

Virginians at War

WWII: Battle of Midway

Resource Packet

Contains: Glossary, Timeline, Images, Discussion Questions, Additional Resources

Program Description: Virginians at War: The Battle of Midway explores the experience of Virginians that fought in the Battle of Midway in June of 1942. Veterans share their memories of life at sea, the battle, and the significance of damage inflicted on both US and Japanese fleets. Of particular note are the detailed and poignant accounts of the loss of the USS *Yorktown* and what it meant to those that served upon it. This pivotal clash between the navies of the United States and Japan was a turning point in the war, which saw a decisive American victory that opened up the Pacific Theater for future operations.

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Length: 20:42

Streaming link: <https://vimeo.com/367053949>

Featured Speakers:

OC1 Thomas Allen, Richmond
AMM2 Harry Asbury, Amelia
CAPT John Crawford, Newport News
CPO Joseph Fazio, Virginia Beach
CT1 Charles Hagedorn, Warrenton
CDR Randolph LaPrade, Richmond
HTCM Charles J. Meyer Jr., Norfolk
RADM Donald "Mac" Showers, Arlington



GLOSSARY

IMPORTANT TERMS

- **CAP:** Combat Air Patrol; a mission for fighter aircraft over a certain objective, force, combat zone or defense area
- **Neophytes:** a beginner or novice
- **OP/INTEL:** Operational Intelligence
- **Order of Battle:** the organization of personnel in an armed forces unit, including the size, strength, equipment and formations of personnel
- **Scuttle:** the deliberate sinking of a ship to prevent capture
- **SBD:** "Scout Bomber Douglas"; Douglas SBD Dauntless; a dive bomber plane used by U.S. Navy and Marines during WWII
- **Submarine Tender:** a ship that carries food, fuel, ammunition and other supplies for submarines
- **Task Force 16:** a U.S. Navy aviation unit commanded by Rear Admiral Raymond A. Spruance during the Battle of Midway
- **Task Force 17:** a U.S. Navy aviation unit commanded by Rear Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher during the Battle of Midway
- **TBD:** "Torpedo Bomber Douglas"; Douglas TBD Devastator; a torpedo bomber plane used by the U.S. Navy during WWII
- **Wardroom:** the mess cabin for high-ranking naval officers

IMPORTANT PLACES

- **Midway:** a United States atoll (ring-shaped coral island chain) roughly halfway between North America and Asia. There are two main islands in the Midway atoll: Sand Island, and Eastern Island.
- **Pearl Harbor:** a harbor on the island of Oahu (Honolulu, Hawaii) that functions as a deep-water Naval base for the United States Navy.

NOTABLE SHIPS

- **Akagi, Hiryu, Kaga, and Soryu:** four Japanese heavy aircraft carriers, all sunk by U.S. dive-bombers.
- **USS Enterprise:** Heavy aircraft carrier present at the Battle of Midway, part of Task Force 16.
- **USS Hornet:** Heavy aircraft carrier present at the battle of Midway, part of Task Force 16.
- **USS Yorktown:** Heavy aircraft carrier present at the Battle of Midway, part of Task Force 17. *Yorktown* was badly damaged prior to battle, and was ultimately sunk by Japanese torpedoes during the Battle of Midway.

BATTLE OF MIDWAY TIMELINE

- **June 3, 1942:**
 - **9:04 AM:** American reconnaissance plane is attacked by Japanese gunners after sighting the invading Japanese fleet
 - **9:25 AM:** another American reconnaissance pilot locates part of the Japanese fleet 500 miles away from the Midway atoll
 - **12:30 PM:** U.S. AAF B-17's are dispatched from Midway, but do no damage to the Japanese fleet
 - **9:15 PM:** U.S. Catalina seaplanes are launched from Midway
- **June 4, 1942:**
 - **1:15 AM:** Catalina seaplanes carry out torpedo attacks against part of the Japanese fleet, scoring only one hit on a Japanese tanker
 - **5:45 AM:** a Catalina pilot notifies Midway that Japanese bombers are headed towards Midway
 - **6:30 AM:** Japanese planes first strike at Midway, attack lasts roughly 30 minutes
 - **7:00 AM:** American forces begin a torpedo attack on *Akagi*, scoring no hits
 - **7:00 AM:** Spruance launches Task Force 16 planes from USS *Enterprise* and USS *Hornet*
 - **7:15 AM:** Japanese planes begin changing out their torpedoes for bombs
 - **8:38 AM:** Fletcher launches Task Force 17 planes from USS *Yorktown*
 - **9:20 AM:** American Devastators from the USS *Hornet* attack the *Soryu*, but fail
 - **10:20 AM:** Devastators from USS *Enterprise* and *Yorktown* strike, and similarly fail
 - **10:20 AM:** As torpedo attack ends, a wave of American Dauntless dive-bombers from USS *Enterprise* attack, damaging the *Akagi*, *Kaga*, and *Soryu*, ultimately leading to the sinking of the *Kaga* and *Soryu*
 - **12:00 PM:** the first wave of *Hiryu*'s dive-bombers attack and strike the USS *Yorktown*
 - **2:30 PM:** boilers on the *Yorktown* are reignited, but planes from the *Hiryu* attack again
 - **2:55 PM:** the captain of the *Yorktown* gives the order to abandon ship
 - **5:00 PM:** American bombers from the *Enterprise* and *Yorktown* attack the *Hiryu*, causing significant damage
- **June 5, 1942:**
 - Salvage of the USS *Yorktown* begins
 - *Akagi* and *Hiryu* are both scuttled
- **June 6, 1942:**
 - **1:35 PM:** lookouts spot incoming torpedoes from the Japanese submarine *I-168*, which sink the destroyer *Hammann* and further damage the USS *Yorktown*
- **June 7, 1942:**
 - **5:00 AM:** the USS *Yorktown* sinks

Clash of the Carriers

BATTLE OF MIDWAY

June 3–6, 1942

JAPANESE FORCES — JAPANESE COMBINED FLEET

Commanded by Adm. Yamamoto Isoroku

Japanese Kido Butai ("Mobile Force")

Commanded by Vice Adm. Nagumo Chuichi

4 HEAVY AIRCRAFT CARRIERS



2 LIGHT AIRCRAFT CARRIERS



2 SEAPLANE CARRIERS



7 BATTLESHIPS



15 CRUISERS



42 DESTROYERS



10 SUBMARINES



UNITED STATES FORCES — U.S. PACIFIC FLEET

Commanded by Adm. Chester Nimitz

3 HEAVY AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

Task Force 16

Commanded by Rear Adm. Raymond Spruance
USS *Hornet* and USS *Enterprise* carrier battle group



Task Force 17

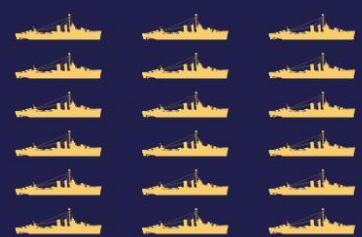
Commanded by Rear Adm. Frank Jack Fletcher
USS *Yorktown* carrier battle group



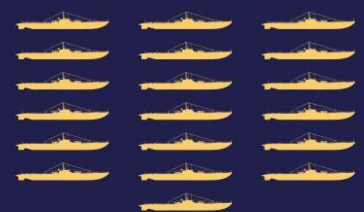
8 CRUISERS



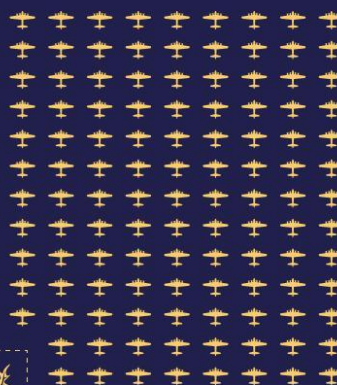
18 DESTROYERS



19 SUBMARINES



115 LAND-BASED NAVY, MARINE CORPS, AND ARMY AIR FORCES PLANES



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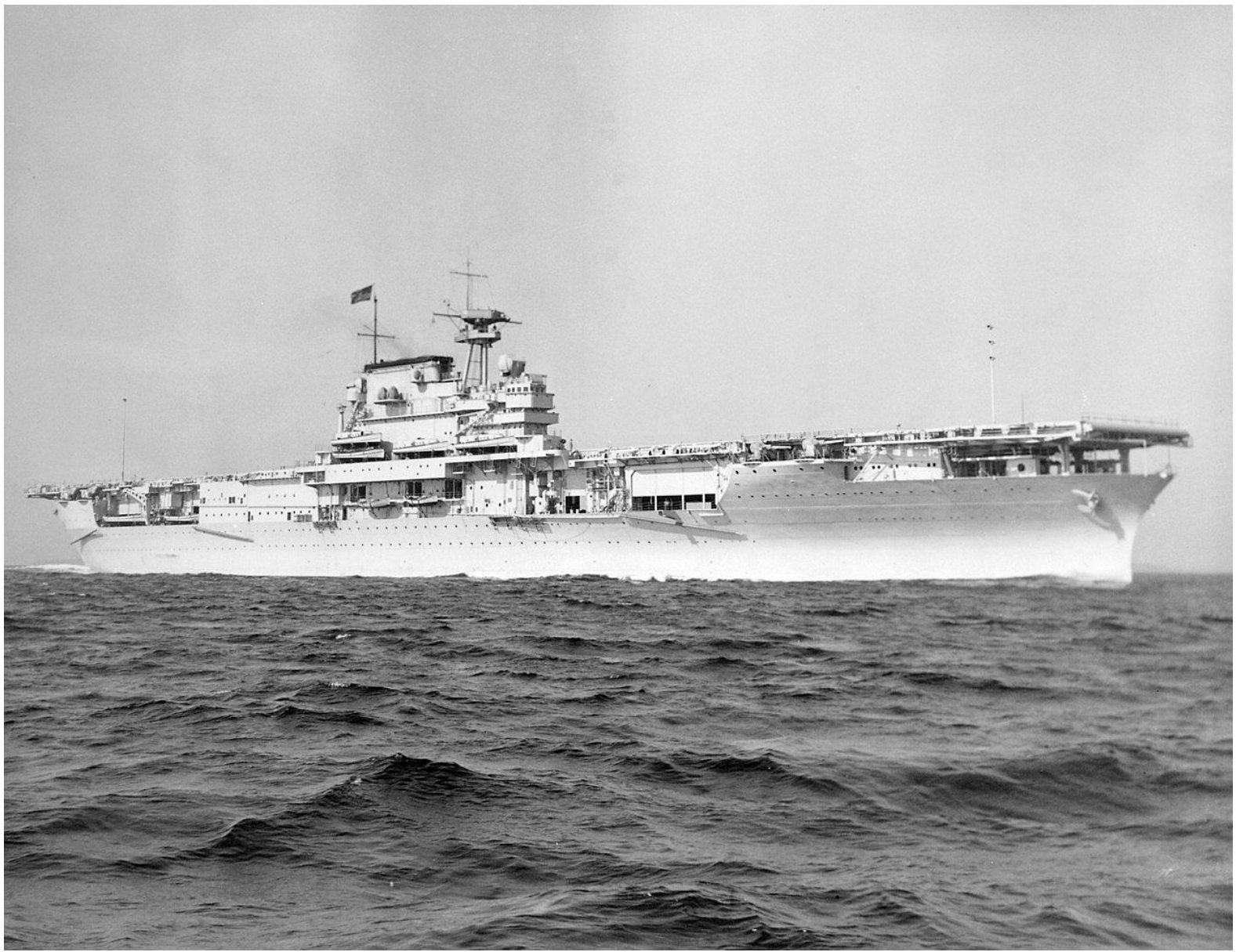
Infographic for the Battle of Midway (Encyclopedia Britannica)



Midway Atoll (U.S. Navy)



Devastators preparing to take off from the USS *Enterprise* (U.S. Navy)



The USS Yorktown before WWII (U.S. Navy)



USS *Yorktown* after being hit by three Japanese bombs, June 4th 1942 (U.S. Navy)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why was Midway so important to the Japanese and American military?
2. Why was the intelligence intercepted from the Japanese so important to the US at the battle of Midway?
3. For the Japanese, why was Midway such a turning point in the fight for the Pacific?
4. Why did the crew of the Yorktown feel such a connection to the ship?
5. Why did Japanese Admiral Yamamoto believe that the Japanese would only have 6-12 months of naval superiority in the Pacific?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To learn more about the experiences of Virginians in World War II, view *Virginians at War: Battle of Iwo Jima* at vawarmemorial.org. Looking to do more research? Check out the links below.

- Background on the Battle of Midway. [Link](#)
- Extensive article on Midway by the US Navy. [Link](#)
- Deep dive into the battle of Midway. [Link](#)
- Short video overview of Midway. [Link](#)