

Pearl Harbor Lecture Notes

Key Leaders:

U.S.

Admiral Harold R. Stark – Chief of Naval Operations (US)

Admiral Husband E. Kimmel – Naval Commander at Pearl

Major General Walter Short -- Army Commander at Pearl (starting April '41)

Japan

Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto – Head of Japan's Combined Fleet

Admiral Chuichi Nagumo -- Leader of the Pearl Harbor Attack Group

Commander Minoru Genda -- Japanese Air Commander in Pearl Strike Force

- **Japan** is densely populated and very resource poor (especially lacks oil).
- **Japan got the Marianas, Caroline and Marshall Islands from the 1919 Treaty of Versailles** {after WWI} – they had been German colonies {which Japan seized during WWI}. These islands were great bases for Japan, especially Truk in the Carolines.
- **Hawaii** was closer to these Japanese island chains & they knew the U.S. could reach them first. **Aircraft carriers** became important in the interwar years (1919-1939) as the power of aircraft became obvious. AC were floating **magazines**, filled with munitions and aviation gas
- **1940 – Japan fortified the Marshall Islands.** US President FDR responded by ordering **US fleet to stay in Hawaii** after completion of annual war games. May 1940 -- U.S. Congress appropriated \$17 billion to build a two ocean navy & America launched a massive naval building program. {**11 large aircraft carriers, 179 destroyers, & 67 submarines**}
- **Japan saw the American naval buildup as an effort to get naval superiority in the Pacific. So, in Sept. 1940 Japan joined the Axis Alliance and took some military bases in French Indochina!** [France had been taken over by the Nazis in June, 1940]
- **Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto** {Commander in Chief of Japanese Combined Fleet} was one of the first Japanese high commanders to understand the importance of air power in the coming war. Initially Yamamoto opposed a war with the US. He graduated from Harvard University in 1921 and served as a Japanese Naval Attache' in Washington D.C. Yamamoto saw the amazing industrial capacity of the US. **Regardless, he proposed attacks from carrier-based planes**
- **Yamamoto thought a sudden attack on Pearl could buy Japan 6 months to advance in SE Asia!** He also thought fear of a long & bloody war would cause America to negotiate a peace settlement instead of fighting. He questioned the will of Americans to fight!!!
- Jan. '41 Yamamoto requested Japanese carrier planes be supplied with **torpedoes that could be launched in 40-45' deep water** --- the shallow depth of Pearl Harbor. Shallow water was a problem since aircraft torpedoes usually sank below that depth before stabilizing on shallow runs to targets.
- **April 1941 – Japan signed a Neutrality Act with the Soviet Union** (Japan had been fighting S.U. in Mongolia). This freed Japan to attack to the South.
- **July 1941 – Japan established a protectorate over all of Indochina which had been a French colony!** ***** **FDR froze Japanese assets in the U.S. & joined with the Netherlands & England to place an oil embargo on Japan!!! Japan relied on these nations for 88% of her oil supply!!!** FDR wanted to stop Japan's advances, but not provoke her. Didn't work!

THE JAPANESE STRIKE FORCE

Japanese Plan was to simultaneously attack Pearl Harbor, Wake Island, Guam, British Malaya, and British Hong Kong with other attacks to follow in the Philippines, Dutch E. Indies (key oil source), and British Burma.

November 26th, 1941 ---- the **Pearl Harbor Strike Force** left anchorage at Etorofu in the Kurile Islands. The force was commanded by **Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo** (who was known for his skill at torpedo attacks and his kindness to men). **The Strike Force was built around 6 aircraft carriers:**

1. Akagi – 1927 – modernized
2. Kaga – 1928 – modernized
3. Hiryu – 1939
4. Soryu – 1939
5. Shokaku – 1941
6. Zuikaku – 1941

The Japanese Advance Expeditionary Force proceeded separately to Hawaii from the Marshall Islands. Consisted of 27 large submarines { 11 had small aircraft inside and 5 were carrying midget subs}. Each midget carried 2 torpedoes. Subs were to remain off coast of Oahu after original attack to ambush any American ships not sunk.

Nov. 27, 1941 – Chief of Naval Operations, Harold Stark, cautioned Kimmel that Japan would attack “somewhere in a matter of days” – thought it would be the Philippines. {knew this from Jap diplomatic codes we had broken – MAGIC}

PEARL HARBOR UNPREPARED FOR ATTACK

1. Battleships not protected by anti-torpedo nets (impede mobility & harbor too shallow for torpedoes)
2. Anti-aircraft munitions stored in locked boxes (sabotage mode)
3. No barrage balloons over harbor
4. No equipment for smoke screens over ships
5. General Short had ordered Army planes to be lined up tightly with wings folded since he feared sabotage (high Jap population in Hawaii)

THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR

Dec. 7th, 1941

- **3:42 am** - - **Minesweeper USS Condor** patrolling harbor entrance saw periscope of a midget sub and called **Destroyer Ward** which searched for over 2 hours with no luck.
- **After 6:00 am** -- PB4 Flying Boat sighted and marked midget sub trying to sneak into the harbor behind an American repair ship (Antares)
- **6:45 am** -- Destroyer Ward attacked midget Jap sub
- **6:45 am** – Army mobile radar station at Opana Point (northern shore of Oahu) detected small blip north of Oahu (Jap cruiser float planes sent as scouts)
- **6:54 am** – Destroyer Ward notified Commandant of Navy that it fired on, rammed and sunk a Jap submarine. The anti-sub net had been opened at **5:00 am** and was still open!
- **7:15 am** – Army mobile radar picks up large radar blips approx. 132 miles north of Oahu. Both radar sitings reported to young fill-in officer at headquarters. He told radar operators not to worry. Was incoming fleet of B-17s from CA.
- **7:25 am** -- Admiral Kimmel notified of attack on Jap sub. ** Kimmel failed to issue a general alert to Pearl! Thought it was not serious!

The Pearl Harbor Strike Force attacked with a total of 353 planes

- Launch zone was 220 miles NW of Oahu
- 50 planes carried 40cm ****armor-piercing shells converted to bombs for attacking battleships (wooden fins attached).**
- 40 planes carried ****torpedoes with 450lb warheads & wooden fins to keep them shallow in 40 foot deep Pearl Harbor,**
- 3 waves of attack were planned
- 7:53 am – 1st wave hit with 183 planes
- 8:50 am – 2nd wave hit with 170 planes

USS **Arizona** - High altitude bombers dropped armor-piercing shells with timed detonators – a shell passed through two decks and set off the forward **magazine** which held 1232 silk-wrapped, smokeless gunpowder cartridges! Over 1100 men died!

KEY JAPANESE MISTAKES

10:00 AM – Attack over! Returning Japanese pilots (esp. Air Commander Minoru Genda) encouraged Admiral Nagumo to launch the third air strike which was intended to **hit repair yards, machine shops oil tank farms, & submarine bases.** *****Nagumo refused since he did not know where the US carriers Lexington and Enterprise were.** He knew the Saratoga was on the West Coast for repairs. Nagumo wanted to preserve Japanese naval power to protect his Strike Force and attack American carriers if they were sighted. (He was risking 6 of Japan's total of 11 aircraft carriers. U.S. had 3 – all in Pacific Fleet)

THE AFTERMATH OF ATTACK

Initially appeared to be a devastating loss for America. 188 planes destroyed. 159 damaged. Sunk or seriously damaged 18 warships. 2403 men killed.

****In actuality, due to the shallow nature of Pearl Harbor and the fact that the Japanese did not destroy the repair and machine shops, only two battleships, the USS Arizona and USS Oklahoma were total losses. All other ships sunk into the mud at the bottom of the shallow harbor. They were raised, repaired and back in service within 6 months!! ***Furthermore, the American public was now ready to go to war!!**

Japanese losses = 29 planes, 1 sub, 5 midget subs, 168 men killed.

Dec. 8th, 1941 Pres. Roosevelt declared war on Japan!

Admiral Husband E. Kimmel {Naval Commander at Pearl} & Major General Walter Short {Army Commander at Pearl} were both relieved of command after the Pearl Harbor attack.