



RHUMB LINES

Straight Lines to Navigate By



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The Battle of Midway – A Turning Point in Our History

"The three aircraft carriers that were unscathed during the attack on Pearl Harbor helped turn the tide at Midway just six months later. The USS Yorktown, damaged so heavily at Coral Sea that it was thought repairs would take months, was sailing toward Midway and the fight just after 72 hours of work at the Pearl shipyard. It was a critical turning point in the Pacific during World War II."

- The Honorable Ray Mabus, Secretary of the Navy

Midway's Place in History

- Regarded as a critical turning point in the Pacific during World War II, the [Battle of Midway](#) took place June 4-7, 1942. During the battle, U.S. Navy carrier strike forces defeated an Imperial Japanese navy carrier task force. Left without air cover, and unable to prevent land- and sea-based air attacks against their surface ships, the Japanese invasion forces retreated.
- [Midway](#) was a dramatic victory. Facing four veteran Japanese aircraft carriers, the U.S. Navy won the battle with only three aircraft carriers – [USS Enterprise \(CV 6\)](#), [USS Hornet \(CV 8\)](#) and [USS Yorktown \(CV 5\)](#) – augmented by land-based fighters, bombers and torpedo planes from Midway.
- During the battle, Japan lost four carriers, a [heavy cruiser](#) and 256 planes. The U.S. lost Yorktown, a destroyer and 145 planes. Japan's losses, both at Midway and at the [Battle of Coral Sea](#), shifted the balance of naval power in the Pacific, and derailed Japanese plans to both threaten Hawaii and isolate Australia.

Code Breaking, Command and Courage

- Thanks to American [code breakers](#), Adm. Chester W. Nimitz, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, knew Japanese intentions and employed his forces accordingly. Midway airfield was tightly packed with 105 land-based Navy, Marine Corps, and Army air forces search and combat planes, providing critical support to his battle plan.
- Adm. Frank Jack Fletcher was the officer in tactical command with two task forces, Task Force (TF) 17 with USS Yorktown, and TF 16 with USS Enterprise and USS Hornet. When Adm. William Halsey was temporarily ill, Adm. Raymond Spruance took command of TF 16, with USS Enterprise as his flagship.
- After Nimitz issued his operational orders, he entrusted the fighting of the battle to subordinates. In the actions of June 4-7, 1942, those subordinates, from flag officer to fighter pilot to enlisted crewmen, more than justified his faith in them. They had written, Nimitz declared afterward, "a glorious page in our history."
- American courage, confidence and skill proved equal to the task. These traits, emulated in the fighting spirit and self-sacrificing efforts that continue in our Navy today, defeated an honorable and formidable opponent at Midway and set the United States and its Allies on the road to victory in the Pacific.

Key Messages

- This year is the Bicentennial of the War of 1812 and the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Midway – historic naval engagements which demonstrated the innovation and strength of the Navy, essential to ensuring the security, prosperity and vital interests of the U.S.
- We continue to honor our connection to the Sailors and ships that fought in the War of 1812 and the Battle of Midway with vessel namesakes like USS Hornet and USS Enterprise.
- The [lessons](#) of the Battle of Midway endure – we are a maritime nation, and our security will always be tied to the sea, as it has been for the past 200 years.

Facts & Figures

- Pacific Fleet cryptanalysts intercepted 500-1,000 Japanese radio messages per day in May 1942 and deciphered and translated roughly 25%, an astonishing feat that enabled intelligence analysts to conclude Midway was the Japanese target.
- More than 183 Battle of Midway commemoration events will be held around the world, to include wreath laying ceremonies in all Navy regions and at the U.S. Navy Memorial in Washington, D.C., June 4.
- For Midway resources visit: www.navy.mil/midway/resources.html and [Naval History & Heritage Command](#) Midway page.
- Link to CNO's Blog: <http://cno.navylive.dodlive.mil/2012/05/30/commemorating-the-battle-of-midway/>