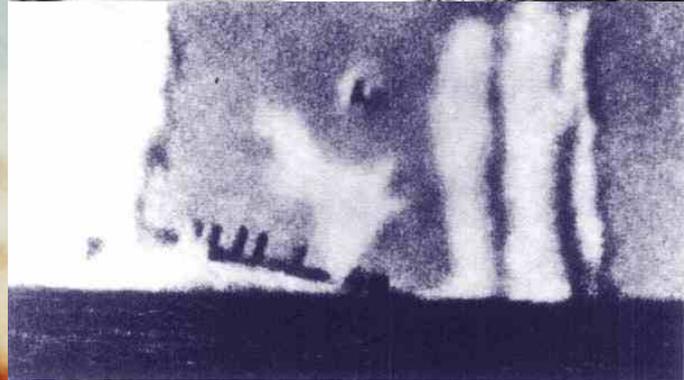
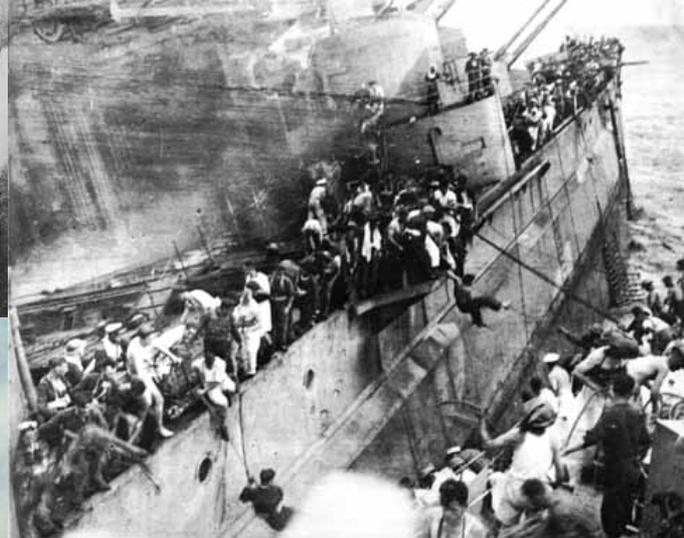


# **The Battle of Midway: A New Look at a Classic Battle**

**Jon Parshall  
Historicon 2006**





# Historical Importance of Midway

- ❑ Most important battle in the Pacific War in terms of short and long-term effects
- ❑ Permanently wrecked IJN's elite carrier force
- ❑ Restored parity of forces in Pacific
- ❑ Allowed U.S. to undertake offensive actions—Guadalcanal, Solomons

# Historical Mythos

- ❑ All great battles create their own mythos
- ❑ Important events create the filter through which we interpret the event as whole
- ❑ Revisions not to be undertaken lightly



# The 1020 Dive-bomber Attack

- ❑ Reversed the apparent outcome of the battle in a sudden, unexpected way
- ❑ Provides perhaps the most vivid mental image of the entire battle
- ❑ Endlessly reinforced over the past 60 years
- ❑ Unfortunately, it's a false image in some respects

# Understanding Deck Operations

- ❑ **Before angled flight decks, you did one thing at a time:**
  - Spotting
  - Launching
  - Recovery
- ❑ **Recovery, in particular, shuts down the flight deck completely**

# The Japanese Reserve Strike Force

- “The flight deck, which moments before had been filled with a deafening din, was now silent. There were no planes, no drone of engines... But the stillness was again broken by the raucous loudspeaker as it blared out the order, ‘Prepare second attack wave!’ ...

It was 0500 when the crimson sun rose over the horizon. The flight deck was again filled with planes ready to attack in the event an enemy task force appeared.”

—Mitsuo Fuchida

# Arming / Rearming

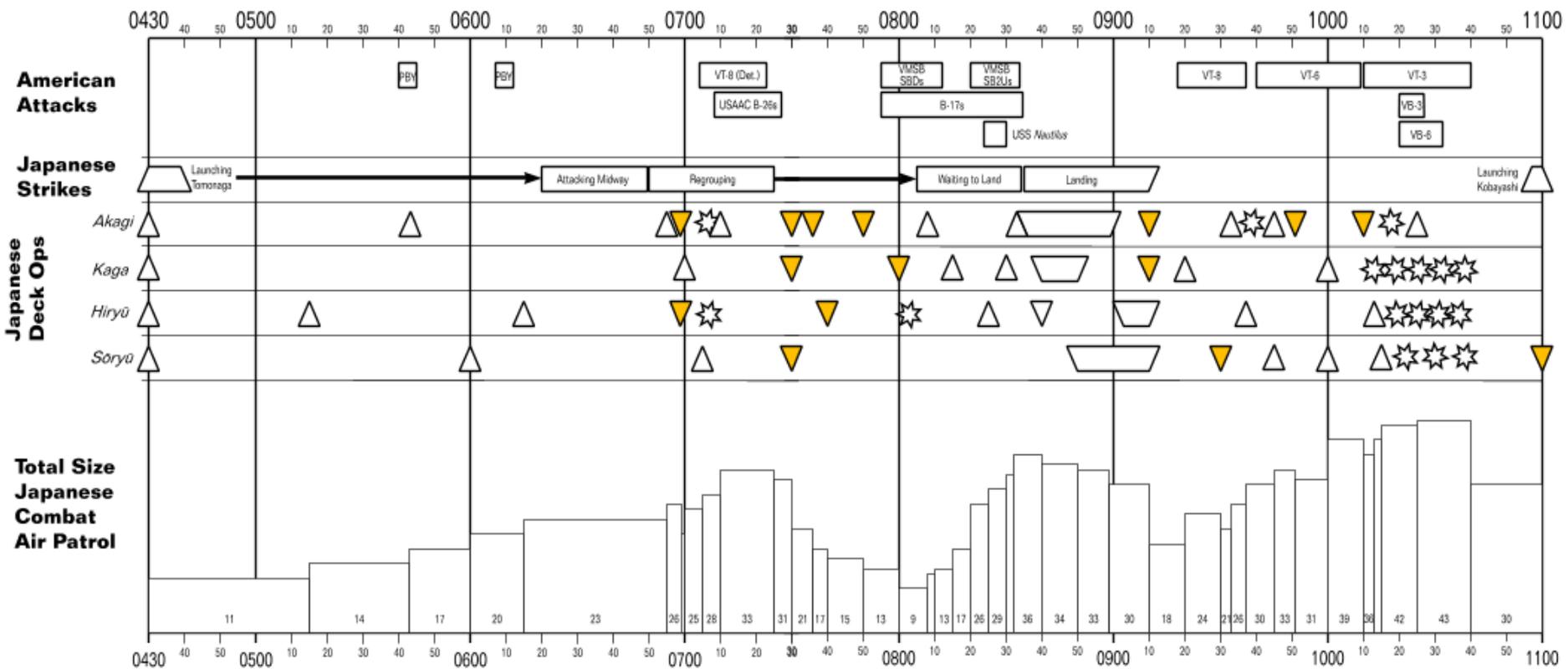
- 0715: “Consequently, at 0715... he ordered the planes of the second wave, which had been armed for an attack on enemy ships, to prepare instead for another strike on Midway. This mean that the torpedo-laden level bombers on *Akagi* and *Kaga* had to be de-armed and reloaded with bombs. The ones already on the flight deck were taken down to the hangar one after another, and the re-arming began.”

—Mitsuo Fuchida

# And Re-arming

- “By his decision, taken shortly after 0830, to recover the Midway strike force before doing anything else, Admiral Nagumo virtually committed himself to the second, more cautious plan of action. On board *Akagi*, when the order was given to clear the deck for recovery, the weary maintenance crews began once more to lower the torpedo bombers to the hangar deck. There, the orders now were to switch back from bombs to torpedoes.”

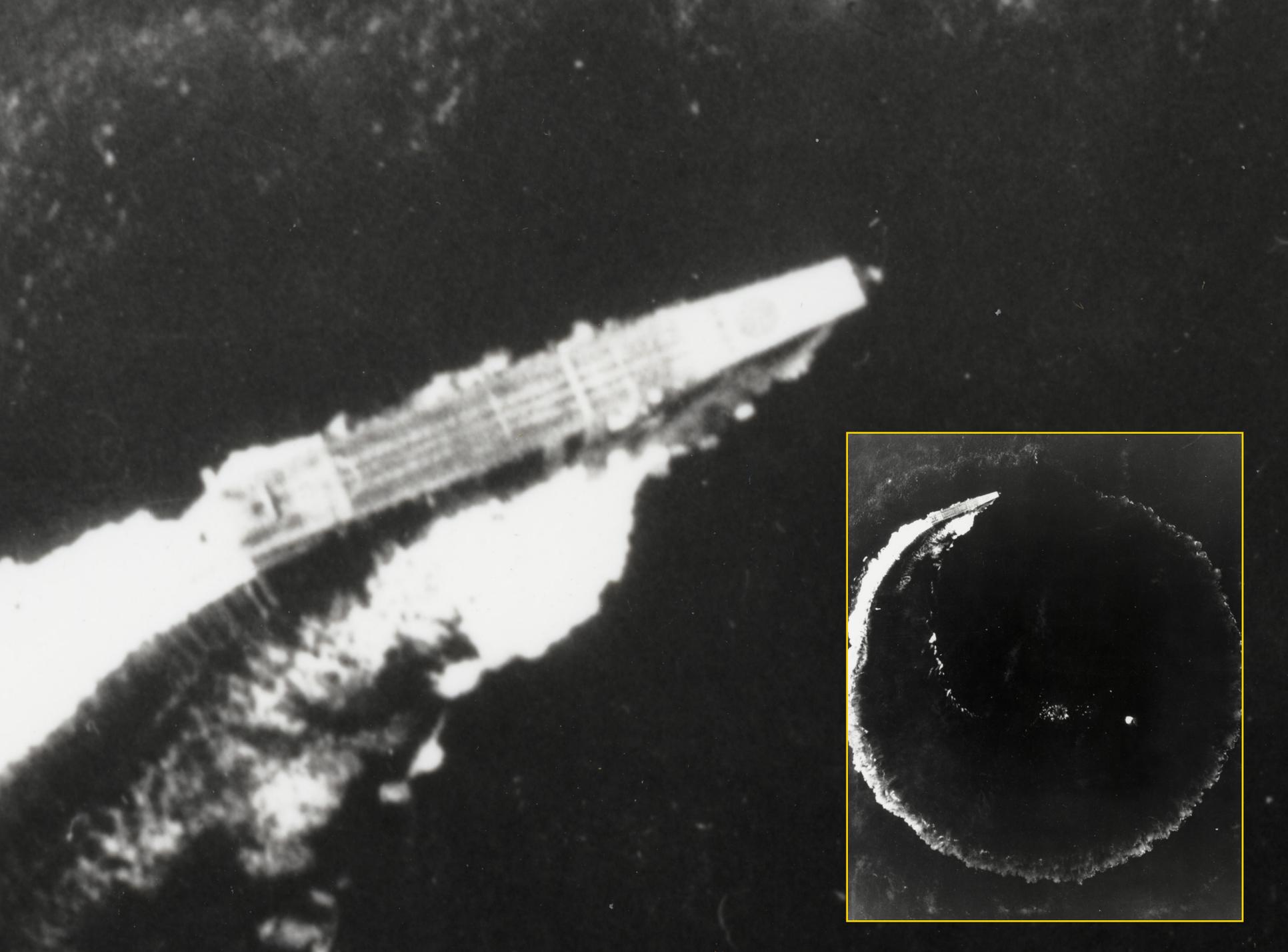
—Mitsuo Fuchida

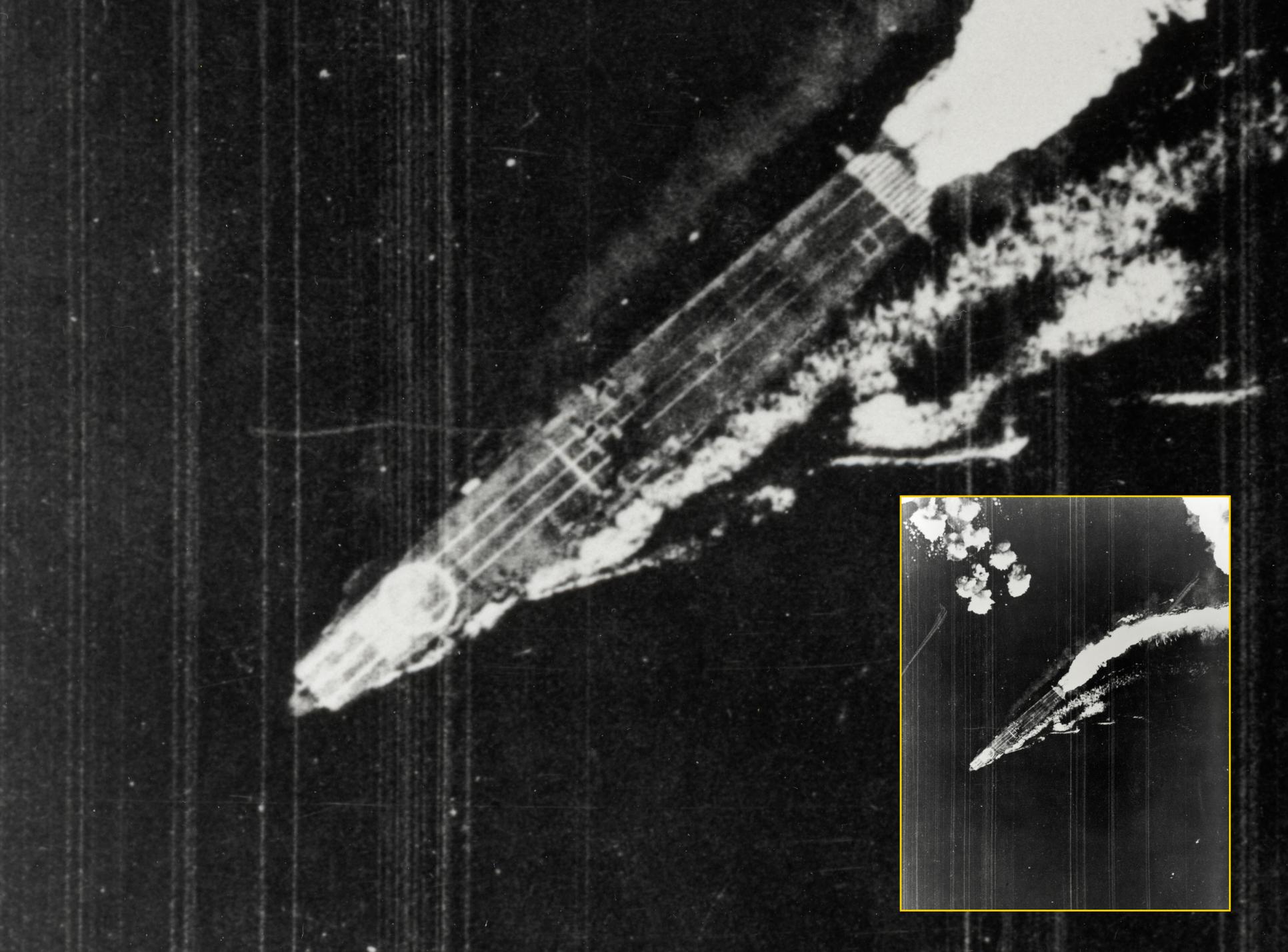


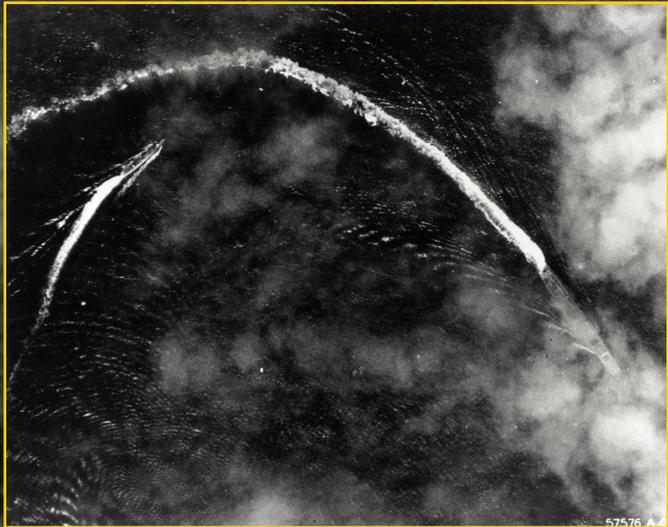
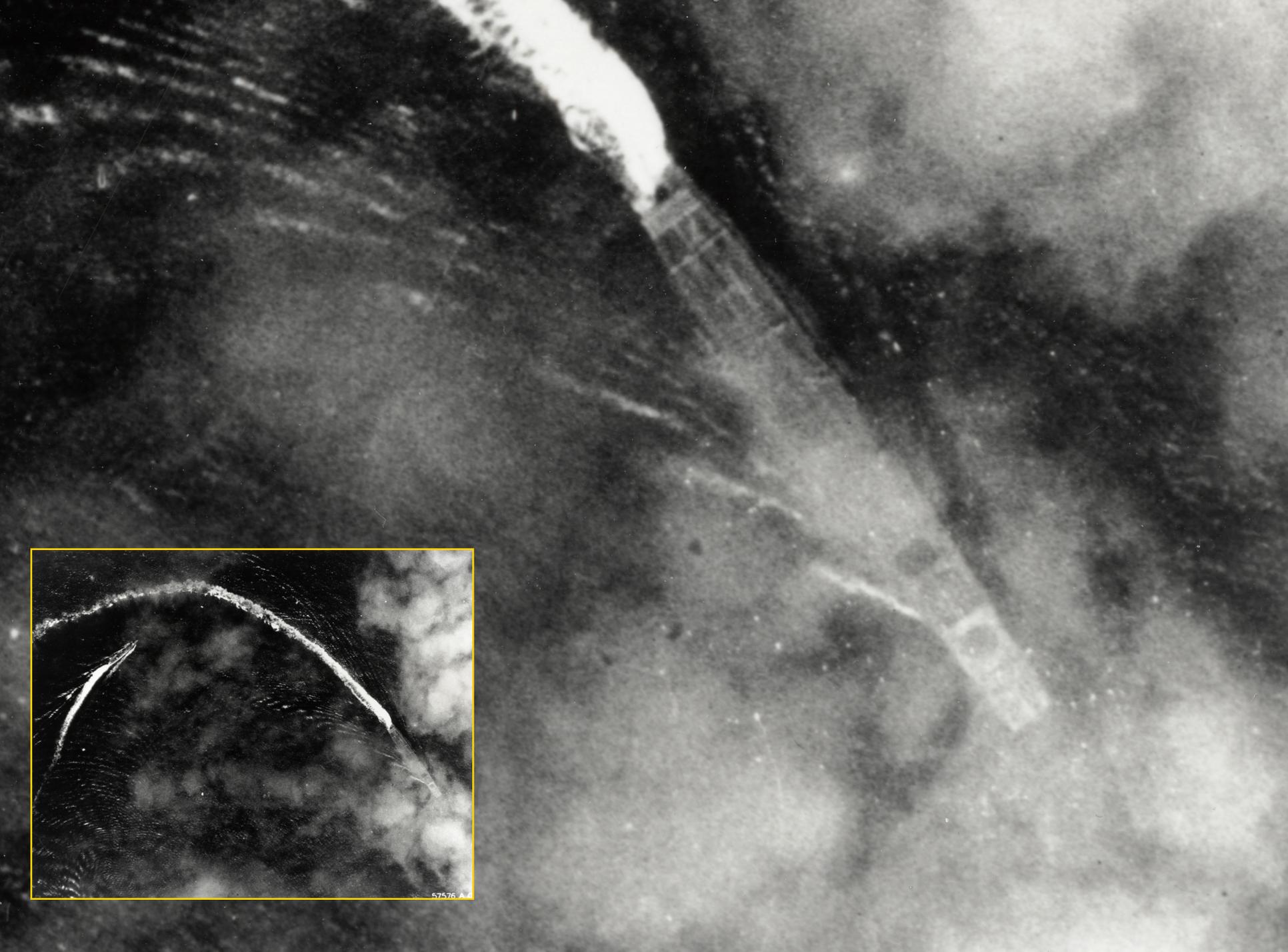
◊ Americans spot Japanese fleet  
 ◊ TF 16 begins launching aircraft  
 ◊ Nagumo orders reserve aircraft rearmed with bombs  
 ◊ Tone #4 Sights TF 16  
 ◊ Nagumo receives Tone #4 signal, orders rearming reversed  
 ◊ TF 17 begins launching aircraft  
 ◊ Carrier Striking Force bombed

**Legend**

- △ = CAP launch
- ▽ = CAP landing
- ☆ = CAP fighter shot down
- ◡ = landing
- ◊ = Major event







# Intermediate Conclusion

- ❑ Fuchida's rendition of flight deck operations doesn't appear to jibe with either common sense, the operational records, or the photographic record
- ❑ In fact, it is our strong belief that the reserve strike force was probably never spotted at all
  - Arming operations for torpedo planes typically occurred in the hangar
  - Aviator accounts (Abe Zenji) indicate that strikes were held in hangars until needed

# Fuchida's Rendition of 1020 Attack

- “Preparations for a counter-strike against the enemy had continued on board our four carriers throughout the enemy torpedo attacks. One after another, planes were hoisted from the hangar and quickly arranged on the flight deck... At 1020 Admiral Nagumo gave the order to launch when ready. On *Akagi*'s flight deck all planes were in position with engines warming up. The big ship began turning into the wind. Within five minutes all her planes would be launched.

Five minutes! Who would have dreamed that the tide of battle would shift completely in that interval of time?

... At 1024 the order was to start launching came from the bridge by voice tube. The Air Officer flapped a white flag, and the first Zero fighter gathered speed and whizzed off the deck. At that instant a lookout screamed ‘Hell-divers!’ I looked up to see three black enemy planes plummeting towards our ship.”

# Spotting A Strike

- ❑ **Requisite operations**
  - Moving planes to flight deck (sequentially)
  - Enclosed hangars necessitate engine warmup on flight deck
  - Arming (dive-bombers only)
- ❑ **Total time required:**
  - 30 minutes bare minimum
  - 45 minutes normally
- ❑ **Flight deck shut down while spotting**

# Spotting A Strike

- ❑ **Requisite operations**
  - Moving planes to flight deck (sequentially)
  - Enclosed hangars necessitate engine warmup on flight deck
  - Arming (dive-bombers only)
- ❑ **Total time required:**
  - 30 minutes bare minimum
  - 45 minutes normally
- ❑ **Flight deck shut down while spotting**

# Fun with Kōdōchōshos!

- ❑ **Compiled records of air activities aboard aviation vessels**
- ❑ **Contain details regarding:**
  - Aircraft organization
  - Flying Personnel
  - Ordnance
  - Weather conditions
  - Takeoff/Landing Times

# 飛行機隊戦闘行動調書

甲 表

総合評點

所 轄	赤 城		實施年月日	昭和19年 6月 5日		基地又ハ 母艦所在	母艦 赤 城		任 務	ミッドウェイ作戦	
指 揮 官	大尉 千早 猛 高 (カ)		參加機種 及 ビ 機 數	天 候		全上 發進時刻	0128		職 團 種 別	ミッドウェイ (イスタン島) 攻撃	
	大尉 白根 斐夫 (フ)			曇 風力 8ホ			全上 歸着時刻				
空 戦	交 戦 種 類	セ ル 機 數			爆 奏	kg	時 刻	記 事			
	全 上 戦 果	敵グラマン戦闘機11機内23機 陸軍B17-X1機銃害大破 地上銃害		800 x							
雷 爆 銃 撃	攻 撃 目 標			功 功	500 "	<del>0128</del> 0125	昇 進 艦 上空昇進 敵戦闘機来襲 イスタン飛行場施設焼爆 (艦爆隊) (コウ所-大火災ロ-)				
	全 上 戦 果	イスタン島飛行場施設爆炎 コウ所-大火災 地上銃害			250 "	0315					
被 害	自 爆	機	戦 死 者	名	彈 器	60 "	0340	集 合 帰 進 = 就 艦戦機隊 敵グラマン戦闘機1機ト交戦機1機 イスタン島地上銃害			
	行 方 不 明	"	行 方 不 明 者	"		30 "	0425				
被 害	大 破	"	重 傷 者	"	機 銃 彈	25 x 18	0320	艦爆 艦戦機帰艦 索敵機(砲攻撃)1機 艦誌-報告あり			
	不 時 着	"	輕 傷 者	"		以上重量計 ( T )	0340				
被 害	被 弾	"	其ノ他ノ事故	"	魚 雷	20 x 550	0610	B			
		"				7.7 x 3050	0530				

Ship

Date

Aircraft Type and Number

Ordnance Expended

Chronology of Operations



# 飛行機隊 戦闘行動調書

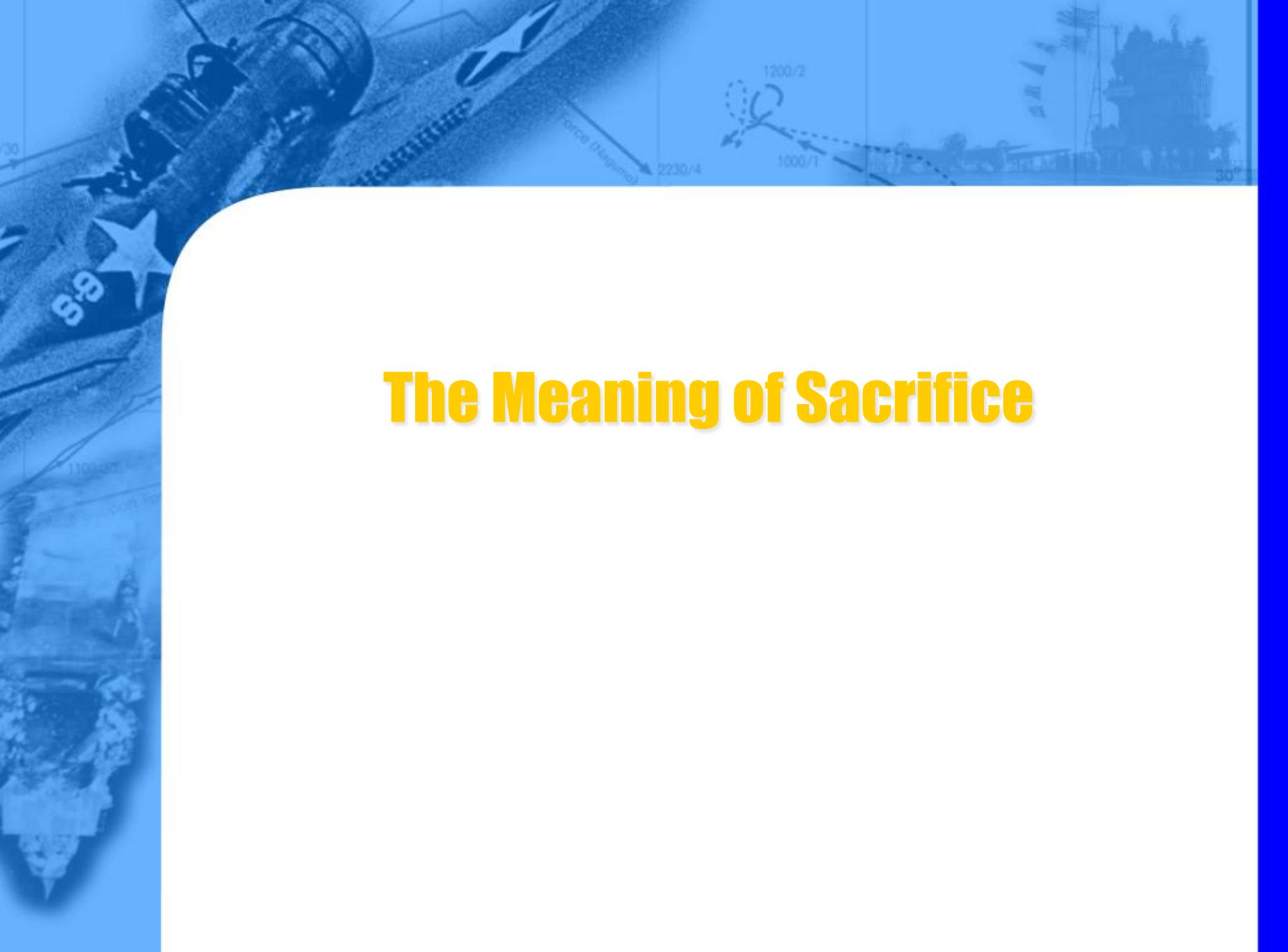
任務	中隊	小隊	機番號	機種	所 轄		實施年月日	指揮官		消耗兵器	被 害	効 果	記 事	
					赤 城	機 長		總指揮官	中隊長					
					操 縦 員	偵 察 員	電 信 員	搭 登 員						
上 空	七				-r 佐野 繁平		0632	0800	飛龍 攻撃	20 X 220	行方不明	小隊 2 (内 1 協同 援 2)		
					大尉 白根 豊夫					29 X 1500				
					-r 菊池 哲策					20 X 220				小隊 2 協同 戦 1 (不帰還)
					-r 木村 博雄					29 X 2100				
							0651		20 X 220		小隊 4 (内 1 協同)			
A8					0945	1700	7:15	Lt.	Ibusuki	Masanobu	sōren32	OK	Forced landing, fuel exhaustion, 1700, rescued by?	
A8					0945	1100	1:15	PO2c	Iishi	Seiji	sōren50		Recovered by Hiryū	
A8					0945	1100	1:15	Sea1c	Ishida	Masashi	sōren55		Recovered by Hiryū	
A9					1025	1100	0:35	PO1c	Kimura	Koreo	kol		Recovered by Hiryū	
直 撃	一〇直				-r 石田 正志		0725	0800	飛龍 攻撃	20 X 220	大攻 1 (協同)			
					-r 木村 博雄					29 X 1500				
					-r 長小川 博雄									
					-r 宇打 龍雄					1200				
					-r 石田 正志					飛龍 攻撃				
					-r 大塚 茂高					1100			1600 (不帰還)	
					-r 菊池 哲策					1130			飛龍	
-r 井石 清次			1512 (不帰還)											
							1330		1600 (不帰還)					

CAP Watch #

Pilot Name & Rank

0725 (1025)

Takeoff



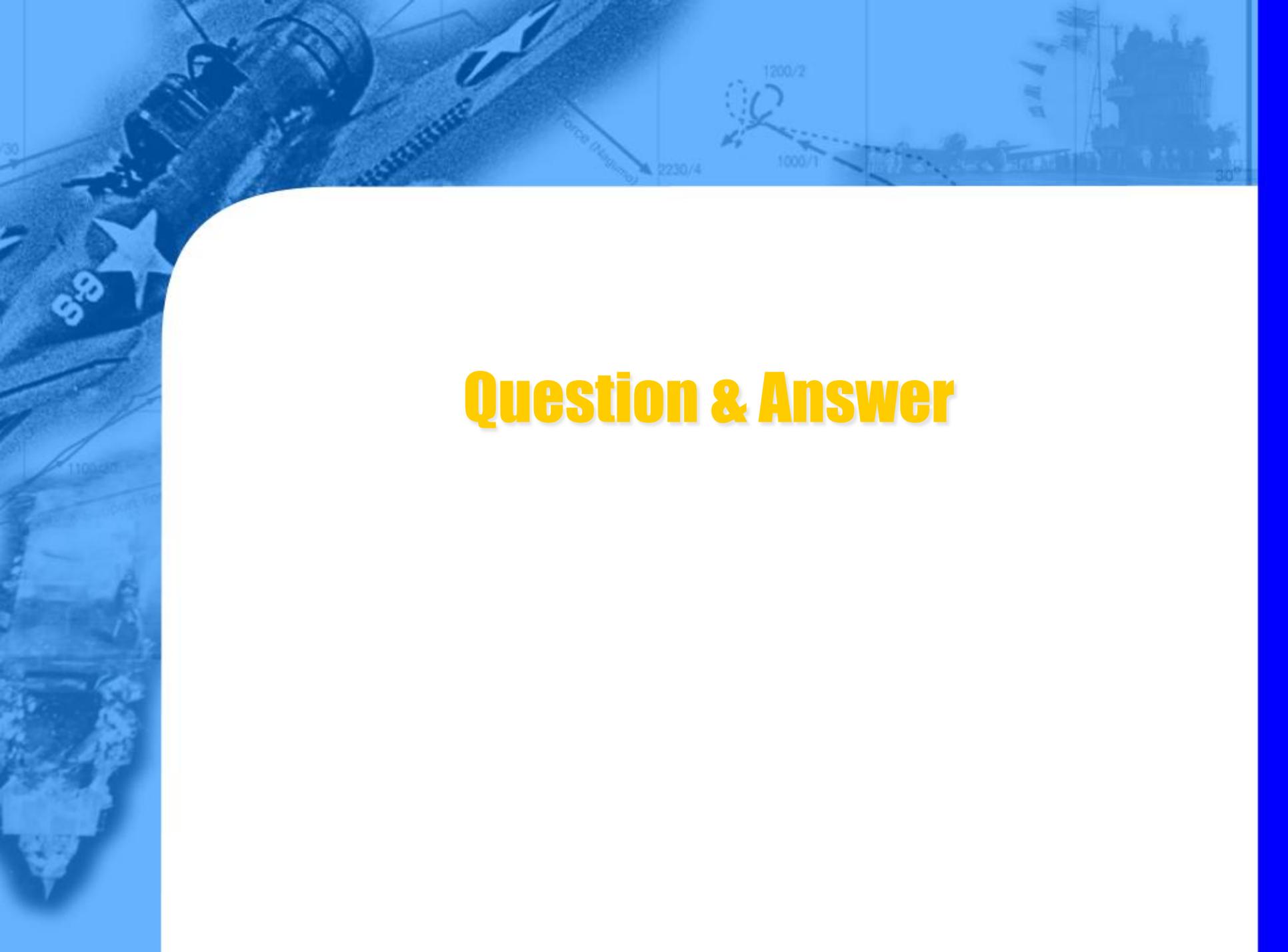
# The Meaning of Sacrifice

# American Torpedo Squadron Attacks

- ❑ Occurred between 0920 and 1035

# In Summary

- ❑ New interpretations often require new look at old /neglected primary sources
- ❑ In a certain sense, *Shattered Sword* is a return to the original source matter, which had never been properly interpreted
- ❑ Much remains to be done on this important battle, and indeed on Pacific War history in general



# Question & Answer