

**This Month
In Military
History**

ASC HISTORY Newsletter

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- **1636** – The National Guard was officially created in 1916; however, the heritage of the National Guard can be traced back to English common law and the citizen militias of the British North American colonies
- **1800** – Washington D.C. established as the capital of the U.S.
- **1804:** Treaty ceding huge section of Midwest, including Arsenal Island, to U.S. is signed.
- **1947** – The Corps' first helicopter squadron, HMX-1, was commissioned at Quantico.
- **1954** – The Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty, between the United States and Taiwan
- **1959** – Twelve nations, including the United States and the Soviet Union, sign the Antarctica Treaty, which bans military activity and weapons testing.
- **1992:** Bush orders U.S. troops to Somalia

Remember Pearl Harbor

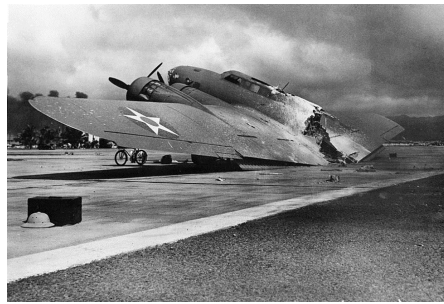
On 7 December 1941 the Japanese Navy launched a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. Because of that attack, the United States finally entered WWII as a belligerent, eventually destroying the Japanese military and assisting in the destruction of the German and Italian fascist states. Most history lessons about Pearl Harbor focus on the horrific losses suffered by the US Navy. However, the Army's experiences at Pearl Harbor offer lessons for today's Army as well.

One well known incident in the attack at Pearl Harbor, replayed in many movies, was that radar operators picked up the approach of Japanese scout aircraft about an hour before the main attack. Those 3 radar sets were manned by the Army. The soldiers on duty reported the incoming aircraft and the officer in charge conferred with his Navy counterparts. Unfortunately, both the Army and the Navy were expecting incoming friendly aircraft-- the Navy from scouts returning and the Army from B-17s scheduled to arrive from California-- and all early warning was lost. In addition to targeting the Navy's warships anchored in Pearl Harbor, the Japanese had two other major targets- the Army Air Corps planes and Hickam and Wheeler Fields.

While most of the first wave of aircraft was attacking Battleship Row, other dive bombers and attack craft hit Hickam and Wheeler Fields. The attacks continued in the second wave. Hickam housed the Army bombers in Hawaii. The Japanese destroyed or damaged beyond combat use over

half the aircraft at Hickam to include 8 of 12 B-17s, 7 of 12 A-20s and 22 of 33 B-18s. An additional 4 B-17s were destroyed or damaged while landing as they arrived from the US just as the attack started. These were in the flight that confused the radar operators.

At Wheeler Airfield, Army pursuit aircraft were attacked, which resulted in the destruction or serious damage of 62 of 87 P40B Kittyhawks, 10 of 12 P-40C Tomahawks, and 23 of 39 P-36 Mohawks.



Of the 223 Army bombers and pursuit aircraft engaged at Pearl Harbor, only 77 were combat ready the next day and 14 of these were the completely obsolete P-26 Peashooter. Part of the reason aircraft losses were so high is that the Army had parked them wingtip to wingtip in response to sabotage threats. A total of 8 pursuit aircraft were able to launch during the attack and are credited with shooting down at least 10 Japanese aircraft. In addition to aircraft losses, the Army took heavy personnel losses as Japanese bombs hit the barracks areas around Hickam. 228 soldier-airmen were killed and another 468 were wounded.

In large part, the Army was unready because Army units had failed to anticipate an air attack. The War Department had sent out a warning in late November, but specifically warned against subversion and sabotage. The Army in Hawaii did not prepare for more than those possibilities. This is what led to the aircraft being packed so closely together as fewer guards were needed to observe all the aviation assets. In addition to not going further than preparing against sabotage, Army leadership failed to fully coordinate with the Navy leadership at Pearl Harbor. The Navy prepared for an attack from the Japanese Navy as well as subversion, but both services failed to envision an air attack.

It is easy to criticize the actions taken in Hawaii prior to 7 December 1941. Hindsight shows us many things that should have been done differently. What does not change in hindsight is the loss of 228 soldier-airmen on that day and the huge cost the Army and Nation paid to restore order in the world from then until September 1945.

Remember Pearl Harbor!



Holiday Celebrations at the Arsenal

During this time of year there is a distinct feeling of camaraderie and a sense of unity leading toward celebration. While many want to celebrate with family and close friends and most offices celebrate among themselves, the Rock Island Arsenal has at times provided an opportunity to share in these festivities.

Since at least 1945 the Arsenal has often had a Holiday social event of some type. Invitations were originally printed in the local Island paper, The Target. The first party in 1945 was proposed to promote the participation of arsenal families. This was done by offering it at no cost to the families, being open to both military

and civilian workers. A complementary lunch was provided. Entertainment for the evening included a plethora of options for both the children and the adults. Films were shown, carols were sung, and each child was provided with presents and pastries.

Since 1945 there have been celebrations each holiday season. The pomp that accompanied the first party has petered off, although as late as a few years ago the event always included a band and dancing. Over time the free aspects faded and employees had to pay for the event. Each year there is a tree lighting ceremony where employees and family can join together.

While the Island-wide holiday event started in 1945, since the Arsenal was created the Soldiers living here have been the recipients of a splendid Holiday Feast.

The History Offices wishes you the best this holiday season.



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(Due to OPTEMPO this month's TP is a complete rerun. More new stories in January!)

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