

THE PACIFIC

1945



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By the beginning of 1945 the Pacific War had been raging for three years. On the borders of Burma, the recent Allied victories at Imphal and Kohima had proven a turning point in the Burma Campaign. Meanwhile in Southeast Asia, Allied naval victories around the Philippines had crippled both the Japanese navy and the air force.

The Allies had now turned their attention north, to securing a series of islands that were situated between the Philippines and the Japanese mainland. These included the islands of Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

Just as they had done defending islands in previous years (like Peleliu), the Japanese transformed Iwo Jima and Okinawa into bastions of defence. The Second World War in Europe may have been coming to a close, but the Pacific War in early 1945 was to be marked by some of the bloodiest military conflicts of the 20th century.

Any invasion of the Japanese mainland ultimately never came to fruition, partly due to the dropping of the two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki 75 years ago this month (the Soviet declaration of war on Japan on 9 August was also significant). The Japanese government and Allied forces would sign the Japanese Instrument of Surrender on 2 September 1945.

From Iwo Jima to the Bombing of Hiroshima this eBook explores the Pacific War theatre of World War Two in 1945. Detailed articles explain key topics, edited from various History Hit resources.

Included in this eBook are articles written for History Hit by some of the world's leading World War Two naval and aviation historians, including Thomas Cleaver and Tim Hillier-Graves. Features written by History Hit staff past and present are also included.

You can access all these articles on historyhit.com. *The Pacific: 1945* was compiled by Tristan Hughes.

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'Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima', by Joe Rosenthal.

Who Were the Marines Who Raised the Flag on Iwo Jima?

By Gabrielle Kramer

One of the most iconic photographs taken of the Pacific theatre during World War Two is the image that captured the raising of the flag at Iwo Jima. Taken by American photographer Joe Rosenthal on 23 February 1945, it won him a Pulitzer Prize.

The image depicts the moment that six marines hoisted a large American flag on Iwo Jima's highest point. It was actually the second American flag to be raised on Mount Suribachi that day. But, unlike the first, could be seen by all of the men fighting on the island.

The Battle of Iwo Jima

The Battle of Iwo Jima began on 19 February 1945 and lasted until 26 March of that year.

One of the hardest-fought victories of the battle was the capture of Mount Suribachi, a southern volcano on the island. Many say it was the raising of the American flag on the volcano that inspired US troops to persevere and eventually overcome the Japanese Imperial Army on Iwo Jima.

While the battle resulted in victory for the United States, the losses involved were heavy. US forces counted about 20,000 casualties and the battle was one of the bloodiest in the Pacific theatre of World War Two.

The men who raised the second flag

Earlier in the day, a small American flag had been raised. Due to its size, however, most US troops could not see the small flag waving from Mount Suribachi. Therefore, six Marines hoisted up a second, much larger American flag.

These men were Michael Strank, Harlon Block, Franklin Sousley, Ira Hayes, Rene Gagnon, and Harold Schultz. Strank, Block and Sousley went on to die on Iwo Jima

less than a month after the raising of the flag. Until 2016, Harold Schultz had been misidentified and was never publicly recognised for his part in the flag raising during his lifetime. He died in 1995.

Previously, it was believed that the sixth man was John Bradley, a Navy hospital corpsman. Bradley's son, James Bradley, wrote a book about his father's involvement called *Flags of Our Fathers*. It is now known that Bradley senior took place in the first flag raising on 23 February 1945.

An image of triumph

Rosenthal's historic image became one of the most well-known of the war. It was used by the Seventh War Loan Drive and printed on more than 3.5 millions posters.

Ira Hayes, Rene Gagnon and John Bradley toured the nation after returning home from Iwo Jima. They rallied support and advertised war bonds. Because of the posters and national tour, the Seventh War Loan Drive raised more than \$26.3 million for the war effort.

The raising of the flag at Iwo Jima inspired a nation to continue the fight and Rosenthal's photograph still resonates with the American public today.



The U.S Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington, Virginia.

What Was Operatin Ten-Go? The Last Japanese Naval Action of World War Two

By Thomas Cleaver

When the Emperor Hirohito, the supreme leader in Japan, was informed of the Army's plans for the defence of Okinawa in March 1945, he asked "Where is the Navy?" Admiral Toyoda, Commander of the Combined Fleet, ordered the development of Operation Ten-Go as the navy's contribution to Okinawa's defence.

The plan became the last Japanese naval operation of the Pacific War, known as the Battle of the East China Sea.

Operation Ten-Go

Ten-ichi-go called for the remaining large warships, including the battleship *Yamato*, to fight their way to Okinawa, then beach themselves to fight as shore batteries until they were destroyed.

The ships left Kure for Tokuyama on 29 March. While obeying orders to prepare the mission, fleet commander Vice-Admiral Seiichi Ito, refused to order his ships to carry it out, having told Admiral Toyoda the plan was futile.

On 5 April, Vice Admiral Kusaka flew to Tokuyama to convince Ito and the others to accept the plan. When Kusaka finally explained things, Ito's captains unanimously rejected it as a waste of lives and resources. Kusaka told them the emperor expected the navy to make their best effort; the commanders accepted the plan.

Crews were told the mission and given the chance to stay behind. None did.

The Yamato sets sail for Okinawa

At 16:00 on 6 April, the battleship *Yamato*, light cruiser *Yahagi* and eight destroyers departed Tokuyama.

US submarines *Threadfin* and *Hackleback* sighted them steaming through Bungo Suido Strait between Shikoku and Honshu and shadowed them.

That night, the flight crews of Task Force 58 – the main attack force of the US navy fleet in the Pacific War – were informed *Yamato* was coming. Crews aboard the carriers sweated in the hangar decks to load the Avengers with aerial torpedoes for the first time since training.

At dawn on 7 April, the Japanese passed Osumi Peninsula and headed into the open ocean, turning first southwest as if headed for Sasebo to throw off the submarines they knew were shadowing them.

An hour later, the ships turned south, headed toward Okinawa at 20 knots. Captain Tameichi Hara told the crew of *Yahagi*,

“Our mission appears suicidal and it is, but suicide is not the objective. The objective is victory.

Once this ship is crippled or sunk, do not hesitate to save yourselves for the next fight. We can commit suicide at any time. But we are going on this mission not to commit suicide but to win, and turn the tide of war.”

Task Force 58 prepares to engage

At 06:00, American search planes found the fleet. At 10:00, Admiral Ito ordered a turn to the west as if they were withdrawing. By 11:30 it was clear they could not evade the shadowing aircraft and they turned toward Okinawa.

Fifth Fleet commander Admiral Spruance received the first definite sighting reports shortly after 09:00. He ordered the fleet’s eight battleships to prepare for a surface engagement with *Yamato*.

Task Force 58 commander Admiral Mitscher ordered Task Group 58.1: *Hornet, Bennington, Belleau Wood, and San Jacinto*, and Task Group 58.3: *Essex, Bunker Hill, Hancock and Bataan*, to launch strike aircraft at 10:00.

400 Hellcat and Corsair fighters, Helldiver dive bombers, and Avenger torpedo bombers took off.

Once his planes were off, Mitscher told chief of staff Arleigh Burke to inform Spruance he intended to attack *Yamato*. "Will you take them or shall I?" Spruance replied: "You take them."

Helldivers and Avengers attack

At 12:00, the first planes spotted *Yamato* and found there was no air cover. The Helldivers and Avengers circled and set up attacks. The Japanese spotted the Americans at 12:20.

They opened formation and increased speed as they passed through a heavy rain squall that gave momentary protection.

At 12:34, *Yamato* opened fire with her AA batteries. The fleet took evasive action while the attacking Avengers concentrated on *Yamato* and dropped their torpedoes on the port side, to increase the likelihood of *Yamato* capsizing.

10 minutes later, *Yahagi* took a torpedo hit directly in her engine room that stopped her. She was hit by six more torpedoes and 12 bombs. The destroyer *Isokaze* attempted to aid *Yahagi* but was immediately attacked and sank 30 minutes later.

During the first attacks, most of the bombs and torpedoes missed *Yamato*, but she was hit by two armour-piercing bombs and one torpedo. She maintained her speed but one bomb started a fire aft of the bridge.

VT-84's Avengers arrived at 12:40. Spotting the battleship five miles away, they began circling.

Yamato hit by a barrage of torpedos

VT-84's first torpedo hit *Yamato* at 1245, followed by two more and two bombs dropped from Helldivers that caused extensive damage and knocked out power to the anti-aircraft gun directors, forcing the gun crews to individually aim and fire their weapons.

By 13:35, her speed was reduced to 18 knots.

Between 13:37 and 13:44, five more torpedoes struck, putting *Yamato* in imminent danger of capsizing. At 13:33, the damage control team deliberately flooded both starboard (right) engine and boiler rooms in a desperate attempt to prevent capsizing by balancing the ship, drowning several hundred of their own crew.

Yamato slowed to 10 knots. At that moment, 110 aircraft of the last wave arrived and 20 Avengers from *Bennington* made a run. *Yamato* started a turn to port (left) but three torpedoes hit the port side amidships, jamming her auxiliary rudder hard to port.

By 13:45, Captain Hara counted 13 bombs and seven torpedoes had hit *Yahagi*, which listed 30 degrees to port with waves washing over her main deck. Two of the eight escorting destroyers were already sunk while three others were afire, dead in the water.

At 14:05, Rear Admiral Komura turned to Hara and announced, "Let's go." They removed their shoes and jumped overboard. As they did, *Yahagi* went down, creating a whirlpool that took Hara down with her for several minutes before he managed to return to the surface.

Yamato capsizes

Yamato was swarmed by enemy aircraft. She had taken 11 torpedoes and moved slowly. At 14:02, Admiral Ito was informed she could no longer steer and was sinking. He ordered the crew to abandon ship. At 14:05, *Yamato* started to capsize.

Ito shook hands with Captain Aruga and the other senior officers on the bridge who refused to leave, and went into his cabin. Aruga ordered Ensign Mitsuru Yoshida to leave when the young officer attempted to join them.

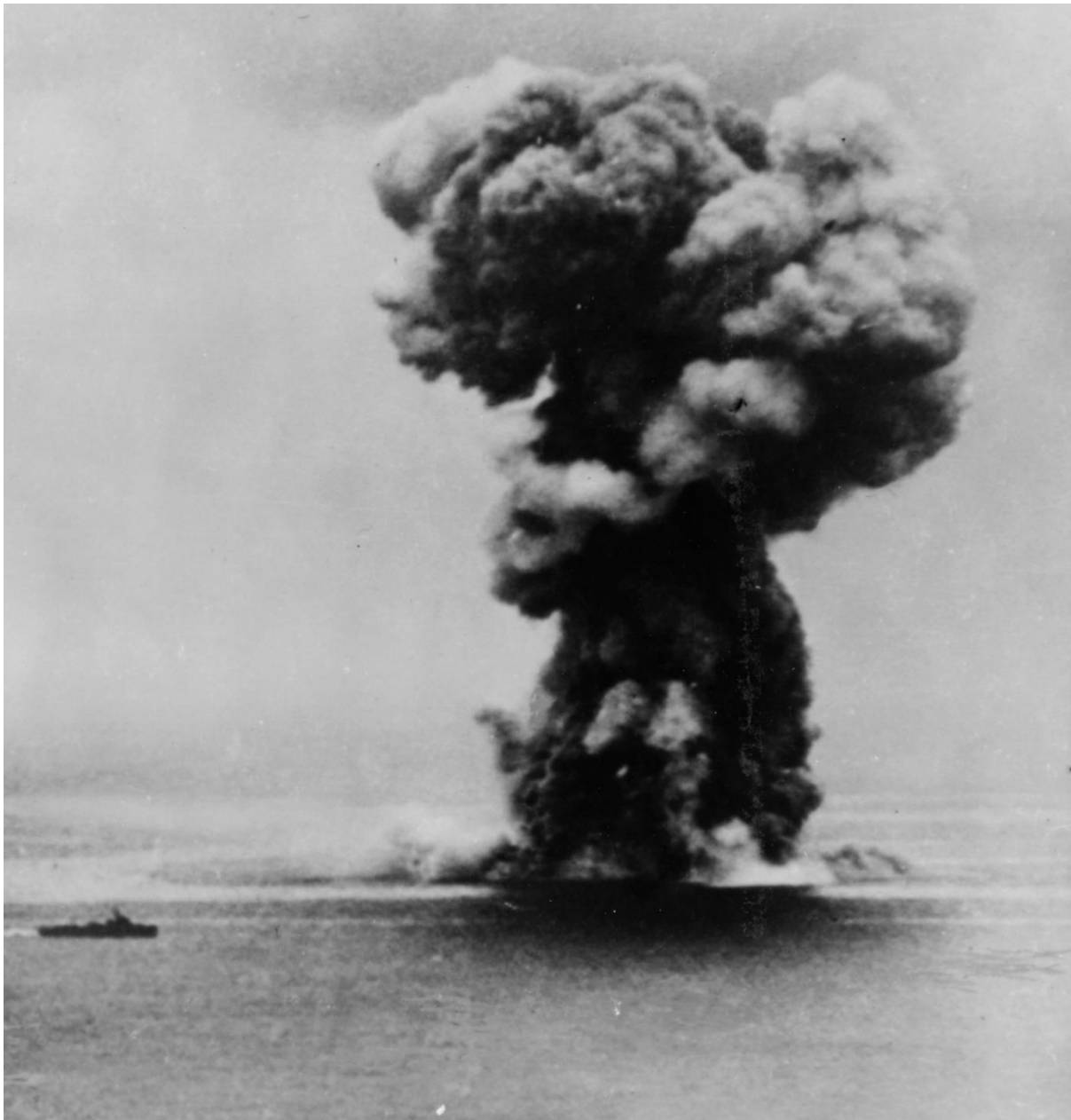
At 14:20, *Yamato* capsized. At 14:23 the fire reached the magazine and she suddenly blew up with an explosion so large it was heard and seen 120 miles away in Kagoshima, with a mushroom-cloud that rose to 20,000 feet.

Ensign Yoshida, who had been pulled under, was blasted to the surface by the explosion and later reported the explosion knocked down several planes watching the sinking.

Asashimo was bombed and sunk attempting to return to port, while *Kasumi* was scuttled. Despite her bow being blown off, *Suzutzuki* made it to Sasebo by steaming in reverse.

Fuyutsuki, *Yukikaze*, and *Hatsushimo* rescued 269 *Yamato* survivors from a total crew of 2,750, as well as 555 *Yahagi* survivors of a crew of 1,000 and 800 from *Isokaze*, *Hamakaze*, and *Kasumi*, all of whom were taken to Sasebo.

American losses were ten aircraft shot down and 12 aircrew.



Yamato moments after the explosion.

Why Were Casualties So High in the Battle of Okinawa?

By Cassie Pope

The Battle of Okinawa began on 1 April, 1945 with the largest amphibious assault of the Pacific War. The United States, having “hopped” their way across the Pacific Ocean, planned to use the island as a base for an assault on the Japanese mainland.

The Okinawa campaign lasted 82 days, ending on 22 June, and witnessed some of the highest casualty rates of the war, across both combatants and civilians.

A key position

Okinawa is the largest of the Ryukyu Islands, located just 350 miles south of the Japanese mainland. The United States, believing an invasion of Japan would be necessary to end the Pacific War, needed to secure the island’s airfields to provide air support.

So critical was the capture of the island, that the United States mustered the largest amphibious assault force of the Pacific campaign, with 60,000 soldiers landing on the first day.

Japanese fortifications

The Japanese defence of Okinawa was under the command of Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima. Ushijima based his forces in the hilly southern region of the island, in a heavily fortified system of caves, tunnels, bunkers and trenches.

He planned to allow the Americans to come ashore almost unopposed, and then to wear them down against his entrenched forces. Knowing an invasion of Japan was America’s next move, Ushijima wanted to delay the attack on his homeland for as long as possible to give them time to prepare.

Kamikaze

By 1945, Japanese airpower was incapable of mounting any serious challenge one-on-one against their American counterparts. The US fleet witnessed the first organised kamikaze attacks at the Battle of Leyte Gulf. At Okinawa, they came en masse.

Almost 1500 pilots hurled their aircraft at the warships of the US 5th and British Pacific Fleets, sinking or damaging about 30 vessels. The USS Bunker Hill was hit by two kamikaze planes whilst refuelling aircraft on deck, resulting in 390 deaths.

No surrender

The Americans had already witnessed the willingness of Japanese soldiers to fight to the death in battles such as Iwo Jima and Saipan.

In Saipan, thousands of soldiers carried out a suicidal charge in the face of American machine guns on the orders of their commander. Such charges were not the policy of Ushijima on Okinawa.

The Japanese would hold each line of defence until the last possible moment, expending great manpower in the process, but when it became untenable they would retreat to the next line and begin the process again. Nevertheless, when facing capture, Japanese soldiers often still favoured suicide. As the battle entered its final stages, Ushijima himself committed seppuku – ritual suicide.

Civilian casualties

As many as 100,000 civilians, or one quarter of the pre-war population of Okinawa, died during the campaign. Some were caught in the cross-fire, killed by American artillery or air attacks, which utilised napalm. Others died of starvation as the Japanese occupying forces stockpiled the island's food supplies.

Locals were also pressed into service by the Japanese; used as human shields or suicide attackers. Even students, some as young as 14, were mobilised. Of 1500 students drafted into the Iron and Blood Imperial Corps (Tekketsu Kinnotai) 800 were killed during the fighting. But most notable of all were the suicides.

Japanese propaganda painted American soldiers as inhuman and warned that captive civilians would be subjected to rape and torture. The result, whether voluntary or enforced by the Japanese, was mass suicides among the civilian population.

By the time the Battle of Okinawa came to an end on 22 June, American forces had suffered more than 45,000 casualties, including 12,500 killed. Japanese deaths may have been higher than 100,000. Add to this the civilian death toll and the terrible cost of Okinawa becomes clear.

This high toll persuaded President Truman to look elsewhere for a means to win the war, rather than send an invasion force to Japan. Ultimately, this was a factor in the approval of the use of atomic bombs against Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.



*US Marine from the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines on Wana Ridge provides covering fire.
May 18, 1945.*

The Crippling Kamikaze Attack on USS Bunker Hill

By Thomas Cleaver

Southern Japan was covered with low clouds on 11 May 1945, with a likelihood of rain. Nevertheless, the Imperial Japanese *Kikusui (Special Attack) No. 6* Squadron was ordered to hit the American aircraft carriers spotted the previous day southeast of Kyushu.

At 06:00, the first *Zeke* – a Japanese fighter aircraft – of the 306th Showa Special Attack Squadron lifted off the runway, followed by five more, with the last departing at 06:53. Each carried a 250-kilogram bomb.

The kamikaze pilots

The small formation stayed low as they headed east. Squadron leader Lt. Seizo Yasunori was determined to find the American carriers.

Ensign Kiyoshi Ogawa, a Waseda University graduate who had been drafted the previous summer, put all his attention into following his leader. He had only graduated from flying school the previous February; flying a *Zeke* with fewer than 150 total flying hours was difficult.

Lieutenant Yasunori spotted the dark silhouettes of American fighters and led his flight into the clouds, where they managed to evade the defenders. Ensign Ogawa was concerned about the clouds, since he had no skill at flying blind, but Yasunori was successful in evading interception.

At the same time, eight VF-84 Corsair pilots on patrol spotted and surprised 30 kamikazes, shooting down 11. The Corsairs turned to head back to *Bunker Hill*.

The assault on Bunker Hill

Bunker Hill, flagship for Admiral Marc Mitscher, began landing eight VMF-451 Corsairs, with the two VF-84 divisions inbound.

Radar operators in *Bunker Hill's* CIC strained to get returns in the stormy skies, but their work was made difficult by a sudden downpour, which reduced their ability to spot inbound attackers.

Lieutenant Yasunori's formation broke into clear skies to find before them the American carriers, white against the blue sea. Suddenly, dark puffs of anti-aircraft explosions surrounded them and one plane fell away on fire. Ensign Ogawa closed on his leader and followed him in his dive.

The men aboard *Bunker Hill* suddenly became aware they were under attack when Yasunori opened fire and strafed the deck. Corsair fighter ace Archie Donahue pulled to the side and exited his aircraft quickly.

They had a matter of seconds to mount a defence. Crewmen manning the 20mm guns edge opened fire. Yasunori was hit, but still came on as his *Zeke* caught fire. When he realised he might not crash the carrier, he pulled his bomb release.

Bombs away

The 550 lb bomb struck near Number Three elevator, penetrated the flight deck, then exited the port (left) side at gallery deck level before it exploded in the ocean.

Yasunori hit the deck a moment later, destroying several aircraft and causing a large fire as his burning *Zeke* careened through several aircraft before it went over the side.

Thirty seconds later, Ensign Owada, also on fire, dropped his bomb; it struck forward of the island, penetrating into the spaces below. Owada's *Zeke* crashed into the island where it exploded and started a second fire.

Moments later, his bomb exploded in Air Group 84's ready rooms at the gallery level above the hangar deck, killing many.

The fire sent backdrafts of flame into the narrow passageways of the island and up the access ladders. As fire spread from the wrecked ready rooms to the hangar deck, firefighters sprayed water and foam on the planes to keep them from exploding.

The inferno spreads

Captain Gene A. Seitz ordered a hard turn to port in an attempt to clear some of the worst of the burning fuel and debris.

Below, the fires spread and *Bunker Hill* fell out of formation. Light cruiser USS *Wilkes-Barre* closed on the burning carrier as her crew broke out fire hoses and turned them on. She came close enough that men trapped on the catwalks jumped to her main deck as other men jumped into the sea to get away from the fires.

Destroyer USS *Cushing* came alongside and fished survivors from the sea as her damage control teams added their fire fighting to the carrier's defence.

Fires raged below decks as men struggled through the toxic air to find the wounded and lead them up to fresh air.

Pilots of VMF-221 who had been on CAP (Combat air patrol) landed aboard *Enterprise*. Chief Engineer Commander Joseph Carmichael and his men stayed together despite 99 of the 500 men in the engine rooms having been killed and wounded, and kept the boilers and engines operating, which saved the ship.

The toll of the suffering

The worst of the fire was contained by 15:30. The cost was staggering: 396 dead and 264 wounded.

For Air Group 84, the worst came next day, when they entered the ruined ready rooms to locate, tag and remove the bodies of their fellows. Many had died of smoke inhalation; their bodies jammed the ready room hatchways.

Sadly, Chief Engineer Carmichael discovered that while the fire was being fought, someone had taken a welding torch and cut through the safety deposit boxes in the ship's post office and stolen the money they contained. The thief was never caught.

Thirteen of Admiral Mitscher's staff died in the fire. He was forced with his surviving staff to transfer by breeches buoy to USS *English* for transport to *Enterprise*, where he broke his flag and resumed command.

The remains of the pilots

Ensign Owada was identified the morning after, when salvage diver Robert Shock volunteered to go into the bowels of the ship, where the Zeke had finally settled. He found the half submerged wreck and came face to face with the dead pilot.

He found papers that later turned out to be photographs and a letter and also removed Ogawa's blood-soaked name tag and a smashed watch, as well as the buckle from his parachute harness, which he hid and brought home after the war.

Following Shock's death in 2001, his son found the items, which were later returned that year to Owada's niece and grandniece in a ceremony in San Francisco.



Ens. Kiyoshi Ogawa, pilot of the second kamikaze on USS Bunker Hill.

How Royal Navy Aviators Helped Secure Allied Victory in the Pacific

By Tim Hillier-Graves

Flying from an aircraft carrier in the Second World War was the most dangerous of pursuits. Even without the threat of enemy action, the likelihood of being killed or maimed was great and when faced with a determined foe, the chances of survival diminished even more quickly.

It wasn't a life for the faint-hearted or the unskilled; naval aviators were the best of the best.

The British Pacific Fleet

By 1944, with the German seaborne threat diminishing rapidly, the Royal Navy could concentrate its carrier strength in the Far East. Here the Americans were island hopping their way towards Japan and meeting great resistance in the air and on the ground on the way.

And it was into this dangerous world that the British Fleet plunged to fight and suffer. But the aircrews didn't flinch, fought bravely and sustained terrible casualties along the way.

Foremost amongst all them were 1839 and 1844 Squadrons, which together, flying Grumman Hellcats, formed the 5th Naval Fighter Wing on HMS Indomitable.

From mid-1944 to the last days of the war they fought with supreme gallantry and to great effect.

'Engage from above, fast and hard'

Although these pilots fought under the banner of the Royal Navy they were, in fact, a multinational force. There were men from New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, Holland as well as the British Isles.

But no matter from where they came they needed certain skills to survive, as Bill Foster, a pilot with 1844, recalled:

“Experience, good eyesight and quick reactions mattered a great deal. The novice saw little in the air and took time to see what was happening around them. When new to air fighting everything just seemed to happen too quickly.

Some never really acquired these skills no matter how hard they tried and were picked off before they knew what was happening. To others it came naturally and they prospered.

Our Commanding Officer, who was a very experienced fighter pilot by the time I arrived, constantly reminded us of the basic principles of air combat – engage from above, fast and hard, get in close, shoot accurately, aim for the pilot, and climb away quickly.

‘The quick and the dead’

But in addition to this, you needed to know the capabilities of your aircraft and how far you could push it. Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the enemy was also essential.

Flying fighters took a heavy toll on your body and there were no pressure suits then to protect you in high G turns. So being fit, avoiding late nights and alcohol were essential. For some this was a problem, especially in the cramped, noisy quarters on a carrier, where drink was readily available.

As your hours flying in combat added up so the risk of battle fatigue increased and, inevitably, you had to be taken off operations for your own good. Some managed to disguise the effects of creeping exhaustion and carry on flying when it had become unsafe to do so.

They were brave and didn’t want to let anyone down, but it was still foolhardy to let them continue. I’m sure some were lost because of this.

The saying ‘the quick and the dead’, though clichéd, held many grains of truth.”

For most of these men it took 18 months or so to reach a frontline squadron – such was the extent of their training. It was this programme that saw two thirds of them either failing to make the grade or being killed in accidents along the way.

The hazards of flying from carriers soon reduced their numbers even further – all this before they'd even engaged the enemy.

By the end of the war their casualty rates would exceed those incurred by the British Army during the Battle of the Somme in 1916, such was the price they paid for their bravery. Theirs was a cold, hard, brutal war and yet they didn't flinch.

Elite aviators

The 5th Fighter Wing faced all this and proved itself to be the finest exponents of this form of war, seeing action in all of the British Pacific Fleet battles in 1945.

Before that there had been some costly rehearsals against comparatively minor targets in the Indian Ocean, but in January the Fleet sailed to attack the strategically important oil refineries around Palembang, on Sumatra.

Over two strikes on 24 and 29 January they did considerable damage, but lost 41 aircraft (out of 244 available) and thirty aircrew in the process. In addition, many aircraft were damaged and nine men were also wounded.

It was a heavy price to pay, especially when the Fleet had only four fleet carriers at any one time and limited reserves to play with. The position with the United States Navy couldn't have been more different.

With their greater industrial muscle, they seemed able to produce new carriers and more aircraft at will, so could afford to take losses in the drive towards Japan. But this didn't deter the Royal Navy from participating fully even though it would be a war of diminishing returns and the loss of many good men.

Between January and August the 5th Wing would be in the thick of the fighting as the BPF hit targets in the Sakishima Gunto Islands, on Formosa and, finally, Japan itself.

Initially, their aim was to subdue any efforts being made by the Japanese to reinforce Okinawa, which the Americans were seeking to take as a preliminary to invading the enemy's mainland.

And so the British Fleet began hammering away at airfields, port installations and anything of strategic importance between March and May.

But the losses in holding down a determined enemy were huge. 203 aircraft (98 in combat) were lost or written off from a complement of 218 and all the carriers were damaged by Kamikazes.

In all 85 Royal Navy personnel were killed and another 83 wounded, with an unrecorded number of aircrew suffering combat fatigue necessitating their removal from the front line.

Being in the forefront of these operations the 5th couldn't avoid their share of casualties and their ranks were soon depleted, with an even heavier load falling on the survivors.

Farewell to the Indomitable

There was a brief respite in June as the Fleet sailed for Australia, its forward operating base, for essential repairs and replenishment. Within a month it again set sail for the front, with Japan now the sole remaining target.

HMS Indomitable wouldn't be part of these operations however; the ship needed longer in dock to keep her operational.

The bulk of the 5th Wing remained with her, but a small detachment of her Hellcats did proceed with the Fleet on HMS Formidable. 1839 and 1844 had a number of pilots who had become specialists in night fighting and photo reconnaissance. These were roles that the Commander-in-Chief believed would be essential in the coming battles.

And so it proved to be. In a matter of weeks these highly skilled pilots provided protection for both the British and American Fleets during the hours of darkness destroying many enemy aircraft in the process.

The PR pilots were even more successful frequently overflying Japan taking many of thousands of pictures that helped plan future strikes and, more importantly, an invasion that two atomic bombs made unnecessary.

A remarkable generation

And so the carrier war came to an end and within 12 months most of these gallant young men had been demobbed and were making their way home to begin their lives anew.

They were conscious of leaving behind many friends and their youth but faced peace as bravely as they had the war, but their thoughts often went back to those days and the trials they had faced.

I had the privilege of meeting many of the survivors, to hear their stories and never failed to marvel at their courage and ability to endure, but also their modesty and humility.

They were a remarkable generation whose passing diminishes us all. I hope in some small way 'Heaven High, Ocean Deep' (Tim's book) gives them with the fitting memorial they so deserve.



Why Did the US Drop Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

By Harry Atkins

The question of whether or not the United States was right to drop atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 is surely among the 20th century's most enduring and divisive.

For many, the horrors inflicted by an atomic attack are so devastating and widespread that there will never be any justification. Others, however, will claim that war invariably demands unpalatable actions to bring about an end to conflict.

The main reasons given

To better understand whether atomic action was justified in 1945, we must first consider the likely motivations behind it. The main reason given for America's decision to take atomic action is that it was a way to conclude the war without suffering further losses (on the American side at least).

There are also those who see the attacks as retribution for Pearl Harbour and the many American lives lost in bloody warfare with Japan.

We might also consider the geopolitical impact that the Hiroshima and Nagasaki attacks had at a time when tensions were rising between the US and the Soviet Union. As a signal of American military might, the atomic attacks on Japan were undoubtedly emphatic, especially at a time when the Soviet Union lagged behind the US in the race for nuclear armament.

The case for the attacks ending the war

The most commonly expressed justification for the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings has been that they brought a halt to a war that would have otherwise claimed many more lives. It was believed that America's only alternative to an atomic assault was an invasion of Japan, which would have almost certainly involved the loss of thousands more US soldiers.

The bombings, remember, followed a long period of conflict that had already seen 418,000 Americans killed. Recent battles with Japan at Iwo Jima and Okinawa had proved extremely costly for the US in terms of casualties and, despite Japan's weakened military position, there was a strong sense that the Japanese would not lay down without a bloody fight. The shock of Japanese kamikaze attacks had not helped this impression.

In such circumstances, the US decided that a significant Japanese death toll was a justified means to an end. Indeed, it would have been politically difficult for President Harry S. Truman to make any other decision.

Truman had assembled a committee, chaired by Secretary of War Henry Stimson, to consider the question of an atomic assault and there was a strong consensus that the bombs should be used; it was seen as a solution that would end the conflict without sacrificing further American lives.

Criticism

Critics of the decision, however, have pointed out that Japan was on the cusp of defeat anyway and that naval blockades and conventional bombing would have forced it to surrender without the need for such a devastating assault.

Even Stimson, Truman's secretary of war, has commented that "Japan had no allies; its navy was almost destroyed; its islands were under a naval blockade; and its cities were undergoing concentrated air attacks".

Some historians also suggest that the bombings weren't even the principle reason for Japan's eventual surrender, asserting instead that the Soviet Union's declaration of war on August 8 was the overriding factor.



3 Stories from Survivors of Hiroshima

By Harry Atkins

At 8.15 AM on 6 August 1945, Enola Gay, an American B-29 bomber, became the first airplane in history to drop an atomic bomb. The target was Hiroshima, a Japanese city that instantly became synonymous with the horrific consequences of nuclear warfare.

The nightmarish horror that descended on Hiroshima that morning was unlike anything the world had previously witnessed.

Between 60,000 and 80,000 people were killed instantly, including some who were effectively vanished by the extraordinary heat of the blast. Widespread radiation sickness ensured that the death toll was ultimately far higher than that – the number of people killed as a result of the Hiroshima bombing is estimated to be 135,000.

Those who survived were left with deep mental and physical scars and their recollections of that nightmarish day are, inevitably, deeply harrowing.

But, 75 years later, it's important that their stories are remembered. Since the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the threat of nuclear war has never really gone away and the accounts of those who experienced its horrific reality are as vital as ever.

Sunao Tsuboi

The story of Sunao Tsuboi illustrates both Hiroshima's horrific legacy and the possibility of building a life in the aftermath of such a devastating event.

When the blast struck, Tsuboi, then a 20-year-old student, was walking to school. He'd declined a second breakfast at a student dining hall in case 'the young woman behind the counter would think him a glutton'. Everyone in the dining room was killed.

He recalls a loud bang and being flung 10 feet through the air. When he regained consciousness Tsuboi was badly burned across most of his body and the sheer force of the blast had ripped his shirtsleeves and trouser legs off.

The account he gave to *The Guardian* in 2015, the 70th anniversary of the attack, paints a chilling picture of the nightmarish scenes that confronted stunned survivors in the immediate aftermath of the blast.

“My arms were badly burned and there seemed to be something dripping from my fingertips... My back was incredibly painful, but I had no idea what had just happened. I assumed I had been close to a very large conventional bomb. I had no idea it was a nuclear bomb and that I’d been exposed to radiation. There was so much smoke in the air that you could barely see 100 metres ahead, but what I did see convinced me that I had entered a living hell on earth.

“There were people crying out for help, calling after members of their family. I saw a schoolgirl with her eye hanging out of its socket. People looked like ghosts, bleeding and trying to walk before collapsing. Some had lost limbs.

“There were charred bodies everywhere, including in the river. I looked down and saw a man clutching a hole in his stomach, trying to stop his organs from spilling out. The smell of burning flesh was overpowering.”

Remarkably, at the age of 93, Tsuboi is still alive and able to recount his story. The physical toll that fateful day took on his body was significant – facial scars remain 70 years later and the protracted impact of radioactive exposure has led to him being hospitalised 11 times. He’s survived two cancer diagnoses and been told three times that he was on the cusp of death.

And yet, Tsuboi has persevered through the persistent physical trauma of radioactive exposure, working as a teacher and campaigning against nuclear arms. In 2011 he was awarded the Kiyoshi Tanimoto peace prize.

Eizo Nomura

When the bomb hit, Eizo Nomura (1898–1982) was closer to the blast than any other survivor. A municipal employee working just 170 metres southwest of ground zero,

Nomura happened to be looking for documents in the basement of his workplace, the Fuel Hall, when the bomb detonated. Everyone else in the building was killed.

At the age of 72, Nomura started writing a memoir, *Waga Omoide no Ki* (My Memories), which included a chapter, titled simply 'Atomic Bombing', that details his experiences on that awful day in 1945. The following excerpt describes the horrifying scenes that greeted Nomura as he emerged, through the flames, from his building.

Outside, it was dark because of the black smoke. It was about as light as night with a half-moon. I hurried to the foot of Motoyasu Bridge. Right in the middle and on my side of the bridge I saw a naked man lying on his back.

Both arms and legs were extended toward the sky, trembling. Something round was burning under his left armpit. The other side of the bridge was obscured by smoke, and the flames were beginning to leap up."

Tsutomu Yamaguchi

Tsutomu Yamaguchi (1916-2010) had the unfortunate distinction of being the world's only officially recognised double atomic bomb survivor.

In 1945, Yamaguchi was a 29-year-old naval engineer working for Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. On 6 August he was nearing the conclusion of a business trip to Hiroshima. It was his last day in the city, after three hard months working away from home he was about to return to his wife and son in his hometown, Nagasaki.

When the blast struck, Yamaguchi was on his way to Mitsubishi's shipyard ahead of his last day there. He recalls hearing the drone of an aircraft overhead, then spotting a B-29 flying over the city. He even witnessed the bomb's parachute assisted descent.

As it detonated – a moment Yamaguchi described as resembling "the lightning of a huge magnesium flare" – he flung himself into a ditch. The power of the shock wave was so ferocious that he was hurled from the ground into a nearby potato patch.

He recalled the immediate aftermath in an interview with *The Times*: "I think I fainted for a while. When I opened my eyes, everything was dark, and I couldn't see much. It

was like the start of a film at the cinema, before the picture has begun when the blank frames are just flashing up without any sound.”

Having spent the night in an air raid shelter, Yamaguchi made his way, through the decimated remains of the city, to the railway station. Remarkably, some trains were still running, and he managed to get an overnight train back home to Nagasaki.

Severely hurt and physically debilitated, he nonetheless reported back to work on 9 August, where, just as his account of the horrors he'd witnessed in Hiroshima was being greeted with incredulity by colleagues, another iridescent flash battered through the office.

Though his body was subjected to another radioactive assault, Yamaguchi somehow survived a second nuclear attack, just four days after the first. Though he suffered the brutal effects of radiation sickness – his hair fell out, his wounds turned gangrenous and he vomited relentlessly – Yamaguchi eventually recovered and went on to have two more children with his wife, who also survived the blast.



The firestorm cloud that engulfed Hiroshima, reaching its peak intensity roughly 3 hours after the bomb was dropped.