

**Chief of Naval Operations
Adm. Jonathan Greenert
Delivers remarks at the Battle of Midway Ceremony
June 4, 2012**

Admiral Greenert: Well, the Navy Memorial- we are on a roll, aren't you? Every single time we've been up here in the last six months it's been weather like this so we must have paid our dues a few years ago when the clouds opened and the rain came down. Thank you again for hosting this, this wonderful 70th commemoration of the Battle of Midway. General Willie Williams, thank you for joining us, sir. And Admiral Manson Brown, thank you so much. Clearly every time I hear about the Battle of Midway there's more woven into it and this is clearly a sea services operation. I thank you very much for your presence today. Please pass my best to the commandant on my behalf. Thank you.

Midway veterans. Guys, it's good to see you again. Has it already been a year since we were all up here shaking hands and having a beer the night before and listening to the tales. They continue to amaze me. I thank you again for what you did.

We will always remember what you've done for us, what your colleagues did. This battle defined the world that we know today 70 years ago and I thank you again for that.

Fellow flag officers and friends and supporters of the Navy Memorial, thank you for your support. Thank you for your attendance today.

Sailors and the Honor Guard, you look great. We appreciate the flags. We appreciate the cadence and all that went with it. Well done today.

This is really, as we said, a defining moment in Navy history and really in the country's history. History is full with success stories. It's also full with hard lessons. In this year, this particular commemoration, we're kind of getting a trifecta of special years. The 200th Commemoration for the War of 1812; the 70th Commemoration of the Battle of Coral Sea, a very important battle; and of course the 70th Commemoration of the Battle of Midway.

We've got to remember what these taught us. We've got to remember what these all meant in the past as we go forward in the future.

For example, think about it, only five months after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Japanese expansion was seemingly totally unstoppable. They are just rolling through Asia. Then there's the Battle of Coral Sea. In some respects the Battle of Coral Sea might have been a tactical loss, depending on how you interpret it – it may have been a tie. But it was clearly a strategic victory.

As I look out today and I see the attendance of our Naval Attachés and our Defense Attachés, I say thank you because it's partnerships that make the difference, have made the difference in history and will make a difference to us in the future.

The Battle of Coral Sea kind of stopped the momentum of the Japanese, and it was really a foundation for the success at Midway.

Only a month later in the Battle of Midway the Japanese strength, like the strength at Coral Sea was greater. They had more carriers. We had three, they had four. They had more battleships. We had none and they had two. They had more aircraft. They had about 230, they had about 250. So how did we win?

There have been a whole series of stories and articles written on that- courage for sure, the gentleman to my left, contributed to that and the representation of that. But I think embedded in all of these campaigns that we talked about and that we're commemorating this year, are enduring lessons since 1812 that those of us that organize, train, equip and lead forces can take away.

I think the first lesson we take away is technology matters. It matters a great deal. There is nothing like well-built and resilient ships and aircraft. In 1812 it was U.S. Navy firepower that really surprised the Brits, and our ships withstood attack and surprised them by saying, "boy, that ship's made of iron." And then of course Old Ironsides got renamed the Constitution.

In WWII and at Midway the industrial base and the technological advances, resilient ships, were key. Look at how hard, how tough the Yorktown was. We built quality ships, submarines and aircraft. We built quantity. By the end of the war we'd built about 7,000 ships and aircraft. Today the performance of our ships and aircraft are second to none. We have the finest ships and aircraft. They're durable still and they're resilient. They operate forward anywhere, anytime, above and below the sea, and our country expects it of us for our sailors and for our pilots. Technology matters.

Number two, at the Battle of Midway we had bold and we had accountable leaders and they knew how to take a chance using calculated risk. They knew they weren't going to get perfect information. Back in 1812 a situation was presented where there were opportunities to put forth a culture of command and independence – taking charge. Captain David Porter took charge of that. He grabbed that opportunity. He captured the first British warship that sailed around the Cape Horn.

In World War II, Nimitz. Fletcher and Spruance at the Battle of Midway. They showed bold leadership and the willingness to be accountable. The same thing happened in Coral Sea with Nimitz and with Fletcher, taking a calculated risk.

Today as General Williams mentioned, there are people over in the Middle East and have been taking that calculated risk, willing to be bold, willing to be accountable.

Thirdly, you've got to have confident and you've got to have proficient crews. In 1812 our crews trained daily in gunnery and in seamanship and it paid off in battle as they won encounter after encounter with the British. In the Battle of Midway it was the confidence and the proficiency of the crews, when things had to turn on a dime because an opportunities presented itself, it was them that turned the tides, again, the gentlemen to my left, that made things happen.

Grabbed an opportunity, executed well, and when necessary, they innovated. Their individual skills and their self sacrifice and their heroism made the difference. Confident and proficient crews.

Today we have amazing crews. You got a snapshot of your future that marched in front of you. They represent the hundreds of thousands of sailors, hundreds of thousands of Marines and Coastguardsmen that sail around the world and serve around the world today with expert seamanship and aviation skills as well. Sailors who are living their legacy and adapting as necessary in missions around the world.

Their future success and our future success depend on our ability to learn, to adapt from the historical events of our world. We must always remember those and look to them as we think about our future.

For those of you who serve today, I want to thank you for choosing to serve. For those of you that support -- the families, the friends-- those of you that support those that serve today, I thank you for that.

Behind you, over here, about what I would call the seven o'clock position is a bronze sculpt and it says the Navy family -- Those who wait also serve. I commend that to you as we think about this event, this commemoration, the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of Midway.

Thank you all for attending today and supporting our veterans. As you're thinking about our history, let's think about our future. God bless you all. God bless our Navy. God bless this great nation. Thank you ladies and gentlemen.

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