

The Battle of Midway 4th –7th June 1942

David Child-Dennis

Part 2

Midway – 4th - 7th June 1942 – the turning point?

The Battle of Midway has been rightly identified as the pivotal event of the Pacific war. The Japanese originally intended it to be part of a complex plan to remove the US fleet from the Central Pacific and restrict it to Hawaii and the west coast of the United States. The Japanese believed that once they had achieved this goal, the Americans would quickly agree to an armistice and Japan would achieve its 'East Asian Co-prosperity Zone'. They were wrong.

The architect of this massive Japanese attack – Operation 'MO', Admiral Yamamoto, had spent some time at Harvard University in the United States before the war. As such he spoke or at least read English, an unusual accomplishment at that time for any Japanese, and had an appreciation of the American psyche. He had warned at the commencement of hostilities that Japan would need to achieve a decisive victory against the U.S within the first year or face a protracted war that Japan could not win. The Imperial General Staff chose to ignore his advice.

A month earlier, The Imperial General Staff had seen the Battle of the Coral Sea as a Japanese victory. They had lost the light aircraft carrier *Shoho* and suffered extensive damage to one of their most modern fleet carriers, *Shokaku*. Her sister *Zuikaku* had escaped damage but had lost a number of her highly experienced aircrew. Thus two of their most modern carriers were unavailable for the Midway operation. Their presence may have turned a Japanese defeat into victory. However, they had sunk the *Lexington* and believed they had also damaged or sunk a second large carrier. As it transpired, they had mistaken *Lexington* for another carrier because she appeared undamaged at the time of the second attack.

The most important advantage the Americans enjoyed was their ability to read the main Japanese Naval Code (JN25) from before the war. This had initially been cracked by the specialists working at Bletchley Park in England and had been supplied to the Americans during an exchange of technical information in October 1940. The design for the double cavity magnetron had also been supplied which allowed for a more accurate centimetric radar to be built by the Americans.

The ability to read the Japanese Naval Codes gave the American Navy the opportunity to out manoeuvre the Japanese and arrive in position before Japanese submarine patrols sent to intercept the U.S carrier groups moving west from Hawaii. Thus the Japanese were completely surprised by the US carriers as they appeared from the north west of Midway soon after the Japanese began their final approach for the invasion of the atoll. The Americans not only knew where and when the attack would take place, but also most of the naval forces assigned to it. Nimitz must have had a few sleepless nights trying to figure out how best to counter this massive thrust with such limited resources.

The forces.

For the purpose of this part of the campaign, the forces as they historically appeared will be used. This means the Aleutian invasion forces will not be available to the Japanese for reinforcement of the Midway operation. The same will apply to the American units defending the Aleutians.

The US Navy operated thirty-two PBY Catalina flying boats from Midway. Some (how many is unknown) were equipped with radar and used in night torpedo attacks. From all accounts they were unsuccessful. However, they constituted a considerable threat to the Japanese who appear to have taken them seriously. Accordingly, they will attack individually and use only 1D6 in their torpedo attack. The defending Japanese vessels use the standard night-time gunnery rules applied to AA fire.

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AA fire doctrine.

As a result of their experiences during the Coral Sea battle, both sides changed their AA gunnery tactics. Neither the Allies nor the Japanese were satisfied with the accuracy or lethality of their AA gunnery. By the time of Midway these deficiencies had not been addressed. If the AA factors appear to be too low for this period, players should keep the above in mind. However, the Japanese did adopt an AA barrage fire plan, later known as a 'box barrage' for their 8inch gunned cruisers. While this extended the reach of their AA fire, it appears not to have significantly increased lethality.

High Level Bombing

B17's from Midway attacked the Japanese on a number of occasions during the course of the battle. They achieved no hits against ship targets. To simulate their poor performance, each B17 counter will be allocated 1D6 on a bombing run.

Torpedo Attacks – B26 Marauders

B26's from Midway were pressed into service as torpedo bombers, a task they were completely unsuitable for. To represent this, each B26 air counter will be allocated 1D6 per torpedo attack.

Submarines.

Submarines were present in some number on both sides of the battle, the Japanese even ordering one of their units to shell Midway Atoll in order to disrupt the US air operations. I would have to conclude that this may have been the first 'kamikaze' mission of the war! Fortunately for the crew, the mission was cancelled before it could take place. While the destroyer *Hammann* and the carrier *Yorktown* were both sunk by a Japanese submarine (*I-168*), the US submarines were also very active and made several nearly successful attempts against Japanese units. Accordingly both sides will be permitted three submarine attacks against any surface vessels of their choice. All submarine/anti-submarine rules will apply.

Weather.

The weather played an important part during the campaign. The Japanese had relied on approaching the Aleutians using a large weather front to obscure their movement from the Americans. The approach to Midway was less likely to be obscured by a frontal system, although this was a possibility. To simulate this, players should roll 3D6 each and add the results together. This represents the maximum unaided daytime visibility in inches. If the combined total is 15 or less, there is a weather front over the area. Players will then reduce reconnaissance dice rolls by 1D6 (to a minimum of 1D6) for each dice roll and all ships will reduce their speed to a maximum of 6 inches on the game table. This represents an average rate of advance of 20 knots. If the dice rolls total 30 to 36, the atmosphere is extremely clear and the seas very calm. Visibility rolls will be increased by +1 on each dice roll.

Operation 'MO' Victory Conditions- (from the Japanese point of view).

Major Strategic Victory

The Japanese objective was to occupy the Midway atoll. If the Japanese succeed in destroying all US major surface warships within a 300 mile search zone around Midway they will have won a major strategic victory. It is assumed that in this event the US Marine defenders will be unable to resist a Japanese landing and will be overrun within two days at best.

Tactical Victory

The Japanese capture Midway and manage to force a US Navy withdrawal of surface units to at least 200 miles away from the Midway Atoll. This would preclude a US counter attack with aircraft. The PT Boats attached to Kure and Midway do not count towards victory conditions being reconnaissance and local defence forces only.

The Battle of Midway 4th –7th June 1942

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Minor Tactical Victory

The Japanese fail to capture Midway but manage to sink one US aircraft carrier and reduce the Midway aircraft fleet by 50%. Japanese losses are less than US losses.

Minor Tactical Loss

Japanese fail to capture Midway and lose one aircraft carrier or two heavy cruisers.

Major Tactical Loss

Japanese fail to capture Midway and lose two aircraft carriers and 50% of their aircraft strength or four heavy cruisers or two battleships. US losses are ignored

Major Strategic Loss

Japanese fail to capture Midway and lose three aircraft carriers and up to 50% of their aircraft or four cruisers and three battleships and 50% of their destroyers. US losses are ignored

Japanese Disaster

Japanese fail to capture Midway and lose at least 50% of their entire fleet in the Midway operation. US losses are ignored.

Orders of Battle

Imperial Japanese Navy

Carrier Striking Force (First Mobile Force)

Vice Admiral Nagumo

Carrier Division 1

Akagi

21 A6M2 Fighters (Zero) bombers (Kate)	21 D3Y Dive bombers (Val)	21 B5N2 Torpedo
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Kaga

30 A6M2 Fighters (Zero) bombers (Kate)	23 D3Y Dive bombers (Val)	30 B5N2 (Torpedo)
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Carrier Division 2

Vice Admiral Yamaguchi

Hiryu

21 A6M2 Fighters (Zero) Bombers (Kate)	21 D3Y Dive bombers (Val)	21 B5N2 Torpedo
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Soryu

21 A6M2 Fighters (Zero) Bombers (Kate)	21 D3Y Dive bombers (Val)	21 B5N2 Torpedo
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Cruiser Div. 8

CA *Tone*, CA *Chikuma*

Battleship Div 3, Second Section

BC *Haruna*, BC *Kirishima*

Screen

Destroyer Divisions 4,10,17

12 modern destroyers. 4 in each division

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Midway Occupation Force

Vice Admiral Kondo

Covering Group

Cruiser Division 4, First Section

CA *Atago*, CA *Chokai*

Cruiser Division 5

CA *Myoko*, CA *Haguro*

Battleship Division 3, First Section

BC *Kongo*, BC *Hiei*

Screen

Destroyer Divisions 2 and 9

7 modern DD in total

Light Carrier

Zuiho 12 A6M2 Fighters (Zero) 11 D3Y Dive bombers (Vals)

1DD escort.

Close Support Group

Vice Admiral Kurita

Cruiser Division 7

CA *Suzuya*, CA *Kumano*, CA *Mikuma*, CA *Mogami*

Main Body (First Fleet)

Admiral Yamamoto

Battleship Division 1

BA *Yamato*, BA *Mutsu*, BA *Nagato*

Light Carrier

Hosho 8 B5N2 Torpedo bombers (Kate)

1DD escort

Destroyer Squadron 3

CL *Sendai*

Destroyer Divisions 11,19,20

12 modern DD. 4 per division.

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United States Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas

Carrier Striking Force

Rear Admiral Fletcher

Task Force 17

Rear Admiral Fletcher

Carrier Group

CV-5 *Yorktown*

VF-3 Fighting Squadron (25 F4F-4 Wildcat
Dauntless)

VB-3 Bombing Squadron (18 SBD)

VT-3 VT-3 Torpedo Squadron (13 TBD Devastator)

Cruiser Group

CA34 *Astoria*, CA33 *Portland*

Destroyer Squadron 2

6 DD

Task Force 16

Rear Admiral Spruance

Carrier Group

CV-6 *Enterprise*

VF-6 Fighting Squadron (27 F4F-4 Wildcat
Dauntless)

VB-6 Bombing Squadron (19 SBD-2)

VT-6 Torpedo Squadron (14 TBD Devastator)

CV-8 *Hornet*

VF-8 Fighting Squadron (27 F4F-4 Wildcat
Dauntless)

VB-8 Bombing Squadron (19 SBD-2)

VT-8 Torpedo Squadron (15 TBD Devastator)

Cruiser Group

CA32 *New Orleans*, CA36 *Minneapolis*, CA44 *Vincennes*, CA26 *North Hampton*, CA24
Pensacola

CL51 *Atlanta*

Destroyer Screen

Destroyer Squadron 1 (4DD)

Destroyer Squadron 6 (5 DD)

Shore Based Air, Midway

Patrol Wings 1 & 2

32 PBV-5 and 5a Catalina (some radar equipped for torpedo attacks at night)

6-TBF Avenger (first to arrive in the Pacific)

Marine Aircraft Group 22 (MAG-22)

VMF 221 (Marine Fighting Squadron 221)

20 Brewster Buffalo, 7 F4F-3 Wildcat

VMSB-241 (Marine Scouting-Bombing Squadron 241)

The Battle of Midway 4th –7th June 1942

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11 SB2U-3 Vindicator, 16 SBD-2 Dauntless

Seventh Army Air Force Detachment

4- B26 Marauder, 19-B17F (in two detachments)

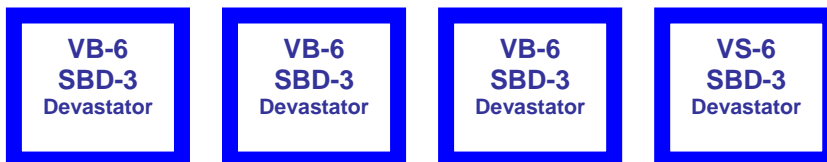
Battle of Midway
Carrier Air Group Compositions

USS Enterprise

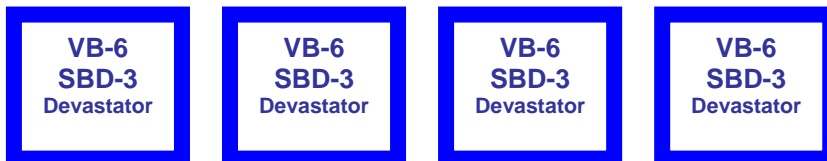
VT-6



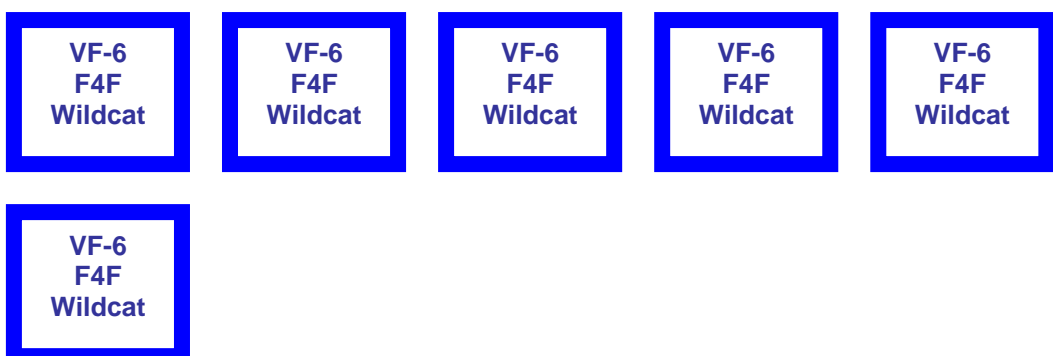
VS-6



VB-6



VF-6



Battle of Midway
Carrier Air Group Compositions

USS Hornet

VT-8

VT-8 TBD-1 Avenger	VT-8 TBD-1 Avenger	VT-8 TBD-1 Avenger	VT-8 TBD-1 Avenger
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VS-8

VB-8 SBD-3 Devastator	VB-8 SBD-3 Devastator	VB-8 SBD-3 Devastator	VS-8 SBD-3 Devastator
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VB-8

VB-8 SBD-3 Devastator	VB-8 SBD-3 Devastator	VB-8 SBD-3 Devastator	VB-8 SBD-3 Devastator
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VF-8

VF-8 F4F Wildcat	VF-8 F4F Wildcat	VF-8 F4F Wildcat	VF-8 F4F Wildcat	VF-8 F4F Wildcat
VF-8 F4F Wildcat				

Battle of Midway
Carrier Air Group Compositions

USS Yorktown

VT-3

VT-3 TBD-1 Avenger	VT-3 TBD-1 Avenger	VT-3 TBD-1 Avenger	VT-3 TBD-1 Avenger
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VS-3

VB-3 SBD-3 Devastator	VB-3 SBD-3 Devastator	VB-3 SBD-3 Devastator	VS-3 SBD-3 Devastator
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VB-3

VB-3 SBD-3 Devastator	VB-3 SBD-3 Devastator	VB-3 SBD-3 Devastator	VB-3 SBD-3 Devastator
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VMF-3

VMF-3 F4F Wildcat	VMF-3 F4F Wildcat	VMF-3 F4F Wildcat	VMF-3 F4F Wildcat	VMF-3 F4F Wildcat
VMF-3 F4F Wildcat				

Midway Shore based Air Groups

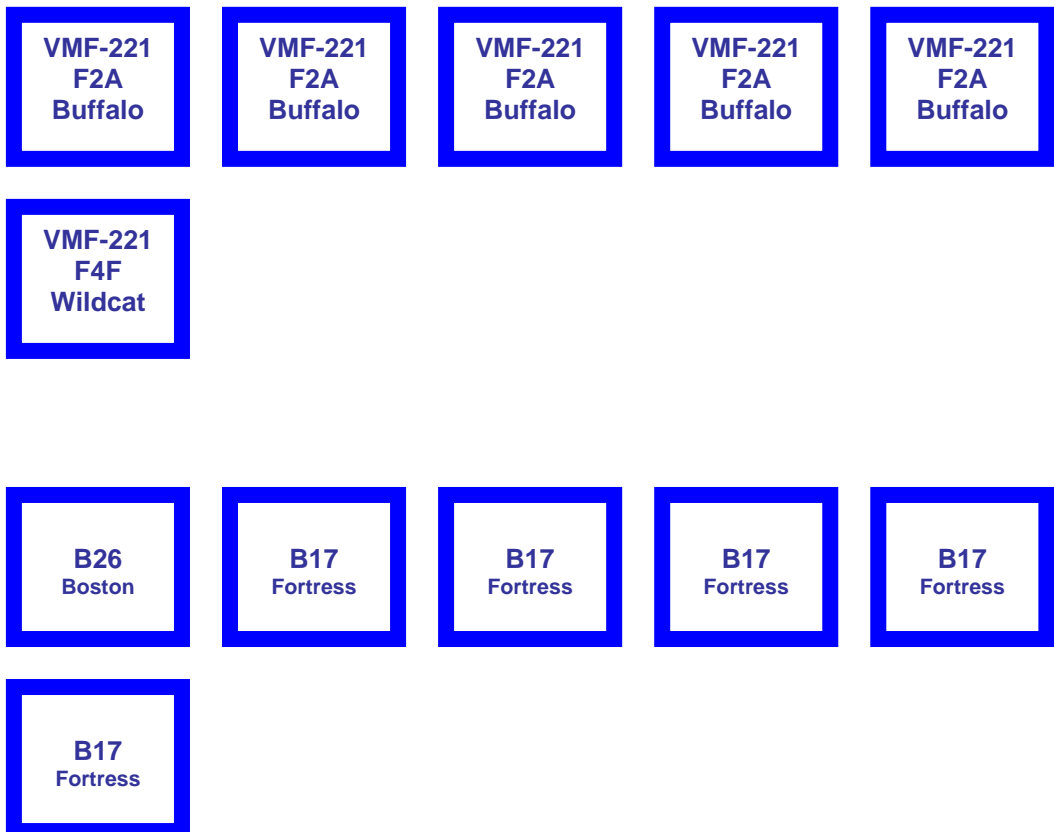
VT-8



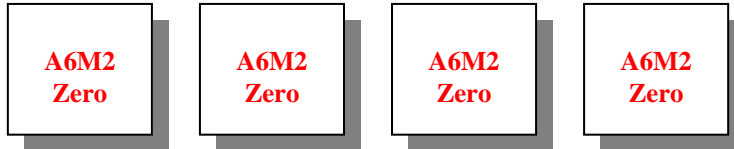
VMSB-241



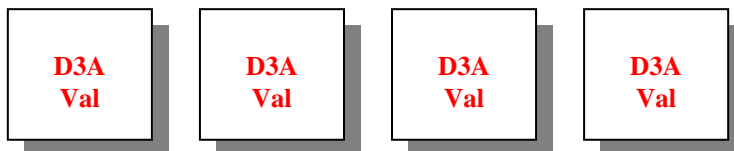
VMF-221



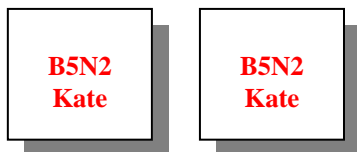
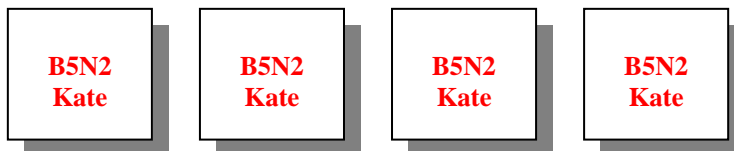
**Kaga Naval Air Group (NAG)
Battle of Midway – 5th June 1942**

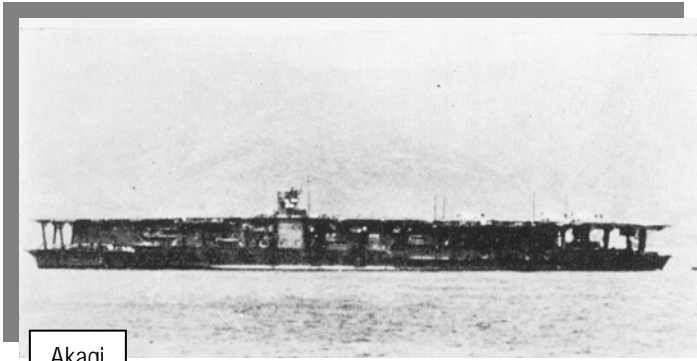


Dive Bombing Group



Level Bombing and Torpedo Attack Group

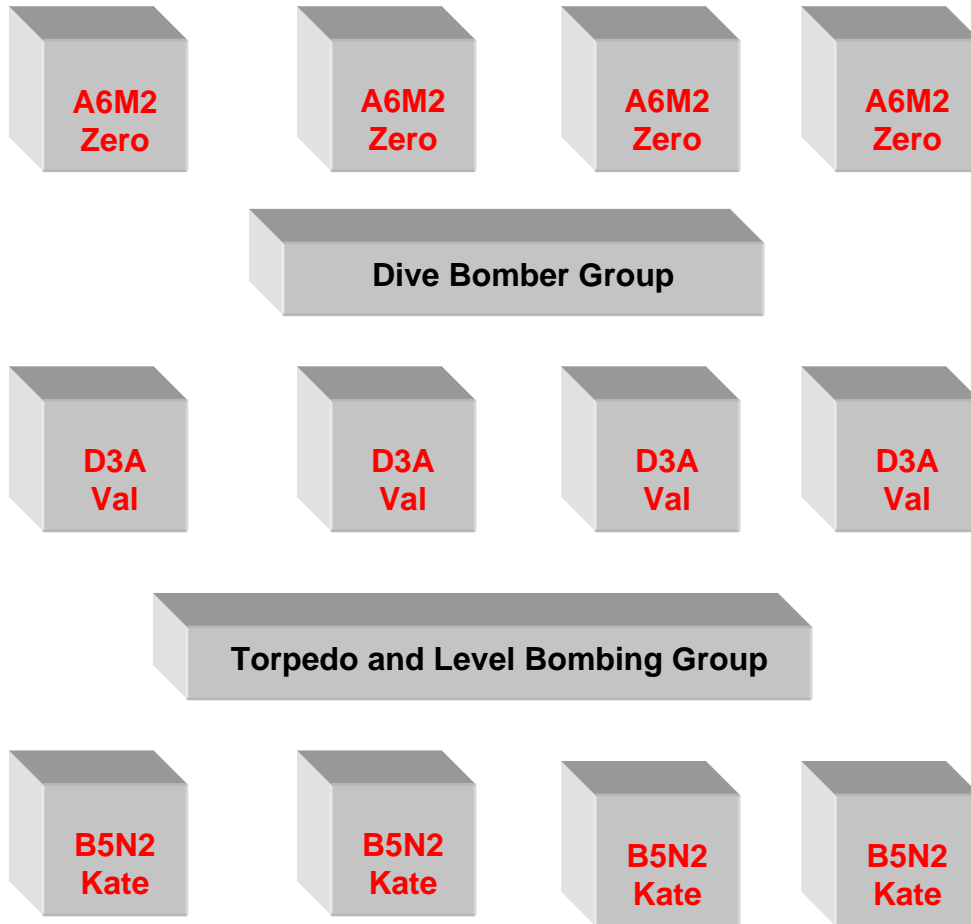


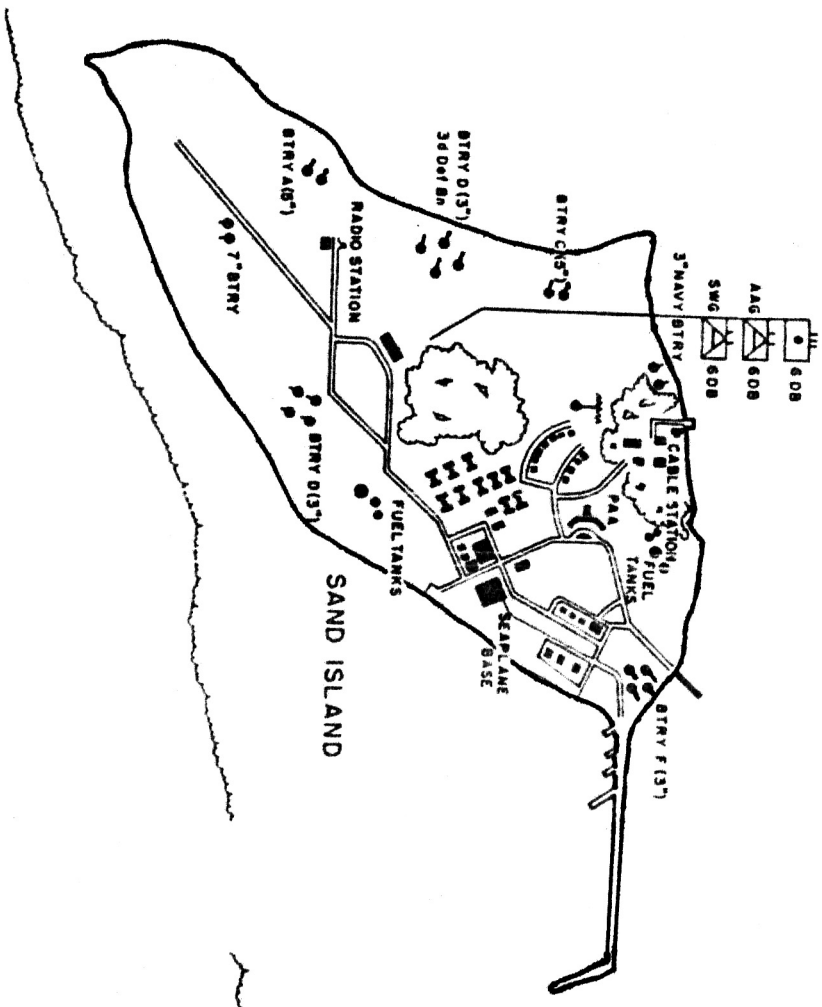


Akagi

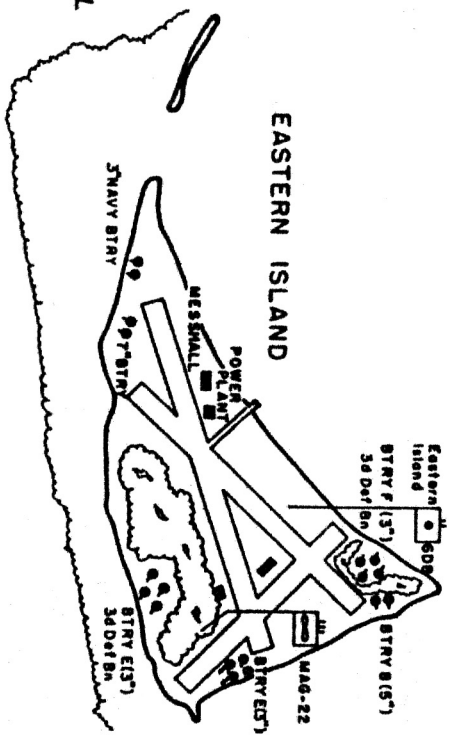
Akagi, Hiryu and Soryu Naval Air Groups (NAG)

Battle of Midway 5th June 1942



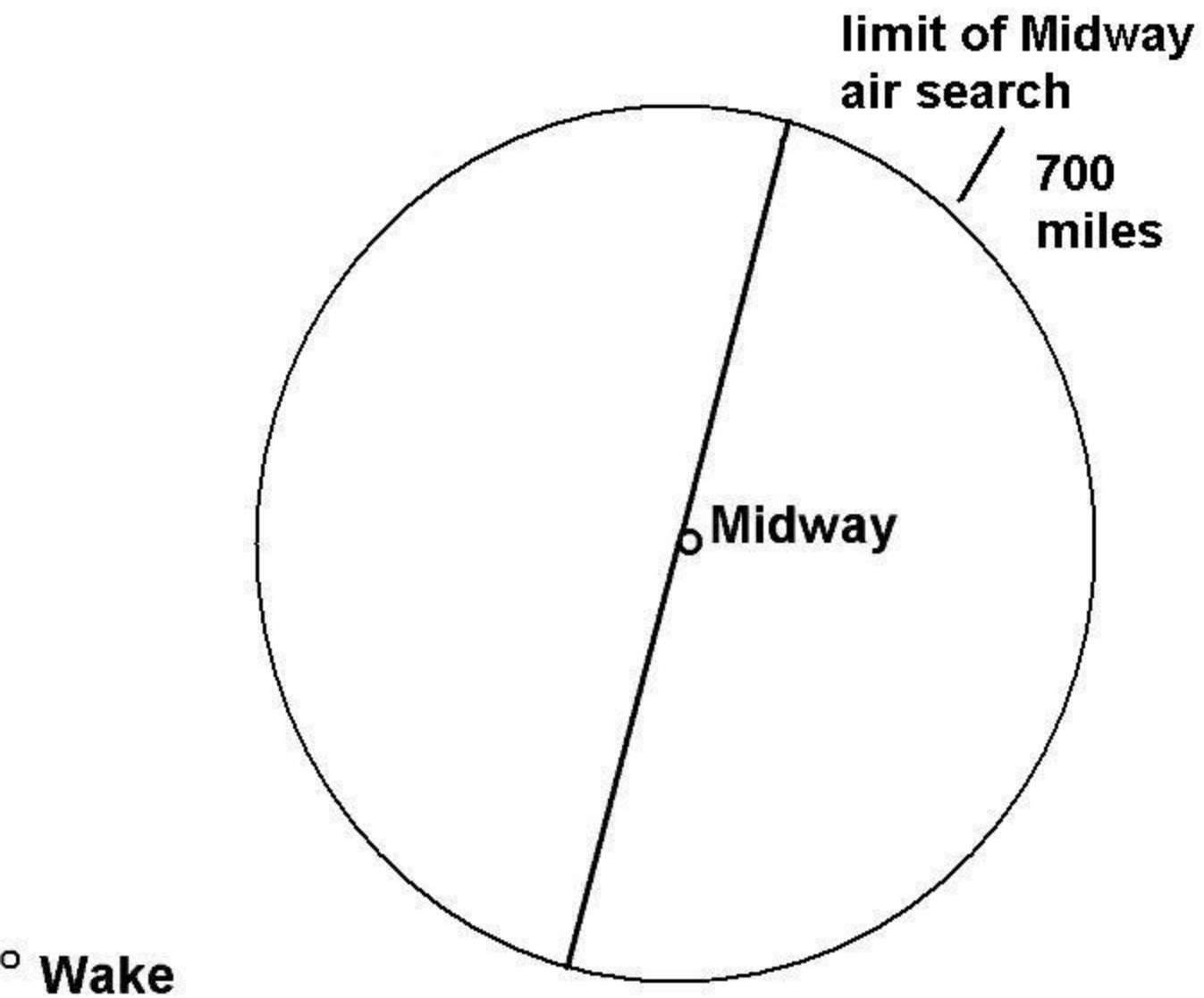


BROOKS CHANNEL



EASTERN ISLAND

PACIFIC OCEAN



250 miles



