

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic World War II-Era Military Facilities, Midway Islands

and/or common Battle of Midway

**2. Location**

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of

state \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	_____ agriculture
_____ building(s)	_____ private	_____ unoccupied	_____ commercial
_____ structure	_____ both	_____ work in progress	_____ educational
_____ site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	_____ entertainment
_____ object	_____ in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	_____ government
	_____ being considered	_____ yes: unrestricted	_____ industrial
		_____ no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military
			_____ museum
			_____ park
			_____ private residence
			_____ religious
			_____ scientific
			_____ transportation
			_____ other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name U.S. Navy

street & number

city, town Washington \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of state D.C.

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. U.S. Navy

street & number

city, town Washington \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of state D.C.

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title \_\_\_\_\_ has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_\_\_ yes  no

date \_\_\_\_\_ federal \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local

depository for survey records

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Midway is a coral atoll six miles in diameter and having two islands, Sand and Eastern. The atoll's name is said to come from its location, midway between San Francisco and Tokyo. Geographically, it is a part of the Hawaiian chain of islands, being 1,140 miles from Oahu; politically, it has never been a part of Hawaii. The United States took formal possession of the unoccupied islands in 1867. The United States Navy assumed jurisdiction over Midway in 1903. The Navy remains custodian of the atoll.

Eastern Island, roughly triangular in shape, is 1.3 miles in length and its greatest width is 0.8 miles. During the Battle of Midway, Eastern Island had three runways arranged in a triangle. It was defended by six coastal and dual-purpose batteries, containing 3-, 5- and 7-inch guns. Although Eastern Island was important to the battle, today it is unoccupied and its runways have been abandoned. A small pier stands at the head of the small-boat channel that leads to Sand Island 1.7 miles to the west. Four postwar, abandoned buildings stand near the pier.

Sand Island is the larger of the two, being two miles in length and one mile wide. Almost the entire island has been developed. Near the middle of the north beach the Pacific Commercial Cable Company erected four large, two-story, concrete and steel apartment houses in 1903. They have been abandoned and have deteriorated considerably. The cable company also imported topsoil and ironwood trees to beautify the glaring white sands. The trees thrived and they served as the bivouac area for 2d Marine Raiders in June 1942. The center of the island is the administrative and housing area. Nearly all structures in this area are postwar and many of them have been abandoned due to decreases in the island's population.

A seaplane base was constructed at the eastern end of the island well before the battle, but no land runways existed on Sand Island until afterwards. The large, paved aircraft parking area with its tiedown rings, two ramps, and a post-battle hangar remain. After the battle, the existing southeast area of the island was created by dredging and filling and an advanced submarine base was established adjacent to the seaplane facilities. Also after the battle, Seabees constructed two land runways, roughly shaped like a T with a taxiway running between them. One runway and the original taxiway have been abandoned, and only one runway, 10,000 feet in length and paralleling the south side of the island, remains operational. Part of the abandoned runway serves as a taxiway leading to a large modern hangar/air terminal/headquarters building.

At the time of the Japanese attack, Sand Island's coastal and anti-aircraft armament consisted of Battery F (four 3-inch guns) on the northeast corner; a 3-inch naval battery (two guns) near the north shore; Battery C (two 5-inch guns) near the northwest corner of the island; Battery A (two 5-inch guns) also on the west shore; a 7-inch battery (two guns) toward the island's southwest corner; and Battery D (four 3-inch guns) on the south shore. In addition to these batteries established by the 6th Defense Battalion, the 3d Defense Battalion's Battery D (four 3-inch guns) arrived on Sand Island in May 1942. It was emplaced at about mid-point on the west shore.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1941-1942

Builder/Architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The first Japanese attack on Midway occurred on December 7, 1941, when destroyers successfully shelled naval installations. Then, flush with victory after victory in the Pacific and southeast Asia, Japan prepared in the spring of 1942 to capture the Midway Islands, establish a toehold in the Aleutians, and draw out what was left of the U.S. Pacific Fleet and decisively defeat it. Centered on four aircraft carriers, the Japanese fleet of 162 warships and auxiliaries approached Midway in the first days of June. The Marines and Navy personnel on Midway were aware of Japan's intentions and worked furiously to strengthen the defenses. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet, ordered his forces, centered on three carriers, to sea to intercept the Japanese. On June 3, Midway's aircraft spotted a part of the Japanese fleet approaching. Before dawn, June 4, the Japanese launched 108 aircraft which attacked both Sand and Eastern islands, inflicting considerable damage. U.S. planes took to the air from Midway but the Marine scout bombers and fighters suffered greatly. The Japanese, unaware that the American carriers were fast approaching, decided to launch a second attack upon Midway. The American carrier planes struck while the Japanese were still rearming. By the end of the Battle of Midway, all four Japanese carriers had been sunk, while the United States lost carrier Yorktown. The Japanese lost 332 of their finest aircraft, and more than 2,000 of their most experienced pilots and sailors perished. The Japanese navy never fully recovered and its expansion in the Pacific had been stopped. American naval power in the Pacific was restored. The morale of the American fighting man leaped upward. The American victory at Midway was the turning point of the Pacific war.

### Background

An American sea captain, C.N. Brooks, discovered the Midway Islands in 1859. In 1867, Captain Williams Reynolds, USN, commanding USS Lackawanna, took formal possession of the atoll for the United States. Reynolds named the only shallow harbor for Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles. Two years later, the U.S. Congress voted \$50,000 for dredging the harbor. The Navy carried out the work, then abandoned the islands to the tens of the thousands of albatrosses and other birds that dwelt there.

Not until 1903, when a commercial telegraph cable was laid across the Pacific, was Midway reoccupied. That year President Theodore Roosevelt issued an executive order placing the U.S. Navy in charge of the islands.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name None

Quadrangle scale None

### UTM References

Structures located in the area between 28°11' and 28°13' North latitude and between 177°19' and 177°24' west longitude

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Erwin N. Thompson, Historian

organization Western Regional Office, NPS date June 24, 1986

street & number 450 Golden Gate Avenue telephone (415) 556-4165

city or town San Francisco state California 94102

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature \_\_\_\_\_

title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date \_\_\_\_\_

Keeper of the National Register

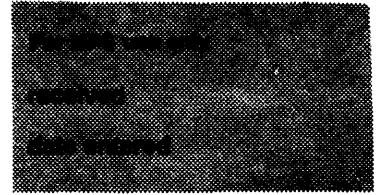
Attest:

Chief of Registration

date \_\_\_\_\_

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Nothing remains of the 6th Battalion's Battery D or the 7-inch battery, today's runway having been constructed over their sites. The emplacements of Battery A also have disappeared, having been replaced by a now-abandoned missile storage area. Three of this battery's ammunition magazines have survived: S-7113, S-7119, and S-7121. They are quonset - hut in shape, made of corrugated metal, and have concrete floors. They are covered with earth. The structures have deteriorated in varying degrees, the principal problem being rusting metal. At the 3rd Defense Battalion's Battery D, two magazines, S-7124 and S-7125, remain; they are similar in appearance and condition to those at Battery A. Battery D also has 1 and 1/2 concrete parapets that encircled the guns. Ready magazines are built into the parapet walls which are about four feet high on the inside. A short distance to the northeast of magazine S-7125 is a buried concrete structure resembling a pillbox, but its function is unknown. It sits on the corner of a large rectangle of level land that appears to have been cleared by man.

Batteries C and F have disappeared, C probably because of runway construction and F because of the submarine base. The most extensive coastal defense remains today are the two emplacements for the 3-inch naval battery. They are sited about 1,500 feet south of the island's north point, immediately adjacent to the small cable company cemetery. Each emplacement sits on a man-made mound about twenty feet high. The pits are surrounded by substantial, concrete, seven-sided parapets, each with seven ready magazines built into it. The bolts for the base plates are in the centers of the pits. A corrugated-metal, earth-covered magazine, S-6194, for this battery stands nearby. Today, it stores PCB and is off limits.

With the construction of the land runways on Sand Island after the battle, the Navy constructed several, large, reinforced concrete magazines for bombs and ordnance. Four of these were located along the taxiway that runs past the west shore batteries. In addition to these new magazines the original battery magazines described above were pressed into service for the storage of ordnance.

The structures recommended for nomination as a national historic landmark are:

Ammunition magazines S-7113, S-7119, S-7121, S-7124, S-7125, and S-6194.

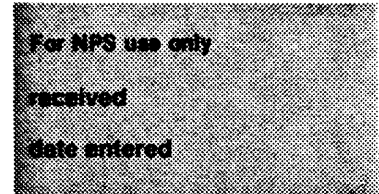
Concrete pillbox near S-7125.

One and a half emplacements for 3-inch guns of 3d Defense Battalion's Battery D.

Two emplacements for the 3-inch naval battery.

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The Commercial Pacific Cable Company established a communications station on Sand Island. Their four principal buildings, 619, 623, 628, and 643, remain but are abandoned and deteriorating. The company planted ironwood and eucalyptus trees and lawns on the island to cut down sand storms and the blinding glare. Because of Japanese bird feather poachers on the island, the company recommended that the United States send troops. A detachment of twenty Marines arrived in 1904 and set up camp. They remained on the lonely atoll for four years.

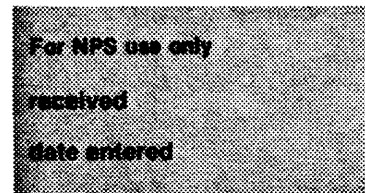
The cable establishment gained company in 1935 when Pan American Airways' Clippers arrived at Midway and established weekly commercial flights across the Pacific. Pan Am established a small hotel and flight facilities on Sand Island. Because of this commercial enterprise, the U.S. Congress authorized the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to dredge an entrance channel between the islands, a harbor, and seaplane runways in the lagoon as a civil works project in 1938. Later, the U.S. Navy contributed funds and the dredging increased in scope in preparation for a naval air station. The Corps of Engineers completed its project in 1940 and the U.S. Navy took over at Midway.

The Navy had already been busy there. In 1939 it let a contract to Pacific Naval Air Base Contractors for the construction of facilities for two patrol plane squadrons on Sand Island. The civilian employees also began construction of land runways on Eastern Island. The first U.S. Marine detachment assigned to Midway arrived in September 1940. They belonged to the 3d Defense Battalion and promptly began constructing defenses -- the contractor was too busy with the air station to help. In September 1941, the 6th Marine Defense Battalion replaced its bitter rival, the 3d Defense Battalion. In November the island was treated to a visit from the Japanese ambassador, Saburo Kuruusu, en route to Washington on a Pan Am Clipper. Due to engine trouble, the plane lay over three days. To impress the special ambassador, the Marine commander, Lieutenant Colonel Harold D. Shannon, had every Marine on the island march past the Pan Am hotel in single file in an endless circle. Shannon informed the ambassador that he was observing only a small portion of the island's defense force. While Colonel Shannon commanded the Marines, the island commanding officer was Commander Cyril T. Simard, USN. The two men got along well, in contrast to their counterparts on Wake Island which Japanese captured in December 1941.

On December 7, 1941, the planes of six Japanese aircraft carriers under Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo bombed the naval base at Pearl Harbor and the military airfields on Oahu. That same day, two Japanese destroyers, Abebono and Uohio, staged a raid on Midway. The destroyers set fire to the seaplane hangar on Sand Island, destroying a PBY (Catalina) patrol bomber. They also hit the island's power plant, severely wounding Lieutenant George H. Cannon, USMC, who had his command post in the building. He refused to leave his post until all his wounded men had been evacuated. He died from

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loss of blood. Lieutenant Cannon posthumously was awarded the Medal of Honor, the first Marine to be so honored in World War II.

Shells hit the Pan Am radio station, the island laundry, and other shops. The 6th Defense Battalion's Battery D on Sand Island returned fire as did the guns of the 5-inch battery on Eastern Island. While the Marines believed they had hit both vessels, the destroyers returned safely to Japan. Admiral Nagumo had planned to conduct an air attack on Midway while returning to Japan from Hawaii, but the operation was cancelled because of weather.

Thanks to the breaking of most of Japan's secret codes, Admiral Nimitz learned that Japan was planning a massive raid on Midway in the spring of 1942. He visited the atoll in early May and promised Shannon and Simard additional support, including two 3-inch batteries (D and E) from the 3d Defense Battalion. The 3d's Battery D was placed on the west side of Sand Island where 1 1/2 concrete parapets and two magazines mark the site. Inasmuch as less than a month was available for the construction of the emplacements, it is possible that the 1 1/2 parapets were all that were completed.

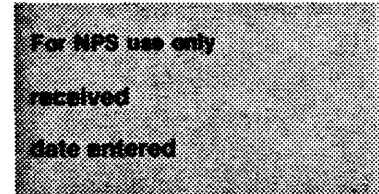
Additional aircraft also arrived on Eastern Island. By June, the Navy had thirty-two PBY Catalinas and six TBF Avengers at Midway; the Marines had a squadron of fighters (Brewsters) as well as Grumann F4F-3s, a newer fighter, and a squadron of scout bombers; the Army's Seventh Air Force dispatched four B-26 bombers and thirteen B-17 Flying Fortresses. Shortly before the battle, a demolition plan for the aviation gasoline supply was tested. An enlisted man threw the wrong switch and 400,000 gallons of gas went up in flames. From then on, Marines had to refuel aircraft by hand from 55-gallon drums.

Two companies of the 2d Raider Battalion reinforced the 6th Defense Battalion. Their principal Assignment during the time leading to the attack was night patrol of the beaches. After the Pearl Harbor attack, the contractor's workmen turned from their work on the air station to help the Marines strengthen the defense. Additional armament included eight 37mm guns, eighteen 20mm anti-aircraft guns, and five light tanks. The tanks were hidden in trenches in the cable company woods. Sand Island was surrounded with two double-apron barbed wire barriers. Antiboat mines and obstacles lay offshore. Every man on both islands had underground shelter.

Beginning May 20, Catalinas and army bombers searched the sea daily. On June 3, a Catalina made contact with enemy vessels 700 miles from Midway. That afternoon B-17s bombed these ships but made no hits. It was concluded later that the vessels were Admiral Nagumo's transport group carrying a reinforced infantry regiment for the invasion of Midway. Meanwhile, Rear

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Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher and Rear Admiral Raymond A. Spruance led carriers Yorktown, Enterprise, and Hornet undetected toward the enemy.

The air raid alarm sounded at Midway at 5:53 a.m., June 4, as 108 Japanese planes (36 Kate torpedo planes, 36 Val dive bombers, and 36 Zero fighters) roared toward the islands. All American planes took to the air, to the great disappointment of the Japanese. The Marine Fighters met the enemy thirty miles out. The Marines were hopelessly outnumbered and their planes were inferior to the Zeroes. Their losses were great.

The first bomb fell on Midway at 6:30 a.m. The Marines put up intense anti-aircraft fire, shooting down four planes.<sup>1</sup> While ground casualties were light, destruction of buildings and facilities was extensive. The Japanese planes returned to their carriers to rearm with bombs for a second attack at Midway. At that point, Admiral Nagumo learned of the presence of U.S. ships some 200 miles away. Orders were given to take off the bombs and rearm with torpedoes, and precious time was lost.<sup>2</sup>

American carrier planes began their attack on the enemy carriers at about 9:30 a.m. Despite terrible casualties, they pressed the attack. Soon three Japanese carriers, Kaga, Akagi, Soryu, were on fire and in a sinking condition. Planes from the fourth enemy carrier, Hiryu, attacked Yorktown and disabled her. American planes, in turn, set Hiryu on fire. She sank on June 5. The following day, a Japanese submarine sank Yorktown.

U.S. losses: 1 carrier and 1 destroyer sunk  
307 personnel killed  
147 aircraft lost  
extensive damage to Midway

Japanese losses: 4 carriers and 1 heavy cruiser sunk  
1 heavy cruiser wrecked  
1 battleship, 1 oiler, and 3 destroyers damaged  
322 aircraft lost  
2,500 personnel killed

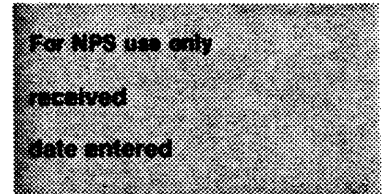
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1. The 3-inch naval battery on Sand Island did not fire at the enemy planes. It was kept silent for use as surprise anti-boat guns when the landing was attempted. Lt. Col. Robert C. McGlashan, USMC, to Director, Division of Public Information (Historical Section), August 12, 1947, "Historical Report on the Defense of Midway," Box 11, U.S. Marine Corps Records, World War II, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, MD.

2. All four of Nagumo's carriers had taken part in the raid on Pearl Harbor.



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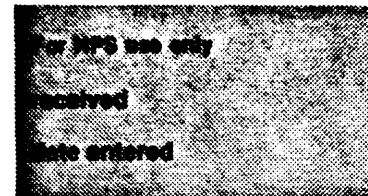
Midway surveyed its losses. On Sand Island, the seaplane hangar was again damaged, as were three fuel storage tanks and the navy laundry. The brig, dispensary, and the salt water lines were destroyed. Over on Eastern Island, damage was more severe. The island's power plant was demolished and fuel lines were destroyed. The Marine mess hall and the post exchange had been hit. One bomb fell in the fighter squadron's rearming pit exploding bombs and ammunition and killing four Marines. On both islands, only twenty men were killed, thanks to all the measures that had been taken.

In the summer of 1942, Seabees arrived on Midway to rebuild the atoll. Among the new works were an airfield and a large amount of fill on Sand Island. A new steel seaplane hangar replaced the one that had been damaged in both fights. A large seaplane parking area was concreted. Three of the four cable company buildings were remodeled as a hospital; a large, underground, concrete structure supplemented the hospital. In September the Seabees began work on a submarine base on the east end of Sand Island, thus shortening the run to Japan by 1,100 miles. A contractor arrived in April 1943 to begin a dredging program. The entrance channel and the anchorage area were enlarged, the later expanded to a mooring capacity of six cruisers, five destroyers, and a repair ship.

In 1942, the Seventh Air Force sent the 73d Fighter Squadron to Midway to relieve the badly battered Marine fighter squadron, VMF 221. Between December 1942 and July 29, 1942. Seventh Air Force bombers staged through Midway on raids to Japanese - held Wake Island. Naval Operating Base Midway was commissioned on July 29, 1942. Activities included the submarine base, section base, and air base. By the middle of 1943, Midway's population had reached 5,000.

In 1945, air operations on Eastern Island were closed, except as an emergency landing field. (There had long been concern about accidents there caused by the excessive numbers of albatrosses.) Pan Am, which had returned to Midway after the war, closed its operations there in 1947, the same year the Civil Aeronautics Authority (AAA) took over Midway's airport operations, remaining on Sand Island until 1950. In 1957-58, a major \$40 million building program got underway on Sand Island when Midway became home of the Pacific Airborne Early Warning portion of the DEW line. Many of the quarters built at this time have since been abandoned.

Today, a naval detachment administers Midway. A contractor is in charge of maintenance and housekeeping. A C-141 passenger-cargo plane schedules a once-a-week visit. Other military aircraft arrive from time to time. The albatrosses continue to dominate the historic atoll.

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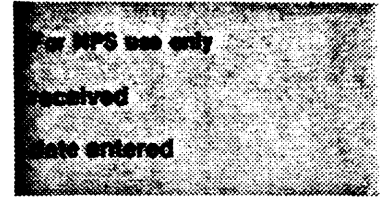
Item number 9

Page 1

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\_\_\_\_\_. McGlashan, Lt. Col. Robert C., USMC, to Director, Division of Public Information (Historical Section), August 12, 1947, "Historical Report on the Defense of Midway." Box 11, U.S. Marine Corps Records, World War II. Washington National Records Center, Suitland, MD.

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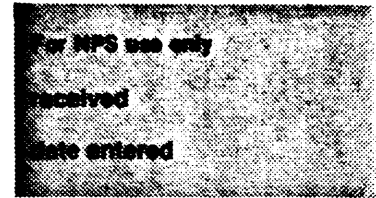
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Sand and Eastern islands lie between  $28^{\circ} 11'$  north latitude and  $28^{\circ} 13'$  north latitude, and between  $177^{\circ} 19'$  west longitude  $177^{\circ} 24'$  west longitude.

Boundaries

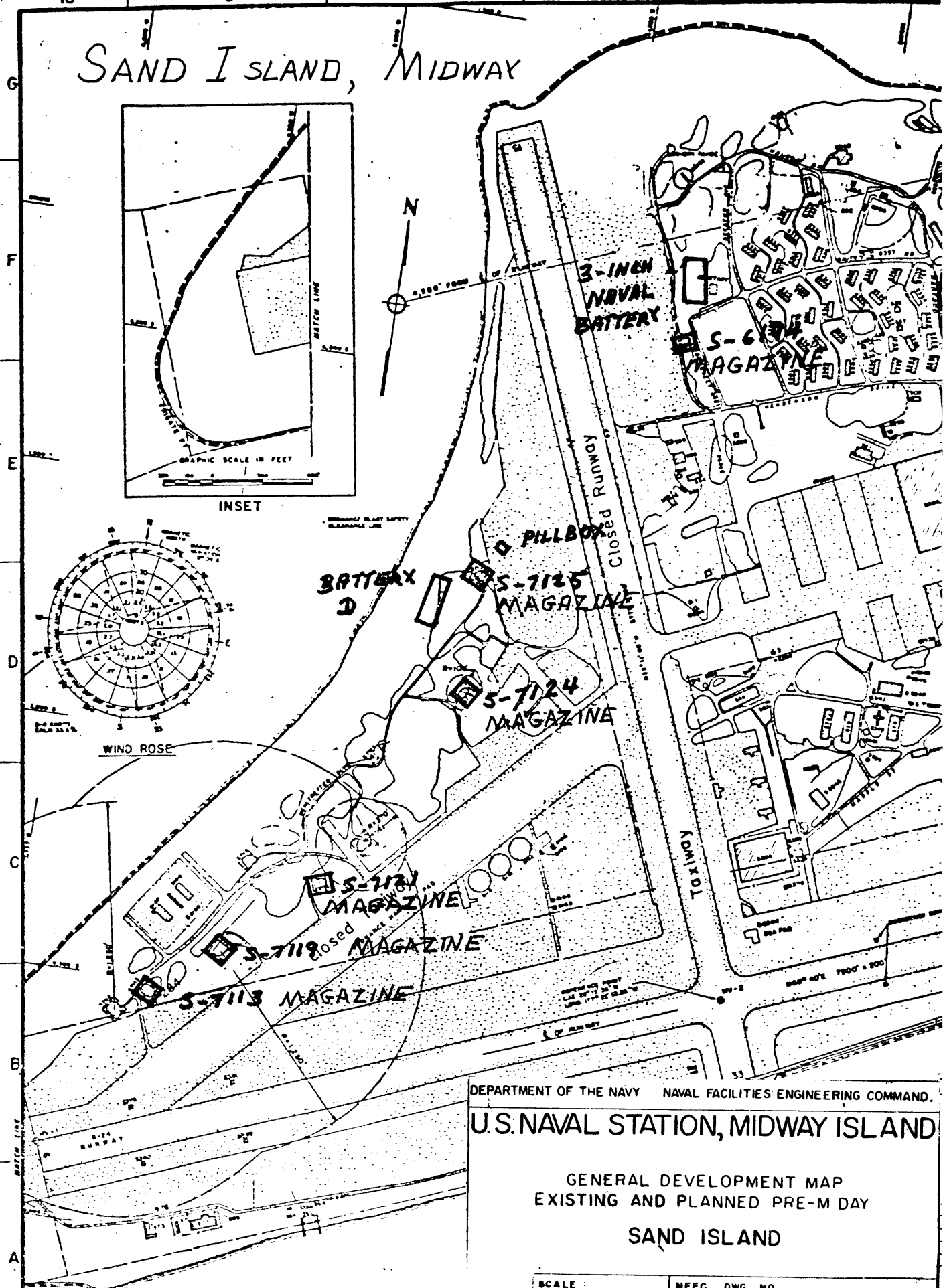
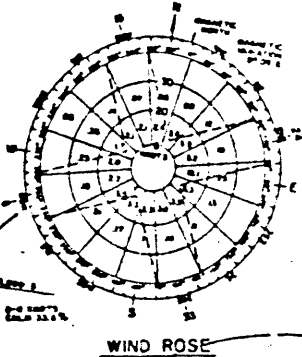
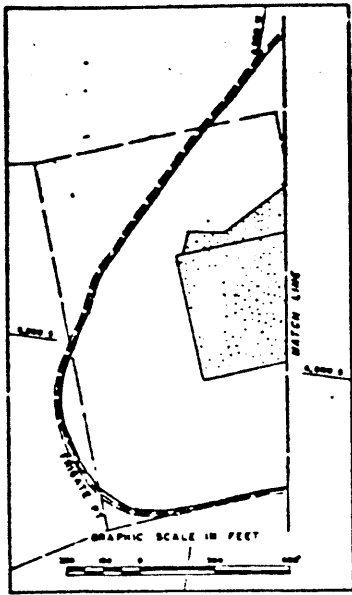
For each of the magazines S-7113, S-7119, S-7121, S-7124, S-7125, and S-6194, a rectangular of land centered on and surrounding the magazine measuring 100 feet by 100 feet.

For the pillbox near magazine S-7125 a rectangle of land surrounding and centered on the pillbox measuring 50 feet by 50 feet.

For the land  $1 \frac{1}{2}$  3-inch gun emplacements, Battery D, 3d Defense Battalion, a rectangle of land centered on and around the emplacements measuring 150 feet by 225 feet.

For the two emplacements at the 3-inch naval battery, a rectangle of land centered on and around the emplacements measuring 300 feet by 300 feet.

# SAND ISLAND, MIDWAY



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY NAVAL FACILITIES ENGINEERING COMMAND

## U.S. NAVAL STATION, MIDWAY ISLAND

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT MAP  
EXISTING AND PLANNED PRE-M DAY

### SAND ISLAND

SCALE :  
1 INCH = 300 FEET

NFEC DWG NO.

SHEET 1 OF 4

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