

What's the Purpose?

FDR's Pearl Harbor Speech

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese aircraft and naval ships attacked the U.S. military at Pearl Harbor on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. Over 2,400 people were killed and the U.S. lost a large number of ships and aircraft. The next day, President Franklin Roosevelt addressed a Joint Session of Congress, which was broadcast to the American people. The text on the right is the beginning of his speech.

Yesterday, December 7, 1941 - a date which will live in infamy - the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its Government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to the Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. While this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

Determine the Purpose

From reading the passage, what do you think was the purpose of President's Roosevelt's speech?

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Correct answers will vary. Possible correct answers may include:

1) Roosevelt is condemning the attack on Pearl Harbor

2) Roosevelt wants to go to war with Japan.

3) Roosevelt wants Congress and the American people to understand that the attack was planned in advance and was a surprise.