

## OPERATION DOWNFALL

**THE LITTLE-KNOWN, NOW FORGOTTEN, 1945 FILED-AWAY PLAN TO INVADE JAPAN**

**THE BIGGEST AND MOST HORRIFYING INVASION IN HISTORY NEVER TOOK PLACE**

**FOR THOSE WHO STILL ASK " SHOULD WE HAVE DROPPED THE BOMB? "**

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**ON MAY 25, 1945, THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF MET IN WASHINGTON D.C. TO APPROVE PLANS FOR THE  
INVASION OF JAPAN**

**DETAILS OF THE OPERATION ARE TAKEN FROM THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES**

**BE SURE TO SEE THE VIDEO ON THE LAST PAGE**

The invasion, code-named "Downfall," would be in **two stages**. The first, [\*Operation Olympic\*](#), would take place on the southern island of Kyushu on November 1. Phase two, [\*Operation Coronet\*](#), would use Kyushu as a staging area for the invasion of the Tokyo plain in March 1946.



The Strategic Plans for "Operation Downfall "

### A QUICK END TO THE WAR (??)

The chief advocate of the invasion was the Army's chief of staff, General George C. Marshall. He believed that democracies could not endure long wars and that the best way to end this quickly was to occupy the Japanese capital.



Gen George C Marshall



Gen Douglas MacArthur

General MacArthur had little doubt that sufficient power to overcome Japanese resistance could be massed in the fall of 1945 for an invasion. Kyushu's (Plate No. 113) He stated his reasons as follows:

I think that the ground, naval, air, and logistic resources in the Pacific are adequate to carry out Course III. The Japanese Fleet has been reduced to practical impotency. The Japanese Air Force has been reduced to a line of action that involves uncoordinated, suicidal attacks against our forces, employing all types of planes, including trainers. Its attrition is heavy and its power for sustained action is diminishing rapidly.

Those conditions will be accentuated after the establishment of our air forces in the Ryukyus. With the increase in the tempo of very long-range attacks, the enemy's ability to provide replacement planes will diminish and the Japanese potentiality will decline at an increasing rate.

It is believed that the development of air bases in the Ryukyus will, in conjunction with carrier-based planes, give us sufficient air power to support landings on Kyushu and the establishment.

#### BY THE BOOK

The initial American intelligence estimate predicted that Kyushu would be defended by six divisions. U.S. planners anticipated that the Japanese would be uncertain where the landing would occur and would spread their forces thin -- three divisions in the north, three in the south. The invasion on Kyushu's southern beaches would consist of nine divisions. This three-to-one ratio of invader to defender was the textbook recipe for a successful invasion. The U.S. held another three divisions in reserve.



PRESIDENT HARRY TRUMAN

#### EXCERPTS FROM TRUMAN'S DIARY CONCERNING INVADING OR BOMBING

President Harry Truman's diary is one source historians have evaluated for information about his decisions at the end of World War II. Read this excerpt written in mid-June, while the Battle of Okinawa was drawing to a close and Truman and his advisers were discussing a Japan invasion plan.

JUNE 17, 1945

THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON *(This article from Pres Truman's diary clearly expresses his feelings for Gen Douglas McArthur)*

Went down the River today on the [presidential yacht] Potomac to discuss plans, issues, and decisions. Took [press secretary] Charlie Ross, straight thinker, honest man who tells me the truth so I understand what he means; [staff aide] Matt Connelly, shrewd Irishman, who raises the chips and shows me the bugs, honest, fair, "diplomatic" with me; [former congressman and director of the office of war mobilization and reconversion] Judge Fred Vinson, straight shooter, knows Congress and how they think, a man to trust; [special counsel and speechwriter] Judge [Samuel] Rosenman, one of the best in Washington, keen mind, a lucid pen, a loyal Roosevelt man and an equally loyal Truman man; [former White House press secretary] Steve Early, a keen observer, political and otherwise, has acted as my hatchet man, absolutely loyal and trustworthy, same can be said as about Rosenman. We discussed public relations in Germany, Italy, France, Holland, Belgium, England, and Russia. Food, fuel, transportation, and what to do about it and other related problems

Japanese War and the relations with China, Russia, and Britain about it, Supreme Commander [Douglas MacArthur] and what to do with Mr. Prima Donna, brass hat, Five Star McArthur.

He's worse than the Cabots and the Lodges -- they at least talked with one another before they told God what to do. Mc tells God right off. It is a very great pity we have to have Stuffed Shirts like that in key positions.

I don't see why in Hell [President Franklin] Roosevelt didn't order [General Jonathan] Wainwright home and let McArthur be a martyr, guess he was afraid of the Sabotage Press-McCormick-Patterson Axis. We'd have had a real general and a fighting man if we had Wainwright and not an actor and a bunco man such as we have now.

Don't see how a country can produce such men as Robert E. Lee, John Pershing, [Dwight] Eisenhower, [Omar] Bradley, and at the same time produce [George] Custers, [George] Pattons, and [Douglas] McArthurs.

#### FOOTNOTE ADDED HERE

(Reference Gen MacArthur) (See video @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAhBDiu3mqy>)

After many years of friction between Gen McArthur and President Truman, the President relieved McArthur of his Command in the Korean Conflict on April 11, 1951, and McArthur retired from the US Army and passed away in Washington DC on April 5, 1964.



Announcement



Happier Days

I have to decide on Japanese strategy -- shall we invade Japan proper or shall we bomb and blockade? That is my hardest decision to date. But I'll make it when I have all the facts. So you see we talk about more that [sic] "Cabbages + Kings and Sealing wax and things..."

**THINGS BEGIN TO GET SERIOUS.....**

**TRUMAN WARNED THE JAPANESE ON JUNE 7, 1945**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Adu10J4LnrI>

**TRUMAN AUTHORIZED THE LANDING ON KYUSHU**

The unprecedented American losses on Okinawa -- one-third of the invasion force was killed, wounded, or missing -- heightened President Harry Truman's concern about what it would cost American lives to defeat Japan.

He informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that casualties would be his criterion for authorizing an invasion of the Japanese homeland, a decision he would describe as his hardest up to that point.

#### **PREDICTING CASUALTY NUMBERS**

Truman met with the Joint Chiefs and other senior advisers in June 1945 to review the initial invasion plans. At least four different opinions emerged about potential casualties. These estimates for U.S. losses on Kyushu ranged from as low as 31,000 for just the first thirty days, to a total of about 280,000. Truman authorized the landing on Kyushu but withheld his approval for Coronet.

#### **THE JAPANESE INTENDED TO FIGHT TO THE END**

American fears about casualty levels were sent soaring in July by intercepts of Japanese military cables. The new intelligence revealed a massive build-up of Japanese forces in southern Kyushu. Historian Edward Drea describes the situation: "It was as if the very invasion beaches were magnets, drawing the Japanese forces to those places where the Americans would have to land and fight their way ashore. It was also very clear in those messages that the Japanese intended to fight to the bitter end."

#### **A NEW WEAPON?**

Also in July, American military leaders reported successful tests of a devastating new weapon -- the atomic bomb. According to historian Barton Bernstein, the president's advisers focused on "not the issue of use, which... was rather assumed, but rather postwar implications, the power of the bomb... and what it would mean for the world." The bomb's availability would become a factor in the invasion plan, although military planning scenarios never assumed atomic weapons would end the war.

#### **DIFFICULTIES ANTICIPATED**

In early August the intercepts indicated 13 Japanese divisions defending the invasion beaches. One intelligence officer noted that the U.S. would be attacking a ratio of one-to-one -- "not the recipe for victory." A deeply worried General Marshall asked General Douglas MacArthur, who was to lead the Kyushu landing, whether it was still feasible, and if not to consider alternatives, including landing troops in northern Japan.

#### **ATOMIC STRATEGY**

At the same time, General Marshall considered another option to make the Kyushu invasion work. He found out that at least seven atomic bombs would be ready by November 1. On August 6, the U.S. destroyed Hiroshima with an atomic bomb, yet Japan did not surrender. Marshall doubted if bombing cities would force the war to end, and began to consider using atomic bombs to soften up the invasion beaches -- almost as if they were naval gunfire. Planners did not fully comprehend or take into account the lingering, deadly effects of atomic radiation. We know today that, had the invasion taken place under cover of atomic weapons, Japanese defenders who did not die instantly from the bomb blasts would have died a lingering death from radiation poisoning. So would have many American invaders.

**TRUMAN'S ULTIMATUM REGARDING JAPAN** (Japan ignores Truman's final offer to surrender at the Potsdam Conference)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIOqL86jfg4>

**TRUMAN ANNOUNCED THE DROPPING OF THE ATOM BOMB ON HIROSHIMA**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3lb4wTq0jY>

**TRUMAN JUSTIFIED THE USE OF THE ATOM BOMB**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Hxk3qS2TQ8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Hxk3qS2TQ8)

"I made the only decision I ever knew how to make. I did what I thought was right." With these words, President Truman answered the questions of his fellow Americans and the people of the world after the U.S. became the only nation in history to make wartime use of the atomic bomb.

## **SURRENDER**

After the Soviet Union shocked Japan on August 8th by declaring war, and the U.S. dropped a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki the following day, Japan came to understand it should surrender. There was no need for an invasion after all. But a major legacy of the war's end would be the debate over whether dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki saved lives by ending the war sooner. In a postwar article, Secretary of War Henry Stimson argued that using the atomic bombs saved a million American casualties that might have resulted from an invasion.

## **HINDSIGHT**

Historians today -- like the military planners of the 1940s -- disagree about how many Americans might have died in an invasion. Counting up projected invasion casualties has become important to people seeking to understand why Truman and his cabinet dropped two atomic bombs on Japan. But, as Bernstein points out, "This is a post-Hiroshima analysis, growing with more fervor as the distance from Hiroshima grows, about the moral legitimacy and the moral justifications for the act, and not about understanding the decision-making leading to the act."

In the fall of 1945, in the aftermath of the war, few people concerned themselves with the invasion plans. Following the surrender, the classified documents, maps, diagrams, and appendices for Operation Downfall were packed away in boxes and eventually stored at the National Archives. These plans that called for the invasion of Japan paint a vivid description of what might have been one of the most horrible campaigns in the history of man. ***The fact the story of the invasion of Japan is locked up in the National Archives and is not told in our history books is something for which all Americans can be thankful.*** Its existence kept secret throughout the war, the US naval base at Ulithi was for a time the world's largest naval facility.

### **FOOTNOTE TO SCHOLARS OF WW2 AND THOSE DESIRING MORE INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT**

If any of you might be interested in reading the entire story of Truman's decision and the making and delivery of the bomb ***in much more detail*** click on the link below. This publication also covers the Potsdam Conference and notes how the Japanese were offered another opportunity to surrender and did not.

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## **THE DECISION TO DROP THE ATOMIC BOMB -TRUMAN AND THE BOMB: A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY**

<https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/online-collections/decision-to-drop-atomic-bomb>

This collection focuses on the decision-making process to drop the atomic bomb. It includes 76 documents totaling 632 pages covering the years 1945 through 1964.

Supporting materials include an online version of "Truman and the Bomb: A Documentary History," edited by Robert H. Ferrell.

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## **THE ARMADA PUT TOGETHER FOR OPERATION DOWNFALL**

Ulithi Atoll in the Pacific



*The ships of Task Force 58 at anchor at Ulithi Atoll in the Pacific — one of the most powerful naval fleets ever assembled in history.*

In 1945, 15 battleships, 29 carriers, 23 cruisers, 106 destroyers, and a train of oilers and supply ships sailed from "a Pacific base." What was this base? **The mightiest force of naval Power ever assembled** must have required a tremendous supporting establishment. Ulithi, the biggest and most active naval base in the world was indeed tremendous **but it was unknown**. Few civilians had heard of it at all. By the time security released the name, the remarkable base of Ulithi was a ghost. The war had moved on to the Japanese homeland, and the press was not printing ancient history about Ulithi.

Ulithi is 360 miles southwest of Guam, 850 miles east of the Philippines, and 1300 miles South of Tokyo. It is a typical volcanic atoll with coral, white sand, and palm trees. The reef runs roughly twenty miles north and south by ten miles across enclosing a vast anchorage with an average depth of 80 to 100 feet - the only suitable anchorage within 800 miles. Three dozen little islands rise slightly above the sea, the largest only half a square mile in area.

The U.S. Navy arrived in September 1944 and found resident about 400 natives, and three Japanese soldiers. The natives on the four largest islands were moved to smaller Fassarai, and every inch of these four was quickly put to use. Asor had room for a headquarters: port director, radio station, evaporator (rain is the only freshwater supply), tents, small boat pier, and cemetery. Sorlen was set up as a shop for maintaining and repairing the 105 LCVs and 45 LCMs that became beasts of all work in the absence of small boats. Mogmog was assigned to recreation.

The big island, Falalop, was just wide enough for a 3500-foot airstrip for handling the R4Ds (Douglas DC-3s) and R5C Commandos, which would presently fly in from Guam 1269 passengers, 4565 sacks of mail and 262,251 pounds of air freight a week. This took care of a few services - but where were they going to put the naval base?

Enter "the secret weapon," as Admiral Nimitz called Service Squadron Ten. Commodore Worrall R. Carter survived Pearl Harbor to devise the miraculous mobile service force that made it possible for the Navy to move toward Japan in great jumps instead of taking the slow and costly alternative of capturing a whole series of islands on which to build a string of land bases.

Within a month of the occupation of Ulithi, a whole floating base was in operation. Six thousand ship fitters, artificers, welders, carpenters, and electricians arrived aboard repair ships, destroyer tenders, and floating dry docks. USS AJAX had an air-conditioned optical shop and a supply of base metals from which she could make any alloy to form any part needed. Many refrigerator and supply ships belonged to three-ship teams: the ship at Ulithi had cleaned out and relieved sister ship No. 2 which was on the way back to a rear base for more supplies while No. 3 was on the way out to relieve No. 1. Over half the ships were not self-propelled but were towed in. They then served as warehouses for a whole system of transports which unloaded stores on them for distribution. This kind of chain went back to the United States. The paper and magazines showed England sinking under the stockpile of troops and material collected for the invasion of Normandy.

The Okinawa landings were not so well documented but they involved more men, ships, and supplies-including 600,000 gallons of fuel oil, 1500 freight cars of ammunition, and enough food to provide every person in Vermont and Wyoming with three meals a day for fifteen days. The smaller ships needed a multitude of services; the ice cream barge made 500 gallons a shift, and the USS ABATAN, which looked like a big tanker, really distilled fresh water and baked bread and pies. Fleet oilers sortied from Ulithi to refuel the combat ships a short distance from the strike areas. They added men, mail, and medical supplies, and began to take orders for spare parts.

When Leyte Gulf was secured, the floating base moved on, and Ulithi which had had a temporary population the size of Dallas and had been the master of half the world for seven months, shrank to little more than a tanker depot. Once again, it became a quiet, lonely atoll.

### **SHORT SUMMARY – JUSTIFICATION & PUBLIC OPINION**

#### **AMERICA HAD THE BOMB ....NOW WHAT?**

When Harry Truman learned of the success of the Manhattan Project, he knew he was faced with a decision of unprecedented gravity. The capacity to end the war with Japan was in his hands, but it would involve unleashing the most terrible weapon ever known.



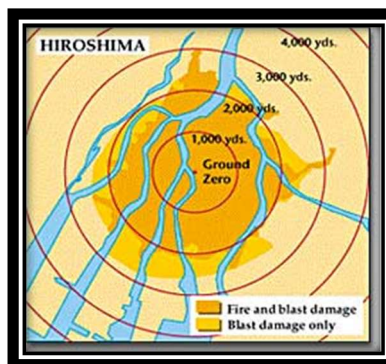
American soldiers and civilians were weary from four years of war, yet the Japanese military was refusing to give up their fight. American forces occupied Okinawa and Iwo Jima and were intensely firebombing Japanese cities. but Japan had an army of 2 million strong stationed in the home islands guarding against invasion.

For Truman, the choice of whether or not to use the atomic bomb was the most difficult decision of his life. First, an Allied demand for an immediate unconditional surrender was made to the leadership in Japan. Although the demand stated that refusal would result in destruction, no mention of any new weapons of mass destruction was made. The Japanese military command rejected the request for unconditional surrender, but there were indications that a conditional surrender was possible.

Regardless, on August 6, 1945, a plane called the Enola Gay dropped an atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima. Instantly, 70,000 Japanese citizens were vaporized. In the months and years that followed, an additional 100,000 perished from burns and radiation sickness.



*Three days later, a "mushroom" cloud rises over the city of Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, following the detonation of "Fat Man." The second atomic bomb.*



*This map shows the range of the destruction caused by the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.*

Two days later, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. On August 9, a second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, where 80,000 Japanese people perished. On August 14, 1945, Japan Surrendered.

#### **PUBLIC OPINION**

Critics have charged that Truman's decision was a barbaric act that brought negative long-term consequences to the United States. A new age of nuclear terror led to a dangerous arms race.

Some military analysts insist that Japan was on its knees and the bombings were simply unnecessary.

The American government was **accused of racism** because such a device would never have been used against **white civilians**



*On August 6, the city of Hiroshima, Japan remembers those who lost their lives when the atomic bomb fell. Thousands attend the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony annually.*

Other critics argued that **American diplomats had ulterior motives**. The Soviet Union had entered the war against Japan, and the atomic bomb could be read as a strong message for the Soviets to tread lightly. In this respect, Hiroshima and Nagasaki may have been the first shots of the Cold War as well as the final shots of World War II. **Regardless, the United States remains the only nation in the world to have used a nuclear weapon on another nation.**

Truman stated that his **decision to drop the bomb was purely military**. A Normandy-type amphibious landing would have cost an estimated million casualties. Truman believed that the bombs saved Japanese lives as well. **Prolonging the war was not an option for the President**. Over 3,500 Japanese kamikaze raids had already wrought great destruction and loss of American lives. **The President rejected a demonstration of the atomic bomb to the Japanese leadership**. He knew there was no guarantee the Japanese would surrender if the test succeeded, and he felt that a failed demonstration would be worse than none at all. Even the scientific community failed to foresee the awful effects of radiation sickness. Truman saw little difference between the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and the firebombing of Dresden or Tokyo. **(Both actions would have been War Crimes if we would have lost the War and are still controversial today)**

**The ethical debate over the decision to drop the atomic bomb will never be resolved.** The bombs did, however, bring an end to the most destructive war in history. The Manhattan Project that produced it demonstrated the possibility of how a nation's resources could be mobilized.

**Pandora's box was now open. The question that came flying out was, "How will the world use its nuclear capability?"** It is a question still being addressed daily

#### **COMMENTS FROM THE MILITARY LEADERS**

It always appeared to us that, atomic bomb or no atomic bomb, the Japanese were already on the verge of collapse.

**General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold** - *Commanding General of the U.S. Army Air Forces Under President Truman*

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If had been conscious of depression and so I voiced to (Sec. Of War Stimson) my grave misgivings, first based on my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary, and secondly because I thought that our country should avoid shocking world opinion by the use of a weapon whose employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives. I believed that Japan was, at this very moment, seeking a way to surrender with a minimum loss of 'face.' "

**General Dwight D. Eisenhower**

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"It is my opinion that the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender. My feeling was that in being the first to use it, we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was taught not to make war in that fashion, and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children."

Admiral William D. Leahy

Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

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"Certainly before 31 December 1945, and in all probability before 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated."

U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey's 1946 Study

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The final decision now lay in the main with President Truman, who had the weapon; but I never doubted what it would be, nor have I ever doubted since that he was right. The historical fact remains and must be judged in the after-time, that the decision whether or not to use the atomic bomb to compel the surrender of Japan was never even an issue. There was unanimous, automatic, unquestioned agreement around our table; nor did I ever hear the slightest suggestion that we should do otherwise.

Sir Winston Churchill

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The dropping of the bombs resulted in the colossal saving of human lives. Many Japanese had been killed defending the small island of Okinawa as at Hiroshima. Imagine what the invasion of the Japanese mainland would have led to! ...They would blow themselves up rather than surrender. Millions would have been killed.

Lord Louis Mountbatten

Supreme Allied Commander in Southeast Asia

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The use of atomic bombs on Japan in 1945 is one of the most controversial debates in history. The fundamental decision of how to end the war not only plagued leaders of the time but has been scrutinized ever since. Some claim it was the most efficient way to end the fighting, whereas others thought it was done to influence the post-war world order. Even today, debate continues over whether using the bombs in 1945 was necessary for victory.

#### **OPINIONS REGARDING THE USE OF THE ATOMIC BOMBS**

The following arguments were put forth by military strategists, policymakers, and academics to support their assertion that the use of the atomic bombs was unwarranted, unnecessary, and/or unjustified



**DO NOT USE ATOMIC BOMB**

**A.** Use of the atomic bombs on civilian targets is immoral, unethical, dishonorable, unprincipled, and just plain wrong for any civilized nation.

**B.** Japanese civilians were tired of the war; more than 60 of its cities had been destroyed by conventional bombing before the dropping of the atomic bombs, the home islands were being blocked by the American navy, and the Soviet Union entered the war by attacking Japanese troops in Manchuria.

**C.** The two cities had limited military value; Civilians outnumbered troops in Hiroshima six-to-one. Within the first four months of the bombings, up to 166,000 people in Hiroshima and 80,000 in Nagasaki were killed, half of those numbers on the day of the bombing alone.

**D.** Japanese diehards had acknowledged since 1941 that Japan could not fight Russia as well as the United States and Britain. By mid-June 1945, US General George Marshall advised Truman directly that "the impact of the Russian entry on the already hopeless Japanese may well be the decisive action."

- E.** Some Japanese officials did try to end the war by negotiation before it was too late, but they were given no support from Tokyo.
- F.** Japan's military position was so poor that its leaders would likely have surrendered before the invasion, and at roughly the same time in August 1945, even if the United States had not employed strategic bombing or the atomic bomb
- G.** Use of the atomic bomb was less about hitting Japan, and more so about making a statement to the Soviet Union about the strength of American firepower (and hence was the first act of tension during the atomic-age Cold War)
- H.** An invasion need not inflict major American casualties: (1) a 1944 study projected that an invasion of Japan would "cost a million American lives and many more than number in wounded, while a memorandum from Herbert Hoover to President Truman in May 1945 estimated that a negotiated peace with Japan would "save 500,000 to one million lives." (1) A 1945 study by the Joint War Plans Committee estimated "relatively low US casualties" of 193,000, a quarter of whom would be killed.
- I.** The US had long since broken the enemy codes; a critical message of 12th July 1945 showed that the Japanese emperor himself had decided to intervene to attempt to end the war. In his private journal, Truman bluntly characterized the message as the "telegram from the Japanese Emperor asking for peace."
- J.** As of 29th April 1945, the US Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), reported "increasing numbers of informed Japanese, both military and civilian, already realize the inevitability of absolute defeat." The JIC further advised that "the increasing effects of air-sea blockade, the progressive and cumulative devastation wrought by strategic bombing, and the collapse of Germany should make this realization widespread within the year.
- K.** Intercepted messages suggested that the main obstacle to peace was the continued Allied demand for unconditional surrender and the American refusal to modify its "unconditional surrender" demand to allow the Japanese to keep their emperor needlessly prolonged Japan's resistance.
- L.** For several months, the US had dropped more than 63 million leaflets across Japan, warning civilians of air raids. Many Japanese cities suffered terrible damage from aerial bombings, some even 97% destruction. In general, the Japanese regarded the leaflet messages as truthful. Hiroshima was not among the dozen cities listed.
- M.** The United States had sought Russia's help primarily to pin down Japanese armies and thus make a US invasion of the home islands easier. By midsummer 1945, Japan's position had deteriorated so much that some top US military planners believed the mere shock of a Red Army attack might be sufficient to bring about surrender and thus make an invasion unnecessary.
- N.** Postwar, a top-secret War Department Study found that "Japanese leaders had decided to surrender and were merely looking for a sufficient pretext (reason) to convince their army that Japan had lost the war; Russia's early-August entry into the war "would almost certainly have furnished this pretext". Also, in another report, this time by the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey in 1946, in its report Japan's Struggle to End the War, concluded that "certainly before 31 December 1945, and in all probability before 1st November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated."
- O.** A demonstration explosion over Tokyo harbor would have convinced Japan's leaders to quit without killing many people.
- P.** Even if Hiroshima was necessary, the US did not give enough time for word to filter out of its devastation before bombing Nagasaki.
- Q.** The bomb was used partly to justify the \$2 billion spent on its development.



USE ATOMIC BOMB

The following arguments were put forth by military strategists, policymakers, and academics to support their assertion that the use of the atomic bombs was warranted, necessary, and/or justified.

**A.** The Japanese had demonstrated near-fanatical resistance, fighting to almost the last man on Pacific islands, committing mass suicide on Saipan, and unleashing kamikaze attacks at Okinawa. Firebombing has killed 100,000 in Tokyo with no discernible effect. Only the atomic bomb, the reasoning went, could jolt Japan's leadership to surrender

**B.** Supporters of the bombings argued the Japanese government had promulgated a National Mobilization Law and waged total war, ordering many civilians (including women and children) to work in factories and military offices and to fight against any invading force.

**C.** Supporters of the bombings have emphasized the strategic significance of the targets. Hiroshima was used as the headquarters of the Fifth Division and the 2nd General Army, which commanded the defense of southern Japan with 40,000 military personnel in the city. Hiroshima was a communication center, an assembly area for troops, a storage point, and several military factories as well. Nagasaki was of great wartime importance because of its wide-ranging industrial activity, including the production of ordnance, ships, military equipment, and other war materials

**D.** Pursuing an expectation of "unconditional surrender" was necessary:

(1) The demand for unconditional surrender had been asserted by Roosevelt and had become a national rallying cry. Truman could not lightly abandon it, nor is there any reason to think he wanted to. Both he and Roosevelt had clear memories of World War I and how its unsatisfactory conclusion had helped bring on World War II.

(2) At a conference on 8th June 1945, in the presence of the emperor, the Japanese government formally affirmed its policy: "The nation would fight to the bitter end." (3) Japan's chief of the army general staff expressed his confidence in the military's "ability to deal a smashing blow to the enemy," and "it would be inexcusable to surrender unconditionally."

**E.** Intercepted military messages revealed that the Japanese had about 10,000 planes, half of them kamikazes, to defend the home islands. In addition, they counted on flying bombs, human torpedoes, suicide-attack boats, and navy swimmers to be used as human mines. All of these 'had been used at Okinawa and the Philippines with lethal results,' and the intercepts showed that they were now being placed on Kyushu.

**F.** In preparation for a meeting with President Truman scheduled for June 1945, the army's Chief of Staff, General George Marshall, asked General Douglas MacArthur for a figure of American casualties in the projected invasion of Kyushu, Marshall was shocked by MacArthur's reply: 105,050 battle casualties in the first 90 days alone, and another 12,600 casualties among American noncombatants. Marshall called their figures unacceptably high.

**G.** With only two bombs ready (and a third on the way by late-August 1945; others were a month away) it was too risky to "waste" one in a demonstration over an unpopulated area.

**H.** Absent use of the bombs, the US was planning a land invasion of Japan. Causality estimates for US forces alone number nearly a million soldiers. Military and civilian estimates may have exceeded the bombings' deaths for the Japanese alone.

**I.** Years postwar, Truman described a meeting in the last week of July at which Marshall suggested the invasion would cost "at a minimum one-quarter-of-a-million casualties and might cost as much as a million, on the American side alone, with an equal number of the enemy. The other military and naval men agreed."

**J.** The two cities would have been firebombed anyway.

**K.** On several occasions, Truman made abundantly clear that the main reason he went to Potsdam to meet Stalin was to make sure the Soviets would enter the war. "If the test [dropping the bombs] should fail, then it would be even more important to us to bring about a surrender before we had to make physical conquest of Japan."

**L.** Men like Truman, Stimson, and Marshall were deeply worried over the scale of American casualties – whatever their precise number – that were certain to be incurred by an invasion. The President could not face another Okinawa, much less something greater. That is the foundation of understanding why he and his associates were prepared to use the bomb.

**M.** Even after the atomic bomb had exploded at Hiroshima on August 6, the Japanese refused to yield. The Minister of War, General Korechika Anami, went so far as to deny that Hiroshima had been struck by an atomic bomb. Others insisted that the US had used its only bomb there, or that world opinion would prevent the Americans from using any others they might have. It was the emperor who was decisive in causing Japan to surrender. He was moved by the bomb – and by the Soviet declaration of war.

However, statements by the emperor and the premier show clearly that they viewed the Soviet invasion as only another wartime setback. It was the bomb that changed the situation entirely.

**N.** The bomb's use impressed the Soviet Union and halted the war quickly enough that Russia did not demand joint occupation of postwar Japan.

**O.** Immediate use of the bombs convinced the world of its horror and prevented future use of these weapons of mass destruction when nuclear stockpiles were far larger.

**VIDEO**



This silent footage, in both color and black and white, shows the preparation of the “Little Boy” and “Fat Man” atomic bombs on Tinian Island. It includes the takeoff and return of the Enola Gay, which dropped “Little Boy” on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. The footage also depicts the mushroom cloud above Nagasaki. (Video at bottom of link page)

<https://ahf.nuclearmuseum.org/ahf/history/little-boy-and-fat-man/>

**DISCLAIMER**

PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT EVEN THOUGH THIS INFORMATION HAS BEEN TAKEN  
FROM WEBSITES/SOURCES THAT APPEAR TO BE AUTHENTIC, I CAN NOT ENSURE THAT ALL THE  
DATA IN THIS ARTICLE IS ACCURATE AND CORRECT