

The Battle of Midway, the turning point of World War II in the Pacific Theatre, marks one of the most successful American military intelligence breakthroughs. Just six short months after the devastating Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, American naval forces were still recovering and in no position to face major military challenges. However, through extensive teamwork between sheer bravery, calculated risk, and cryptographic ingenuity, the American forces were able to outsmart the Imperial Japanese Navy and turn the tide of the war. The Battle of Midway not only delivered a decisive blow, but it also demonstrated the power of preparation, intelligence, and execution— lessons that remain relevant today.

Arguably, the most important aspect to American success came before any actual conflict: the codebreakers. The American naval codebreakers, led by Captain Joseph Rochefort, broke the Japanese code, which was encoded through codebooks. Through this, Station HYPO in Hawaii was able to discover plans for an attack on “AF”. The only problem was that there was no code in the codebooks for “AF”, meaning that it represented a new destination. The elaborate minds working at Station HYPO communicated with Midway and asked them to broadcast a radio message stating that the island’s desalination plant had broken down. The message was not encoded to make sure that, if intercepted, the Japanese would be able to decipher it. The ingenious plan worked. The Japanese soon sent their own message that “AF’s” desalination plant was broken down, confirming the identity of “AF”. This clever trick not only revealed the location of the surprise attack but also went on to reveal the date and time of the attack, helping Admiral Nimitz to prepare his own surprise for the Imperial Japanese Navy. The intelligence work behind the Battle of Midway teaches us that information can be more useful than brute force when used correctly. Despite being outnumbered and outgunned, the American forces were able to utilize their superior communication skills to gain an upper hand, balancing the weakness

in arms against the Japanese. Today, the world is becoming increasingly shaped by information and technology, which highlights the importance of mastery in these fields. Whether it's top-secret government work, everyday business practices, or simply day-to-day decisions, the ability to solve problems and think critically is essential for success, no matter the situation. The precision and teamwork shown by the codebreakers set an example of how victories do not typically come from the efforts of one person, but actually stem from a greater collaboration and trust in a team.

The location of Midway creates an understanding of the draw for possession. For both sides, Midway Atoll is quite literally mid-way across the Pacific Ocean. Therefore, it was a vital destination for both ships and aircraft alike, as it served as an intermediate to refuel and launch from. Japan was aware of the strength that came with Midway Atoll, and Admiral Yamamoto of the Imperial Japanese Navy devised a plan to end America's power in the Pacific Theatre. Essentially, Admiral Yamamoto's plan was to attack Midway, thus luring the remaining American aircraft carriers in the Pacific to defend the atoll. After they had been drawn in, a much larger ambush would crush the American Navy amongst the confusion of the surprise, almost in the same fashion as Pearl Harbor. Admiral Yamamoto believed that this attack would eliminate the United States as a strong naval power in the Pacific, forcing the United States to negotiate or even withdraw from the war. Thankfully for the incredible work at Station HYPO, Admiral Yamamoto's plan would backfire, crippling the Imperial Japanese Fleet.

One of the most satisfying feelings is watching hard work pay off, and that is exactly what happened for the American intelligence efforts. The careful work involved with accurately decoding messages and foiling a complex military plot is a powerful example of that feeling. Had the codebreakers at Station HYPO failed to recognize the impending attack or disregarded

it, the outcome of the Battle of Midway may have been drastically different. Their work can still be used today as a reminder to complete all tasks with due diligence, as we can never truly know how far the impact of our efforts might carry. The codebreakers at Station HYPO most likely did not foresee that their heroic work would prevent the United States Navy from possibly becoming nonviable for the remainder of WWII.

The Battle of Midway was *the* turning point of the war in the Pacific because of the drastic loss Japan faced. As the saying goes, “don’t put all of your eggs in one basket.” Japan, under the assumption of complete secrecy and surprise, placed all of its “eggs” in the basket that is Midway. Unbeknownst to Admiral Yamamoto and the Imperial Japanese Navy, Admiral Nimitz had developed a trap of his own. With the invaluable information he was receiving from American intelligence, he moved his carriers under the cover of night northwest of Midway Atoll to “Point Luck.” Admiral Nimitz also packed Midway with aircraft to prepare for the oncoming Japanese air attack from the infamous Kidō Butai, who were also responsible for the tragedy of Pearl Harbor. The strategy behind “Point Luck” was that it was the best position to launch an attack from before they were discovered by Japanese scouts. Admiral Nimitz also ordered Admiral Halsey and his two carriers to return to Hawaii, making the Japanese believe that the main American carrier force was in the south, opposite of “Point Luck.” Admiral Nimitz’s careful preparation and deception further helped the United States maintain the secrecy of their ambush. Caught in the surprise of the deception, Vice Admiral Nagumo was forced to make the decision between sending a lesser force to attack the American carrier or waiting for the rest of the force to return, allowing them to refuel and rearm. However, this would let the American planes launch first. This proposition, coined as Nagumo’s Dilemma, ultimately led to the loss of four Japanese carriers as a result. Following Japanese doctrine, Admiral Nagumo chose to

withhold the attack. Consequently, the American planes launched first and delivered a devastating blow to the Imperial Japanese fleet. Admiral Nimitz's success is a reminder that being prepared and understanding when to act is often more important than brute strength. His careful decisions during planning and execution with decent precision turned an outnumbered position into a tactical advantage. In today's world, success often comes down to preparation, flexibility, and choosing the right moment to act. On the other side, Japan's defeat at the Battle of Midway teaches the danger of overconfidence and underestimating one's opponent. Admiral Yamato believed his plan to be flawless and did not account for the possibility of American counterintelligence. Today, this serves as a reminder that no plan is invincible. Humility and adaptability are essential, even when you may feel ahead. It is important to explore all possibilities, even when success is almost guaranteed. Better to be safe than sorry could not shine more clearly through Admiral Yamato's plan, and is one of the most applicable examples of this famous phrase.

The actions at the Battle of Midway relate to me on a personal level. Doing more research and reconnecting with American history has formed a new appreciation for the way I am a leader and how I make an impact in the world around me. The work of the codebreakers at Station HYPO symbolizes the importance of performing well when you are not being watched. In my school and extracurricular life, I strive to always complete tasks to the best of my ability, regardless of who it is for or who may be watching me. Specifically, on my high school varsity soccer team, I was presented with the "Unsung Hero" award, which speaks to the work I put in as a captain playing central defensive midfielder. I was not the goal scorer or the leader in assists, but I created plays and often started plays that led to goals. Being in this position, the average fan does not watch for this type of play, but my coach wanted to remind me and others that hard

work, even when away from the spotlight, does not go unnoticed. I plan to carry the values demonstrated by Admiral Nimitz and the United States Navy during WWII, and especially at the Battle of Midway. In order to be successful like the United States Navy, strategic vision and excellent teamwork are a necessity, especially in a group setting. The Battle of Midway may have taken place over 80 years ago, but the legacy it left behind continues to inspire. From the brilliance of the codebreakers to the bravery of the servicemen, all behind the steady leadership of Admiral Nimitz, the American victory is an enduring lesson in how courage and preparation can shape history. Uncertainty and challenge are ever-present in today's world, and the story of Midway remains a beacon of what is possible when a community works together towards one common goal. Just as the servicemen at Midway shaped history, I hope to shape the communities I am a part of through the same level of dedication and teamwork.

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