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A POLICE DEPARTMENT UNDER FIRE

W. A. Gabrielson†

At 7:53 a.m. Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, a call came in over the switchboard of the Honolulu Police Department which jarred the monotony of the skeleton Sunday staff at the Station into electrified activity. "I'm eating breakfast in the parlor with my family," reported Thomas Fujimoto, who lives in the Damon Tract near Pearl Harbor, "and a bomb just struck my kitchen. They're bombing all Pearl Harbor." A call to the Pearl City Branch of the Police Department, verified the fantastic report. Instantaneously the Police switchboard was jammed with calls reporting falling bombs with their aftermath of death, fire, and destruction.

Thus began the story of the first aerial bombardment of an American city. America has been at war before, but wars of the past—where the civilians received news of the war by dispatches from a front which was across the ocean—seem pedestrian in contrast with lightning war from the air which soldier and civilian must face side by side.

The story of Honolulu and its Police Department under aerial siege is exciting and worth telling, not as a reminiscence of a past event, but as a recorded illustration of the problems which police departments of other American cities may be required to face and deal with before this total war is over. It is hoped that the reading of this record may be of value to other police departments in organizing themselves for maximum service and efficiency, and may help them to strengthen in advance what appear as weak links in their chain of defense.

The Police Department of the City and County of Honolulu is the civilian law enforcement agency for the Island of Oahu. Oahu has an area of about 598 square miles and a population of 258,258. During normal, and even during boom times, law enforcement on Oahu is not particularly difficult by mainland standards. Problems arising incident to the presence of large numbers of sailors and soldiers come under the jurisdiction of the Shore Patrol and the Military Police, respectively. Oahu has no organized gangs and few first degree murders. On an island the size of Oahu a successful auto theft is impossible unless the thief also steals a boat to escape with his loot. Honolulu itself sprawls over a narrow coastal plane, creeps up a dozen narrow valleys, and clammers over steeply rising hills. Like Topsy, it just grew, as did its roads and highway, and consequently, the traffic problem was the Police Department's chief headache. And of course even "Paradise" has no immunity from burglars and petty thieves.

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In Hawaii, as on the mainland, war with Japan has long been "an old street rumor." But with the world situation growing more tense day by day, the Police Department could not afford to take the chance that rumor would never become reality. Consequently, in the spring of 1941 plans were made for the forming of an emergency police reserve which could, if the necessity arose, supplement the regular force. This reserve consisted of 150 leading business men, lawyers, executives, legislators, and others.

On July 27, 1941, a school to train these reserves began. Classes were held every Monday night from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at which the men were taught the laws of arrest, the duties of a police officer, beat problems, how to gather evidence in traffic accidents, first aid, self defense, and the handling of firearms. In addition to the weekly class, these reserves walked or rode a beat with a police officer one night a week learning the location of persons living in that area. These reserves graduated at the end of November, 1941.

On December 7, the Honolulu Police Department, because of these newly graduated reserves, had in addition to its 325 regular officers 150 trained men ready to be called.

The organization of the Honolulu Police Department on December the 7th was somewhat as follows. Besides the Chief of Police there were, in what might be called the administrative end of the Department, one assistant chief of police, an instructor for the training school, and a supply officer. The duties of the Department were divided into, and were handled by, seven regular divisions—rural, traffic, vice, uniformed patrol, records, crime prevention, and detection. Each division was commanded by a captain, and there were in all ten lieutenants and twenty-nine sergeants. Three watches were maintained on the uniformed patrol, each headed by a lieutenant.

Fortunately, the first report of the bombing came in just at the time the men on the first watch were signing off and the men on the second watch were coming on. All other men on the force were ordered to report immediately, and the Emergency Reserve was called up. Getting word to the men was not an easy task. The station switchboard was jammed with calls, as was a great portion of the lines all over the city. The two-way police radio was used. Messengers were sent. Announcements were made repeatedly over the two local commercial broadcasting stations until they were ordered off the air, directing officers to report to the station and telling civilians to stay off the streets, to stay in their houses, and not to use their telephones except in cases of emergency.

Patrol cars were sent to all areas to keep traffic moving and to maintain order. Guards were stationed at public utility installations. Officers were dispatched to areas that were being evacuated to direct evacuation in an orderly fashion. Officers were sent to

help remove the dead and to care for the wounded and to get them to first aid stations. The Fire Department was notified where bombs fell so that they could check the spread of fire after explosions.

One of the most important tasks which the Police Department had to perform was aiding the Federal Bureau of Investigation in rounding up enemy aliens suspected of espionage. The Department is particularly proud of its record in producing men wanted by the F.B.I., sometimes within a few minutes after the Department's assistance was called for.

Of course, many problems arose which had not, and some of which could not have, been anticipated. This necessitated additional executive officers in our organization. Under peacetime conditions a large number of executive officers were not needed. Now they were urgently needed. Our duties had changed instantly from crime prevention and detection to handling of crowds, answering distress calls, giving emergency treatment, and moving injured and dead. After martial law was declared, the Police Department was a force that had to cooperate with the Military Police, but remained as the Police Department. The Military Governor began issuing orders, many of which were to be enforced by the civil police, and the Chief of Police found himself so busy with the larger problems that he realized he would have no time for the over-all planning and direction of his force, unless this deficiency in executive officers was remedied immediately.

Four new assistant chiefs were appointed from the Police Department, and two civilian volunteers were given the rank of assistant chief. The usual procedure of promotion according to rank was not followed in the case of assistant chiefs selected from the force because the captains were too valuable to take out of their jobs and there were no trained men to replace them. Instead, four outstanding younger men were picked for the new assistant chiefs—two lieutenants, one detective, and one sergeant. The captains realized the necessity which prompted the action, and so far as we can determine, did not resent this temporary by-passing.

On December 7, we had no field officers of a higher rank than sergeant. The captains and lieutenants all stayed at their inside posts, except in cases of emergency assignment elsewhere. Two of the new assistant chiefs were made field officers in general charge of uniformed details, one being on duty during the day and the other at night. Three were assigned to the Chief's outer office to handle the detail work that previously passed across his desk, freeing him for general supervision both at headquarters, at our three rural stations, and in the field with the men. There is an Assistant Chief of Police on duty 24-hours a day at police headquarters, who is empowered to make decisions immediately when the necessity arises.

Three new field lieutenants were selected, one for each watch, and the number of sergeants was doubled.

100% performance in executive positions from men without special training and experience in the special duties of the position cannot be expected. We decided that the sooner we gave more of our men posts of such responsibility, the more efficient we would become. We did not know at the time of the first attack, and we do not know now, when another enemy raid may come. We must, and do, go on the assumption that it may come at any moment. During an attack there may be casualties and deaths among the members of the Department, and men must be ready and trained to fill every position.

During the first 48 hours after the attack the whole force worked almost constantly, being relieved only for a few hours of much needed rest wherever the officer happened to be when it became possible to relieve him. For the first month all officers were on duty seven days a week, but now arrangements have been made for a six-day week, because of the necessity of keeping our force at top efficiency at all times.

Emergency posts have been created, and all officers are assigned to a beat closest to their homes. In case of an air raid warning, all men off duty have advance instructions where to report for specific assignments. This system expedites mobilization and cuts down traffic. Officers do not report to headquarters or police stations in the three rural districts, Kaneohe, Wahiawa, or Pearl City, unless those stations are their assigned posts.

In October of 1941 the Police Department had been authorized by the legislature to increase its force from 262 to 367 men. We immediately started recruiting to that level. The Military Governor has since authorized the Police Department to increase its force by an additional 200 men, and we are still recruiting to fulfill that quota. We have to date added 141 regulars to our force since December 7th. We have in no way relaxed our pre-war requirements, as now more than ever before, it is necessary to have capable, responsible officers in our Department.

Before the war all recruits were put through a six weeks' training course. This we reluctantly abandoned because of the pressure of time. The men we are recruiting now are given an intensive one-week course—ten hours a day—with stress laid on handling of firearms, riot duty and gas drill, and rudimentary police work. They are then sent out with an experienced man to learn their job in the field. In addition, we have a list of required reading which they must complete and make reports on.

New equipment was needed and was ordered—a steel helmet, a gas mask, and a riot gun for every man. Traffic officers and foot patrolmen are not, of course, required to carry riot guns while on

duty, but the guns are kept available at all times. In addition, the Department has a reserve of 250 Army Springfield rifles. Thousands of feet of rope were ordered for use in roping off bombed areas or forbidden territory. Army stretchers were turned over to the Department for use in evacuating hospitals or removing injured from bombed buildings. Police officers have, of course, always been equipped with first aid kits.

The motorized patrols were increased by 50% over the pre-war levels. Each of these motor patrols is equipped with a two-way radio, and as soon as 172 new sets that have been ordered arrive, all cars owned and used by police reserves will also be equipped with two-way radios. The two-way radio system has proved invaluable in many ways during the emergency. It is particularly effective in enforcing blackout regulations and curfews.

Our ordinary budget for 1942 was \$1,025,000. We have been granted an additional \$1,200,000 to take care of our emergency needs and increased staff.

This report would not be complete without special words of commendation for those whose efforts helped the Department to function efficiently during the first days of the war.

The Honolulu Police Commission deserves special mention. This five-man commission is the policy-making body of the Department. Its members are appointed by the Mayor of the City and County of Honolulu and serve without pay. The present members of the Commission are: Edward E. Bodge, Chairman, A. D. Castro, G. W. Sumner, A. F. Thayer, and C. F. Weeber. Since the war, the commission has devoted much time and energy to helping the Department plan and function efficiently. Many of the members devoted almost their full time to the department for many weeks after the first attack and continue to donate a considerable portion of their time to the Department.

The Police Emergency Reserve has been invaluable to the Department. The businessmen in this Reserve have figuratively and literally rolled up their sleeves and gone to work. When these Reserves were asked to report on December 7, 1941, 140 out of the 150 then in the Reserves reported. The other ten were on the mainland, and several of them have since returned and are also serving. Most of them worked without rest or sleep for the first 24 hours. Much of the work has been done at considerable cost to the business pursuits of these men. They have served without pay, buy their own uniforms, use their own cars, and are even paying for their own radios, the cost of which is \$282.00. The Department furnishes their guns, helmets, masks, and Sam Browne belts. Since the blitz, fifty more men have volunteered for the reserve, and there are now 200 Reserves in active service. The head of this Reserve is Major Douglas King, a retired British Army officer, resident of the Terri-

tory for many years. He volunteered with the first group in the summer of 1941 and is now an Assistant Chief of Police, without pay, devoting his full time to the task.

There is another new Assistant Chief of Police who is a volunteer serving without pay. He had the unique experience on December 7th of having momentarily all to himself an escort of Japanese bombers.

When the Japanese bombers descended on Pearl Harbor, Roy Vitousek, one of Honolulu's leading lawyers, was in the air in a private plane with his 16-year old son, Martin. They were flying in the vicinity of Pearl Harbor over the John Rodgers airport, where the Inter-Island planes land and take off. When he became aware of the nationality of his uninvited escort, he climbed above the bombers—one of whom fired a machine gun burst at his plane, but missed—and circled above the bombers until the first wave passed after which he made a dive landing on the field and sought what shelter there was—in a hurry! He went immediately to Police Headquarters to report his experience, arriving at 8:30 a.m., and was "drafted" into service. He has been here practically all the time since. His assistance has been of immense value to the Chief and the Department, particularly in helping to interpret the orders of the Military Governor which the Police Department is called upon to enforce and also in ironing out the legal questions that arose in the new relationship of the Department with the Military Police and the Shore Patrols under martial law.

Not only have the civilian police been allowed to continue functioning under martial law, but their duties have multiplied in many respects. Under the direction of the Military Governor they have been called upon to enforce many of the orders issued by him. Many "normal times" functions, on the other hand, have diminished. Invocation of a dusk to dawn blackout, a 7:30 p.m. curfew on civilian vehicle traffic and a 9:00 p.m. curfew on civilian pedestrians, the ban on the sale of all alcoholic beverages, and gasoline rationing have ushered in a new low in crime in Honolulu. Strict enforcement of speed limits and the banning of night driving except for official cars have cut traffic accidents by 50%. A stern Provost Court Judge has dealt summarily with culprits arrested by the Police Department. Most speeders have their driving licenses revoked. Most of the summonses that are issued now are for blackout violations, curfew violations, and illegal parking. On many of the through streets in Honolulu parking has been banned entirely, and no parking is allowed on any street at night.

Many other civilian defense organizations have been formed or have completed their organization since the beginning of the war. The Department's closest contact is with the air raid wardens. They have been helpful in reporting blackout and curfew violations

and, in case of a raid, would cooperate with the police in evacuating the civilian population, caring for injured and removing persons from bombed buildings.

The war has on the whole greatly heightened public respect for the Police Department. The reason for this is, we feel, that the civilian population considers we have done a good job under difficult conditions. There are, however, two specific factors that have contributed to this heightened respect and understanding.

The first is the Emergency Police Reserve. These business men, with their inside view of the works and the problems of the Police Department, have been able to promote a better understanding by the civilian populace as a whole.

The second is the police radio. Shortly after the first attack on December 7th, the commercial stations were ordered off the air. Civilians who had been told to stay off the streets and off their telephones felt completely isolated. When they flipped the dial on their silent radios they discovered down at the end of the band at 1712 kilocycles the police broadcast. They remained glued to it. The public got a bird's-eye view of the functioning of the Police Department and an insight into the many tasks which policemen are called upon to do. They heard policemen all over the city being instructed to do various things—to pick up mothers about to give birth and to take them to the hospital; to check for blackout violations and suspicious characters; to pick up blood donors; to report for specific assignments; to investigate what somebody thought might be signal lights (which turned out to be the reflection of the moon on darkened windows); and all other things which a patrol car on a beat is instructed to do.

They realized that the Police Department was busy protecting and caring for the civilian population 24-hours a day. A flood of calls came in from civilians who had coffee and food which they had prepared for the men on their beat.

One dispatcher particularly became famous overnight. He was Jimmy Wong, a Chinese-Hawaiian with a slow, deep, drawling voice whose humor furnished many a person release from tension through laughter.

As soon as the police realized the extent to which the public was tuned in they reported news, told the population when the local commercial stations were coming on the air for announcements, and generally did everything they could to keep up public morale. No public relations council in the world could have done for the Police Department what the police broadcast did in increasing the public's awareness of its functions and problems during those first two days and nights when the radio was otherwise silent and Honoluluans were isolated from each other by the blackout and the curfew.

That we have much, much more to learn in this training school of war we fully realize. But, if there are any particular recommendations that we would make, on the basis of our experience, to police departments of other cities who may sometime be called upon to face the situation which we faced on December 7, 1941, it would be these.

1. Recruit, organize, and train an emergency police reserve from business and professional men in your city. They will be willing and eager to serve, and if our experience is any indication, will prove of invaluable assistance.
2. Instruct your civilian populace in advance what to do in case of such an emergency. Warn them to stay off the streets and stay off the telephone so that the streets and telephone lines will be free for emergency workers.
3. Make plans in advance for the speedy clearing and directing of traffic out of congested areas in case of air raids.
4. Work out detailed plans in advance and inform officers where to report for assignments and duty during an air raid.
5. Be sure you have an adequate communication system so that reports can be made to the police by civilians and also that the police themselves can contact necessary authorities.
6. Train in advance adequate personnel to handle the increased burden of administrative duties which the department will be called upon to handle in an emergency.
7. Make plans in advance for coordinating the activities of the police and all other civilian defense agencies so that there is a minimum of wasted energy and overlapping of functions.

Some of these things we did "before the fact"; but others, as this report shows, we had to do afterwards.

We have been tried by the ordeal by air. During the attack many of our men were the targets for machine guns. One officer's car was riddled with machine gun bullets, but there were no casualties.

What, you may wonder, do we expect to do in case of the next test—an enemy landing? We expect and intend to "keep our heads" and do what we have always done to the best of our ability—protect the civilian population of Honolulu while the army repels the invader.