened. And if Pearl Harbor never happened America would

not have gone to war with Japan as soon, or at all. As it turns out, if the siege Pearl Harbor never happened, a lot of things today would be very different in a variety of countries.

So let's just say that Dean Acheson never made the history altering decision to cut oil trade with Japan. On one hand, he might have been quite stubborn about his decision to stop the oil trade but decided not to because it was not his decision to make, and Roosevelt had already made it. On the other hand, Acheson could have simply taken more time to think about the consequences of his actions, and as a result, he would have realized just how much this decision might affect the war for America. For example, he certainly realized that stopping oil trade would keep America from providing fuel to the enemy. However, it might also plunge them into the war causing hundreds of thousands of American deaths. Had Acheson made the decision to not cut oil trade with Japan, the attack on Pearl Harbor would have either been delayed, or prevented entirely.

Overall, Pearl Harbor was the cause of many events in History, and Dean Acheson, could have stopped it all from happening if he had simply thought about his decisions a little bit more. Had Acheson been able to rationalize his situation better, Hundreds of Thousands of lives could have been lived out happily. Instead, Acheson made a quick decision not thinking about the grand scheme of things and there is no doubt that it was the final straw for Japan to finally do something about America. In the end Pearl Harbor was the starting point of a lot of major events in history, but Dean Acheson made the final move that caused Pearl Harbor to happen.



If Dean Acheson hadn't stopped the oil trade between America and Japan, it would have prevented Pearl Harbor, at least temporarily. Not to mention, even if the Japanese did not provoke it, America was on their way into the war one way or another. Pearl Harbor was simply the event that did start it. However if it had not happened, many other things in history would have gone down very differently. For example, if the siege on Pearl Harbor never happened, the Japanese Americans, Canadians, and Mexicans would never have been placed into internments camps. However, because there Country was still against America in the war, they most likely still would have been heavily discriminated upon. Another example of something that would have changed is the "Manhattan Project." Had the Pearl Harbor attack not happened the "Manhattan Project" would have still been launched, most likely after America had to join the war for a different reason. Had America joined the war before Britain was taken over the rest of the war would most likely have played out very similarly aside from the atomic bombs. If America joined the war to protect itself from Japan, they most likely would have needed to use "Little Boy" and "Fat Man" anyway. However if they joined solely to keep Germany from overtaking everything, they could possibly have come to a peaceful conclusion with Japan. Overall, Dean Acheson caused Pearl Harbor to happen, and Pearl Harbor was the cause of many other big events in history.

One thing that would have been different had Pearl Harbor been avoided is Order 9066. If The Japanese were not the main aggressors for America in World War Two, the American government would not have felt it necessary to lock them up to protect against espionage. However, because the

Japanese were still on the other side of the war effort, there is no doubt that they would have been discriminated upon heavily by the majority of Americans. It is pretty clear that the reason the American Government was so adamant on locking up the Japanese civilian population was because of how secretive the Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbor was. Therefore if America got brought into the war because of the Germans, or Italians, they most likely would not have locked up their respective immigrants in the Americas. In summary, Order 9066 was one of those events in history that would have been entirely erased from history had Pearl Harbor been avoided.

Something else that would have been changed if Acheson had chosen more wisely would be the "Manhattan Project". The "Manhattan Project" was the military project that produced the world's first atomic bombs. Had America gone to war with Germany before Japan, they most likely would have still started the project because at the time they started it, Germany was a much bigger threat. However, they most likely would have still taken care of Germany before any nukes were created. If Japan, at this point, had been super aggressive towards America they would need to take them down quite decisively. However, if Japan had just mostly been doing their own thing, attacking China, aside from sending some troops to help Germany, America could probably end the war by helping out China and making some kind of a deal with Japan, holding the bombs for later use. Overall, America would still have Atomic bombs before any other country, however, there is a chance that we could have kept it a secret, saving several countries from nuclear threats left and right.

**In the end, there are many things that happened because of the events at Pearl Harbor that could have been avoided by Dean Acheson if he had not cut oil trades with Japan. Things like Order 9066, and the “Manhattan Project” are just a few examples of events with drastically different stories had Pearl Harbor not happened. The United States most likely would still have joined the war, though possibly because of the Germans and not the Japanese. Pearl Harbor was an awful, and bloody, event that started a chain reaction that caused several other bloody events in history.**

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