

PACIFIC 1939-1945: PEARL HARBOR

**WHY WAS THE USA SO UNPREPARED FOR THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR
IN 1941?**

Extract from an interview with a Japanese officer at Pearl Harbor

Catalogue ref: AIR 20/605

TRANSCRIPT

Q. Were you a pilot or an observer during the PEARL HARBOR attack?

A. I was an observer.

Q. How many aircraft used in the attack?

A. A total of 350.

Q. What types were employed?

A. In the first wave:	50 High Level	KATES
	40 UTB	KATES
	50 Dive Bombers	VALS
	50 VF	ZEKES

In the second wave:	50 High Level	KATES
	80 Dive Bombers	VALS
	40 VF	ZEKES

Q. How many aircraft were lost. (Failed to return to their carriers)?

A. 29 in all. 9 VF in the first wave and 15 dive bombers and 5 VTB in the second wave.

Q. Which units of the fleet participated in the PEARL HARBOR attack?

A. BBs	KIYE, KIRISHIMA
CVs	AKAGI, KAGA, SORYU, HIRYU, SHOKAKU, ZUIKAKU.
CAs	TONE CHIKUMA.
CL	NAGARA.
DDs	20 (large type).

Q. How many Air Craft were employed as CAP over the Pearl Harbor attack force?

A. 50 VF from CVs plus 12 float planes from the BBs, CAs and CL.

Q. Were they in addition to the 350 planes used in the actual attack at PEARL HARBOR?

A. Yes.

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What is this source?

This source is an extract from an interview with Captain Mitsuo Fuchida of the Japanese navy that took place after the war had ended.

After Japan surrendered in September 1945 intelligence officers went through Japanese records and interviewed Japanese officers about key events in the war to see what lessons they could learn.

What's the background to this source?

WW2 broke out in Europe in 1939. The USA was neutral in the early stages of the war although it was clear that US President Roosevelt was no friend of Nazi Germany or its ally Japan. In Japan, hard line military commanders had become increasingly powerful during the 1930s. Japan had built up an empire in Asia and these leaders wanted Japan to become Asia's leading power. They knew that the USA would stand in their way and that war with America would happen some time. They decided to try and knock out the US fleet in the Pacific. The plan was to buy time to build up their resources in the Pacific so that Japan would be ready to take on the USA once it recovered from the attack at Pearl Harbor.

By 1941 Japan was a dominating force in Asia. It invaded Manchuria in North East China in 1931 and then moved deeper into the country in 1937. By July 1941, Japan had flooded French Indochina (now Vietnam) with troops. It intended to use these territories as a platform to take control of British territories like Malaya and Singapore, the Dutch East Indies and the US dominated Philippines. After Pearl Harbor this plan worked very effectively. At one point it seemed that even Australia might be under threat from invasion.

PACIFIC 1939–1945: PEARL HARBOR**It's worth knowing that...**

By the time the war ended Fuchida was a senior officer in the Japanese navy. He led Japanese attacks on Darwin (Australia) and also Sri Lanka. By 1944 he was a staff officer, helping to plan strategy for the whole Japanese navy.

Fuchida was also interviewed about the Japanese use of Kamikaze (suicide) attacks later in the war. Kamikaze pilots flew aircraft loaded with explosives and crashed them into enemy ships.

How will you use this source?

1. Does this source suggest the attack on Pearl Harbor was well planned?
2. Would you regard this source as a reliable source of information about the Japanese attack?
3. Could any parts of this source be used as evidence in your report on the key question?

Use this table to help plan your report.