

SELECTED EXCERPTS FROM

# **DIPLOMATS & ADMIRALS**

**FROM FAILED NEGOTIATIONS AND TRAGIC MISJUDGMENTS  
TO POWERFUL LEADERS AND HEROIC DEEDS,  
THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE PACIFIC WAR FROM  
PEARL HARBOR TO MIDWAY**

**DALE A. JENKINS**



AUBREY PUBLISHING CO.  
New York



## President Franklin D. Roosevelt

**I**n 1941, as the United States faced the threat of another horrific war, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was leading the nation from a wheelchair. Struck down by polio at age thirty-nine, he rehabilitated and marshaled himself, despite severe pain, to press on with his career in politics. Eleven years later, delivering his message of confidence and optimism, he was elected President of the United States.

Many people who lose a sense, like eyesight, compensate by developing keen hearing, touch, taste, or smell. In Roosevelt's case, his legs were paralyzed. Without assistance he could not move. Limited to thinking and speaking, he developed those capabilities to make himself one of the great communicators of his age.

He had great personal magnetism and inspired loyalty in virtually everyone around him. In addition, he had great personal confidence and did not hesitate to make decisions - or to make subsequent decisions modifying, sometimes significantly, the first ones when that suited his purposes. Despite his expansive personal style, he was inwardly secretive and had an indecipherable agenda that he shared with no one.

He was a genius at mass communications, and his speechwriters deferred to his reviews of their drafts, not so much because he was the president, but because when a text required the perfect word, the exquisite or incisive phrase, or exactly the right tone, he was the best. And when it came to delivery, he had no peer. He spoke to the nation from the White House thirty times in the friendly, confident, and inclusive tones that were described as Fireside Chats. During the Fireside Chats, half the country tuned in on their radios, and it was said that on hot summer nights when people had their windows open, one could walk through the residential downtown of a large city and hardly miss a word.

## Admiral Yamamoto

The Japanese war plan, the Gradual Attrition Strategy, was developed during the 1930s to meet the US Pacific Fleet battleships as they moved across the Pacific Ocean toward Japan. Cruisers and destroyers would attack first to weaken and reduce the Pacific Fleet, followed by a Japanese battleship fleet at least equal in strength to the reduced fleet they would confront in the western Pacific. To maximize the advantages of their night fighting capabilities, in a massive night battle the Japanese fleet would destroy the Pacific Fleet. Carrier operations were added to protect the surface forces.

Plans changed when Admiral Yamamoto assumed command of the Combined Fleet. He was one of the few officers in any country's navy in the 1920s to realize the potential power of carrier-based aircraft. In 1924, while still a captain, he learned to fly and changed his specialty to aviation. This led to his command of the carrier *Akagi* and, as a rear admiral, command of the First Carrier Division. He wanted more carriers and opposed the construction of the seventy-four-thousand-ton super-battleships *Yamato* and *Musashi*, but the Japanese "gun club" of senior battleship admirals had their way and those ships were built.

Yamamoto was considered, both in Japan and the United States, as intelligent, capable, aggressive, and dangerous. Motivated by his skill as a poker player and casino gambler, he was continually calculating odds on an endless variety of options. He played bridge and chess better than most good players. Like most powerful leaders he was articulate and persuasive, and once in a position of power he pushed his agenda relentlessly. Whether he would play his odds successfully in the Pacific remained to be seen.

Yamamoto saw two serious problems with Japan's Gradual Attrition Strategy. The first was that it did not force action. It depended on the Americans to initiate action at a time of their choosing. That time could be when the United States, with its huge industrial capability, waited

until it had built an overwhelming force that could defeat the Japanese fleet even after it had suffered losses brought about by the Gradual Attrition Strategy. Second, the leading naval powers were developing carriers, and carrier planes could strike at much greater range than cruisers and destroyers. Striking at greater range meant that carrier planes could sink cruisers and destroyers employed in the Gradual Attrition Strategy before they got within range to use their guns and torpedoes. That, in turn, meant that Japan would have to deploy its own carriers to protect its cruisers and destroyers from enemy carrier attack, and that would lead to a different confrontation - carriers versus carriers. Was it, therefore, not better to be go on the offensive and destroy an enemy fleet before it could do the same to one's own fleet? As a result, Yamamoto superseded the Gradual Attrition Strategy with a new concept built around large, fast-moving fleet carriers. This was an aggressive force that could destroy the US Pacific Fleet without waiting for that fleet to move across the Pacific Ocean.

What Yamamoto created was a naval blitzkrieg, a lightning war at sea. As the German army in 1939 and 1940 had employed fast-moving tanks and other mechanized vehicles, supported by dive-bombers and other aircraft to deadly effect, fast carriers with dive-bombers and torpedo planes were the naval equivalent. The Japanese developed carrier operations and armaments that were, at that time, the most advanced in the world. The fast, highly maneuverable Zero fighters and the long-range torpedo planes, nicknamed "Kates" by Pacific Fleet fliers, were the most advanced in any navy. The best US attack plane was the Dauntless dive-bomber, and the Japanese equivalent, nicknamed the Val, achieved a greater range but with lighter armaments. The Japanese carrier pilots and deck crews had been trained to a peak level of expertise. Carrier commands perfected their operations to allow full deck loads of planes to be launched in a matter of minutes. They developed operations for coordinated launches, formations, and attacks by multiple carriers, a skill the U.S. Navy would not match for several years. By the end of

1941, the First Carrier Striking Force would consist of six carriers: three carrier divisions, each division with two carriers, and was the most powerful naval force in the world.

## Richard Sorge

**T**he US oil embargo meant that Japan had to go south to the Dutch East Indies to get oil, and this presumably would preclude an invasion of Siberia. However, the pro-war army elements also knew a two-front war likely would finish Russia. Despite the army's rejection of Foreign Minister Matsuoka's demand that they invade Siberia when Hitler invaded Russia in June, it did not eliminate the possibility of a Siberian invasion if circumstances changed. The possibility of finishing Russia was so attractive to the pro-war elements that they could reverse their earlier aversion to Siberia and launch an attack. The army was watching the progress of the German offensive approaching Moscow, and, quite apart from the impending shortage of oil, a defeat of Russia in the west would be the signal for an attack on Siberia.

A Siberian attack would have to begin by the end of August for troops to not be caught in the Siberian winter. In mid-August the Japanese Kwantung Army ordered hundreds of thousands of troops loaded onto trains for Manchuria. Plans were made for shipping one hundred thousand tons of military armaments and equipment. Movements of this magnitude could not be made secretly, and Stalin would have been aware of this development. August 1941 was the most perilous time for Russia in the entire war.

The most successful spy in the war on any side was Richard Sorge, a German and Nazi Party member operating as a journalist in Tokyo, but in fact working for Russia. Sorge was a wounded veteran of the Great War who had come to believe in communism, and that belief determined

his ultimate loyalty. He built a small spy network in Tokyo, and through various sources uncovered the date of Operation Barbarossa, which he reported to Stalin. Opinions differ on whether Stalin believed Sorge's information about Barbarossa, but when it turned out to be true it added credibility to other important information from Sorge. His standing with Stalin was enhanced, and Sorge established himself as a reliable source for later crucial intelligence transmissions.

Sorge was the potential target of three counterspy investigations. The German Gestapo was suspicious of his activities, and Colonel Joseph Meisinger, for good reason known as the Butcher of Warsaw, was sent to Tokyo to investigate. The Russian NKVD was checking to determine the true loyalties of Sorge, and any significant suspicion would have resulted in Sorge's elimination. Finally, the Japanese secret police were aware of illegal coded radio transmissions, and its agents were suspicious of Sorge and other members of his network. Sorge was able to elude all these operations by complicated maneuverings, alcoholic seductions, and lies for several years, during which he played a crucial role in the outcome of the war.

Sorge had his circle of spies following the Japanese move to Manchuria, collecting every available scrap of information. Finally, on September 14, a member of the Sorge ring returned from Manchuria with the information that the Japanese buildup in Manchuria was being reversed. A message went to Stalin with that crucial information. This was the most important intelligence information that any spy in the war obtained.

Exactly what produced this sudden turnaround by the Japanese army is not possible to identify exactly, but there had been earlier discussions in army circles that Japan would not invade Siberia until they were sure of a German win in the west. News of the slowing German advance may have reached the Japanese generals, causing them to pull back and not have their troops in Siberia in winter and be exposed to Russian eastward troop movements if the German attack in the west were stopped. The entire Japanese move to Manchuria may have been a feint to hold Russian

troops in Siberia while the German army captured Moscow. If that was the motive they did not hold their Manchurian position long enough. Stalin, with the information from Sorge and confident that no attack could be made after mid-September, began transferring his forces to the west. By the first week of December, 18 divisions of troops, 1,500 tanks, and 1,700 planes had been moved west to defend Moscow.

## (Prime Minister) Prince Konoë

(Prime Minister) Prince Konoë faced complicated internal problems in his efforts to achieve a diplomatic solution with the United States. Attempts to achieve a unified position in the Japanese government exposed its contradictions and rivalries. There was a rivalry between the civilian and military sectors of the government, as shown by the power of the military to bring down a government if the civilians took actions contrary to their views. There was a bitter rivalry within the armed forces between the army and the navy, which had at its core a battle for power in the government. This showed itself in a debate over the allocation of resources—primarily steel and oil. Further, within each armed service there were moderates, who saw the need for diplomacy to avoid a war with the United States, and pro-war hardliners, who believed the power of the samurai fighting spirit would overcome any material and resource imbalance. Within the latter group were those who would rather fight and die in a glorious defeat than succumb to the humiliation of slow strangulation from an oil embargo. Finally, there were contradictions within individuals, who in large meetings boisterously and confidently advocated aggressive actions, and later privately admitted to close confidants their concerns about Japan's ability to win a war with the United States. The public bravado was most evident when important decisions were made in large or important group meetings,



such as Imperial Conferences. These decisions were then difficult to reverse or even modify as circumstances or opinions changed because of the Imperial Mandate attached to such decisions.

Konoe made a huge effort to bypass all these conflicting elements by doing everything he could to have a one-on-one summit meeting with Roosevelt. Having been rebuffed by Hull, Konoe and his advisers struggled to reply to Hull's demands with points that would be approved by the armed forces. The position that was approved on August 29 provided for Japan to withdraw from China, without specifying a timetable, that it would not revoke the Tripartite Pact—a point insisted upon by the army—but further clarified its position that Japan would not be committed to a war with the United States if the United States became involved in a war with Germany.

The German assault on Russia marked the time when Germany and Japan took drastically different courses, and staying in the Tripartite Pact was a disastrous situation for Japan. The Russian assault had changed the basis of the pact, but the army would not agree to a revocation. Hull viewed the pact that Japan had with Adolf Hitler—the most hateful aggressor on the planet—in a very negative light and was highly inflexible in discussions with Ambassador Nomura because of it.

## Secretary of State Cordell Hull

**H**ull sat at his desk in a quandary. He was concerned by the British opposition to the modus vivendi but could understand their apprehension about any possible lessening of US support for their interests in the Far East. However, he was completely shaken by the intense, adamant opposition by the Chinese, including the mobilization of their powerful influence in the government and the Washington press. He was staggered by the power of the Chinese lobbying effort in Washington that

was pulling out every possible ploy and leverage to prevent a settlement between the United States and Japan. Hull felt stuck to the commitment to them as allies, even though their interests were very different from those of the United States.

For anyone to think that war between the United States and Japan was inevitable, the strong doubts expressed by the British and the strident efforts of the Chinese leadership to prevent an agreement are proof that it was not inevitable. In fact, Hull had been about to avoid war by submitting the final *modus vivendi* to the Japanese diplomats. Foreign Minister Togo and the Japanese government, as evidenced by their plaintive and desperate pleas for an agreement, surely would have embraced it. But Hull was not capable of taking that step because he allowed himself to be controlled by opposition from governments he thought he dared not oppose, whatever the results for the United States. In this situation of massive, world-shaking importance, the United States had a Secretary of State who was unable to maintain a policy that was critically important for the United States but questioned by the British and violently opposed by the Chinese. In failing to maintain that policy, he failed in his duty as Secretary of State and failed in his loyalty to the United States. After his ineptitude was later realized, he would be described by Roosevelt as “that old fool, Hull.”

Hull was staggered by the heavily weighted arguments of the British and the strident demands of the Chinese. He also was operating under the mistaken belief that, in a war with Japan, US forces would prevail in a few months. Taking five minutes to talk with Admiral Stark on the power of the Japanese navy never occurred to him. The southward movement of the heavy Japanese amphibious force through the South China Sea was a small indication of their total capabilities. A war with Japan would not be over in a few months, but on the contrary would be long and bloody. Hull’s failure also showed a massive gap in communication and coordination between the armed forces and the State Department—two departments of the federal government that should

have integrated their resources to avoid disasters and achieve positive results for the United States.

Hull felt he must abandon the *modus vivendi*. What could he give the Japanese in its place? The other document, already prepared, was the long-term proposal that articulated the eventual goals to be achieved in the Pacific over several years, the Ten Point Note. Hull's way out was to deliver the Ten Point Note to the Japanese diplomats. That note would become known from that day forward as the Hull Note of November 26. It was a turning point in the history of the United States and the countries of Asia.

## Vice Admiral Nagumo

**I**n the Inland Sea of Japan, Admiral Yamamoto was in the operations room aboard battleship *Nagato*. The carrier *Akagi's* powerful low-frequency radio equipment had transmitted the reports of the first strike on Pearl Harbor back to Yamamoto almost simultaneously with the reports Vice Admiral Nagumo was reading. It was clear the first strike had accomplished all its goals. In one fell swoop the battle line of the US Pacific Fleet had been destroyed. It was not a partial result; it was a complete success.

The mock battle scenarios had indicated that one, or possibly two, Japanese carriers would be lost in the attack as US forces retaliated. But there was no retaliation. Virtually all the US air power on the island of Oahu had been destroyed in the first minutes by the surprise attack and the brilliant tactics of the Japanese carrier pilots. The next attack, set for the early afternoon, would sink cruisers, destroyers, submarines - and the Pacific Fleet carriers, if they showed up to defend the harbor. There were sixteen-inch guns in open, unfortified emplacements near the harbor entrance. If the dive-bombers and level bombers could

render them inoperable the two battleships could move in for shore bombardment of the entire harbor, including the shore facilities, fuel tanks, and dry docks.

Yamamoto sensed a feeling of culmination about the huge success of the first strike, and the same incisive intuition that guided his brilliant moves at the gaming tables told him what the next move on the bridge of *Akagi* would be. In Nagumo he knew his man. Nagumo had never been committed to the Pearl Harbor mission. He had not been Yamamoto's choice to command the carrier Striking Force; his assignment was the decision of the Navy Ministry in Tokyo, based on seniority. It perhaps would have been better if one or two battleships in Pearl Harbor had escaped the first attack because it might have spurred Nagumo to further action. While the exultation of the officers and sailors on his staff swirled around him, Yamamoto sat quietly. Finally, he fixed a steely gaze on his chief of staff, and in a low, intense voice: "Admiral Nagumo is going to withdraw."

North of Pearl Harbor, the planes of the first wave were being spotted on all six flight decks for another launch. The second wave was on the hangar decks being fueled and rearmed. Nagumo considered the reports of the sinking ships at Pearl Harbor. There were almost no attack aircraft left undamaged on Oahu, and no capability for any meaningful attack on the Striking Force. There were still many ships and important targets left in the harbor. A nervous Nagumo may have thought US carriers might make an appearance while the Striking Force was launching or recovering planes. Unknown to Nagumo, *Enterprise* was close to the harbor and *Lexington* was a day away. In a prospective carrier battle, Striking Force would have a six-to-one or six-to-two advantage against Pacific Fleet pilots with no combat experience.

Nagumo had done the minimum expected of him. His navy career had been on surface ships, and he was uncertain about carrier operations. He was relieved that all six carriers were still intact. He was safe and had no taste for further action. After a review with his chief of staff,

Nagumo pronounced that the anticipated results had been achieved. The cruisers, destroyers, submarines, shore facilities, fuel tanks, and possible carriers near Pearl Harbor would have to wait for another time—a time that would never come.

After a final pause and reflection, Nagumo gave the order to withdraw. The young officers on the *Akagi* bridge looked at each other in disbelief. There was an old Japanese aphorism: he was like a small dog that takes one bite and runs. But there was no debate. The order went out to the five other carriers. The planes on the flight decks of all six carriers were lowered to the hangar decks, and the carrier fleet turned to a northwest course, away from Pearl Harbor and back to Japan.

## President Franklin D. Roosevelt

**B**ack in Washington, alone in the late afternoon of December 7, a chastened Franklin Roosevelt considered the situation. He had dealt with his shocked and uncertain cabinet advisers after the immediate news of the Pearl Harbor attack, and they had now departed. Eight years earlier, Roosevelt had rallied a despairing and depressed country over the financial and economic collapse with an inaugural speech that assured the country “we had nothing to fear but fear itself.” Now he had to again communicate a message of confidence and resolution.

Roosevelt gathered his thoughts. He may have wondered how things had gone so terribly wrong. But what might have been was now hindsight—the United States was at war and was in it to win. He spoke quietly to his secretary, Grace Tully. “Sit down, Grace. I’m going before Congress tomorrow. I’d like to dictate my message. It will be short.” Taking his time, he began dictating the message that would again mobilize the nation. It began, “Yesterday, December seventh, 1941, a

date which will live in world history, the United States was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.”

He continued for about five hundred words, citing deceitful diplomacy and the massive, preplanned attacks that, even as he spoke, were still occurring throughout the western and southern Pacific. He concluded, “No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.” Grace typed the dictation, and when she brought it back, he crossed out “world history” in the first line and wrote “infamy.”

## Rear Admiral Yamaguchi

**O**n the *Hiryu* bridge, an increasingly worried Rear Admiral Yamaguchi considered the situation. A PBY patrol scout had made a radio transmission just after 0600. The PBY had to have come from Midway. The attack of torpedo planes and B-26s on the carrier Striking Force at 0710 also had clearly come from Midway, 140 miles away. To be over the Japanese fleet at 0710 meant that they had taken off immediately at 0600, in response to the PBY report. That meant the Americans had prepared for the attack the previous day, or even earlier. Furthermore, B-26s normally would not be stationed on Midway; they would have been flown in from Pearl Harbor, indicating an even earlier preparation. The secrecy of the Japanese mission clearly had been compromised at least several days before, and the Americans had had time to prepare their defenses and counterattack.

There had been no positive confirmation that the American carriers were still in Pearl Harbor. If the Americans had several days to prepare, they could have deployed their carriers to be able to attack the Striking Force before the Japanese submarines were in position off Pearl Harbor.

With the mission's secrecy blown and the location of the American carriers unknown, would the Americans not throw everything they had against the Japanese, including carriers? The American carriers had been constantly on the move, making raids against the Marshalls, Marcus, Rabaul, New Guinea, and even Tokyo. Why did Admiral Yamamoto think they would now be tied up at their piers in Pearl Harbor and their sailors lolling on Waikiki Beach?

Then came the message from the *Tone* scout aircraft at 0728: ten enemy ships sighted, 100 miles away. Ship types, undisclosed. Vice Admiral Nagumo messaged frantically to the scout aircraft: identify ship types. No reply from the scout. On the *Hiryu* bridge, Yamaguchi was now desperate. The Japanese didn't know where the American carriers were, but they knew their mission was compromised. Why would there not be carriers in an American force of ten ships? His CarDiv2 carriers were ready with dive-bombers, and he could spot, warm up, and launch a full deck load in thirty minutes. CarDiv1 could complete their launch with whatever ordnance was currently loaded on its planes in another fifteen minutes. Some of the Zeros had been refueled and rearmed, and others with their great speed could catch up to the slower dive-bombers. If they launched immediately, they had little to lose even if the American force had no carriers, and it would clear the decks for the returning planes from Midway, beginning about 0830. Still nothing from Nagumo. Yamaguchi understood that the Zeros had beaten off one attack, but there could be another one. Why had Nagumo not ordered a course change? They could send a destroyer back down the returning flight course to intercept the aircraft returning from Midway and guide them back to the carriers' new position.

Nagumo had made his career as a battleship and cruiser admiral. When he was assigned command of the Striking Force, his seniority meant that he was never required to get into the details of flight operations, nor did he make the effort to do so. He depended on his experts, Commanders Fuchida and Genda, for that, but now both of them were debilitated.

Nagumo was suddenly on his own. At this crucial time, the cost of his failure to learn the complicated factors that played into carrier operations suddenly came due. Now, when every minute counted, it was too late to learn the complexities involved in loading different armaments on different types of planes on the hangar deck, too late to learn how the planes were organized and spotted on the flight decks, too late to learn the flight capabilities of his different types of planes, and far too late to know how to integrate all those factors into a fast-moving and efficient operation with the planes and ordnance available at that moment. Commander Genda, his brilliant operations officer, couldn't make the decisions for him now. It was all up to Nagumo. At 0730 on June 4, 1942, years of shipbuilding, training, and strategic planning had all come to this moment. Teams of highly trained pilots, flight deck personnel, mechanics, and hundreds of other sailors were ready and awaiting his command. The entire course of the battle, of the Combined Fleet, and even perhaps of Japan were going to bear the results of his decisions, then and there.

He thought for fifteen minutes—a lifetime in a carrier battle. Then came the order from Nagumo at 0745: “Prepare to carry out attacks on enemy fleet units. Leave torpedoes on those attack planes which have not yet changed to bombs.”<sup>1</sup> But there was no order to launch an attack or to change course. Yamaguchi was incredulous. Had Nagumo lost his mind? Did he not understand that in a carrier battle, blasting holes in an enemy carrier flight deck with high-explosive munitions, thereby shutting down flight operations, was the number-one priority? A destroyed flight deck makes a carrier a helpless target. Sinking the ship is secondary at that point, and the existing ordnance could take a carrier out of action, quickly and effectively. The exhausted deck crews struggled to comply with this latest order.

---

1 Morison, p. 107



## Lieutenant Commander Wade McClusky

Lieutenant Commander Wade McClusky, age forty-two, commander of the *Enterprise* air group, had been a fighter pilot, one of the best. His promotion to air group commander on *Enterprise* moved him to piloting the premier attack plane in the Navy arsenal, the Dauntless dive-bomber. Like the admirals on the flag bridges of the different carriers, he was considering his situation and that of the two squadrons of thirty-one dive-bombers he was leading into battle. The sixteen planes in the scouting squadron, VS-6, were each carrying a 500-pound bomb and two 100-pound bombs. The bomber squadron, VB-6, had fifteen planes each carrying a single 1000-pound bomb. His air group had been in the air since shortly after 0700, and they were getting low on fuel.

Admiral Spruance had ordered the *Enterprise* air group, together with the *Hornet* air group, to fly southwest on course 240 degrees to intercept the Japanese carrier force. McClusky calculated, after the earlier delay, that he should see it by 0925. His pilots had seen nothing but the low cumulus clouds and open ocean. He knew, as most of the senior aviators knew, that the Devastator torpedo planes would not succeed; against the Zeros they were like clay pigeons in a shooting gallery. Even if some got past the Zeros, flying slow and low over anti-aircraft fire from the escorting destroyers and cruisers was another invitation to death. And, if any survived all that to launch a torpedo, Admiral Halsey's previous evaluations had shown the WWI-vintage torpedoes to be completely unreliable. He knew, as the other dive-bomber commanders knew, that it was up to the dive-bombers, or the Pacific Fleet was going to lose the Battle of Midway.

By 0930 he accepted that he should have intercepted the Japanese carriers if they had continued on the same course and speed after the 0603 report. Now all his experience and judgment were needed in this crucial moment. Facing the same situation as *Hornet* air commander Ring, who turned the *Hornet* air group left to protect Midway, he analyzed

the situation much the same way *Hornet* torpedo squadron commander Waldron had, just minutes earlier. He decided to turn right about 90 degrees to the northwest and start a search pattern that would take him parallel to, but south of, the original Japanese course of 135 degrees. He executed the turn, and the two squadrons followed. If the Japanese had maintained their course but had been delayed for any reason, such as the need to take evasive maneuvers, flying back near that track would find them. McClusky and his air group were flying at nineteen thousand feet. At that altitude, one can see a vast expanse of ocean. But with 50 percent cumulus cloud cover at lower altitudes, visibility was difficult. Still nothing, and the fuel situation was becoming serious. Some of the planes might have to ditch in the ocean when they ran out of fuel. McClusky would have been fully justified in turning back to *Enterprise* at this point, but he knew the Japanese carriers were out there - and he had to find them. He hoped all his years of training and flying experience could come together and give him the judgment needed.

He led the two squadrons on the reverse of the Japanese course for about fifteen minutes until he had covered enough ocean to be confident the carriers were not on that track. He had begun the search south of the intercept point and so was sure the Japanese could not be farther south. He turned his group to the northeast to execute the first leg of a search pattern. Since he had not found the Striking Force carriers, it was possible their scouts had found the US task forces, and they had turned north to close the range.

Then, several minutes before 1000, McClusky, through an opening in the clouds, spotted a lone destroyer, which could only be Japanese, heading northeast at flank speed. It was the destroyer *Arashi*, that had been detached to counter the American submarine *Nautilus*. He turned his air group to parallel the track of the destroyer. After several minutes of flying, McClusky saw faint white slivers on the horizon indicating the wakes of ships. Following farther, and emerging from over a cloud layer, the Japanese carrier force was spread out below him. The yellow

decks, each painted with a large red disc, identified the carriers. At 1002 the electrifying message went out: "This is McClusky. Have sighted the enemy." McClusky's decision to persevere in his mission and decide on the search courses under the pressure of battle conditions and low fuel are some of the greatest moments of command leadership in the entire war.

## Rear Admiral Raymond A. Spruance

**A** shattered Yamamoto received the report of the destruction of three of his carriers but was still determined to turn the tables. He increased the speed of the main body and ordered Nagumo to close the American force with his battleships. Yamamoto thought the Americans would continue west to pursue the remaining Japanese ships, and if he could get his battleships within range he could destroy them in a night battle. Nagumo had two battleships in his force, plus cruisers and destroyers, and Yamamoto with his six battleships was coming up fast behind him. Japanese forces had trained for years in the use of star shells and other incendiary devices to illuminate enemy ships at night. Destruction by the massive guns of *Yamato* and the other battleships could reverse the outcome of the battle.

On board *Enterprise* some of the staff officers were urging Admiral Spruance to pursue westward to make an annihilating attack with his carriers at first light in the morning. But Spruance had other thoughts. Pacific Fleet carriers had won the Midway battle. He knew at least two Japanese battleships were out there somewhere to the west, and he knew of their night-fighting capabilities. He also was concerned that the Japanese amphibious force might still attempt a landing on Midway, and he wanted to be in the proximity of Midway in that event. After recovering the planes that had demolished *Hiryu*, and despite the

contrary advice he was receiving, he ordered his carrier force to take a course to the east.

As night fell, Yamamoto followed with his forces behind the two battleships of the Striking Force, and they steamed eastward at full speed into the night. Far ahead the destroyers went to flank speed to search for the US carriers. Lookouts, with the best night-vision binoculars in the world, swept the night horizon where the very dark sky meets the black ocean. The faintest shape, the tiniest pinprick of light, would show there was something out there, like the superstructure of a ship over the horizon. There was nothing. By midnight Yamamoto realized, with his air cover destroyed, he would be vulnerable to an air attack from the American carriers at first light. The plan for a night surface battle had failed. Leaving four sunk or sinking carriers behind, a devastated Yamamoto reversed course to the west, and his entire fleet went into retreat.

The remnants of the huge Japanese fleet would be pursued over several days with comparatively minor action. But when Admiral Spruance turned the US carrier force to the east late in the day on June 4, the Battle of Midway, for all intents and purposes, was over.