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Battle of the Coral Sea - I

Lead: In what may have been the first truly `modern naval engagement, Japanese and American carrier aircraft fought over the Coral Sea in May, 1942. No surface ship in either navy sighted the enemy.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: In the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Japanese forces sought to take advantage of Allied confusion and their own stunning success in the early days of the war in the Pacific. They upgraded

their Strategic Plan to include strikes toward the central Pacific island of Midway and south toward New Guinea and Australia. Midway in June 1942 would prove to be perhaps the decisive defeat for the Japanese Navy in World War II, but the Coral Sea engagement a month earlier, even though it has been considered a draw, stopped the southern advance of the Japanese juggernaut and laid the foundation for the subsequent U.S. victory at Guadalcanal the following winter.

The Coral Sea washes the southeastern coast of Papua New Guinea, the western reaches of the Solomon Islands, and in mid-1942 provided the only natural protection

northeastern Australia had in the face of the Japanese advance. In early May, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto sent forces south to secure Tugali in the Solomons and Port Moseby in New Guinea. American intelligence had cracked the Japanese military code and knew that the Japanese were coming in three separate groups, two carrier task forces coming out of the Pacific and an invasion force from Rabaul (ra-bool).

The United States responded with two carrier groups shaped around USS *Lexington* and *Yorktown* and a combined Allied cruiser squadron. On May 7th and 8th the aircraft of the opposing forces dueled in history's first all-air naval encounter. No ship

on either side sighted the enemy, but the damage on both sides was extensive. Next time: the end of Lady Lex.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/events/wwii-pac/coralsea/coralsea.htm>

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