

## 4. Destruction and Heroics



"Dorie" Miller

As Japanese planes filled the sky over Pearl Harbor, airfields came under relentless attack. Of the 126 U.S. planes on the ground at Wheeler Field, just 43 were left fit for service. The U.S. only managed to launch 6 planes to repel the first wave of assault.

At the same time, massive action was directed against the U.S. fleet. A 1,800-pound bomb smashed into the USS Arizona causing an enormous explosion. The ship sank with more than 1,000 men trapped inside. The USS West Virginia, riddled with bombs and torpedoes, settled on the bottom of the harbor. The USS Oklahoma received four torpedoes and rolled completely over trapping 400 sailors. The onslaught continued until every battleship in Pearl Harbor had sustained significant damage.

Clark Simmons remembers the heroism of Cook Third Class Doris "Dorie" Miller, who was awarded the Navy Cross for his actions:

*"Dorie Miller was on the West Virginia. And when [it] was hit, the captain and executive officer were on the bridge and they both were injured. So, Dorie Miller went up and physically picked up the captain and brought him down to the first aid station. And then he went back and manned a .50-caliber machine gun, which he had not been trained on...the citations say he shot down three Japanese planes. You have to understand that when Franklin Delano Roosevelt...opened up the Navy to blacks, but in one area only - they were called mess attendants, stewards and cooks. And Dorie Miller, with all his abilities, with all the things he could do, the Navy was structured that if you were black, you only could be a servant."*

Madelyn Knapp Blonskey, a member of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps, recalled the morning of December 7<sup>th</sup>:

*"As I stepped out of the nurses' quarters...I smelled the odor of sulfur and burning oil. I heard buzzing above me. There were about 20 very small planes, flying low, almost touching the treetops. I hurried towards the hospital...There were about 15 to 20 stretchers with injured men lying on them. There were more bloody wounds - caused by shrapnel - than I had ever seen in my life. Nurses gave the wounded morphine, a drug that eased pain. Too much morphine would be harmful. So, to show that a man had been given morphine, a nurse put a [lipstick] M on his forehead. Caring of the wounded and dying went on for days. Schools were made into temporary emergency rooms. We were not prepared for the many hundreds of casualties. But we did the best we could with what we had to work with. There was no shortage of blood. Civilians, soldiers, sailors, and marines appeared day and night to give blood."*



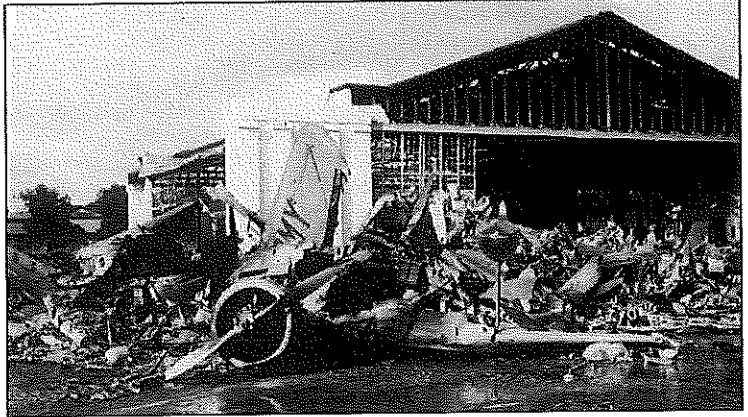
Explosions at a Pearl Harbor airfield

Source: National Geographic Society. "Remembering Pearl Harbor." *National Geographic Society*, 13 Nov. 2018, [www.nationalgeographic.org/interactive/remembering-pearl-harbor/](http://www.nationalgeographic.org/interactive/remembering-pearl-harbor/).

## 5. Impact of the Attack

The Japanese attack destroyed nearly 20 American ships, more than 300 airplanes, and killed 2,403 sailors, soldiers, and civilians. In contrast, the Japanese only lost 30 to 60 planes, five midget submarines, and fewer than 100 men.

While the attack inflicted significant destruction, the Japanese did not achieve their ultimate goal of destroying the U.S. Pacific fleet. The attack failed to destroy the base's most vital onshore facilities – oil storage depots, repair shops, shipyards and submarine docks. As a result, the U.S. Navy was able to rebound relatively quickly. Even more significantly, no American aircraft carriers – the most important naval vessels – were at Pearl Harbor that day.

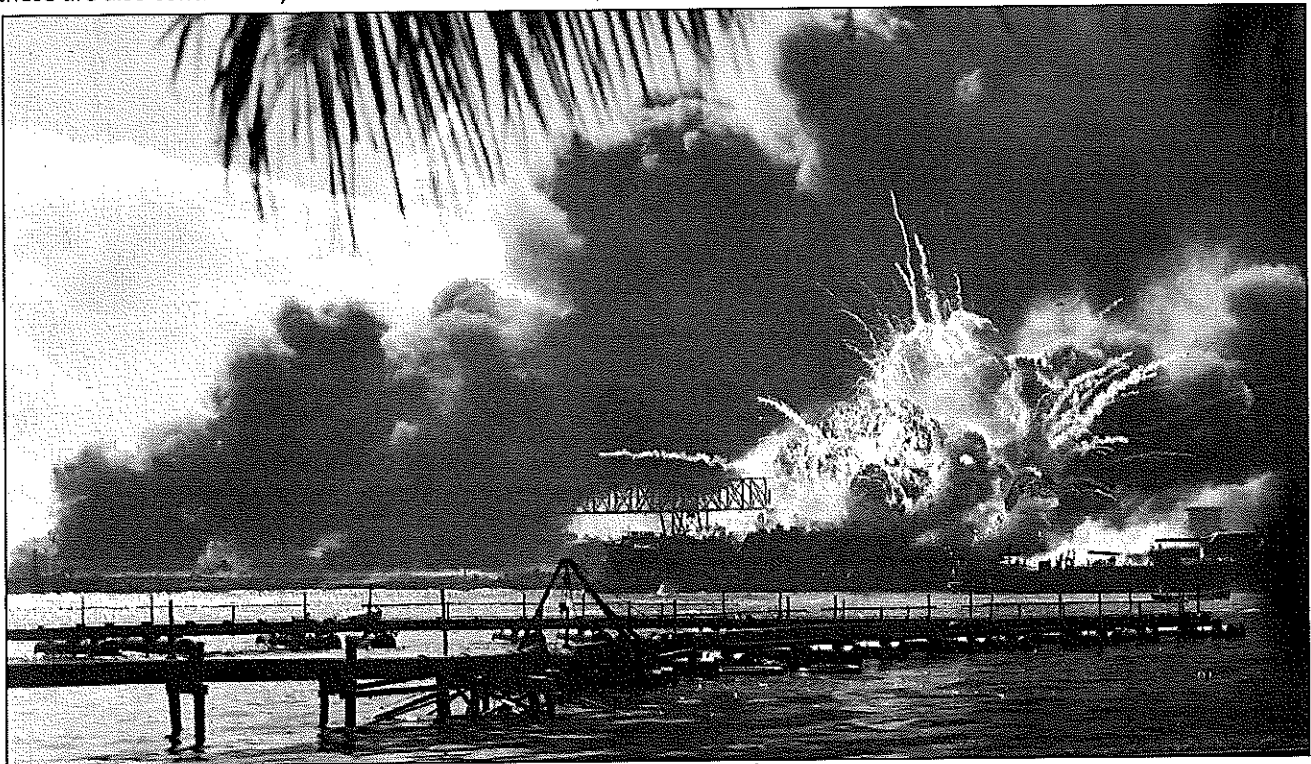


Destruction on Wheeler Air Field

The following is a Japanese announcement released to citizens about the attack at Pearl Harbor, 1941:

*“What an uproar! Japan’s Imperial Forces got things off to a quick start with one splendid strike then another in historic surprise attacks on Pearl Harbor, where the bravado of the US Asia fleet met with sudden defeat...Word has it that Roosevelt and Churchill were shaken up and went pale upon hearing of the defeats...Our barbaric enemies are already cowering in fear in the Pacific...The military gains of the glorious Imperial Forces are truly great, and the army, navy, and air force should be given our heartfelt gratitude. We should also honor our courageous men who are ready to lay down their lives when charging enemy lines, as well as those who went out to conquer but never returned..”*

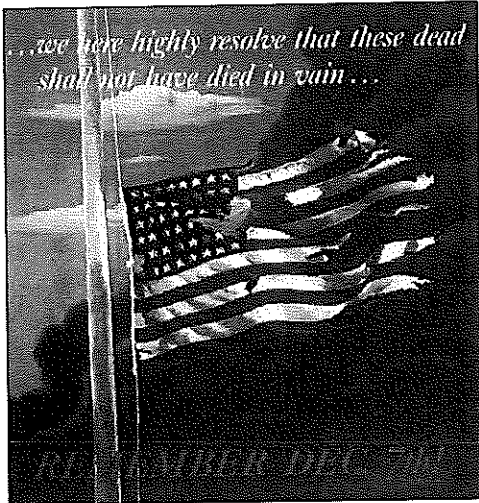
*...The Hawaii air attack units, in addition to annihilating the enemy fleets, also carried out a simultaneous raid of all military bases, including Hickam Field, Wheeler Army Airfield, and Ford Island’s naval airfield (located inside the Pearl Harbor naval port), all of which secured the port. By swooping down on nearby enemy planes lying in wait on the ground or using artillery or bombs to decimate and destroy enemy forces, Japanese forces caused hangars to go up in flames and shot down enemy planes that boldly accepted their challenge. The first stage of bombing quickly caused the Wheeler Airfield to go up in a blaze, with explosions that sent the hangars up in flames beneath the black smoke. On the airfield, several enemy planes are lined up in an orderly fashion, and these are also continuously assaulted and annihilated by the second-stage naval fighters’ artillery strikes and bombing.”*



Explosion of the USS Shaw

Source: Trenholm, Sandra. “The Gilder Lehrman Institute.” *Japanese Announcement of the Attack at Pearl Harbor, 1941* | Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, [www.gilderlehrman.org/content/japanese-announcement-attack-pearl-harbor-1941](http://www.gilderlehrman.org/content/japanese-announcement-attack-pearl-harbor-1941).

## 6. America Responds



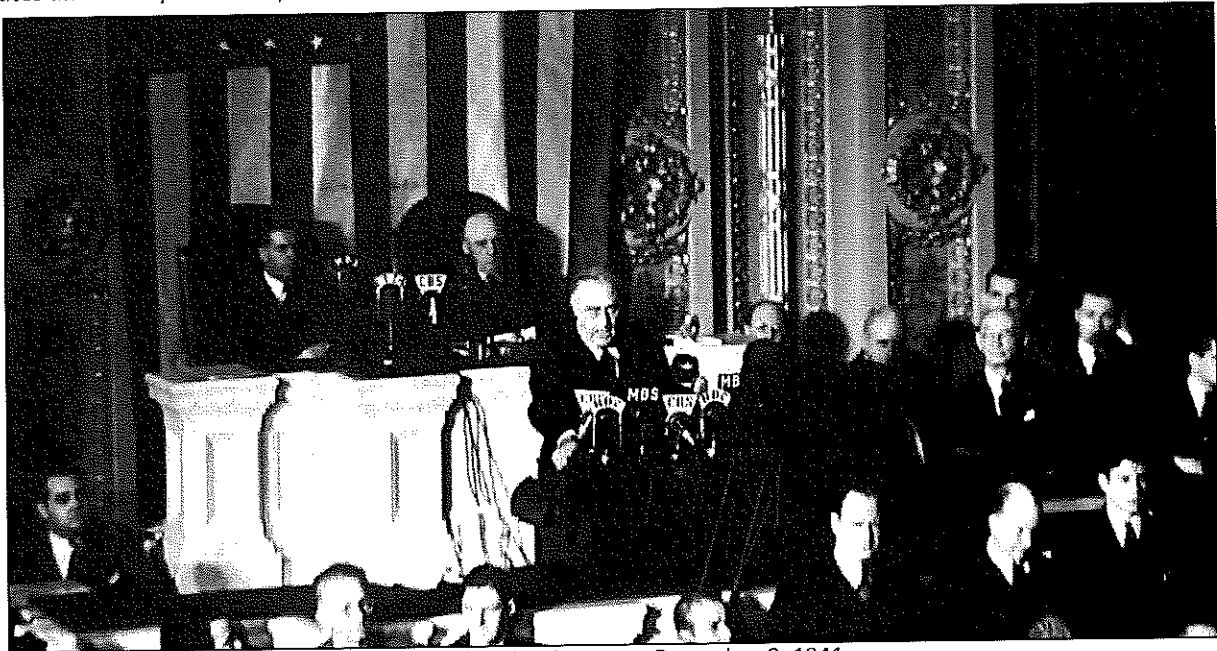
U.S. Propoganda Poster

Across the nation, Americans were stunned, shocked and angered. The Japanese surprise attack turned U.S. public opinion in favor of entering the Second World War. On December 8, President Roosevelt addressed a joint session of Congress, his speech broadcast to the nation by radio. In his address, Roosevelt asked Congress to declare war against Japan, which it did that day. Three days later, Japan's allies - Germany and Italy - declared war on the United States. The United States was immersed in a war it would conduct simultaneously in Europe and the Pacific.

Following the Pearl Harbor attack, and for the first time during years of discussion and debate, the American people were united in their determination to go to war. Japan had wanted to destroy the U.S. Pacific fleet, rendering America unable to fight; instead, they pushed their adversary into a global conflict that ultimately resulted in Japan's first occupation by a foreign power.

Franklin Roosevelt's speech, asking Congress to declare war, December 8, 1941:

*"Yesterday, December 7th, 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...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. Japan has...undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves...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...I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7th, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese empire."*



FDR addressing Congress, December 8, 1941

Source: Chan, Melissa. "Franklin Roosevelt Infamy Speech." *Time*, Time, 7 Dec. 2016, [time.com/franklin-roosevelt-infamy-speech-attack/](http://time.com/franklin-roosevelt-infamy-speech-attack/).

**H.S. American History Week 1 March 30-April 3, 2020**

**Answer the questions related to each reading by following the titles.**

**“4. Destruction and Heroics”**

A. What happened to the USS Arizona?

B. What did Dorie Miller do to receive the Navy Cross?

C. What did nurses do to show men had received morphine? Why was there no shortage of blood for victims?

**“5. Impact of the Attack”**

A. How many ships and planes were destroyed by Japan? How many individuals were killed as a result of the attack?

B. Why did the Japanese not achieve their goal of destroying the U.S. Pacific fleet?

C. Do you believe the Japanese announcement is accurate? Why?

**“6. America Responds”**

A. How did the attack on Pearl Harbor effect public opinion?

B. What occurred three days after the U.S. declared war on Japan?

C. According to Roosevelt, how did Japan deceive America?