

PEARL HARBOR - Event Summary

On the morning of Sunday December 7th, 1941 the Japanese launched a naval based air attack on the US military naval base at Pearl Harbour, Hawaii. The base was located on the south side of the Hawaiian island of Oahu.

Sunday was regarded as a resting day for the naval personnel based Pearl Harbour which is part of why the Japanese were able to make such a significant launch on the US. The Japanese attacked the base from the air, bombing the site and many of the ships...

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

There are a few conspiracy theories around Pearl Harbour and whether or not the US president of the time, Franklin Roosevelt knew about the attack before it happened and instead of putting measures in place to prevent it allowing it to happen.

1. President Roosevelt let the attack commence despite of having knowledge that it would happen as he wanted to provoke Hitler into declaring war against the U.S. Provoking the Axis powers was the only way that the US could enter the war as all other members of the congress had declined US entry into the war. [1] If the president had also gone past the congress he would be breaking his oath he took assuring the American public that he in no way was America would enter the war unless directly attacked. The US were already [2] supplying weapons to the Allied forces and the US also had frozen its assets, aspects which were meant to provoke Germany but these aspects also displayed strength of the US. As [3] Japan was part of the Axis powers after signing the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936, consisting of Germany, Japan and Italy after other countries also joined they were a target to be provoked. By provoking the Japanese to attack the other powers would have also been drawn, into attacking the US especially as they showed weakness. He also let Japan attack first so it would aggravate the general public enough so the government had the support to go to war. [4] This would give Roosevelt more economic and political power in the US. By provoking them and isolating the Japanese politically and also cutting oil supplies the Japanese were aggravated to attack.

- There is evidence that high ranking officers and diplomats in the US were aware of the attack. One of the key pieces of information that gives some evidence of this is the cracking of code "purple" in 1940. This code enabled the US military to intercept important messages of the Japanese diplomatic code including messages sent that would warn the US of the impending attack. This includes a message that was decoded asking for the locations of all the ships and weaponries at Pearl Harbour. This should have sent alarm bells that the Japanese were planning an attack on America which was then shown to President [5] Roosevelt as he was shown all decoded messages. The decoded bomb plot message was [6] then investigated in a later inquiry after the attack with specific evidence being brought up showing the Japanese knowledge of where the ships and weaponries were placed at Pearl Harbour. As the Japanese were approaching Pearl Harbour there is significant evidence that the Japanese broke radio silence enabling nearby ships and military personnel in bases to decode the messages and also to locate their position. This evidence is important in showing that Roosevelt knew about the impending attack.

2. Churchill knew about the attacks and failed to warn the US about the attacks because the Allies needed the Americans to join the war as they were struggling at the time under the pressure of the Axis powers. With limited weapons, supplies and a depleting army the Allies needed full support from one of the most powerful countries in the world if they had any chance in overcoming Hitler.

There is some evidence that the British had also broken down Japanese military codes and decrypted them as the US had done though [7] failed to tell the US of what they perceived as an impending attack. This enabled them into 'tricking' the US into joining the war which in turn would lead the British into defeating Hitler...

SIGNIFICANCE TO NEW ZEALAND

Pearl Harbour was significant to New Zealand as it brought the Americans into the war against Japan, eventually halting the Japanese before they reached New Zealand. As New Zealand is such an isolated country and due to having the bulk of our armed forces fighting in Europe we would not have been able to defend ourselves without the US which would have led to a greater loss in lives.

Also in comparison to countries which had a heavy military influence like Japan New Zealand was unprepared and insignificant. Also due to a reasonably large supply of untouched natural resources, which Japan needed after trade embargos from the U.S. New Zealand would be a strong target. By Japan attacking Pearl Harbour and inducing America's involvement in the war it gave New Zealand some protection as we were aware that [8] we would be incapable of defending ourselves for an extended period of time let alone the colonies in the pacific further north.

Also with the US entrance into the war a greater quantity of resources was brought into the war shortening the war. This led to more saved lives than if they had stayed in isolation. New Zealand suffered a particularly high rate of death in the war in comparison to the population at the time. The joint participation and stationing of American soldier's fighting in the pacific [9] here strengthened the political ties with America. This has led to the further development of the economy today opening new ties with the country. It has also meant the heavy reliance on the American economy for stability. It also enabled New Zealand to space itself from the 'mother country', England giving us more freedom and independence. This was emphasised [10] further by the influence that the American soldiers had on the New Zealand women with approximately 1500 marriages between American soldiers and NZ women. Some of these [11] relationships caused tensions in NZ men towards the US troops leading in some cases to violence. This has also meant, because of this, that other influential historical events that may have otherwise been insignificant have taken great importance in our lives. This however has also lead to New Zealand's heavy reliance on the US.

If they had known about the attack in advance and had taken action to prevent it the US may not have fully entered the war. This may have led to the different outcome in the European war or a longer conflict resulting in a higher casualty rate. For New Zealand this would have meant that our forces would have suffered higher casualties. Approximately 150,000 New Zealanders served in war with about 11,900 dying.