

Course of World War II

Class 5

William A. Reader

williamreader40@gmail.com

America Before Pearl Harbor

Nye Committee

Officially known as the Special Committee on Investigation of the Munitions Industry

- Headed by Senator Gerald Nye of ND
- Set up in 1934 to investigate the causes of U.S. involvement in World War I

The report concluded that wartime loans and sales to the Allies was a major factor in getting the U.S. into World War I

Documented the huge profits that arms factories had made during World War I & implied that the “merchants of death” not only profited from the war but got us into it

Led to the various Neutrality Acts

America Isolationism & Pacifism

In 1935, historian Walter Millis published his best-selling *Road to War: America, 1914-1917*

- Gave rise to a demonology that “merchants of death,” aided by false Allied propaganda, had tricked America into war in order to make money

On 6 April 1935, 50,000 WWI veterans held a peace march on Washington

On 12 April 1935, some 175,000 college students staged a 1-hour anti-war strike

A 1935 Gallop Poll found that 70 percent of the respondents agreed that intervention in the Great War had been a mistake

Neutrality Act of 1935

Imposed an embargo on arms and war materials to all parties in a war

Declared that American citizens traveling on ships of warring nations do so at their own risk

Set to expire after 6 months

Invoked in the Italy-Ethiopia War

Neutrality Act of 1936

- Renewed the provisions of the Neutrality Act of 1935

- Forbade all loans or credits to belligerents

- Did not cover civil wars, such as the one in Spain from 1936 to 1939

- Did not cover oil or dual-use civilian-military items like trucks

- Loophole enabled U.S. companies to sell more than \$100 million to Franco

Neutrality Act of 1937

Reiterated the provisions of the earlier acts

Extended them to include civil wars as well

Had no expiration date

Forbade U.S. ships from transporting any passengers or goods to belligerent nations

Forbade U.S. citizens from traveling on the ships of belligerent nations

Allowed the President to permit on a 'cash and carry' basis the sale of materials and supplies to belligerents in Europe as long as the recipients paid in cash and transported the goods themselves

Neutrality Act of 1939

Allowed the sales of arms to belligerents on a 'cash and carry' basis

Repealed the Neutrality Acts of 1935 and 1937

Barred American citizens and ships from entering war zones designated by the President as such

Charged the National Munitions Control Board with issuing licenses for all arms imports and exports

Reactions to World War II

Americans greeted the outbreak of war in Europe with the following emotions”

- A strong desire for the U.S. to stay out of the war
 - 90% opposed U.S. entry into the war
- A desire that the Allies would win the war
 - 80% expressed a wish that the Allies win the war
 - Only 1% expressed a desire for a German victory
- A fear that that neither desire would be fulfilled

The War led to two distinct lobbies which advocated opposite policies concerning the conflict

Fall of France

The Fall of France in June 1940 came as a great shock to the American people

- Provoked a fear that the U.S. was now vulnerable to attack
- Led to U.S. rearmament
 - The Two-Ocean Navy
 - 50,000 planes
 - Large-scale expansion of the Army
 - First peacetime draft
- Led Roosevelt to seek a third term
- Led the Republicans to nominate Wendell Willkie over Robert Taft for President
- Led Roosevelt to propose Lend-Lease

Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies

Organizational Notes

- Formed in May 1940
- Included 125 local chapters with regional offices in Chicago, Chapel Hill, San Francisco, and Boston
- Held numerous rallies and distributed 2 million copies of printed matter
- Included a whole host of eminent Americans

Policy positions:

- Advocated U.S. military materiel support for Britain as the best way to keep the U.S. out of the war
- Opposed the Neutrality Acts
- Supported the destroyer deal & the draft
- Supported Lend-Lease

America First Committee

Organizational Notes

- Established in September 1940 by Yale Law student R. Douglas Stuart & Yale undergraduate Kingman Brewster
- Had 800,000 at its peak in 650 chapters
 - Was a collection of pacifists, anti-Semites, German-Americans, Communists, and Roosevelt-haters
- Headquartered in Chicago
- Headed by Sears executive Robert E. Wood
- Had many celebrity members, including several U.S. senators

America First Committee - 2

Policy positions:

- Supported the Neutrality Acts
- Opposed Lend Lease on grounds that it weakened U.S. defenses at home and threatened to involve the U.S. in war abroad
- Believed the U.S. Navy and two oceans could protect the U.S. from invasion
- Believed that a large scale military buildup and intervention in World War II would create a garrison state that would be destructive of American liberty and lead to future subsequent wars

The End of Neutrality

The Lend-Lease Act of March 11, 1941

- Allowed the U.S. to sell, lend, or give war materials to allied nations fighting the Axis
- Was considered by Hitler an act of war
- Led to German submarine attacks on U.S. merchant ships in war zones
- Eventually led to an undeclared naval war between U.S. destroyers and German submarines

The End of Neutrality - 2

April 1941 – U.S. forces occupy Greenland

April 1941 – U.S. Navy begins patrolling the Western Atlantic

July 1941 – U.S. forces occupy Iceland

July 24, 1941 – In response to the Japanese occupation of Indochina, Roosevelt:

- Freezes all Japanese assets and credits
- Embargoes the sale of scrap iron and petroleum to Japan

The End of Neutrality - 3

Following the attack on the USS *Greer* on September 4, 1941, Roosevelt:

- Sought virtual repeal of the Neutrality Acts
- Declared that U.S. naval forces would “shoot-on-sight” any German submarines

On October 17, 1941, the USS *Kearny* was hit by a German torpedo with 11 KIA and 22 wounded

Following the sinking USS *Reuben James* on October 31, 1941, most of the provisions of the Neutrality Acts were repealed in November 1941

- U.S. merchant ships were armed and allowed to enter belligerent ports

The Road to Pearl Harbor

On to Pearl Harbor

After the American response to the Japanese occupation of southern Vietnam and Cambodia, the Japanese saw war as inevitable

On 17 October, Hideki Tojo became Prime Minister while simultaneously serving as Army Minister and Home Minister

- After that, war preparations went forward at a fast pace

On 5 November at an Imperial Conference, the proposed war plans for the Pearl Harbor, Southern, and perimeter island operations were approved

It was decided that unless a diplomatic settlement was reached by 25 November, the war would begin on 7 December.

Hideki Tojo



Why War with the U.S.

Inability to resolve the conflict over China

- The U.S. sought to preserve China's territorial integrity and independence while Japan sought to conquer China

The decision of the Japanese to take advantage of WWII to seize the possessions of France, Britain, and the Netherlands

- To create a base for operations further south
- To cut China's link to the outside world in order to force an end to the war

This led to the U.S. embargoes which put Japan in the position of either submitting to US demands or going to war

The Japanese belief that they needed to seize the Philippines and to neutralize the U.S. Pacific fleet

Japanese Strategy for War with the U.S.

Japanese Military leaders believed that America was incapable of fighting a long, protracted war of attrition and that a decisive Japanese victory early in the war would cause America to settle for a negotiated peace that left Japan in control of the areas she conquered

- This implied quick seizure of Southeast Asia and an island perimeter from which the Japanese could hold off the Americans
- It also implied a decisive sea battle in the western Pacific in which the U.S. fleet would be destroyed as it came to the rescue of Guam and the Philippines

Japanese Strategy - 2

On 7 January 1941, ADM Isoroku Yamamoto argued that this ambush strategy had three major defects:

- It left the initiative to the Americans at a time when the American fleet was growing in power over time as new ships came on line
- Any operation against Malaya and the Dutch East Indies would divert major components of the fleet away from a Western Pacific battle
- The strategy assumed that Japan would have a fleet superior to, or at least equal to, the American Pacific fleet.

Japanese Strategy - 3

Instead, Yamamoto proposed a different plan

- Destroy the American fleet on the very first day at Pearl Harbor
- Seize Malaya, Singapore, the East Indies, and the Philippines
- Construct a chain of fortified bases along a perimeter of Pacific islands
- Allow the Americans to suffer a war of attrition trying to take these islands

Defects of Japanese Strategy

Yamamoto's Plan (which is what the Japanese adopted) had several conceptual and strategic defects

- Achieving the total surprise necessary for success was a very iffy proposition
- Even if the attack was successful, it would lead to a long war that Japan could not hope to win
- It erroneously assumed that the Pacific Fleet was a threat to the flank of the Japanese attack to the South
- It ignored the implications of attacking a shallow port on a Sunday

Two Other Strategic Considerations

As an island nation dependent on the movement of strategic resources from a newly-conquered empire via ship over a distance of many miles

- Japan went to war with a merchant marine barely equal to the peacetime requirements of the Japanese economy; it was not adequate to the task of wartime
- Both the Japanese Navy “attrit and attack” and the Yamamoto “sneak attack” strategies left the Japanese Navy with a force structure incapable of protecting Japanese merchant shipping from attacks by American submarines.

War in the Pacific

From Pearl Harbor to Midway

Pearl Harbor – October 1941



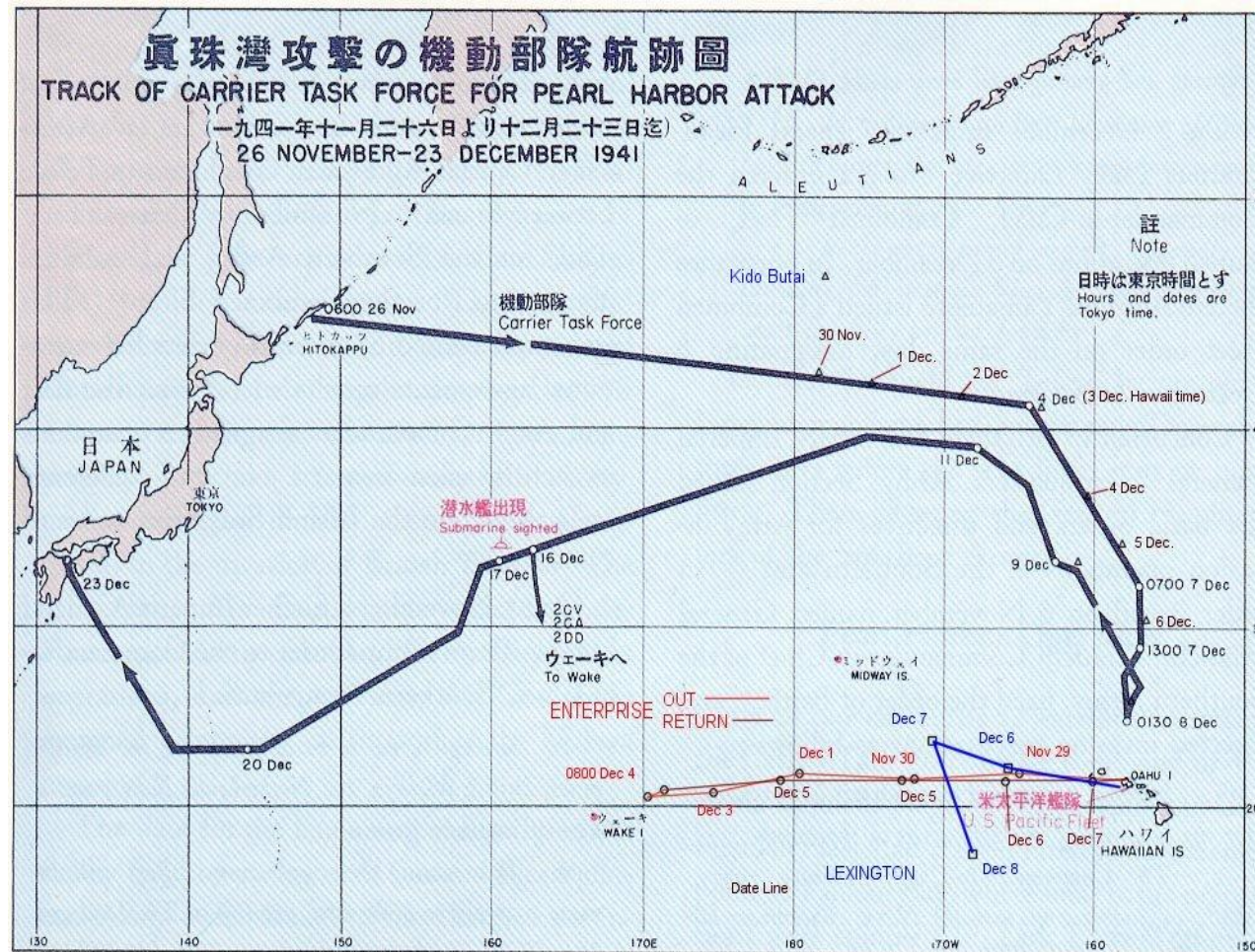
Attack on Pearl Harbor - 1

On 7 December 1941, planes from the Japanese First Air Fleet (Kido Butai) attacked Pearl Harbor

- The Japanese force consisted of 6 aircraft carriers with 414 airplanes, 2 battleships, 3 cruisers, 9 destroyers, 8 tankers, 23 submarines and 5 midget submarines

The Japanese Fleet (Kido Butai) avoided detection by sailing through the Northern Pacific area not traveled by commercial shipping because of the storms brought about by the prevailing Westerlies

Route of the Kido Butai



Attack on Pearl Harbor - 2

The first attack wave of Japanese planes were picked up on radar but were assumed to be incoming B-17s

- The first wave consisted primarily of dive bombers, fighters, and torpedo bombers – one to attack the airfields and the other to attack the battleships
- The second wave consisted mostly of bombers which bombed both the subsidiary airfields and the ships not accessible to the torpedo bombers

U.S. aircraft were parked wingtip-to-wingtip in the middle of the main airfields because GEN Walter Short feared sabotage rather than a possible Japanese air attack

Attack on Pearl Harbor - 3

The Japanese attack in two waves did the following damage

- 4 battleships sunk
- 4 battleships heavily damaged
- 3 cruisers damaged
- 3 destroyers damaged
- 2 other ships sunk
- 3 other ships damaged
- 188 aircraft destroyed
- 159 aircraft damaged
- 2,402 KIA
- 1,247 wounded

Attack on Pearl Harbor - 4

The attack cost the Japanese relatively little

- 4 midget submarines sunk
- 1 midget submarine beached
- 29 aircraft destroyed
- 64 KIA
- 1 POW

Attack on Pearl Harbor - 5

After the return of the first two waves, there was a big debate on whether to launch a third strike

- The attack planner, Minoru Genda, and the attack leader, Mitsuo Fuchida, wanted to go after the oil tanks, docks, and support facilities
- But ADM Chuichi Nagumo decided different for several reasons
 - He was worried about being attacked by the American carriers
 - He was worried about possible heavy aircraft losses
 - The planes would have had to be refueled and rearmed and the resulting turn-around time would have meant they would be coming back to the carriers at night
 - The task force lacked the fuel to remain in Hawaiian waters much longer
 - He believed he had completed his mission

Attack on Pearl Harbor - 6

For the Japanese, it was a great tactical victory but a strategic disaster in several ways

- First, Pearl Harbor meant that the U.S. would enter the war as a nation united and determined to fight on to victory
 - This was a type of war Japan could not win
- Second, the Japanese ignored the tank farms, dry docks, and ship support facilities vital to both naval operations and ship repair
 - This enabled the U.S. Navy to both recuperate from the Pearl Harbor attack and conduct the carrier operations that led to victories in the Battle of the Coral Sea and Midway

Attack on Pearl Harbor - 7

Third, it ended the sway that the battleship admirals had over the U.S. Navy

- Before Pearl Harbor, the admirals saw the battleship as the queen of the fleet and aircraft as useful primarily for scouting
- After Pearl Harbor, even the traditionalists had to concede that the Aircraft Carrier was now the queen of the fleet

Finally, even if left alone, the U.S. Pacific Fleet would have been unable to interdict the Southern Operation because of the lack of the necessary oilers and support ships

Aerial View of Pearl Harbor at the beginning of the attack



Japanese aerial photo
view of the bombing
of Pearl Harbor



USS Shaw exploding at
Pearl Harbor



One Major Effect of Pearl Harbor

Led Adolf Hitler to declare war on the United States on 11 December 1941
This was Hitler's second major mistake of 1941 – both of which combined to eventually doom the Third Reich

Why did Hitler do it?

- Hitler believed that after defeating the Soviet Union, his next war would be with the United States
- The problem with defeating the United States (which meant invading the U.S.) was the U.S. Navy which had to be sunk before Germany could invade
- For this, Germany needed a blue-water Navy which would take time to construct
- Japan, however, had a blue water Navy & if the US Navy was sunk in the Pacific by Japan, it would make an eventual German invasion of the U.S. much easier

Did Roosevelt Know Beforehand?

There have been several conspiracy theorist historians who claimed that Roosevelt knew of the Pearl Harbor attack beforehand and let it happen so as to get the U.S. into the war

There is no proof that Roosevelt knew beforehand and much evidence against it

- While American leaders knew the Japanese were going to attack, they did not know that Pearl Harbor would be an object of the attack
- Roosevelt was much more concerned about stopping Hitler than fighting Japan – A war with Japan would trap him in the wrong war
- Roosevelt could not have known that Hitler would declare war on the U.S.

News of the Attack

Most of the American public found out about the attack in bits and pieces over radio news broadcasts

Many found out when athletic and cultural events were interrupted by PA system announcements

At Griffith Stadium, where the Washington Redskins were playing the Philadelphia Eagles, a crowd of 27,000 remained in the dark even though the PA system began calling on various generals and admirals plus the Resident Commissioner of the Philippines to report to their offices

The Philippines - 1

The Army had long considered the Philippines to be indefensible in a war with Japan

- The islands were thousands of miles from Hawaii and their supply lines could be easily interdicted since they crossed near Japanese-held islands
- The U.S. and the Philippines had few trained troops with which to repel the Japanese

But neither the Philippine Government, GEN MacArthur, nor many senior generals wanted to accept that fact

They believed that the new B-17 bomber could defend the islands against an invasion

The Philippines - 2

Originally, War Plan Orange called for stationing American-Philippine troops around Manila Bay (including the Bataan Peninsula) and waiting for relief from the Pacific Fleet

MacArthur decided that the Japanese should be met at the most likely Japanese invasion sites and moved troops and supplies there

- This was a mistake since many of the supply stockpiles were captured by the Japanese

On 10 December and 22 December, the Japanese landed on Luzon and began advancing toward Manila, forcing MacArthur to fall back to the Bataan Peninsula (which covered the western part of Manila Bay)

The Philippines - 3

On 11 March 1942, Roosevelt ordered MacArthur to leave the Philippines

On 9 April 1942, U.S. and Filipino troops on Bataan surrendered

- Their surrender led to the infamous Bataan Death March

On 6 May 1942, U.S. troop on Corregidor surrendered

By 9 June 1942, the remaining U.S. and Filipino forces on the other islands had surrendered

The Filipinos, unlike the inhabitants of Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, or Burma, did not regard the Japanese victory as a cause of celebration

- The Philippines were the only part of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere where the Japanese encountered popular resistance and a guerilla movement

The Doolittle Raid

With the war going badly, Roosevelt felt a need to strike at Japan by bombing Tokyo

- The only way this could be done was by putting long-range bombers on a carrier
- On 2 April, the *Hornet* left port with 16 B-25s on its flight deck
- On 18 April, the planes had to be launched earlier than planned so while they could bomb Japan, most could not reach bases in China

The importance of the raid lay in its impact on a Japanese naval high command debate over future war strategy

- The raid led to a Japanese decision to attack Midway

Battle of the Coral Sea

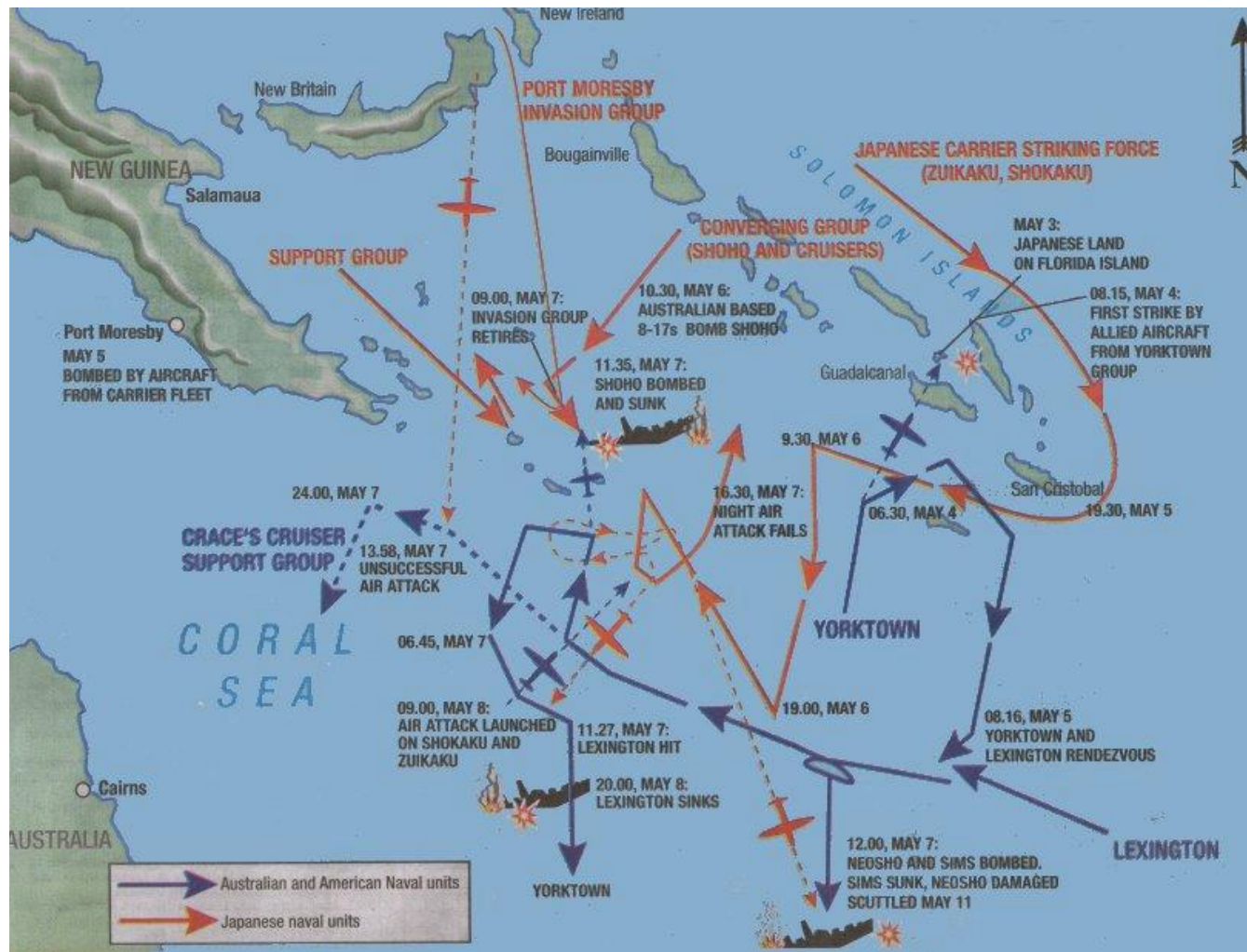
American cryptographers decryption of signals alerted the Pacific Fleet to the invasion of Port Moresby

ADM Nimitz dispatched the *Lexington* and *Yorktown* to intercept the Japanese invasion fleet

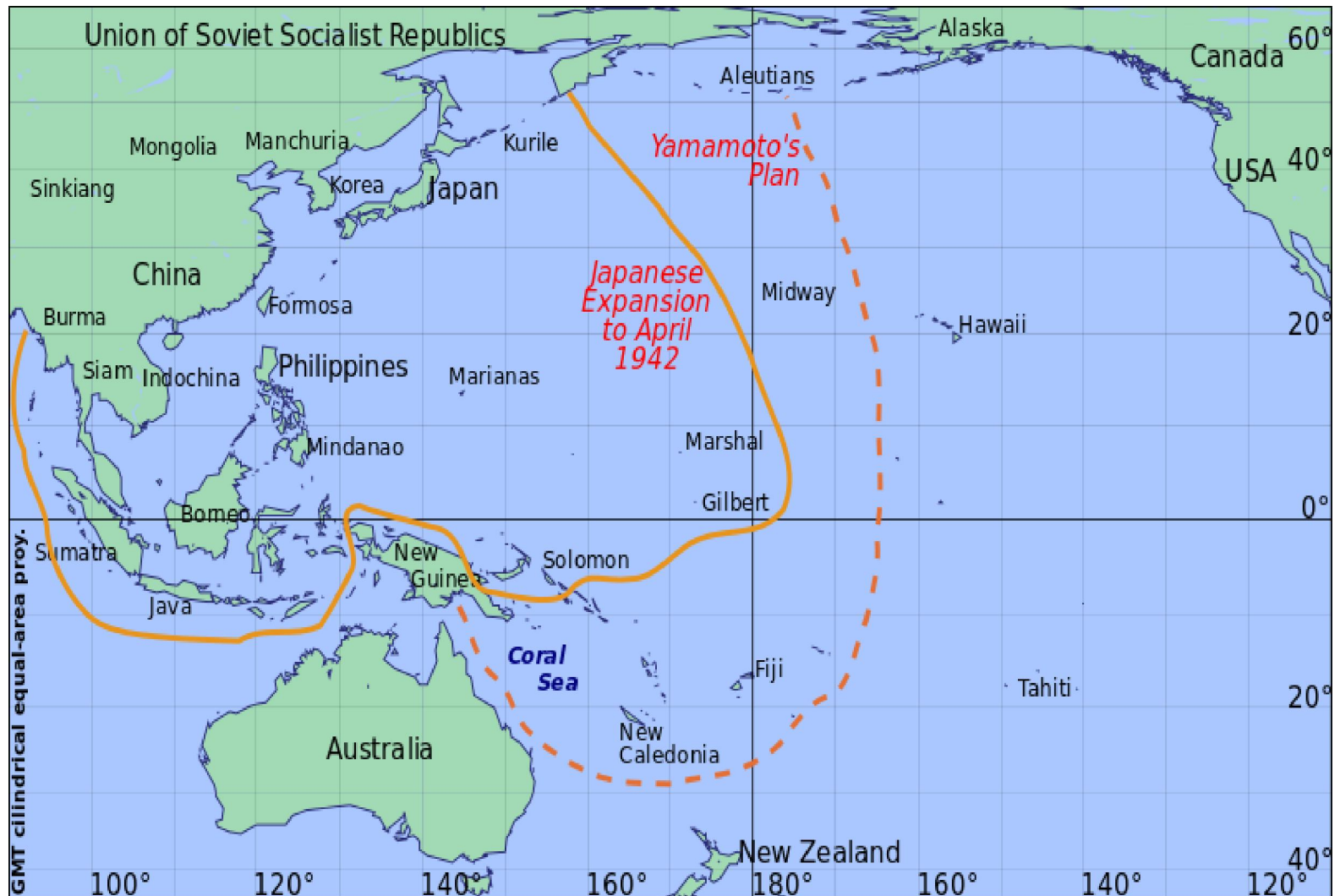
- The invasion fleet was protected by 2 large and 1 small Japanese carriers

The aerial sea battle on 7-8 May 1942 between the two sets of carriers ended in a tactical draw, but was a strategic defeat for Japan,

Coral Sea Battle Map



Japanese Expansion prior to Midway



Midway - 1

Two factors drove the Japanese to attack Midway

- The desire to avoid a repetition of the Doolittle Raid
- The desire on the part of ADM Yamamoto to provoke a decisive battle with the U.S. Navy carrier fleet

Thanks to Navy cryptanalysis, the U.S. knew about the attack ahead of time

Attacks by Midway-based aircraft on the Japanese invasion fleet convinced ADM Nagumo that an airstrike on the island was necessary

- While the airstrike did a lot of damage, the Japanese felt another airstrike was necessary

Midway - 2

As a result, the returning Japanese planes were being refueled and rearmed with bombs

When the rearming and refueling action was in process, the Japanese discovered that American carriers were nearby and that American planes were en route

ADM Nagumo then ordered that the carrier planes be rearmed again with torpedoes

It was while the deck of the Japanese carriers were crowded with refueling planes amid piles of bombs which were being removed and torpedoes which were being loaded that American planes found the carriers

Midway - 3

While the Japanese defensive fighter screen was able to shoot down most of the attacking torpedo planes without suffering any hits, they had prevented the carriers from launching any planes and caused many CAP planes to run low on fuel and fly down to near sea level

This made the Japanese carriers vulnerable to American dive bombers which scored ten hits on the *Kaga*, *Akagi*, and *Soryu* with devastating results

While planes from the *Hiryu* were able to sink the *Yorktown*, planes from the *Hornet* and *Enterprise* were able to find and sink it

Japanese Carrier *Akagi*



Photo # NH 73059 Japanese aircraft carrier Akagi in Summer of 1941

Effects of Midway

With their carriers lost, the Japanese were forced to call off the invasion of Midway

The Japanese lost 4 of their 6 large fleet carriers, over 300 planes, hundreds of experienced pilots and air crews, and over 3,000 naval crewmen – losses not easily replaced

The losses at Midway prevented any new major Japanese naval offensive in either the South Pacific or the Indian Ocean

It opened the way for an American counter-attack in the Solomon Islands

With the threat to Midway and Hawaii removed, it made it possible for the U.S. to follow the Europe First strategy

Aerial view of Midway
from the South

Eastern Island, then the
site of Midway's airfield,
is in the foreground. Sand
Island, location of most
other base facilities, is
across the entrance
channel. Picture was
taken in November 1941

