



December 7, 1941—U.S. sailors rescue a fellow seaman from the flaming water near the U.S.S. *West Virginia* following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. President Roosevelt called it “a day that will live in infamy.”

General Hideki Tojo (huh-DECK-ee TOE-joe) had been following a plan to take over most of Asia. Tojo was one of the proud military leaders who ran Japan. Tojo and other leaders thought Japan had a special right to rule Asia. Besides, Japan needed oil, tin, and rubber for its many factories. Asia had a large supply of such materials.

The plan to rule Asia had begun long before Tojo became Japan’s **premier** (head of government) in 1941. It had started a full 10 years earlier. In September 1931, Japanese armies had marched into Man-

churia, in northern China. In less than four months, they had complete control. Tensions between the Chinese and the Japanese worsened. In 1937, the two Asian powers went to war. By the end of 1940, Japan had marched into much of China, and the French colony of Indochina.

Embargo on Iron

U.S. leaders had grown more and more concerned. It seemed clear to many of them that the Japanese had to be prevented from taking more land. By 1940, the United States had stopped selling

scrap iron to Japan. The next year, 1941, it stopped selling the Japanese oil. Such a ban on commerce and trade is called an **embargo**. These U.S. embargoes set back Japanese plans.

The United States held peace talks with the Japanese in November 1941. The talks did not accomplish anything. The Japanese wanted a free hand in China. The United States wanted them out of China. Neither side would give in.

General Tojo secretly set November 25 as the last day for a peaceful agreement. After that, he planned to order the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Although Hawaii was not yet a state, Pearl Harbor was the main U.S. naval base in the Pacific. By smashing the U.S. Pacific fleet, Japan could grab whatever territory it wanted in Asia before the United States could strike back.

On November 26, a large Japanese fleet secretly sailed toward Pearl Harbor. A few days later, the Japanese admiral got a message. It said: "Climb Mount Nitaka." This was a code meaning, "Attack Pearl Harbor." In Washington, D.C., the Japanese ambassador continued to hold "peace" talks with the U.S.

Blips on a Screen

Japan set the date for the attack—Sunday, December 7, 1941. That Sunday morning, the weather over Pearl Harbor was clear. Two U.S. Army privates were watching their **radar** (device using

radio waves to discover and locate moving objects) screen. This new equipment was supposed to spot planes from far away.

At 7:02 A.M., the men noticed a blip on the screen. This little spot on the radar screen meant that planes were approaching. The soldiers phoned their command post. The only man on duty there was new at his job. He said, "Don't worry." The blips were probably U.S. planes.

At 7:55, the first Japanese planes attacked and dropped their bombs. U.S. warships, lying in anchor along Battleship Row in Pearl Harbor, were easy targets. So were the planes neatly lined up on the airfields. Minutes later a Navy loudspeaker blared, "Air raid, Pearl Harbor. THIS IS NO DRILL."

Not everyone could hear the announcement. A few guessed that it was a Japanese attack. Others thought U.S.

planes were bombing the place by mistake. Still others thought it was a practice drill.

Finally, the men on the ships realized that this was not a drill. The Japanese attacked ferociously. U.S. sailors climbed up ladders, trying to reach their battle stations. On some ships, they found the ammunition boxes locked. On shore there was great confusion, too. Despite the difficulties and complete surprise, many men fought bravely against the attackers.



General Hideki Tojo (1884–1948), Japan's leader, approved the plan to attack Pearl Harbor. This move drew the U.S. into war.

A Base on Fire

By 10 A.M., it ended.

"THIS IS NO DRILL"

The last of the Japanese planes had left. The great U.S. base at Pearl Harbor was a burning wreck. When the smoke cleared, America learned of the devastation of the Japanese attack—2400 people dead and 1200 wounded. Besides inflicting a great

loss of lives, the Japanese had sunk 18 ships, including the six largest ships in the fleet. They had destroyed 188 U.S. planes.

In just two hours, most of the U.S. Pacific fleet had been put out of action. Half the planes in Hawaii had been

Japanese Expansion to 1942



Name at least five Pacific islands that the Japanese occupied in 1942. Now find Manila and estimate its location using the latitude and longitude lines on your map.



destroyed. The Japanese had caught the United States completely off guard.

The next day, President Roosevelt called Congress together and reported the great damage done by the Japanese attack. He asked Congress to declare war on Japan. Within 40 minutes, the voting was over. The United States entered World War II.

These Imperial Marines were part of the powerful military force that Japan had built in just a few years. Japan's goal was to rule all of Asia, and to crush any opposition to its plan.

CHAPTER CHECK

WORD MATCH

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|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. embargo | a. a head of government |
| 2. Pearl Harbor | b. continent Japan wished to rule exclusively |
| 3. Asia | c. where Japan bombed U.S. Navy base in Hawaii |
| 4. premier | d. a ban on commerce and trade |
| 5. radar | e. device using radio waves to discover and locate moving objects |

QUICK QUIZ

1. On what issue did the U.S. and Japan disagree? What was the Japanese goal?
2. What was the importance of Pearl Harbor to the U.S.?

THINK ABOUT IT

1. By 1941, the U.S. had stopped selling scrap iron and oil to the Japanese. Why do you think the U.S. did this?
2. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, there was no declaration of war between the U.S. and Japan. What do you think about one country attacking another by surprise, without a declaration of war?