



We have a short memory for those events that happened during our lives; as a History teacher, I can tell you it's a much worse state of affairs for those events that happened *before* we were born. If those events were particularly important, monuments and plaques may be erected, but their meaning dwindles over time. It's the story behind those events that keep the memory alive. So the story must be continually passed down, from generation to generation...Such an event happened on December 7th, 1941. It was..... a Day of Infamy.

The attack on the naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, was a surprise military strike by Japan upon the United States (a neutral country at the time) just before 08:00, on Sunday morning. The attack led to the United States' formal entry into World War II the next day. Japan intended the attack as a preventive action to prevent the United States Pacific Fleet from interfering with its planned military actions in Southeast Asia against overseas territories of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and those of 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.

The attack commenced at 7:48 a.m. The base was attacked by 353 Imperial Japanese aircraft (including fighters, level and dive bombers, and torpedo bombers) in two waves, launched from six aircraft

carriers. Of the eight U.S. Navy battleships present, all were damaged, with four sunk. All but 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, and one minelayer. A total of 188 U.S. aircraft were destroyed; 2,403 Americans were killed and 1,178 others were wounded. 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. Kazuo Sakamaki, the commanding officer of one of the submarines, was captured.

There were numerous historical precedents for the unannounced military action by Japan [*another reason to study History!*], but the lack of any formal warning, particularly while peace 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.

Admiral Hara Tadaichi summed up the Japanese result by saying, "We won a great tactical victory at Pearl Harbor and thereby lost the war."

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. The U.S. instead adopted "Plan Dog" in 1940, which emphasized keeping Japan out of the eastern Pacific and away from the shipping lanes to Australia, while the U.S. concentrated on defeating Nazi Germany.

Fortunately for the United States, the American aircraft carriers were untouched; 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. As a result, Yamamoto (and his successors) hoarded battleships for a "decisive battle" that never happened.

The Japanese confidence in their ability to win a quick victory meant that they neglected Pearl Harbor's navy repair yards, oil tank farms, submarine base, and old headquarters building. All of these targets were omitted from Genda's list, yet they proved more important than any battleship to the American war effort 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, 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 importation of oil and raw materials: by the end of 1942, the amount of raw materials brought in was cut in half, "to a disastrous ten million tons", while oil "was almost completely stopped". 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. [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attack\\_on\\_Pearl\\_Harbor#Strategic\\_implications](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attack_on_Pearl_Harbor#Strategic_implications)]



