

Amuri Field

US Army occupation of Aitutaki during World War II in the Pacific



After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, and as Japanese armed forces moved into Asia and out into the Pacific, the United States War Department became increasingly concerned about the viability of its Pacific air routes. New routes from the airbase in Hawaii, primarily to Australia and then as far north as Manila needed to be established.

Aitutaki and Penrhyn, in the Cook Islands, were among six Pacific islands chosen to form one of these vital links.

Initially the US Army stationed 850 men on Aitutaki in November 1942, but within a year, once it became apparent that the war was unlikely to spread this far south, most of these men were deployed further North. Eventually, only a "Token Garrison" of 12 US military personnel were to remain on Aitutaki to keep open the airfield and provide a weather service.

