



RHUMB LINES

Straight Lines to Navigate By



May 26, 2011

Battle of Midway Commemoration

"By the evening of June 7, 1942, the tide of the war in the Pacific had shifted. The Battle of Midway underscored the remarkable teamwork of naval forces and highlighted in particular the value of naval aviation in projecting power from the sea. This incredible victory shifted the paradigm of naval warfare, and it continues to inspire us today."
-Vice Adm. Al Myers, commander, Naval Air Forces / Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Regarded as the turning point in the Pacific during World War II, U.S. Navy carrier strike forces, augmented by shore-based bombers and torpedo planes, decisively defeated an Imperial Japanese navy carrier task force during the Battle of Midway, June 4-7, 1942. These actions prevented Japanese forces from capturing Midway Island and marked the dawn of the U.S. Navy's global prominence and the coming of age of carrier aviation.

Midway's Place in History

- America needed to win – just six months after the attack at Pearl Harbor, Midway stood between the enemy and Hawaii, home of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. The Japanese were poised to press their advantage, intent on destroying the Pacific Fleet and threatening the West Coast of the United States.
- Midway was a dramatic victory - facing Japan's 11 battleships and four carriers, the U.S. Navy fought with no battleships and just three carriers: USS Enterprise (CV 6), USS Hornet (CV 8) and USS Yorktown (CV 5).
- During the battle, Japan lost four carriers, a heavy cruiser, three destroyers and 256 planes. The United States 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 Japan was never able to recover from its losses.
- The Battle of Midway cemented the need for carrier aviation, showcasing carrier aviation's ability to deliver credible combat power – an enduring value today.

Code Breaking, Carriers and Courage

- Thanks to American code breakers, judicious aircraft carrier tactics and providential timing, the U.S. Navy inflicted a devastating defeat on the Japanese navy at Midway.
- American courage, determination, heroic sacrifice and training proved equal to the task of drawing the Japanese carriers into battle and destroying them.

The Battle of Midway Buys Time

- In a larger strategic sense, the Japanese offensive in the Pacific was derailed and its plans to advance on New Caledonia, Fiji and Samoa postponed.
- The Japanese opportunity for victory was forever lost, buying time for the Allies to execute what was termed the "Grand Strategy," which gave top priority to defeating Nazi Germany before applying the full force of the war effort to defeat Japan.

Key Messages

- The lessons of the Battle of Midway endure – we are a maritime nation, and our security will always be tied to the sea.
- The U.S. Navy's three available aircraft carriers were strategically positioned to meet the numerically superior enemy force and destroy its carriers.
- The Battle of Midway applied joint service resources in a calculated effort to meet the enemy and destroy its most potent form of naval power.

Facts & Figures

- The Japanese lost four large carriers, more than 100 pilots and more than 700 aircraft mechanics during the Battle of Midway.
- Battle of Midway commemoration ceremonies will be held around the world, to include wreath laying ceremonies at all Navy regions and at the [U.S. Navy Memorial](#) in Washington, D.C., June 3.
- For Battle of Midway resources, visit www.navy.mil/midway/resources.html and [Naval History & Heritage Command](#).