



Pearl Harbor Fact Sheet

Date	December 7, 1941
Location	US Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, Oahu, Hawaii, and other US Pacific territories
Background	Tensions between Japan and the United States had been rising throughout the 1930s and early 1940s. Japan sought greater control of resources and territory in Asia, invading Manchuria and China, occupying French Indochina, and setting its sights on other resource-rich Western colonial territories. Determined to help China and to increase economic pressure on Japan in an effort to halt its military expansion in the Pacific, the United States imposed embargoes on arms, scrap iron, and eventually oil. Negotiations between Japan and the United States collapsed by late November 1941, and Japanese leaders concluded that war was unavoidable. In addition to attacks on the Malay Peninsula, the Dutch East Indies, and the Philippines, the Imperial Japanese government planned a surprise attack on the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, hoping to cripple American naval power and prevent US interference with its territorial expansion plans. Despite intercepting and decoding some Japanese communications, intelligence failures and poor coordination between military commands contributed to the United States being caught largely unaware on the morning of December 7, 1941.
Forces	US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941: 8 battleships, 8 cruisers, 30 destroyers, 4 submarines, and numerous other vessels, as well as 390 aircraft. The three aircraft carriers of the US Pacific Fleet were out to sea on maneuvers. Imperial Japanese Navy's 1st Air Fleet (<i>Kidō Butai</i>): 6 heavy aircraft carriers, 2 heavy cruisers, 32 submarines, 9 oilers, 2 battleships, and 9 destroyers, as well as 353 aircraft
American Casualties	2,403 killed (2,008 Navy, 218 Army, 109 Marines, 68 civilians) and 1,178 injured (710 Navy, 364 Army, 69 Marines, 35 civilians) 20 ships destroyed (2 battleships, 1 auxiliary vessel) or damaged (6 battleships, 3 cruisers, 3 destroyers, 5 auxiliaries) 347 aircraft destroyed or damaged (across Navy, Marine Corps, and Army Air Corps)
Japanese Casualties	129 killed; one taken prisoner 29 aircraft and 5 midget submarines lost
The Commanders	United States: Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, General Walter Campbell Short Japan: Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Admiral Chūichi Nagumo
The Attack	The Japanese air attack on Pearl Harbor began around 7:55 a.m. on Sunday, December 7, 1941. With 183 aircraft, the first attack wave launched from aircraft carriers about 230 miles north of Hawaii. The battleships USS <i>Arizona</i> and USS <i>Oklahoma</i> were lost before the end of the first wave. The second wave arrived at approximately 8:50 a.m. with 170 aircraft. Despite being unprepared, US sailors,



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soldiers, and Marines returned fire with anti-aircraft and machine guns, and some aircraft were able to join the fight. Many servicemembers and civilians fought fires, rescued the wounded, and helped evacuate damaged ships. Sixteen Medals of Honor would be awarded for heroism during the attack. The entire attack lasted about 75 minutes. Throughout the day, Japan launched similar coordinated attacks on US military installations in the Philippines, Guam, and Wake Island, as well as on British territories across the Pacific.

The Outcomes

On December 8, 1941, minutes after President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered his "Day of Infamy" speech to Congress, the United States declared war on Japan. Germany and Italy declared war several days later, bringing America into a global war with the Axis powers. The attack also unified American public opinion behind the war effort and led to rapid mobilization of US military and industrial resources.

The attack on Pearl Harbor was a success for the Japanese as the US Pacific Fleet suffered significant losses, but it ultimately failed to achieve the larger strategic goal of sidelining the US Navy in the Pacific war. Japanese naval forces initially seemed unstoppable, quickly advancing across the region in the months that followed. Japan, however, had underestimated the United States' ability to recover and mobilize. Important targets in Hawaii remained intact, including US aircraft carriers, fuel storage facilities, and repair facilities, and many of the ships damaged or sunk that day were refloated, repaired, and redeployed. Within months, the US Navy would deal a decisive blow to the Imperial Japanese Navy at the Battle of Midway in June 1942, sinking four aircraft carriers and turning the tide of the war in the Pacific.

Sources for Further Exploration

- *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* by Gordon W. Prange, Donald M. Goldstein, and Katherine V. Dillon
- *The Rising Sun in the Pacific* by Samuel Eliot Morison
- *Pearl Harbor: Japan's Greatest Disaster* by Mark Stille
- *Descent into Darkness: Pearl Harbor, 1941, A Navy Diver's Memoir* by Edward C. Raymer
- *Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*
- [Congressional Medal of Honor Society, "16 Pearl Harbor Day Medal of Honor Recipients, Dec. 7, 1941"](#)
- [NHHC "Pearl Harbor Attack 7 December 1941"](#)
- [The American Aircraft of Pearl Harbor](#)
- [Pearl Harbor Attack, December 7, 1941](#)
- [US Navy Pearl Harbor Fact Sheet](#)
- [Ships and District Craft Present at Pearl Harbor, Naval History & Heritage Command](#)

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