

MIDWAY



On April 18, 1942, American bombs fell on Tokyo. Launched from the American aircraft carrier U.S.S. Hornet, the sixteen B-25 bombers attacked Tokyo in retaliation for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The attack on Tokyo, known as Doolittle's Raid, did minimal damage to Tokyo but boosted American morale after a stream of disappointing losses. The attack also had major psychological effects on the Japanese demonstrating that the Japanese mainland was vulnerable to American attacks. Doolittle's Raid prompted a shift in Japanese priorities. The American fleet had to be destroyed. The Japanese would not risk another attack on Tokyo and the Emperor.

Admiral Yamamoto, commander of the Japanese fleet, had a plan. He believed that he could lure the American fleet into battle by attacking Midway Island, the last American base in the North Pacific. American codebreakers, however, had already broken the Japanese Navy's code. American Admiral Chester Nimitz ordered U.S. carriers to positions just off Midway. When the Japanese launched their aircraft against the island on June 4, 1942, the Americans were ready.

American anti-aircraft guns wiped out 38 of the Japanese planes. As the Japanese were preparing for a second wave of attack, American planes took off from the aircraft carriers *U.S.S. Enterprise*, *U.S.S. Hornet*, and *U.S.S. Yorktown*. The Japanese were caught between attacks with aircraft, fuel, and bombs exposed on the decks of their carriers. One of the Japanese carriers was sunk. Two others were damaged and set on fire and would sink a few hours later. A fourth Japanese carrier would be found by American planes and sunk the next day. Admiral Yamamoto retreated with the remaining vessels. Unfortunately, one U.S. carrier, the *U.S.S. Yorktown*, was sunk in the battle.

The Battle of Midway was an important American victory and a turning point in the Pacific war. The Japanese Fleet lost four large carriers and 250 aircraft. These were losses the Japanese could not easily replace. Japan's advance in the Pacific had been stopped. The Battle of Midway marked the limit of Japanese expansion toward the Hawaiian Islands and put Japan on the defensive.