

December 7, 1941—7 a.m. All was peaceful in the Hawaiian Islands.

At the northern end of Oahu, Army Pvt. Joseph Lockard and George Elliott were monitoring their scope at the Opana radar station, part of a new surveillance system not yet fully operational on the island.

They had already been told they could shut down for the day. On Sundays, despite increased international tension, surveillance was maintained only from 4 to 7 a.m. But, they'd decided to keep the station open and practice with the equipment while awaiting transportation back to their camp.

It was just minutes after seven when a sweep of their radar painted a massive flight of aircraft about 130 miles to the north and closing fast.

Quickly the privates tried to contact the spotters at the plotting table in the Fort Shafter Information Center some miles away. But they had already gone to breakfast. Lt. Kermit Tyler, a pilot who had been assigned to the center as pursuit officer for the day, was the only one left in the plotting room. He seemed unconcerned by the discovery. It was probably a flight of B-17s arriving from the mainland or perhaps planes from a carrier at sea, he reasoned. In any case, he wasn't worried.

The lieutenant was right, if only partially so. Twelve B-17s were droning toward Hawaii from the mainland, and the planes detected by radar were in fact carrier-launched. But they were Japanese carriers and in minutes now, the planes would swarm in and pound Pearl Harbor and neighboring military installations into a shambles.

Hawaii had been caught completely off guard. But today a group of dedicated Hawaiians, native and naturalized, is working hard to see that it doesn't happen again. The Hawaii Air National Guard (HANG) alone is charged with the air defense of the island state.

Inside a blacked-out, auditorium-like room on Wheeler AFB near the center of Oahu, members of the Guard's 169th Aircraft Control and Warning (AC&W) Squadron maintain a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week radar vigil of the airspace surrounding the Hawaiian Islands. With an assist from their sister squadron, the 150th AC&W on the lush green island of Kauai, they track every aircraft approaching the islands. And no blind assumptions about their iden-

tity are made.

If a "track," as the blip on the radar screen is called, can't be identified with previously filed flight plans, the Guard's alert birds are ready. Heavily armed F-4 *Phantoms* of the 154th Fighter Group are poised just 100 yards from Hickam AFB's Runway 08 Left, their crews never more than a few hurried steps away.

When they scramble at a klaxon's call—and they do about twice a month—Hawaii Air Guardsmen at one of the two radar stations direct them to their targets.

"We [the Guard] have both elements of air defense—the detection system and the response system," explained Lt. Col. Kurt E. Johnson, an air technician with the 154th. Of

ready answer.

"Some people never stop to think that if there were no manned air defense aircraft, Soviet airplanes could fly over any part of the U.S. at any altitude and at any time," meaning there would be no need for the missiles.

"The people of Hawaii were lulled once before," he continued, "so we, especially, are not willing to have our airspace filled with just anybody who wants to fly through it."

Although he recognizes the link between Pearl Harbor and HANG's mission, for Johnson, personally, it is an emotionally weak connection. "I was only about 12 or 13," he recalled, "and to a 13-year-old kid it was more like cowboys and Indians."

Surprised once, they are not about to let it happen again.

Aloha Alert!

by MSgt. David B. Drachlis
photos by Herman J. Kokojan

course, it is a federal mission and, therefore, the Guard comes under the operational control of the Air Force during an active air scramble, in this case the 326th Air Division.

During the week Johnson, a robust, silver-haired *hapa haole* (half Hawaiian), is the F-4 air technician operations officer for the Guard's 199th Fighter Interceptor Squadron. On Guard weekends, however, he is Deputy Commander of the 154th Group, the squadron's parent organization.

A fighter pilot for most of his adult life, Johnson remains excited about his unit's mission. For the skeptics who question the Guard's value in this age of high-speed, nuclear-warhead-carrying missiles, he has a

The Johnsons lived on Waikiki and he remembers waking up to the voice of the late Webley Edwards broadcasting news of the attack over radio station KGMB. The popular Hawaiian radio personality was repeating, over and over, the now famous phrase "This is no drill; this is the real McCoy."

"I ran outside and could see a great black column of smoke coming out of Pearl Harbor," Lt. Col. Johnson said. "It just dominated everything. Japanese airplanes were flying around south of the island and there were black puffs of smoke following them." Then, as the city awakened, he recalled people became frantic, and "you could see seriousness and grimness on their



Lt. Col. Kurt Johnson helps his wife Claire pack flowers for shipment to the mainland.



faces."

But for young Kurt Johnson, Sunday was a day to pile into the family car and ride over the historic Pali Highway to the country. And that Sunday was no exception.

For more senior guardsmen, the emotional link is stronger. MSgt. Benjamin Goo, noncommissioned officer in charge of the fighter group's simulator section, spent the better part of December 7 pulling wounded soldiers from the burning top floor of Hickam's big barracks complex. The then 19-year-old base civilian employee, who later served with Patton's army in Europe, had never, of course, seen an attack before and "didn't realize just how scared I should have been. Anyway, we were too busy to be scared."

The building that today houses Pacific Air Force's headquarters still bears the deep pockmarks left by Japanese bullets and shrapnel. Goo, now a full-time air technician with the Guard, passes the building on his way to work—and he remembers.

First Lt. Peter S. Pawling is too young to remember Pearl Harbor. Yet he, too, feels a special pride in being a member of the home guard. Pawling, a transplanted mainlander from California, is a full-time alert pilot—alert pro—with the 199th.

"When the klaxon sounds, it stops your heart and you think, 'This is it,'" related the pilot, seated in an easy chair inside the alert facility. "We never know what to expect and always treat it as the real thing." Like the scramble he was involved in last October.

Pawling and his weapons system officer, Maj. James T. Magee, were filling out routine paper work on their aircraft over a morning cup of coffee when the horn went off.

In minutes they were rolling the 100 yards to the runway while going through their preflight checklist. Already they were cleared for takeoff and a United Airlines jet on final to the runway shared with Honolulu International Airport had been told to slow down or go around.

"We had been given 'gate' [afterburner] climb to 25,000 feet and were vectored 100 degrees, which took us right over downtown Honolulu," related Pawling.

Quickly ground control of their aircraft was passed from the tower to departure control and finally to Maj. Walter O. Watanabe, the 169th AC&W duty controller, who vectored

the *Phantom* north toward its target. This time it turned out to be a friendly aircraft whose pilot had not followed proper flight planning procedures and the F-4 returned home.

Occasionally alert aircraft are scrambled to assist civilian planes in trouble. Once an F-4 was launched to aid a private plane that was low on fuel, hitting 50 mph head winds, and was off course over Kauai. The *Phantom* was directed to a holding area and provided information about winds and other data to the pilot of the light plane, who was guided to a safe landing. But most of the time the scrambles are in response to Air Defense Identification Zone violations. "And that is a rather serious thing," said Lt. Col. Johnson. "A pilot if he is military can be removed from flying status and an airline pilot can be fined."

In the early days "there were 30 to 40 scrambles a month," remembered Johnson. "Those were in the prop days of the DC-6s and the DC-7s. But today's jets can meet their estimated times of arrival much better and now we are scrambled on the average of twice a month."

CMSgt. Robert Choi was part of the unit in those early days. The Chief of Quality Control for the 154th Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron joined the organization when the Air Guard's first units were activated as part of Hawaii's Army National Guard in the late summer of 1946.

"We didn't have any airplanes," recalled the sergeant, "just some old rundown buildings and two runways at Bellows Field." Initially Choi, an aircraft mechanic since 1939, and other unit members spent their time laying roofing paper and painting in an effort to renovate the facilities.

It was six months before they got their first aircraft, a B-26C. Eight other planes arrived during the next several months. But, although designated a fighter squadron, they had no fighters. And they were short other supplies and equipment, too.

Under the leadership of their Commander, Maj. William F. Nolan, the guardsmen made "scrounge" raids on Hickam halfway across the island. They used a newly acquired C-46 to carry home the spoils. "We knew where everything was since many of us used to work there," said CMSgt. Choi, "and we would beg, borrow, and steal what we needed. We became known as Nolan and his

Forty Thieves."

Improvisation was a key word. Unable to obtain maintenance stands to work on the aircraft, they used 55-gallon drums and 2-by-4s. And they carried oil for their planes from the "hills" in five-gallon cans.

The mechanics, who were not licensed pilots, used to test-hop their aircraft on a back runway. "We'd tell 'Ops' we were going to make a 'high-speed check' and they'd say, 'O.K.,'" recalled Choi. "Actually they didn't know what we were talking about. We would take the plane off

RIGHT: MSgt. Benjamin Goo reviews photos in a scrapbook acquired as he marched through Germany with the Army in World War II.



ABOVE AND RIGHT: Airline pilot James Lockridge is a captain in his civilian job and when flying for the Hawaii Air National Guard.

[fly it a short distance] and set it down again."

Under the cloak of darkness they would also "test-hop" their cars.

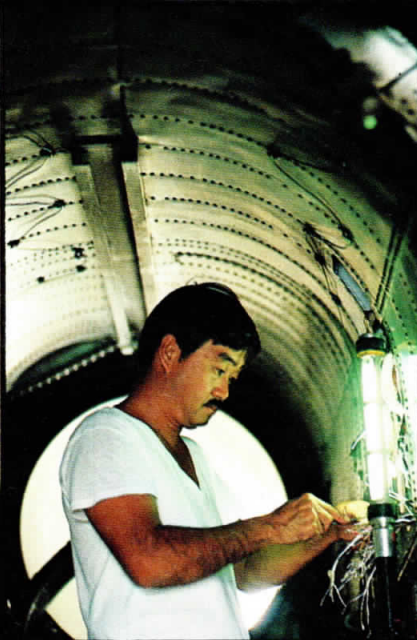
Despite maintenance difficulties, the crew chiefs were proud of their aircraft. When a pilot would show up to fly, the crew chiefs would try to sell him on flying their airplane by telling him it was better than any of the others.

Finally, in 1947, the unit received its first fighters, the P-47N *Thunderbolt* or "Jug," as it was nicknamed. That year the unit moved to Hickam. But supply problems continued.



BELOW: When not in uniform, HANG members work as banana farmers, firefighters, policemen, and at other civilian tasks.

BELOW, LEFT: During off-duty times, HANG members sometimes practice show routines in the hangar.



SSgt. Fukuji, life support systems technician, briefs a pilot prior to a mission.

Then in 1949, the 81st Fighter Group at Wheeler, also equipped with the *Thunderbolt*, was deactivated. The National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C., wanted the P-47 parts for other Guard units on the mainland and HANG got the job of reclaiming the aircraft. However, during the process the better airframes and engines somehow ended up with Hawaii Air National Guard identification numbers on them. And HANG also got control of a 150-year supply of parts.

The parts were stored in four warehouses at Honolulu International Airport, and crew chiefs "rat-

holed" parts for their own aircraft. Then a sugar strike forced consolidation of the contents of the hangars to make room to store sugar. Individual stashes were disturbed and the result was chaos. "Trying to find a part you had ratholed was a real job," said Choi. Mechanics had to rummage through mixed piles of parts to find what they needed.

In the mid '50s the Jugs were replaced by the Korean War-vintage F-86 *Sabre* jet, and the Guard assumed its air defense role.

Later, while flying the F-102, guardsmen volunteered to participate in Palace Alert, a program to

augment Air Force air defense units in Southeast Asia. Lt. Col. Edward Richardson, Commander of the 199th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, was instrumental in getting the program established.

While returning from Thailand in 1968, he learned that because the Air Force was phasing out the F-102, it didn't have enough pilots to meet its alert commitment in Vietnam. "So we made a proposal and in July the program was initiated," said Richardson. "Everyone in our squadron volunteered but because of our own alert commitment here, we couldn't send the whole squadron."



Over the years, much of the Guard's effort has been community-oriented. The unit's members used B-26s to spread salt water and dry ice in an effort to bring about rain on the drought-plagued islands of Maui and Molokai, "bombed" the tourist ship "Lurline" with 100,000 orchids upon her arrival during Aloha Week in 1954, and once took part in a rather unusual pilot-trainee recruiting effort.

Guardsmen towed an F-86 across town for display at the University of Hawaii. The trek was made at night to avoid traffic and the caravan was led by a Guard wrecker, which was

used to uproot trees (they were later replanted) and move parked cars that obstructed the path.

Even today HANG is actively reaching out into the community, though perhaps its projects are somewhat less dramatic.

Members of the Guard have formed HANG *Ohana*, a musical group that performs for unit functions, recruiting events, and community activities. "Through the group we are trying to revive and preserve our traditional Hawaiian culture, *Hawaiiana*," explained Sr. Amn. Louise Sharpe, a management inventory specialist and a hula dancer

with the group. Other HANG members have formed an outrigger canoe racing team and still others are teaching cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

The list of community projects is long and meaningful. But, then, that's not surprising. Out of uniform these guardsmen are Hawaiians—banana farmers, state representatives, local airline pilots, policemen, firemen, janitors, students, secretaries, and professional hula dancers. In uniform, though, they remain Hawaiian, pulling together to protect their community, their culture, and their homeland. 