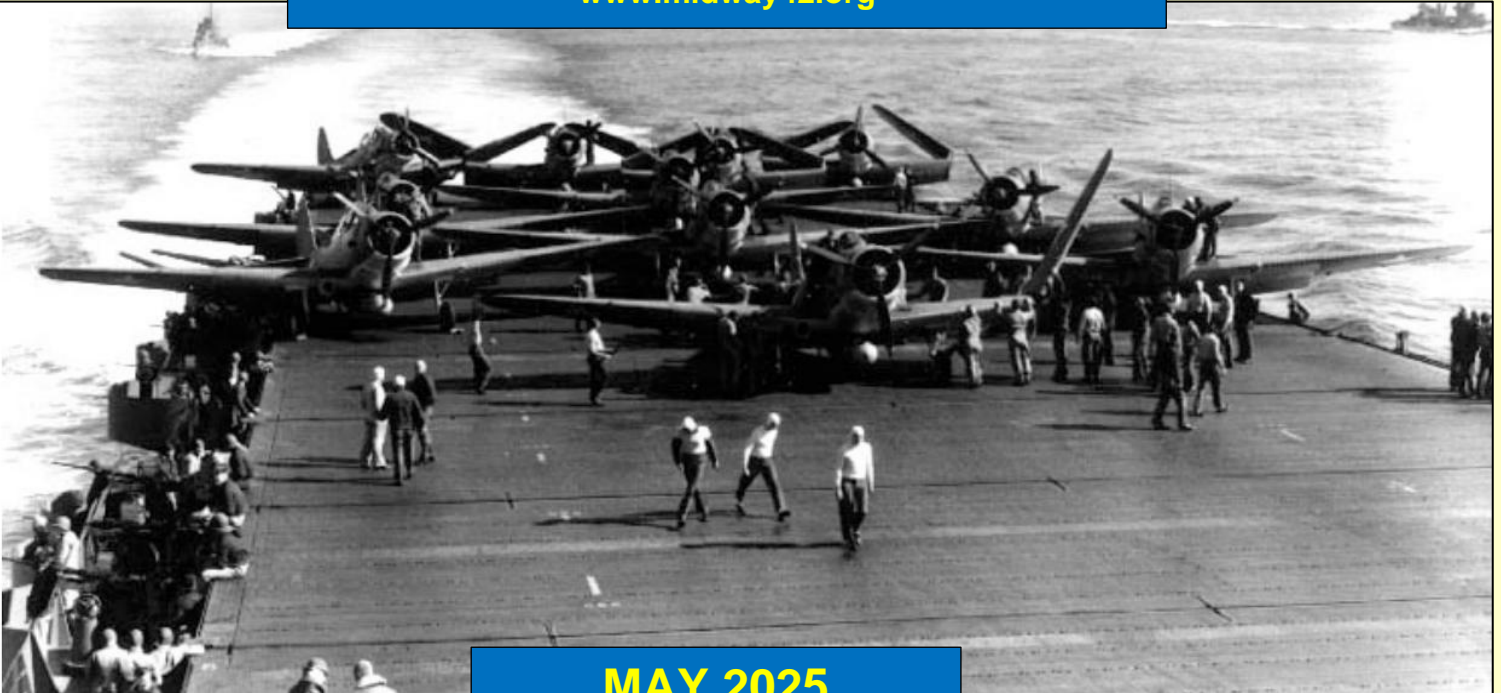


The Roundtable Forum

official newsletter of the
Battle of Midway Roundtable

www.midway42.org

OUR 28th YEAR
ON THE INTERNET



MAY 2025

Welcome to the Roundtable's newsletter for May, and thanks to one and all for your continued interest in all that we do here to maintain awareness and appreciation for the Battle of Midway.

This issue begins with an intriguing question: Yamamoto's strategy at Midway would have made good sense if everything had gone as he'd planned, but of course, it didn't. The battle was decided by the American carriers, and the Japanese had sent two of theirs to the Aleutians instead of Midway. Could those two have made a difference? We have an interesting analysis of what might have happened—or not—if two more IJN air groups had been present at Midway.

Other features this month include a probing question about Rochefort and Nimitz, a special announcement concerning the 83rd anniversary of the battle next month, new details about the USS *Yorktown* CV-5 Club annual convention May 15-18, and a personal message from webmaster Thom Walla as he continues to make progress coming out of a stroke.

Thanks to all for your interest and support, and we'd love to hear from you concerning this newsletter or any BOM matter.

—Ron Russell
21 April 2025

~ AROUND THE TABLE ~

READERS' TOPICS IN THIS ISSUE:

1. The Japanese Aleutians Campaign—strategy or blunder?
2. Rochefort and Nimitz
3. *Yorktown* photo on “Victory at Sea” album cover?
4. Webmaster update

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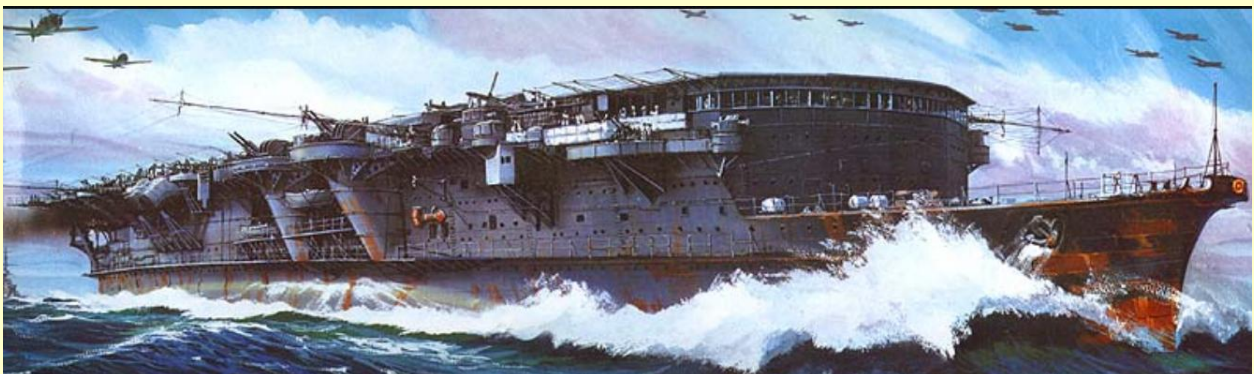
1. THE JAPANESE ALEUTIANS CAMPAIGN – STRATEGY OR BLUNDER?

Scott Kozel sent us an analysis of whether IJN light carriers *Ryujo* and *Junyo* were wasted by including them in the Aleutians task group—would they have been better sent to Midway, thereby perhaps making a difference in the outcome?

13 March 2025
From: Scott Kozel
Virginia

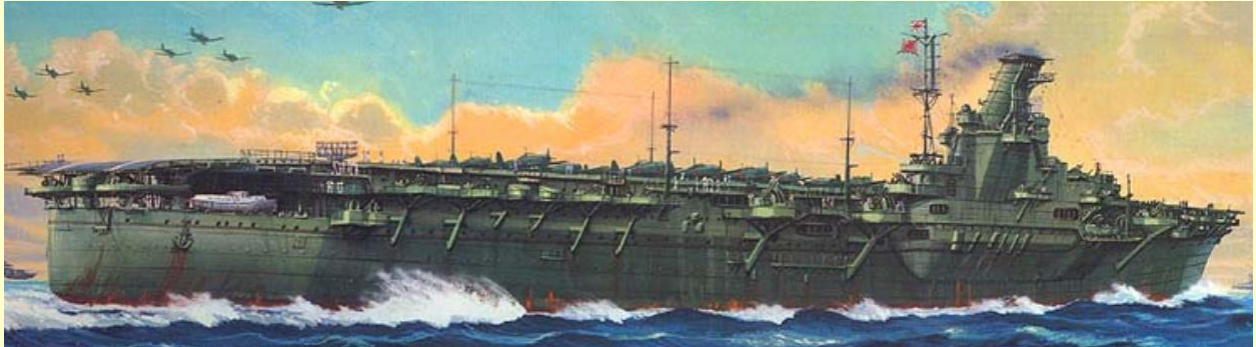
Since *Ryujo* and *Junyo* could not feasibly operate with Kido Butai, would having them there in their own independent task force have provided any tactical value to the battle with the USN forces?

The two light carriers weren't proper fleet carriers. *Ryujo* was small, less than half the size of American *Yorktown*-class carriers, built in 1931 and fairly slow, poorly armored, somewhat unstable and had small magazines and fuel tanks. She was classified as a light carrier, but her capabilities were closer to the American escort carriers. However, she was at least planned as a warship from the start.



Ryujo

***Junyo* was newer and larger, but she was a converted ocean liner and as such built to a civilian standard. She had little in the way of armor and was also less than ideal for naval operations, for much the same reasons as *Ryujo*. They did not get the cream of the naval aviators that Kido Butai got either. Though their airmen were brave and competent, you couldn't expect them to do what those of the big names like *Kaga* or *Soryu* could.**



Junyo

***Junyo*, a *Hiyo*-class aircraft carrier, was not used in the Battle of Midway because it was still undergoing final preparations and trials at the time. The ship was commissioned on 3 May 1942 and participated in the Aleutian Islands Campaign in June, which coincided with the Battle of Midway. *Junyo*'s aircraft complement was not fully assembled.**

Integrating *Ryujo*'s air group with the larger Kido Butai force would have required careful coordination to ensure effective operations. Supporting an additional carrier would have posed logistical challenges, including fuel, aircraft maintenance, and personnel support.

From *The Battle of Midway* (Symonds), p. 199:

"Neither could have been used to reinforce the Midway-bound Kido Butai. The *Ryujo* was simply too small, and the *Junyo*, which had originally been laid down as a passenger liner and converted to a carrier only recently, had a top speed of only 24 knots, which meant she could not keep up with Kido Butai; even the plodding *Kaga* could sustain 28 knots"

From *Shattered Sword* (Parshall & Tully), p. 46:

"*Junyo* was larger and had better aircraft handling facilities, but she was hampered by her low speed of 25 knots. This meant that she was not considered capable of operating torpedo aircraft, because in light wind conditions she wasn't fast enough to create the relative wind over her bow necessary to launch them. *Ryujo* was faster, but she was plagued by small elevators, meaning she could not operate the burly Type 99 dive-bomber."

Parshall & Tully in their “Myths of Midway” (*Shattered Sword*, p. 431) did argue that the Aleutians campaign was not an elaborate feint, but an invasion in its own right, strategically timed and not merely a diversion. Having both operations simultaneously would reduce the chance of USN interference with either.

Whether or not seizing the Aleutians was worthwhile is another debate, but the IJN at the time thought it was important. So *Junyo* and *Ryujo* were there to provide air support to the rest of the task forces.

The two light carriers were not replacements for fleet carriers for multiple reasons, and any value added at Midway would have been marginal at best.

Scott, thanks for this interesting contribution to our newsletter. My take on the subject: your last paragraph pretty much says it all.

As for whether Japan's Aleutians campaign was sensible strategy or a blunder, they had good reason to do it at the time: the Doolittle Raid had seriously scared them about large American bombers in their skies. They saw the Aleutians as a dagger across the Pacific, pointed at their heart with obvious potential for enemy bomber and naval bases. Those islands were a threat that had to be neutralized.

(Scott's article was edited a little for length and clarity. The inserted images of the two carriers are from combinedfleet.com.)

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2. ROCHEFORT AND NIMITZ

14 April 2025
From: Major Tom Rychlik, USMC-Ret
Virginia

During my initial research into the events prior to the Battle of Midway, I was focused on obtaining documents associated with the three torpedo squadron commanding officers. Along the way I had to look into how events and personalities affected the awards they received. I read books on Nimitz and King and the successful effort mounted by the Redman brothers to discredit Commander Rochefort for his success in predicting that the Japanese would attack Midway. As a Naval Academy graduate, I was appalled by the actions of these two men as they first discredited and then convinced King to replace Rochefort in Hawaii. It will never be known how many men or ships were lost and how many operations were affected

by a degradation in intel during the war because they replaced a truly gifted Rochefort with someone much less capable. I was also disappointed that Admiral Nimitz didn't try to do more to influence King's decisions.

In my opinion, Admiral Nimitz, second only to Rochefort, won the war in the Pacific. His leadership, strength of character, experience, and intelligence were exceptional. Thrust into command shortly after Pearl Harbor, immediately at a significant material and geographic disadvantage, having to work under a difficult boss like King, who would not have chosen Nimitz to be CINCPAC, he was in an extremely difficult position. Less than four years later he led the greatest navy in the world into Tokyo Bay to accept the surrender of the Japanese Empire. He masterfully built up King's confidence in himself, while at the same time calculating when to oppose and when not to oppose King.

In [*The Man Who Won World War II*](#), author Henry James takes the reader through the importance of the Battle of Midway. I have long considered it to be the turning point in WWII; there has been a lively discussion on the Roundtable on this subject. James does a great job of expanding on all the previously known effects of the battle and adds quite a few more, particularly that Rochefort and HYPO, by providing Nimitz with the timely intelligence he needed to best marshal and place his forces, won the war for the U.S. As a result, Rochefort can be credited with the favorable world situation the United States inherited when the war ended.

James states that immediately after the battle Nimitz recommended Rochefort for the DSM. King disapproved upon the Redmans' objection since the DSM would not have allowed them to discredit and get rid of Rochefort. So King, even after realizing that the Redmans had been proven wrong, decided to throw in with the them and punish Rochefort!

I am disappointed by Nimitz' acceptance of Rochefort's replacement and OP-20-G's victory because it meant that he had to accept less than accurate intelligence from that cabal for the rest of the war. His acceptance of Rochefort's treatment had real operational impacts that Nimitz should have fought tooth and nail. At this point in the war Nimitz' credibility should have given him the leverage with King to demand Rochefort's return. Sadly, it was easier for him to let Rochefort go than to put his stars on the desk and fight King.

When John Lehman became SECNAV in 1981 he directed a review of Rochefort's case, and in 1985 Rochefort's family received his posthumous DSM from President Reagan. In his remarks, Reagan stated: "If ever there was a battle involving tens of thousands of men in which victory was attributable to *one* man, this one was attributable to Joseph J. Rochefort."

The above comments are edited from a much longer message, but Tom's thesis is consistent throughout: Nimitz obviously couldn't control who was assigned to HYPO, but his tacit acceptance of Rochefort's removal indirectly contributed to U.S. losses that might otherwise have been avoided through better intel. The qualified success at Coral Sea and the stunning victory at Midway had elevated Nimitz' prestige in the Navy Department to a rare level—it's fair to imagine that a determined effort on his part to change King's mind about Rochefort might have brought a different outcome.

Nimitz had stated, in effect, that he could either fight the Pacific war or fight King; he couldn't do both. Given those daunting challenges, one can see his point. Still, Tom raises a troubling question: would lives had been saved with Rochefort in charge at HYPO post-BOM, and could Nimitz have made it happen?

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3. YORKTOWN PHOTO ON "VICTORY AT SEA" ALBUM COVER?



1 April 2025
From: LtCol John Manguso, USAR-Ret
Texas

Wasn't the colorized *Yorktown* photo used for the cover of one of the
"Victory at Sea" record albums?

John is referring to Bill Roy's famous CV-5 photo that we featured on the last page of the [April newsletter](#). I found this example of a "Victory at Sea" album cover (previous page) that looks quite similar to Bill's picture. But that scene is actually of another ship in another battle, likely an *Essex* class carrier in 1944 or '45. Can anyone identify it for us?

(Side note: the "Victory at Sea" theme and other tracks on the above LP record bring back personal memories. I had both the above album and a Volume II album back in the 1960s and started playing them on a radio station I worked at then, during a classical music program. The opening overture in Volume I sounded *great* on our FM stereo station! That was during my active USNR days, so I thought it was highly appropriate. Unfortunately, the station manager didn't share my views—a lot of people were anti-military in the 1960s, and he was one of those. I didn't work there very long.)

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4. WEBMASTER UPDATE

31 March 2025
From: STGC Michael Maule, USN-Ret
California

Ron,

I just want to thank you and Thom for the continued outstanding work on the Roundtable. I've been studying the Battle of Midway since I was a teenager (and I'm now a 71 year old teenager and retired USN aircrewman). It seems like I learn something new about the battle, the people involved, the aircraft (both ship-borne and land-based), or the ships involved with every issue of the newsletter. So thanks again and BZ.

I also wanted to ask about Thom's recovery. I know from experience that recovery from a stroke is a long (and sometimes painful) experience. I hope for his speedy recovery!

Thom's reply: "The recovery continues to be steady. Everything works better day by day. I have therapy twice a week and the days that I don't, I'm in the gym. I can't say how long until I get back to normal but the therapists say I'm doing great and strength is slowly returning, thanks to continued workouts.

"Only things that continue to bother me are my left shoulder and left knee. They say muscles in the shoulder have a lot of work to do and likely will be the last to recover. I can do quite a bit with the left arm and hand, I just can't lift them over my head or type yet. But it gets better constantly with work.

"I hurt my left knee in high school playing basketball, so I need to work on muscle strength there to walk without a limp again. No structural damage but ligaments in the knee were strained early when doing rehab, and the doc says they take time to recover.

"All in all, I can't complain. It could have been a whole lot worse, and my neurologist says I still look good for full recovery. So much so that he says I don't need to see him any longer. Just keep doing what I'm doing."



Now hear this!

NEWS AND INFO IN THIS ISSUE:

- 83rd BOM anniversary, June 2025
- Restored SBD at the *Yorktown* (CV-10) museum
- Texas Dauntless heads north
- Video: SBD-2 at the Naval Aviation Museum
- Get your reservation for the *Yorktown* CV-5 convention
- Editor's Notes

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83rd BOM ANNIVERSARY, JUNE 2025

Here's a reminder for all that the 83rd anniversary of the BOM is fast approaching, and we'd like to hear about any observances that our members or the general public could attend—large or small, major or minor, wherever they might be. If you have any information on such an event, let us know and we'll feature it in the

next newsletter. We'll be completing the June issue around May 22nd, so please send your info before then.

Also, please take a moment to review this topic in our [October 2024 newsletter](#) (scroll down to “Now Hear This: Annual BOM Commemorations”). The CNO mandate to commemorate the battle on its anniversary each year remains in force, and we always do our best here to support that goal.

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RESTORED SBD AT THE YORKTOWN (CV-10) MUSEUM

There are numerous historic museum ships around the nation, from the massive carrier USS *Midway* at San Diego to the diminutive minesweeper USS *Lucid* at Stockton (CA), and many in between. High on the list is the Patriot's Point museum complex near Charleston, South Carolina, featuring the Essex-class carrier USS *Yorktown* (CV-10) and destroyer USS *Laffey* (DD-724). Jeff Crosby sent us a photo of their SBD, nicely displayed with its dive breaks open:



The Patriot's Point website is excellent, with plenty to see. For the restored aircraft collection [start here](#), click “Artifacts and Archives,” then “The Aircraft.”

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TEXAS DAUNTLESS HEADS NORTH

Brock Howe reports that the SBD at the Lone Star Flight Museum in Houston has been sold to the [Fagen Fighters WWII Museum](#) in Minnesota. We have featured Brock's presentations at the Houston museum in several of our past newsletters,

always centered on their beautifully restored Dauntless. Their 80th anniversary event is a particularly good example that's worth another look: check it out in our [June 2022 newsletter](#) (scroll down to "BOM 80 at the Lone Star Flight Museum.")

Brock regrets the loss the Lone Star SBD, which he personally supported through a great many hours of volunteer work. But there's at least one positive note: the plane was maintained in flyable condition, and the Fagen museum will indeed be flying it. If you're in the Minneapolis area or can get there, this might provide a rare opportunity to see the BOM's signature aircraft in action.

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VIDEO: SBD-2 AT THE NAVAL AVIATION MUSEUM

Barret Tillman sent us a Youtube video that's definitely worth your time (about 30 minutes). It's from the National Museum of Naval Aviation, and there is much to see, starting with their nicely restored SBD-2, a veteran of VMSB-241 during the BOM and the sole surviving Dauntless from the battle. Much of the video is narrated by Captain Kevin Miller (identified on-screen by his call sign "Hozer"), who is also known here as the author of [The Silver Waterfall](#). The video includes other content about historic carriers, plus an especially interesting sequence focusing on the Cubi Point Naval Air Station in the Philippines. If you ever had any sort of military experience related to Cubi, Subic Bay, or the Philippines in general, or you know someone who did, that sequence will be highly interesting, and it's very well done in any case. [Click here](#) for the video.



Kevin Miller describes combat in an SBD at the National Museum of Naval Aviation

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GET YOUR RESERVATION FOR THE YORKTOWN CV-5 CONVENTION

Here's a follow-up to the message from Warren Heller in our [March newsletter](#) about the annual convention of the USS *Yorktown* CV-5 Club. President Mike Leggins advises that the event will be at the Holiday Inn in Mobile, Alabama, Thursday through Sunday, May 15-18. All are welcome, and the hotel has a discounted room rate for attendees: call [251-694-0100](tel:251-694-0100) by April 26th and mention the "Yorktown CV-5 Reunion." (Note: that deadline is next Saturday.)

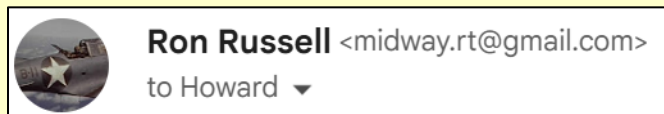
While there, find some time to visit the [USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park](#), another of the great museum ships. For more info about the CV-5 club and the gathering at Mobile, Mike will welcome your call on [707-477-4804](tel:707-477-4804).

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EDITOR'S NOTES

- New Roundtable member Hans Johnson in Florida is the author of a very interesting article on the subject of the radio beacon system used in WW2 by Japanese aircraft—something like the U.S. Navy's YE-ZB system, although technically very different. The article is lengthy and quite detailed, but well written; the author is an expert on the subject. In particular, it was fascinating to note that the heart of the system was an American apparatus, freely available on the commercial market. [Click here](#) to read the article.
- And here's one more request for input from our members and readers concerning any BOM 83rd anniversary commemoration about which you're aware. They will be happening as usual at various museums, Navy and Marine Corps commands, and at gatherings sponsored by supportive organizations—we just need to learn about them. Please pass the word soon, and thank you in advance.
- If you enjoyed reading this newsletter and maybe some of our website content but don't get our monthly email announcement, please consider joining our roster, which will put you in company with about 400 others around the world for whom the Battle of Midway is of special interest. You'll normally get just one email message a month that announces the latest newsletter, and no, we don't give your email ID to anyone else. To join, just send us a message with JOIN on the subject line or in the message body, and include your name and location along with anything else you'd like to share. Our email link appears below.
- About that colorized photo of a *Hornet* Dauntless on the last page of our [February 2025 newsletter](#). I mentioned that the aircraft, 8-B-11, was familiar in BOM imagery and I invited anyone who knew more about it to let us know—where had we seen it before? Here are the answers. The original version of the photo in the newsletter can be found in [A Glorious Page in Our History](#), p. 137. The plane is also seen in action in the John Ford BOM movie—see the screenshot on the next page.

And finally (this is embarrassing), here it is again in the header of every email message that I send:



I *knew* it looked familiar!

- That concludes our offering for May. Thanks to everyone for your continued support, and do keep your comments and questions coming. Our email address:

midwayroundtable@gmail.com



SBD 8-B-11 being spotted on the *Hornet*. This is a colorized copy of a familiar archive photo from the BOM.



8-B-11 in action from the John Ford *Battle of Midway* movie at time 9:44.