Note: In early 1942, the Japanese began planning an offensive that would destroy the remainder of the U.S. Navy’s Pacific Fleet, threaten Hawaii, and stop the U.S. from interfering in Japan’s conquests. Part of this involved attacking a U.S. Navy outpost that they codenamed AF. Japanese commanders began sending orders by radio to the units that would be involved in the operation.

**Map, The Pacific Areas, August 1, 1942**
National Park Service

This map shows the locations of Japan and many of the areas that it had taken over in relation to Midway Atoll, Hawaii, and the United States. Although these locations are separated by thousands of miles of ocean, each played an important role as a place to build bases from which to attack the enemy.
**May 19, 1942**

Midway Atoll Radio Communication (Not Coded) to U.S. Navy Headquarters, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii

“...at present time we have only enough water for two weeks. Please supply us immediately.”

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**May 21, 1942**

Japanese Radio Communication (Coded) from Tokyo, Japan.

“Tokyo Naval Intelligence sent the following message which they had previously intercepted from us: “The AF Air Unit sent following radio message to Commandant 14th Naval District: ‘...with reference to this Units [sic] report dated 19th at the present time we have only enough water for two weeks. Please supply us immediately.’”

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**May 22, 1942**

U.S. Navy Report on Japanese Naval Activity

“The identity of the Area Designator ‘AF’ was confirmed as Midway.”

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This report shows some of the information that U.S. Navy cryptologists and signals intelligence personnel used to determine the location where the Japanese would strike.

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**What Was Ensign Hopper Doing?**

While the plans for the Battle of Midway were being made, Ensign Hopper was busy searching for the Japanese fleet in the South Pacific and flying combat missions against their ships and bases. Unfortunately, at the Battle of the Coral Sea, Ensign Hopper’s ship was sunk by Japanese forces, and he and surviving fellow pilots were reassigned to other units.
Note: The Battle of Midway was largely fought from the air. Pilots on both sides tracked down each other’s fleets, and attacked using bombs, torpedoes, and machine guns. Sailors onboard those ships fought back by trying to shoot the airborne planes, meanwhile trying to stop flooding and fires from sinking damaged ships.

Photograph, *Two Type 97 shipboard attack aircraft from the Japanese carrier Hiryu fly past USS Yorktown (CV-5), amid heavy anti-aircraft fire, after dropping their torpedoes during the mid-afternoon attack..., June 4, 1942*

Naval History and Heritage Command (80-G-32242)
Photograph, *Japanese aircraft carrier Hiryu burning, shortly after sunrise on 5 June 1942, a few hours before she sank...*, June 5, 1942

Naval History and Heritage Command (NH 73064)

The Japanese ship *Hiryu* burning after being bombed by U.S. Navy aircraft.
Photograph, *Japanese heavy cruiser Mikuma, photographed from a USS Enterprise (CV-6) SBD aircraft during the afternoon of 6 June 1942, after she had been bombed by planes from Enterprise and USS Hornet (CV-8)*, June 6, 1942

Naval History and Heritage Command (80-G-414422)

Japanese ship *Mikuma* burning after being bombed by U.S. Navy planes.
Photograph, *Scene on board USS Yorktown (CV-5), shortly after she was hit by three Japanese bombs..., June 4, 1942*

United Service Organizations (80-G-312018)

Crewmen of the U.S. Navy ship USS Yorktown scramble to put out fires after being hit by a Japanese torpedo.
Photograph, *A Japanese Type 97 shipboard attack aircraft is shot down while attempting to deliver a torpedo attack on USS Yorktown (CV-5)* . . . , June 4, 1942

Naval History and Heritage Command (80-G-32242)

![Plane crashing into the ocean after being hit by enemy fire.](image)

**What Was Ensign Hopper Doing?**

Ensign Hopper’s fighter squadron, VF-3, was assigned the job of protecting U.S. Navy ships, and planes such as torpedo and dive bombers, from Japanese attacks. When Japanese planes assaulted the U.S. fleet on the afternoon of June 4, 1942, Ensign Hopper took off from the deck of the USS Yorktown to fend them off. His plane was hit by enemy fire and crashed into the ocean. Since he was not immediately rescued, the Navy listed him as Missing in Action.
Note: After a battle, it was common for commanders to write after action reports that summarized the losses of both sides. After a great victory, commanders often sent their troops a message congratulating them on their effort.

Office of Chief Of Naval Operations, File of Memoranda and Reports Relating to the Battle of Midway, 1946 (excerpt)
National Museum of the Pacific War

This report from the headquarters of the U.S. Navy’s Pacific Fleet to the headquarters of the U.S. Navy’s top admiral compared the estimated losses of the Japanese with those of the Americans.

*Some of the estimates in this report later proved inaccurate. In reality, U.S. forces did not damage any Japanese battleships (BB), and total Japanese losses were closer to 3,000 personnel.
Message, Chester Nimitz to Task Force Commanders, Midway, June 6, 1942 (excerpt)

American Naval Records Society

This note of congratulations and encouragement was one of many messages sent by the head of the U.S. Navy’s Pacific Fleet, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, to the units that participated in the Battle of Midway.

What Was Ensign Hopper Doing?

When the battle was over, the Navy searched for survivors who had been in the water since their planes crashed or ships sank. Ensign Hopper was never recovered. The U.S. Navy later declared him Killed in Action.