

Because the clouds have cleared on Sunday morning - December 7, 1941 - every pilot has an unobstructed view as hundreds of Japanese airplanes approach Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

With strike-force orders from the high command, and detailed information supplied by Takeo Yoshikawa (a Japanese spy at Pearl), pilots know their individual targets. In 110 minutes, the U.S. Pacific Fleet will be horrendously crippled.

Some of the ships - like the USS *Arizona* (BB 39) which had served the country for many years - will become graves.

At 7:53 a.m., Mitsuo Fuchida - the attack leader - cannot believe his eyes. He sees no evidence that anyone expects an attack.

Fuchida, and the men he is leading, effectively face no American resistance on the first wave of their assault. Even before his men drop their bombs and fire their torpedoes, he ecstatically transmits a message of "success without resistance" to the waiting Japanese fleet:

To ra! To ra! To ra!

Wanting to disable American planes before attacking the ships, Japanese pilots are astonished at another unexpected gift. As a security precaution against sabotage, U.S. pilots had been ordered to keep their planes close together and in the open. They are now easy targets for attackers.

As Japanese carrier bombers (called "Vals" by the Allies), carrier attack planes (called "Kate"), torpedo bombers and Zeros swoop over Pearl Harbor and Hickam Field, U.S. air power on the ground is decimated. Fortunately for America, all of Pearl's aircraft carriers are away at sea.

Battleships, lined up without torpedo nets alongside Ford Island, are also easy targets for Japanese pilots. Within minutes, fire and smoke fill the sky. America's mighty ships are becoming jumbled pieces of wreckage.

At 7:58 a.m., Lt. Commander Logan Ramsey dispatches an urgent message:

Air Raid on Pearl Harbor. This is not Drill.

The *Arizona*, and most of her crew, have only minutes to live. The ship will burn for three days.

Because the surprise attack is so effective, American resistance doesn't really begin until the second wave of the attack.

See, also:

[Universal Newsreel regarding Pearl Harbor attack.](#)

Credits:

Clip from *WW II Combat Chronicles*, Disc 1 - "Attack and Counterattack (1941-1943)."

Compiled historical footage and recreated scenes in the *Reader's Digest Classic Collection - World War II Combat Chronicles*, online courtesy the [Discovery Channel](#).

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Pearl-Harbor-December-7-1941>

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