



Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office

USS West Virginia

World War II Fact Sheet

- At the onset of the Pearl Harbor attack, *USS West Virginia* occupied berth F-6 outboard of *USS Tennessee* on “battleship row” along the shore of Ford Island. The *West Virginia* received multiple torpedo hits along the port side as well as bomb hits from aircraft overhead. The attack caused massive damage to the ship but it did not capsize. *West Virginia* sank, coming to rest upright on the harbor floor.
- 106 crew members of *West Virginia* died during the attack; 25 sailors from the battleship remain unresolved today
- The sailors who died aboard the *West Virginia* were initially buried in Halawa Naval Cemetery and Nuuanu Cemetery, both located on the island of Oahu. The burials took place between Dec. 8, 1941 and Nov. 24, 1942.
 - The burials in Halawa and Nuuanu consisted almost entirely of individual burials of single sets of remains, with only two burials of unknowns, X-126 and X-168, having burial records indicating that two and five remains, respectively, were buried under those numbers.
 - 36 men were initially buried as known remains
 - In 1947, the Pearl Harbor casualties were disinterred and removed to the Schofield Barracks Central Identification Laboratory. Identification processing by the laboratory resulted in an additional 45 positive identifications made from among remains initially buried as “unknown.”
- Today there are 38 burials of unknowns in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific which have association to the *USS West Virginia*.
 - This number is higher than the number of unresolved cases for the ship, making it likely that crew members from other ships in the area died aboard *West Virginia*.
 - Unknown files pertaining to these burials indicate the presence of dentition in most of the cases, and also of skeletal remains from which stature, race, and age might be determined, should they be considered for disinterment and identification.
 - Recent consideration of these unknowns indicates that further work to collect and assess medical records of the missing individuals would need to be done to make progress on identifying these unknowns, and initial comparisons of the records at hand show that the process of matching up those still missing with those buried as unknowns is neither straightforward nor simple.
 - Files for these unknowns do not indicate the severe commingling of remains to be found among the unknowns of *USS Oklahoma*.