



1907-09: "Great White Fleet" first armada of warships to circumnavigate globe.

The most noteworthy technical advance made by the Navy during the period between 1919 and 1941 was the progress in Naval aviation. The NC-4, a large Navy flying boat, made the first transatlantic flight in May 1919, but the aircraft carrier was the principal naval development of this period.

In 1922, the first aircraft carrier, USS LANGLEY, was commissioned. In the late 20's, the LEXINGTON and the SARATOGA were commissioned. These were followed in the 30's by the RANGER, YORKTOWN and ENTERPRISE. Then in 1940-41, WASP and HORNET were added to the fleet.

On 7 December 1941, came a treacherous attack on the U.S. Fleet at Pearl Harbor, the Naval Base and airfields in the vicinity. United States losses were heavy; sunk were 6 ships, 4 of them battleships; 11 other ships were damaged; dead were 2004 Navymen, 109 Marines and 228 Army; wounded, 912 Navy, 75 Marines and 360 Army. Five of the ships sunk were raised and repaired. The ARIZONA, which was completely wrecked by a magazine explosion, with a loss of 1102 lives, has been enshrined at Pearl Harbor as a memorial to all servicemen who lost their lives on 7 December 1941.

From that point, it was an uphill struggle, but the U.S. Navy began moving forward until victory was finally achieved. The first fruits were tasted five months later at Battle of the Coral Sea and within a few weeks of that, at the Battle of Midway.

During these difficult years the proud battleships were joined by other instruments of seapower. For the first time in history, fleets used carrier aircraft to attack each other without actually coming in sight of one another. The largest battleship afloat, the Japanese dreadnought YAMATO, perhaps symbolized the coming final defeat of the enemy when she was destroyed by the planes of the U.S. Navy's air arm. The Navy's submarine force, on the other hand, accounted for the destruction of over five million tons of enemy ships in the years of World War II.

The island-hopping campaigns, too, gave rise to the superiority of yet another tactic employed during World War II, the use of huge amphibious forces to land troops at an enemy's doorstep.

In this two-ocean war, the U.S. Navy had its hands full. In the Atlantic, it joined with the British Navy in first containing and then destroying the submarine menace which came close to completely cutting off Europe from America's war production capability.



1941: Japan bombs U.S. fleet and naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.