**United States Navy Battle of Midway Speech 2014**

For questions on this speech, please contact Todd Martin at todd.martin@navy.mil or 901 874 5805.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Speaker** |  |
| **Event** | 2014 Battle of Midway Commemorations |
| **Date** |  |
| **Location** |  |
| **Duration** | Approximately 14 minutes |
| **Goal of Speech** | Recognize the importance of Memorial Day while conveying key Navy messages to audiences. |
| **Top Line Message Points** | - The Navy protects and defends America on the world's oceans.- The Navy is deployed around the world, around the clock.- The Navy is ready to defend America at all times. |
| **People to Acknowledge** | Consult with your Protocol Officer to determine order of acknowledgements |
| **Additional Resources** | <http://www.navyoutreach.org/programs/speakers/speakers-resources-archive/> |

THANK YOU (NAME OF PERSON WHO INTRODUCED YOU) FOR THAT VERY KIND INTRODUCTION. (ACKNOWLEDGE VIPS, DIGNITARIES, ELECTED OFFICIALS, AND OTHER NOTEWORTHY PEOPLE).

IT IS MY HONOR TO WELCOME OUR WORLD WAR II VETERANS HERE TODAY. WE ARE FOREVER GRATEFUL FOR THE BRAVERY AND SACRIFICES THAT YOU, YOUR SHIPMATES AND YOUR FAMILIES DEMONSTRATED DURING THAT WAR, AND EVERY DAY SINCE.

THANK YOU ALL FOR JOINING US TODAY FOR THIS IMPORTANT REMEMBRANCE. IT TRULY IS AN HONOR TO BE HERE TO COMMEMORATE THE 72ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY.

IN RECENT YEARS, THIS PAGE IN OUR HISTORY HAS LARGELY BEEN RELEGATED TO A LIBRARY OF HISTORICAL EVENTS. BUT IT’S PIVOTAL IMPACT ON BOTH THE WAR AT THAT TIME AND OUR MODERN NAVY ARE WORTHY OF FAR MORE ATTENTION AND RESPECT.

AMERICA’S NAVY IS CHARGED WITH PROTECTING AND DEFENDING AMERICA ON THE WORLD’S OCEANS. NAVY SHIPS, SUBMARINES, AIRCRAFT AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, TENS OF THOUSANDS OF AMERICA’S FINEST YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN ARE DEPLOYED AROUND THE WORLD DOING JUST THAT. THEY ARE THERE NOW. THEY WILL BE THERE WHEN WE ARE SLEEPING TONIGHT. THEY ARE THERE AROUND THE CLOCK, FAR FROM OUR SHORES, DEFENDING AMERICA AT ALL TIMES.

WHEN WE NEED THEM, THEY ARE THERE. BECAUSE BEING THERE MATTERS.

IT’S NOT EASY TO BE THERE. WE SEND OUR SAILORS INTO LANDS THEY MAY NEVER HAVE BEEN TO, AND INTO SITUATIONS THAT SOMETIMES PLACE THEM IN HARM’S WAY.

BUT THERE IS A BOLDNESS THAT FLOWS THROUGH THE VEINS OF ALL THOSE WHO SERVE IN THE U.S. NAVY. AN AUDACITY IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY. AN INGENUITY THAT PUSHES US TO FIND SOLUTIONS, EVEN WHEN SOLUTIONS SEEM IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND.

IT IS IN THIS SPIRIT THAT WE HONOR AND COMMEMORATE TODAY. THE COURAGE OF THE GROUP OF VETERANS YOU SEE HERE TODAY, TO LEAVE FARMS AND CITIES FROM ACROSS OUR COUNTRY, TO BOARD SHIPS, CLIMB INTO COCKPITS, AND SUBMERG IN SUBMARINES IN ORDER TO BATTLE AN ENEMY AGAINST SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE ODDS.

IF YOU ARE NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY, I CAN SUM IT UP FAIRLY SUCCINCTLY— WE WERE SUPPOSED TO LOSE.

AMERICAN AUTHOR AMERICAN WALTER LORD WROTE “THEY HAD NO RIGHT TO WIN.” [PAUSE]

“YET THEY DID, AND IN SO DOING, THEY CHANGED THE COURSE OF A WAR.”

WE WERE NUMERICALLY OUTNUMBERED BY THE JAPANESE FLEET. WE CALLED UPON OUR NAVAL FORCES, STILL REELING AND RECOVERING FROM THE ATTACKS AT PEARL HARBOR **TO BE THERE** AND ANSWER THE CALL TO DUTY AT WHAT WOULD PROVE TO BE A PIVOTAL POINT IN THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC. OUR NAVY REWROTE A PAGE IN HISTORY THAT MANY HAD ALREADY PENNED, BRINGING THE STORY TO A DIFFERENT CONCLUSION.

THE WEEKS LEADING UP TO BATTLE OF MIDWAY WERE SOME OF AMERICA’S DARKEST HOURS IN THE PACIFIC. JAPAN HAD BEGUN A DOMINATING ASSAULT ON THE ISLANDS OF THE PACIFIC, FOLLOWING THE DEVASTATION OF THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR. ADDITIONAL LOSSES AT WAKE, CORREGIDOR AND CORAL SEA, HAD LEFT THEIR MARK ON AN EMBATTLED FORCE. DURING THE BATTLE OF CORAL SEA, THE UNITED STATES NAVY LOST THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER LEXINGTON, AND THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER YORKTOWN WAS SEVERELY DAMAGED.

COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF JAPAN’S COMBINED FLEET; ADMIRAL ISOROKU YAMAMOTO FOCUSED HIS NEXT EFFORTS ON CAPTURING THE MIDWAY, JOHNSTON AND PALMYRA ISLANDS. HIS PLAN WAS TO ESTABLISH AIR AND NAVAL BASES FROM WHICH JAPAN COULD ATTACK AND OCCUPY HAWAII. THE EFFORT WOULD CALL THE UNITED STATES NAVY INTO BATTLE BEFORE THE AMERICANS COULD BUILD MORE SHIPS AND AIRCRAFT AND OUTNUMBER JAPANESE FORCES. THE JAPANESE STRATEGY RELIED ON THE AMERICAN FORCES TAKING THE BAIT TO COME AND PROTECT THIS STRATEGIC OUTPOST.

THE UNITED STATES COULD NOT KNOW IN EARLY 1942 THAT MIDWAY WOULD PLAY A STRATEGIC ROLE IN JAPANESE OPERATIONS.

MIDWAY IS AN ATOLL – THE SURFACE REMNANT OF AN ACIENT VOLCANO. AT ITS HIGHEST POINT, IT STOOD BUT A FEW FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL. ITS NATIVE LIFE CONSISTED SOLELY OF THE SEA BIRDS THAT VISITED DURING MIGRATION. AND, APPROPRIATELY NAMED, MIDWAY WAS POSITIONED BETWEEN THE AMERICAN CONTINENT AND NORTHERN ASIA.

HERE’S WHERE THAT BOLDNESS, INGENUITY AND AUDACITY I MENTIONED EARLIER AGAIN COME INTO PLAY.

FOLLOWING PEARL HARBOR, LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JOSEPH J. ROCHEFORT AND HIS “HYPO” CODE-BREAKING TEAM WERE WORKING AROUND THE CLOCK TO DECIPHER THE THOUSANDS OF JAPANESE MESSAGES THAT THE AMERICANS ROUTINELY INTERCEPTED. MONTHS OF WORK TO BREAK DOWN JAPAN’S JN25 CODE REVEALED HINTS OF THE IMPERIAL FORCE’S NEXT MOVE-- AN OPERATION AGAINST AN AMERICAN BASE IN THE CENTRAL PACIFIC.

IF THE JAPANESE COULD PLAY CAT AND MOUSE, THEN THE UNITED STATES NAVY WOULD DO IT BETTER. ROCHEFORT’S TEAM ASKED AMERICAN FORCES ON MIDWAY, VIA SECURE UNDERSEA CABLE, TO TRANSMIT IN PLAIN LANGUAGE PROBLEMS WITH THE ISLAND’S WATER DISTILLATION PLANT. THE RUSE WORKED, AND, SHORTLY THEREAFTER ROCHEFORT’S TEAM INTERCEPTED A MESSAGE FROM JAPAN’S HIGH COMMAND STATING THAT THE TARGET WAS SHORT OF WATER. ROCHEFORT CARRIED THE NEWS TO ADMIRAL CHESTER NIMITZ, COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE PACIFIC FLEET. THE UNITED STATES NAVY HAD BROKEN THE CODE.

NOW IT WAS ADMIRAL NIMITZ’S CHANCE TO BE BOLD. WITH CONFIRMATION THAT MIDWAY WAS THE TARGET OF THE JAPANESE OPERATION, AND INTELLIGENCE ON THE ORDER OF BATTLE, NIMITZ SET UP A SUCCESSFUL AMBUSH OF THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE FLEET.

A SUPREMELY GIFTED STRATEGIST, NIMITZ WAS KNOWN FOR HIS RAW INTELLECT AND ALMOST INEXHAUSTIBLE HUNGER FOR WORK.

NIMITZ POSSESSED A CLEAR VISION OF WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE, AND CLEARLY COMMUNICATED THOSE INTENTIONS TO HIS OPERATIONAL COMMANDERS.

NIMITZ’S PLAN FOR THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY ALLOWED THE COMMANDERS ON SCENE TO MAKE KEY OPERATIONAL AND TACTICAL DECISIONS. AND IT RESULTED IN AN UNLIKELY VICTORY THAT TURNED THE MOMENTUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR AT MIDWAY.

THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY WAS ONE OF THE GREATEST NAVAL BATTLES THE WORLD HAD EVER WITNESSED. THE BATTLE – FOUGHT JUNE 4TH TO JUNE 7TH 1942 – SAW 7 SHIPS SLIP BENEATH THE WAVES OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN, AND 3364 BRAVE MEN LOST THEIR LIVES IN SERVICE TO THEIR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES. JUST DAYS BEFORE THE BATTLE, JAPAN WAS CELEBRATING ITS ALMOST CERTAIN VICTORY.

ONE NOTABLE FACT IS THAT MIDWAY WAS THE LAST BATTLE FOUGHT BY THE “REGULAR” NAVY – THE MEN AND SHIPS THAT WERE IN SERVICE BEFORE THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR. AFTER MIDWAY, DROVES OF ENLISTEES AND RESERVE OFFICERS WOULD SWELL THE RANKS, AND MAN THE SHIPS AND AIRCRAFT SPEWING FORTH FROM THE GREAT INDUSTRIAL ENGINE OF DEMOCRACY.

ALSO NOTABLE WAS THE DEMONSTRATION OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY’S ABILITY TO OPERATE ABOVE, ON, AND BELOW THE SEA. NAVY AIRCRAFT LAUNCHED FROM USS ENTERPRISED AND USS HORNET. SURFACE SHIPS INCLUDING USS HAMMANN, USS TAMBOR, AND USS TONE SUPPORTED THE AIR CAMPAIGN, AND THE SUBMARINE USS NAUTILUS PLAYED A KEY ROLE, ATTACKING THE JAPANESE CARRIER FORCE.

THE STORIES OF COURAGE AND HEROISM AT MIDWAY ARE REMARKABLE IN EVERY SENSE.

I STAND BEFORE YOU RELAYING THIS NARRATIVE NOT BECAUSE IT’S JUNE 4TH. NOT BECAUSE IT’S THE 72ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE. BUT BECAUSE IT IS A STORY THAT DESERVES TO BE TOLD FOR GENERATIONS.

IT’S A STORY OF AMERICAN INGENUITY, INDOMITABLE SPIRIT AND BOLDNESS. OF STEPPING UP IN THE FACE OF THE GREATEST ADVERSITIES.

I HOPE YOU LEAVE HERE TODAY WITH A SENSE OF PRIDE NOT ONLY FOR THE GLORIOUS PAGE IN OUR AMERICAN HISTORY THAT THESE VETERANS HAVE WRITTEN FOR US, BUT ALSO FOR ALL THE PAGES CURRENTLY BEING ADDED BY THOSE SERVING AROUND THE WORLD.

ALTHOUGH TODAY WE ARE NOT ENGAGED IN A WAR THAT ENVELOPS THE GLOBE, THE WORLD’S GEOPOLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CLIMATES CONTINUE TO EVOLVE, AND THE CASE FOR AMERICA MAINTAINING A STRONG NAVY GROWS. INDEED, THE PRESIDENT’S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY CALLS FOR A RENEWED FOCUS ON ENDURING THREATS IN THE MIDDLE EAST REGION, WE SIMULTANEOUSLY FIND AN INCREASED AMERICAN COMMITMENT BACK IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION.

WHEN OUR COUNTRY CALLS FOR OUR NAVY TO FOCUS ONCE AGAIN ON THESE REGIONS, WE WILL BE THERE. AS WE SAW AT THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY, AND AS WE SEE TODAY, 72 YEARS LATER, WHEN IT COMES TO PROTECTING AND DEFENDING AMERICA, BEING THERE MATTERS. AND AMERICA’S NAVY IS ALWAYS THERE.

MAY GOD BLESS THOSE WHO FOUGHT COURAGEOUSLY AT MIDWAY.

MAY GOD BLESS ALL WORLD WAR II VETERANS, WHO WE ARE UNFORTUNATELY LOSING EACH AND EVERY DAY.

MAY GOD BLESS ALL OF US GATHERED HERE TODAY.

MAY GOD BLESS THE MORE THAN 300 MILLION FOLKS WHO CALL AMERICA THEIR HOME.

AND MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS AMERICA.

THANK YOU!