

# The Pacific Theater

## Major Naval Battles of World War II

### Doolittle Raid on Tokyo - April 18, 1942

The first air raid strike on Japan's home island. This mission led by Lt. Col. James Doolittle involved 16 B-25 Mitchell bombers launching off the *USS Hornet* from deep in the Pacific Ocean. The day of the mission was wrought with issues. Having to take off early due to weather, which led to being low on fuel. The aircraft were able to bomb the targets, but then each aircraft faced unforeseen challenges and needed to make decisions on the fly. Although the physical damage to Japan was minor, the psychological effect was that Japan was more vulnerable to attack then it led on and it significantly boosted morale in the U.S.

TOKYO

IWO JIMA

### Battle of Iwo Jima - Feb. 19 - Mar. 26, 1945

American realized conquering the Pacific could take time and cost a heavy casualties. Their strategy was to skip past fortified Japanese Islands, cut them off from supplies and reinforcements giving the U.S. access to strategic islands across the Pacific without having to beat the Japanese back on every island they occupied. One of the Islands identified to be captured was Iwo Jima - its black volcanic sand beaches became the scene of horrific fighting, as the Japanese - against all reason, fought to retain every last inch of the island.

### Battle of Leyte Gulf - Oct. 23 - 26, 1944

In the Battle of the Philippine Sea Japan's Admiral Koga sought to destroy the U.S. Carriers by engaging them in a battle alongside the U.S. Marines invasion of the Marianas Islands. Instead the airmen of Task Force 58 delivered a blow to the Japanese and eliminated the remainder of the Imperial Japanese Navy's carriers.

LEYTE

### Battle of Wake Island - Dec. 8 - 23, 1941

At the same time Japan launched a surprise attack on the U.S. at Pearl Harbor the Battle of Wake Island began. The fight over these tiny islands in the Pacific Ocean initiated when 36 Japanese Mitsubishi G3M3 aircraft attacked the U.S. Marine forces on the Island. The siege continued for weeks as Japan continued to bomb the island the Marines held off the invasion. With dwindling supplies and numerous casualties the U.S. surrendered the island to Japan, on Dec. 23, 1941.

WAKE ISLAND

### Battle of Midway - June 4 - 7, 1942

When U.S. Naval intelligence deciphered pieces of Japanese coded transmissions they learned the next attack would be on tiny Midway Island. The island would be the bait - and the trap would be sprung by the USS Enterprise, USS Yorktown, and USS Hornet. In the final accounting of the Battle, the U.S. lost one carrier, to the Japanese four - a resounding victory, and a turning point in the Pacific War.

MIDWAY ISLAND

PEARL HARBOR

### Battle of Coral Sea - May 4 - 8, 1942

In history's first air-sea battle Japan sought to control the Coral Sea with an invasion of Port Moresby in southeast New Guinea, but their plans were intercepted by Allied forces. When Japan landed in the area, they came under attack from the aircraft carrier planes of the American task force. Although both sides suffered damages to their carriers, the battle left the Japanese without enough planes to cover the ground attack of Port Moresby, resulting in a strategic Allied victory.

CORAL SEA

### Guadalcanal Campaign - Aug. 7, 1942

While the U.S. had been caught off guard by the speed of the Japanese advance across the Pacific, U.S. forces were ready to strike back - hard - by August 1942. The Guadalcanal Campaign would be directed at capturing key airfields and supply bases in the Solomon Islands which, if held by the Japanese would isolate the U.S. from its Allies, Australia and New Zealand. While the fight could be characterized as a brutal up-close brawl in the dense jungles of the Island, the aircraft stationed there came to play a key roll in the campaign as well.

GUADALCANAL

### Pearl Harbor - Dec. 7, 1941

On December 7, 1941, The Empire of Japan suddenly and deliberately attacked U.S. forces in Hawaii. It was the intention of Japan to wipe out America's Pacific fleet in its anchorage, striking the fleet with a torpedo attack from the air. Although the U.S. fleet was brought to the brink of destruction, amid the flames and wreckage, a terrible resolve filled the powerful nation. The attack on Pearl Harbor propelled the U.S. to join the global fight against Axis powers in World War II.