

The Battle of Midway

By Spring 1942, the odds of the war in the Pacific lay heavily in favor of the Empire of Japan. The country's colonial goals were being met almost daily, enveloping new territories and whole countries into the Japanese war machine. The sorely needed industrial materials provided by the mineral-rich areas of southeast Asia and various Pacific islands not only supported the Japanese war effort, but ambitions to be the ruling power of the Pacific. The only threat to the Empire was the United States, specifically the naval carrier fleet at Pearl Harbor.

This advantage changed when Lieutenant Commander Joseph Rochefort and his team of codebreakers successfully determined that Japan's next target was the northeast Hawaiian island of Midway. This uninhabitable atoll played host to a U.S. airstrip that would have made invasion of Hawai'i or the American west coast possible. However, this was not Admiral Yamamoto's plan. His objective was to lure the American carrier fleet out to Midway into a trap that would destroy the only other true opposition in the Pacific, leaving Japan to move freely as the region's sole naval superpower. Admiral Chester Nimitz ordered the USS Enterprise, USS Lexington, and USS Hornet, along with a fleet of cruisers, submarines, and aircraft to intercept the enemy.



On the morning of June 4th, 1942, two plans were put into action: the secret Japanese attack on the U.S. carrier fleet, and the American attack on the Kidō Butai, Japan's naval power in the Pacific. Through a show of incredible bravery against all odds, American forces, though initially unsuccessful and aerially outmatched, successfully destroyed all four aircraft carriers of the Kidō Butai. A fateful decision to neglect direct orders by the fleet's Commander, Chūichi Nagumo, set into motion a series of events that prolonged, and later permanently detained, the launch of his carrier strike team. He was never able to recover his attack strength while his crews masterfully evaded U.S. torpedo and dive-bombing attacks. Packed wing-to-wing in the carrier hangars, Nagumo's fully fueled and armed strike team waited for an opportunity that would never come. American SBD Dauntless dive-bombers began landing hits to the carriers Kaga, Soryu, Akagi, and eventually Hiryu, causing the aircrafts below to explode and destroy each ship from the inside out.

