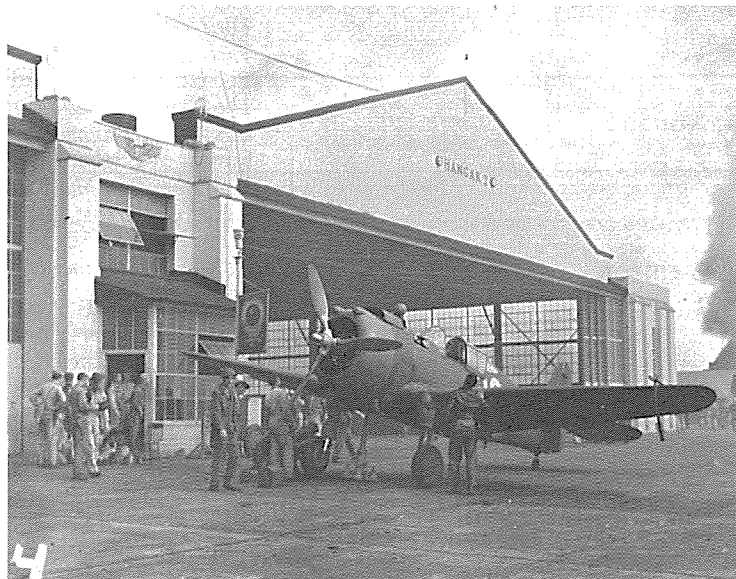
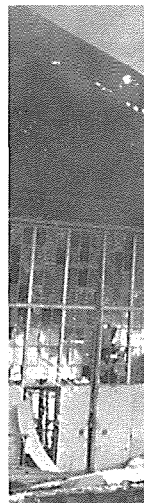
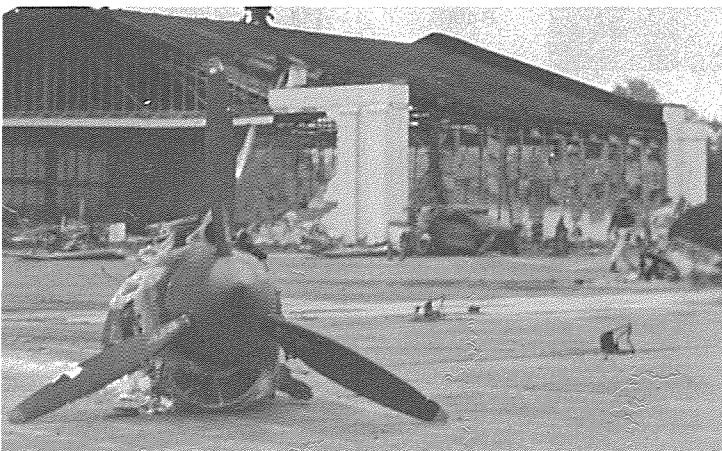




Wheeler Field, T. H.
afternoon of Dec. 7, 1941

From the files of the AAHS and the U.S. Army Signal Corps comes this striking photo-essay of the destruction of U.S. Army fighter strength at Pearl Harbor.

'REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR'



By JAMES H. FARMER
AND
BRUCE PRUETT

On the 18th of December 1941, by Executive Order of the President, Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts was appointed to head a commission "to ascertain and report the facts relating to the attack made by Japanese armed forces upon the Territory of Hawaii, on December 7, 1941." Among the 18 massive volumes which make up the Proceedings of the Roberts Commission the discerning Army Air Corps historian will indeed be delighted with the utter thoroughness with which this honored body took to their task. Of particular interest are all but unpublished quantitative reports of the Air Corps defense posture in the Islands prior to and immediately following the attack. These kinds of 'numbers' give the historian and reader alike the clearest kind of analytical picture of what actually transpired that Sunday morning—unbiased statistical evidence of the results of our ill-timed national complacency.

U.S. Army air strength on the island of Oahu that infamous December weekend in 1941 totaled a numerically respectable 231 aircraft. Fifty-seven of this number were bombers assigned to the 18th Bombardment Wing headquartered at Hickam Field. An additional 22 attack and observation aircraft of various types also contributed to the total. With the balance, however, the 152 fighters of the 14th Pursuit Wing headquartered at Wheeler Field, rested the first line of air defense for what was then America's greatest military bastion in the Pacific.

The facts of the 14th's fighter strength that momentous morning have been well chronicled. Of the 152 aircraft assigned to the 14th only 99 of those, 87 P-40B's and 12 P-40C's, could be considered as "modern equipment." The balance, 39 P-36A Mohawks and 14 antiquated P-26 Peashooters, would be of virtually no use against the Japanese's vastly superior Zeke 21 fighter.

Army fighter strength on Oahu was divided amongst the 15th and 18th Pursuit Groups based, for the most part, at Wheeler Field. Of the 18th Group's five newly equipped P-40 squadrons, the 6th, 19th, 44th, 73rd, and 78th, only the 44th P.S. would not be caught on the ground at Wheeler. The 44th had only recently been assigned to nearby Bellows Field with the 86th O.S., an O-47 unit, on temporary duty for gunnery training.

The 15th Pursuit Group was composed of a more varied mixture of fighter types including the vintage P-26 and P-36A as well as many of the newer P-40 Tomahawks. Except for a small detachment of P-40's from the 47th P.S. assigned to the small emergency field at Haleiwa all of the 15th Group's three pursuit squadrons, the 45th, 46th, and 47th, would also be found neatly aligned at Wheeler awaiting their destruction.

Records of gallantry and self-sacrifice in the face of overwhelming odds that December morning are indeed long and well deserved. Real evidence, however, of any measurable success in the aerial defense of Oahu during those few tragic hours is, to be sure, limited. Without question the most successful American airmen on the island that morning were Lieutenants George S. Welch and Kenneth A. Taylor of the 47th P.S. who had succeeded in getting their two Tomahawk fighters airborne at Haleiwa within 20 minutes of the initial attack. They would each account for four Japanese attackers before the morning was over.

Pilots of the 44th P.S., temporarily assigned to Bellows Field, were much less fortunate as three of their P-40's were destroyed on takeoff there shortly before 9:00 A.M. Hawaiian time. A similar fate earlier befell other 18th Pursuit Group P-40's attempting to take off at Wheeler.

A bit later, however, around 9:15 A. M., six Wheeler-based P-36A's of the 46th P.S. did manage to make it into the air. Two of these Mohawk pilots, Lieutenants Sanders and Rasmussen, would each be credited with a "kill" on this initial sortie. Lieutenants Thacker and Moore damaged another two Zeke 21's before the surviving Mohawks withdrew to the relative safety of Haleiwa.

Between 8:30 and 9:30 A.M., Hawaiian time, less than 26 sorties were credited to U.S. Army fighters on Oahu. It was, to be sure, a pitifully small response to the some 353 Japanese fighters



(Above & below) Wheeler Field, T. H.



(Below) OA-9, Wheeler Field, T. H.



A 44th Pursuit Squadron P-40 at Bellows Field, T. H.

and bombers which claimed—quite successfully—the island's air space as their own that morning.

The thoroughness and precision with which Japan's Naval Air Arm dispatched the U.S. Army's 14th Pursuit Wing remains, for the record, part of one of the greatest military triumphs of recent recorded history. However, despite these recent facts of history few in this rapidly changing age of ours, save perhaps those who actually lived through the attack, can fully recall the utter physical and emotional devastation this attack wreaked upon our collective slumbering American consciences.

A small part of the consequences of this national indifference is vividly displayed on these four pages. Most of these rarely seen U.S. Army Signal Corps photographs of the destruction at Wheeler and Bellows Fields were taken within a few hours of the last attack. A valuable historical record in and of themselves, they offer the human and emotional toll no analyst could ever document. The frightful eloquence of these scenes and their timeless implications require no further amplification on our part.

The following tables are from Volume 3 of the Proceedings of the Roberts Commission, pages 1763, 1764, 1765, 2020, and 2021 respectively.

TABLE A

The following is the individual aircraft assignment, by squadron, at Wheeler Field, T.H. as of 0745, 7 December 1941.

Type	A.C. No.	Assgd. Sq. #
P-40C	41-13329	19
	41-13330	19
	41-13336	19
	41-13328	41
	41-13331	41
	41-13332	41
	41-13337	41
	41-13310	41
	41-13314	41
	41-13357	41
	41-13349	47
	41-13366	47
	41-13331	5
P-40B	41-5211	6
	41-5212	6
	41-5213	6
	41-5214	6
	41-5215	6
	41-5217	6
	41-5219	6
	41-5220	6
	41-5221	6
	41-5222	6
	41-5223	6
	41-5224	6
	41-5225	6
	41-5232	6
	41-5291	6
	41-5299	6
	41-5216	19
	41-5218	19
	41-5227	19
	41-5231	19
	41-5241	19
	41-5245	19
	41-5247	19
	41-5294	19
	41-5295	19
	41-5301	19
	41-5304	19
	41-13303	19
	41-13367	19
	41-13308	19
	41-13310	19
	41-5206	44
	41-5207	44
	41-5208	44
	41-5209	44
	41-13315	44
	41-13319	44
	41-13320	44
	41-13322	44

Type	A.C. No.	Assgd. Sq. #	Type	A.C. No.	Assgd. Sq. #	Type	A.C. No.	Assgd. Sq. #
P-40B	41-13323	44		41-13311	47		38-90	46
	41-5239	78		41-13316	47		38-92	46
	41-5243	78		41-13318	47		38-93	46
	41-5244	78		41-13317	47		38-98	46
	41-5246	78		41-13324	47		38-111	46
	41-5248	78		41-13325	47		38-125	46
	41-5249	78		41-13326	47		38-128	47
	41-5250	78	P-36A	38-27	45		38-160	47
	41-5251	78		38-36	Hq 15 PG		38-161	45
	41-5252	78		38-55	46		38-176	45
	41-5253	78		38-108	S	P-26A	33-88	17A B
	41-5254	78		38-133	45		33-34	44
	41-5257	78		38-149	45		33-37	78
	41-13302	78		38-78	45		33-39	78
	41-13305	78		38-11	46		33-68	41
	41-13312	78		38-15	S		33-80	78
	41-13321	78		38-21	46		33-85	46
	41-5226	73		38-22	45		33-86	6
	41-5228	73		38-31	45	P-26B	33-180	6
	41-5229	73		38-45	45		33-182	73
	41-5230	73		38-59	Hq 15 PG-S		33-183	47
	41-5231	73		38-63	45		33-184	44
	41-5233	73		38-70	S		33-192	44
	41-5235	73		38-124	46		33-203	47
	41-5236	73		38-167	45	B-18	36-325	17A B
	41-5237	73		38-102	45	B-12	33-258	45
	41-5242	73		38-110	45		33-266	47
	41-13297	73		38-2	45		33-267	45
	41-13299	73		38-32	46	AT-6	40-2097	Hq 18PG
	41-13300	73		38-57	46		40-2099	Hq 18PG
	41-13301	47		38-76	46		40-2100	Hq 15PG
	41-5293	47		38-82	46		40-2101	Hq 15PG
	41-5298	45		38-83	S	OA-9	38-558	Hq 18PG
	41-5210	47		38-86	46		38-569	Hq 15PG
	41-5286	45		38-109	46		38-575	Hq 18PG
	41-13305	46		38-118	46	O-47B	39-85	17A B
	41-13306	46		38-121	46	A-12A	33-229	46
	41-5239	46		38-169	46		33-256	17A B
	41-5255	46		38-171	46	OA-8	37-370	17A B
	41-5303	46		38-145	46	BT-2BI	31-79	45-S
	41-13313	47		38-73	45		31-112	46-S

TABLE B

The following airplanes were on hand after the raid:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| (1) B-17D's-8 | (8) P-26B's-5 |
| (2) B-18's-21 | (9) B-12A's-3 |
| (3) A-20A's-10 | (10) A-12A's-2 |
| (4) P-40C's-7 | (11) AT-6's-3 |
| (5) P-40B's-50 | (12) OA-9's-1 |
| (6) P-36A's-35 | (13) OA-8's-1 |
| (7) P-26A's-3 | (14) O-47B's-7 |
| | (15) O-49's-1 |

TABLE C

The following airplanes were usable after the raid:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| (1) B-17D's-4 | (8) P-26B's-2 |
| (2) B-18's-11 | (9) B-12A's-1 |
| (3) A-20A's-5 | (10) A-12A's-1 |
| (4) P-40C's-2 | (11) AT-6's-2 |
| (5) P-40B's-25 | (12) OA-9's-1 |
| (6) P-36's-16 | (13) OA-8's-1 |
| (7) P-26A's-2 | (14) O-47B's-5 |
| | (15) O-49's-1 |

TABLE D

The following airplanes took to the air at the times indicated:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| 0830-4 P-40's | 1127-4 A-20A's |
| 0830-2 P-36A's | 1140-2 B-17D's |
| 0855-2 P-40's | 1200-5 P-40's |
| 0915-6 P-36A's | 1300-3 A-20A's |
| 0930-5 P-40's | 1330-2 B-18's |
| 0930-6 P-36A's | 1500-11 P-40's |
| 0950-1 O-47B | 1500-3 O-47B's |
| 1040-3 O-47B's | 1520-3 B-17D's |

Remains of the 14th Pursuit Wing at Wheeler Field, T. H., are bulldozed into a pile near Hangar 3 for early disposal. The wreckage includes remains of a Grumman OA-9, several P-40's and P-26 "Peashooters".

