

# Virginians at War

## WWII: Intelligence

### Resource Packet

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

**Program Description:** Virginians at War: Intelligence looks at the details of American codebreaking and code-developing efforts against the Japanese in World War II, beginning with the failure to collect intelligence prior to the attack at Pearl Harbor. The turning point of the war in the Pacific, the Battle of Midway, is highlighted as a great success for American intelligence efforts.

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**Length:** 19:52

**Streaming link:** <https://vimeo.com/367084301>

#### Featured Speakers:

CT1C Charles Hagedorn, Warrenton  
TSGT Stephen Stanley Krawczyk, Manassas  
Y2C William Raymond May, Grundy  
HTCM Charles J. Meyer Jr., Norfolk  
LCDR Clarence E. Sasse, Norfolk  
RADM Donald "Mac" Showers, Arlington  
CAPT Ken W. Simmons, Alexandria



# GLOSSARY

## IMPORTANT TERMS

- **Atoll:** a ring-shaped coral reef, island, or series of islets
- **Attack on Pearl Harbor:** Japan's surprise attack on the U.S. Naval Base on December 7, 1941 that led to the United States' entry into World War II
- **Battle of Coral Sea:** fought from May 4-8, 1942; the first air-sea battle in history and marked an early success for American intelligence efforts in the Pacific, as the U.S. Navy was able to break enough of the Japanese code to discover their plan to attack in advance
- **Battle of Midway:** fought from June 4-7, 1942; battle that marked the turning point in the Pacific and represented a major success for the U.S. Navy's intelligence efforts
- **JN-25:** the main code used by the Imperial Japanese Navy during WWII that was effectively decrypted by the United States Navy by the Battle of Midway
- **Order of Battle:** a list of the military units to be located within the field of operations for a battle
- **Station HYPO:** also known as Fleet Radion Unit Pacific – the U.S. Navy's intelligence unit based in Hawaii during World War II that worked on deciphering Japanese codes, including JN-25
- **USS Yorktown:** an aircraft carrier that was sunk at the Battle of Midway on June 6, after destroying several Japanese aircraft carriers and taking the brunt of the Japanese attack

## NOTABLE PEOPLE

- **Lieutenant Wilfred "Jasper" Holmes:** a U.S. Naval officer at Station HYPO who helped devise the plan for the Battle of Midway
- **Rear Admiral Edwin Layton:** Officer who served under Admiral Nimitz and used code-breaking and decoded messages to plan war operations
- **Admiral Chūichi Nagumo:** Commander-In-Chief of Japan's First Air Fleet during the Battle of Midway
- **Admiral Chester Nimitz:** Commander-In-Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet during WWII
- **Lieutenant Commander Joseph Rochefort:** U.S. Navy Commander in charge of Station HYPO
- **Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto:** Commander-In-Chief of the Imperial Japanese Navy during WWII

# TIMELINE

- **1940:** U.S. Intelligence can decipher Japanese code "PURPLE"; "PURPLE" messages contain diplomatic information, but no specific military information
- **1941:** LCDR Joseph Rochefort, a Japanese linguist and cryptanalyst, is sent to command Station HYPO in Hawaii
- **December 1941:** Japanese attack Pearl Harbor on the 7<sup>th</sup>; Admiral Chester Nimitz is designated as Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas
- **March 1942:** Station HYPO codebreakers have recovered 25% of JN-25
- **May 1942:** LCDR Rochefort's cryptanalysis team is able to review, analyze and report as many as 140 messages per day
- **May 4-8, 1942:** The Battle of the Coral Sea takes place; U.S. presence in the Coral Sea is high, thanks to previously decoded messages that had indicated a future Japanese attack in the area; the Japanese attack is mostly thwarted, and morale of the U.S. Navy is lifted slightly after several previous defeats
- **June 4-7, 1942:** The Battle of Midway takes place; the U.S. Naval Fleet and Station HYPO set a trap for the Imperial Japanese Navy after partially breaking Japanese JN-25 code that suggested a future operation at location "AF" on June 4 or 5; Station HYPO determines "AF" is code for Midway by sending a fake, un-coded message that Midway is in distress; American victory at Midway represents a turning-point of the war in the Pacific
- **April 18, 1943:** Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, leader of the Imperial Japanese Navy, is shot down over Bougainville by U.S. Army Air Force P-38 planes; decoded messages by U.S. Naval intelligence provided the location of Yamamoto's planned route and allowed for interception of his plane



LCDR Joseph Rochefort

(NSA)



Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, circa  
1941-42

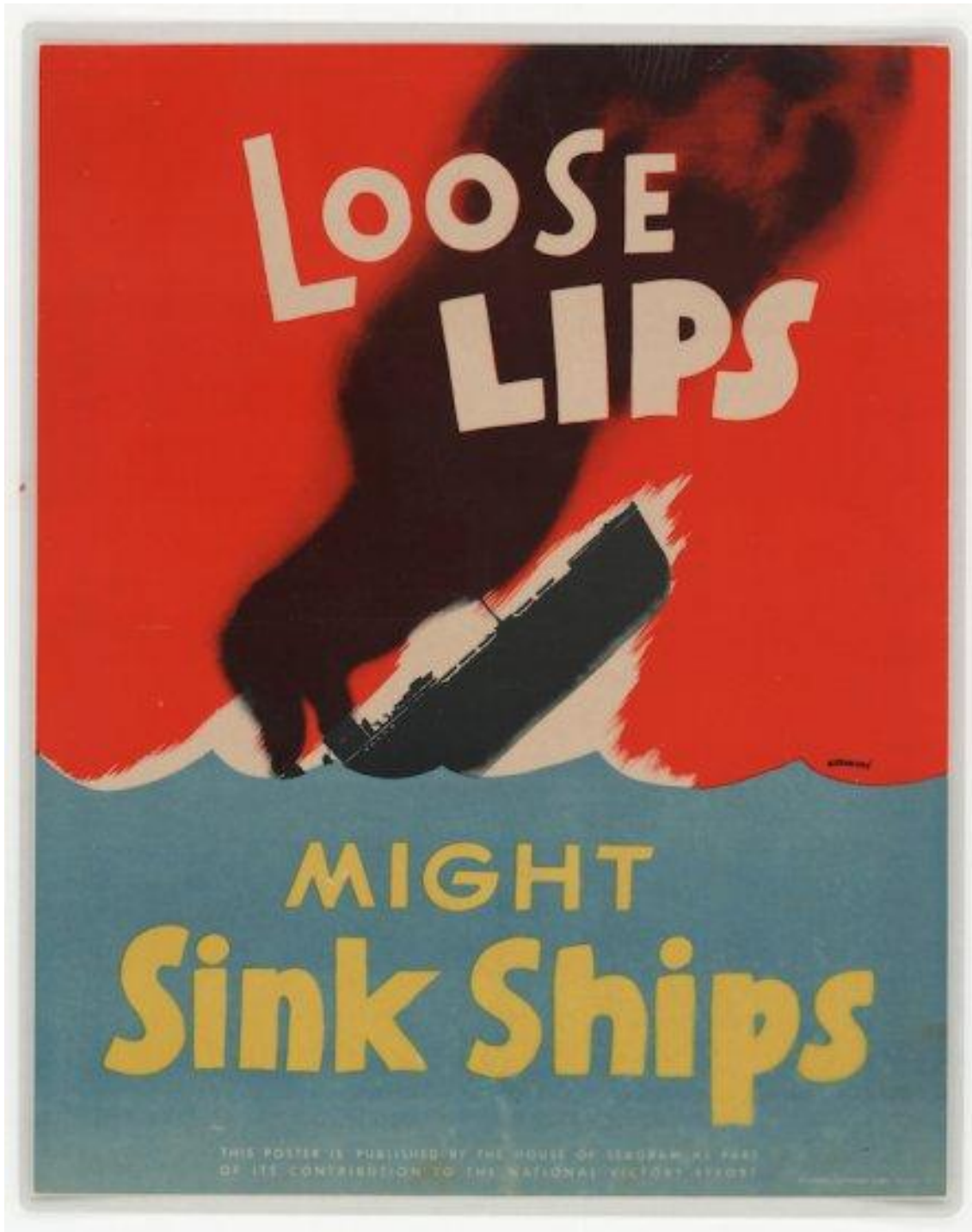
(U.S. Navy)



Admiral Chester Nimitz, circa 1945-47

(U.S. Navy)





World War II propaganda poster

(National Archives)

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is the Battle of Midway considered the turning point for World War II in the Pacific?
2. How did the Battle of the Coral Sea help U.S. forces to prepare for the Battle at Midway? How did it hinder Japanese forces?
3. Who would you say “won” the Battle of the Coral Sea, and why?
4. What was the significance of the USS *Yorktown*’s presence at the Battle of Midway?
5. What purpose did the “Loose Lips Sink Ships” propaganda poster serve?
6. What are some modern examples of ciphers that you might use in your day-to-day life? Who are modern-day code-breakers?

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To learn more about the experiences of Virginians in World War II, view *Virginians at War: WWII Submarines* and other films at [vawarmemorial.org](http://vawarmemorial.org). Looking to do more research? Check out the links below.

- <https://www.history.com/news/battle-midway-codebreakers-allies-pacific-theater>
- <https://www.nsa.gov/About-Us/Current-Leadership/Article-View/Article/1623007/capt-joseph-j-rochefort-usn/>
- <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-almost-everyone-failed-prepare-pearl-harbor-1-180961144/>
- <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/research/histories/biographies-list/bios-n/nimitz-chester-w.html>
- <https://time.com/4591841/loose-lips-sink-ships-posters/>
- <https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/Museum-Exhibits/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/196193/war-of-secrets-cryptology-in-wwii/#:~:text=Cryptology%20is%20the%20study%20of,helped%20shorten%20the%20war%20considerably.>

