

AP U.S. History – Pearl Harbor and FDR’s Declaration of War Speech

At 7:53 a.m. on Sunday, December 7, 1941, the first assault wave of Japanese fighter planes attacked the U.S. Naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, taking the Americans completely by surprise.

The first attack wave targeted airfields and battleships. The second wave targeted other ships and shipyard facilities. The air raid lasted until 9:45 a.m. Eight battleships were damaged, with five sunk. Three light cruisers, three destroyers and three smaller vessels were lost along with 188 aircraft. The Japanese lost 27 planes and five midget submarines which attempted to penetrate the inner harbor and launch torpedoes.

Three prime targets; the U.S. Pacific Fleet aircraft carriers, *Lexington*, *Enterprise* and *Saratoga*, were not in the harbor and thus escaped damage.

The casualty list at Pearl Harbor included 2,335 servicemen and 68 civilians killed, and 1,178 wounded. Over a thousand crewmen aboard the *USS Arizona* battleship were killed after a 1,760 pound aerial bomb penetrated the forward magazine causing catastrophic explosions.

News of the "sneak attack" was broadcast to the American public via radio bulletins, with many popular Sunday afternoon entertainment programs being interrupted. The news sent a shockwave across the nation, resulting in a tremendous influx of young volunteers into the U.S. Armed Forces. The attack also united the nation behind President Franklin D. Roosevelt and effectively ended the American isolationist movement.

On Monday, December 8, President Roosevelt appeared before Congress and made this speech asking for a declaration of war against Japan, calling the previous day "...a date which will live in infamy..."

Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, members of the Senate and the House of Representatives:

Yesterday, December 7, 1941 - a date which will live in infamy - the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that nation, and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific.

Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in the American island of Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And, while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost. In addition, American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.

Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya.

Last night Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong.

Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam.

Last night Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands.

Last night the Japanese attacked Wake Island.

And this morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

Japan has therefore undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense, that always will our whole nation remember the character of the onslaught against us.

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people, in their righteous might, will win through to absolute victory.

I believe that I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will make it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us.

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory and our interests are in grave danger.

With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph. So help us God.

I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.

Franklin D. Roosevelt - December 8, 1941