

Presidential Documents

Proclamation 7156 of December 4, 1998

National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Fifty-seven years ago, at 7:55 on Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, Imperial Japan launched a surprise attack on American forces at Pearl Harbor, thrusting the United States into the crucible of World War II. From the vantage point of history, we now know that the events of that day would transform our Nation and the course of world history.

Attacking in two waves, Japanese aircraft killed or wounded almost 3,600 Americans—over 1,000 of them aboard the battleship ARIZONA—sank or badly damaged most of our Pacific Fleet, and destroyed or damaged almost all U.S. aircraft in the area. In his historic speech to the Congress on the following day, President Franklin Roosevelt requested and the Congress approved a declaration of war against Japan. With characteristic optimism and confidence in the spirit of the American people, he predicted that “No matter how long it may take us . . . the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.”

President Roosevelt proved to be right, although he would not live to see the ultimate triumph of freedom. After almost 4 long years of struggle and sacrifice by the men and women of our Armed Forces, sustained by the prayers of their families and the efforts of determined working men and women throughout our land who built our Nation into the “Arsenal of Democracy,” the United States and our allies prevailed over the forces of fascism and oppression.

To understand and appreciate the magnitude of our victory in World War II, we have only to remember Pearl Harbor. We have only to remember the indomitable spirit of the American forces there who, despite the death and destruction engulfing them, individually and collectively responded with courage and selflessness. We remember the sailors who raced to their battle stations and opened fire on the attacking Japanese planes even as their ships were ablaze and sinking. We remember the small, valiant band of Army pilots who managed to take off during the second wave of bombing and, though hopelessly outnumbered, shot down several enemy aircraft. We remember the crew of the crippled OKLAHOMA cheering their comrades on the NEVADA as she made a desperate dash down the harbor channel to safety. These heroes of Pearl Harbor were an inspiration to our entire country—and they remain so today. It is fitting that each year, on this day, we remember them and give thanks for their courage, their sacrifice, and their refusal to be defeated. Because of them, and the millions of other Americans like them who have served our Nation in uniform, America is free, strong, and at peace.

To pay tribute to these heroes and to honor our solemn obligation to those who sacrificed their lives to defend our freedom that fateful Sunday morning, the Congress, by Public Law 103–308, has designated December 7, 1998, as “National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day.”

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 7, 1998, as National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. I urge all Americans to observe this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities in honor of the Americans who served

at Pearl Harbor. I also ask all Federal departments and agencies, organizations, and individuals to fly the flag of the United States at half-staff on this day in honor of those Americans who died as a result of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fourth day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William J. Clinton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "W" and "C".

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