Nomination w/amended boundaries - April, 1985

NPS Form 10-900
(3-82)

NHL — WWII PACIFIC

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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received

date entered

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Hickam Field

and or common Hickam Air Force Base

2. Location

street & number ____ not for publication

city, town X vicinity of Honolulu

state Hawaii code 15 county Honolulu code 003

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
X district	X public	X occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
___ building(s)	___ private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	X yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	X military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name U.S. Department of the Air Force

street & number

city, town Washington ___ vicinity of state D.C.

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. U.S. Department of the Air Force

street & number

city, town Washington state D.C.

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes X no

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
X excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	X original site
___ good	___ ruins	X altered	___ moved date _____
___ fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Army Air Corps established Hickam Field southeast of Pearl Harbor Naval Base on Oahu, Hawaii, in 1935. The principal army field in Hawaii, Hickam was the only one large enough to handle the B-17 bomber. Three runways formed a triangle. Today, these runways are either taxiways or aircraft parking areas, other runways in other locations now serving the base. On the northwest side of the former northeast-southwest runway are the principal features and structures that were attacked by Japanese aircraft on December 7, 1941. Adjacent to the runway and parallel to it is the flight line, on which aircraft were parked at the time of the attack.

Northwest of the flight line, from southwest to northeast are the following structures: hangar 35, a huge, double hangar having twin, rounded roofs; a row of steel-frame hangars arranged in pairs--hangars 15 and 17, 11 and 13, 7 and 9, and 3 and 5; northeast of hangar 5 is the air operations building; and beyond it is one more pair of hangars, 2 and 4. All the hangars, including those damaged in the Japanese attack, are essentially as originally constructed. Some of them retain evidence of the attack such as bullet-splatters in concrete columns and, in one instance, a bullet hole clear through a steel column. The hangars, like other early structures at Hickam, have elements of the art-deco style of architecture, particularly on their corners.

Northwest of hangars 7 and 3 is the huge, reinforced-concrete, three-story former airmen's barracks, now the headquarters of the Pacific Air Force as well as a personnel center. In 1941 the barracks was home for 3,000 enlisted men and was called Hale Makai. Japanese planes bombed and strafed the building, setting it on fire. The bomb and fire damage has long since been repaired, but a large number of spatter holes remain on the exterior walls where bullets hit the concrete. Certain modifications have been made to the structure's external appearance. The most notable of these is a broad, two-story corridor joining two wings at the northeast end of the building, which creates an imposing, but compatible, entrance to the Pacific Air Force offices.

In the square on which the air operations building is located, northeast of hangars 3 and 5, the Air Force displays a small collection of aircraft. These planes do not particularly relate to World War II and are not included in the recommendation.

The recommended historic district includes the flight line, hangars, air operations building, and the former barracks. The district and structures bordering on it, together with the tropical landscaping, make Hickam an area of distinct visual charm. Here, one captures the feeling of the pre-World War II military environment in Hawaii, as well as coming into contact with the physical damage of the surprise attack. Hangars 2 and 4 are excluded from the boundary of the National Historic Landmark district.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	___ architecture	___ education	X military	___ social/humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
___ 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
X 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates December 7, 1941 **Builder/Architect**

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The bombing and strafing of Hickam Field was an important objective of the Japanese task force that attacked Oahu on December 7, 1941. The success of the Japanese attack on the American fleet in Pearl Harbor was dependent on the destruction of American air power for two reasons: that American aircraft not interfere with the attack itself, and that they not interfere with the successful withdrawal of the task force once its mission was completed. On both accounts, the Japanese carrier planes achieved overwhelming success. Hickam, along with other military fields on Oahu, was rendered helpless when sixty percent of Japan's striking force was concentrated against aircraft and airfields. Although Japan experienced immediate victory, the surprise attack united the American people in a fierce desire to reverse their losses. The planes were replaced, the structures were rebuilt, the dead were revered, and the nation began the long struggle to restore its position in the Pacific.

Hickam Field

Hickam Field, adjacent to Pearl Harbor Naval Base, was established in 1935 as Hawaii's principal army airfield and bomber base. It was named in honor of Lt. Col. Horace Meek Hickam, a pioneer aviator who had been killed in an aircraft accident the year before at Fort Crockett, Texas. In 1941, Hickam was the only airfield in Hawaii having runways long enough to handle the B-17 Flying Fortress bombers, which were arriving in Hawaii in increasing numbers. At that time, the airfield was the headquarters of the Hawaiian Air Force, while operational units assigned to it included the Eighteenth Bombardment Wing and the Hawaiian Air Depot. Hickam was a handsome post architecturally, an outstanding feature being the masonry-clad, octagonal water tower that stood 171 feet tall. This landmark was considered to be one of the most beautiful man-made structures on Oahu. Almost as imposing was the recently completed barracks building adjacent to the aircraft hangars. The construction quartermaster had wanted to build several smaller barracks dispersed over a wide area, but the Army Air Corps had insisted on one structure large enough to house 3,000 enlisted men. Construction costs for the sprawling building amounted to $6 million.

On Sunday, December 7, 1941, fifty-one planes were on the ground at Hickam, most of them bombers. A flight of twelve B-17s were expected to arrive from the mainland that morning.[1]

The Attack

Also on the morning of December 7, 275 miles north of Oahu, Japanese pilots aboard six aircraft carriers received final instructions for that day's mission. The air attack on Oahu was to be executed by two waves of aircraft each composed of three groups. The first wave's primary target was the battleships and carriers (the carriers were absent) in Pearl Harbor, but the airfields were to be hit first to prevent a counterattack against the Japanese bombers and torpedo planes. If the Japanese met with no opposition in the air, they were to destroy grounded planes. The second wave's mission was similar, except that the attack on the airfields was to prevent a counterattack against the task force itself.

The first wave of 183 planes (43 fighters, 49 high-level bombers, 51 dive-bombers, and 40 torpedo planes) struck Oahu at 7:55 a.m. At Hickam Field, Japanese Zero fighters and Val dive-bombers strafed and bombed the flight line and hangars, concentrating on the B-17 bombers. In the midst of the attack, the twelve bombers from the mainland arrived, unarmed, unsuspecting, and low on fuel. The Japanese attacked them in the air but most of them succeeded in landing at Hickam where they were attacked on the ground.[2] Later that morning, after the Japanese left Oahu, four of Hickam's bombers succeeded in getting into the air to search, in vain, for the enemy task force. The second wave of 167 planes struck Oahu at 8:40 a.m. Dive-bombers, high-altitude bombers, and fighters hit Hickam Field in two groups. By 9:45 a.m. the Japanese attack was over.

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1. The other principal airfields on Oahu in 1941 were:
   Wheeler, an army fighter plane base, adjacent to Schofield Barracks
   Ewa, a Marine Corps field, west of Pearl Harbor
   Ford Island, carrier aircraft field, in Pearl Harbor
   Kaneohe, naval base for Catalina patrol planes, on windward Oahu
By late 1941, the army was enlarging Bellows Field, near Kaneohe, for B-17s which were beginning to cause congestion at Hickam.

2. One B-17 crash-landed at Bellows Field, bringing that area to the attention of the Japanese. Another made a forced landing on a golf course.

Hickam took stock of its wounds. About half of its planes had been destroyed or severely damaged. Three hangars, 9, 13, and 15, had been directly hit, hangar 13 being reduced to a twisted ruin. Hangars 7 and 11 had been damaged when a bomb exploded between them. The Hawaiian Air Depot was largely destroyed. Several base facilities, including the fire station, chapel, and guardhouse, had been damaged. The big barracks had been repeatedly strafed and bombed and a portion of the structure was on fire. Many enlisted men had been at breakfast when the attack began. A bomb hit the mess hall in the center of the building, where 35 men were killed. Fifteen cooks who had taken shelter in a cold storage were all killed from concussion. All told, Hickam's casualties amounted to 121 men killed, 274 wounded, and 37 missing.[3]

While the Japanese had succeeded in their objectives, they had ignored the vital repair facilities and the gasoline storage tanks at Hickam, Pearl Harbor, and elsewhere on Oahu. Hickam Field quickly emerged from the attack stronger than before, playing an important role in World War II and in Pacific wars since. Today, it is the headquarters of the Pacific Air Force.

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3. Total army casualties on Oahu amounted to 218 killed and 364 wounded or missing. Naval casualties were much heavier, 2,008 killed and 710 wounded. The army had 77 planes destroyed and 128 damaged; and the navy and Marine Corps lost 87 aircraft and had 31 damaged.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 81 acres

Quadrangle name Puuloa

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	03	607880	2360340
B	03	608180	2360060
C	03	607500	2359360
D	03	607180	2359360
E			
F			
G			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Erwin N. Thompson, Historian		
organization	National Park Service, Denver Service Center	date	August 9, 1984
street & number	755 Parfet Street	telephone	(303) 234-4509
city or town	Denver	state	Colorado 80225

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national ___ state ___ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

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BOUNDARY

Beginning at a point at the southwest corner of the intersection of Vickers Avenue and E Street, then in a straight line southeasterly along the west curb of E Street to its intersection with Hangar Avenue, then in a straight line northeasterly along the south curb of Hangar Avenue to its intersection with F Street, then in a southeasterly direction along the west side of F Street to its intersection with Freedom Avenue, and continuing southeasterly in a straight line along the west curb of F Street to the point where the flight line's and the former runway's boundaries meet, then in a straight line southwest along this boundary for a distance of 3,200 feet, then in a straight line northwest 900 feet to the west side of the west doors of hangar 35, then in a straight line southwest along the southeast end of hangar 35 to 1st Street, then in a straight line along the east curb of 1st Street for a distance of 600 feet, then in a straight line northeast along the northwest end of hangar 35 to B Street, then in a straight line southeast along the west curb of B Street to its intersection with Hangar Avenue, then in a straight line northeast along the south curb of Hangar Avenue to its intersection with D Street, then in a straight line northwest along the east curb of D street to its intersection with Vickers Avenue, then in a straight line northeast along the south curb of Vickers Avenue to the point of beginning.