

Advice to Japanese kamikaze pilots during the second world war

Japanese kamikaze pilots were given manuals advising them to 'exert supernatural strength' - and keep their eyes open

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Kamikaze: extracts from a pilot's manual

The mission of to-go units

Transcend life and death. When you eliminate all thoughts about life and death, you will be able to totally disregard your earthly life.

This will also enable you to concentrate your attention on eradicating the enemy with unwavering determination, meanwhile reinforcing your excellence in flight skills.

Exert the best in yourself. Strike an enemy vessel that is either moored or at sea. Sink the enemy and thus pave the road for our people's victory.

Take a walk around the airfield

When you take this walk, be aware of your surroundings. This airstrip is the key to the success or failure of your mission. Devote all your attention to it.

Look at the terrain. What are the characteristics of the ground? What are the length and width of the airstrip? In case you are taking off from a road or a field, what is the correct direction of your flight? At what point do you consider taking off?

In case you will take off at dusk, or early morning, or after sundown, what are the obstacles to be remembered: an electric pole, a tree, a house, a hill?

Where to crash (the enemy's fatal spots)

When diving and crashing on to a ship, aim for a point between the bridge tower and the smoke stack(s).

Entering the stack is also effective.

Avoid hitting the bridge tower or a gun turret. In the case of an aircraft carrier, aim at the elevators. Or if that is difficult, hit the flight deck at the ship's stern. For a low-altitude horizontal attack, aim at the middle of the vessel, slightly higher than the waterline. If that is difficult, in the case of an aircraft carrier, aim at the entrance to the airplane hanger, or the bottom of the stack. For other vessels, aim close to the aft engine room.

Just before the crash

Your speed is at the maximum. The plane tends to lift. But you can prevent this by pushing the elevator control forward sufficiently to allow for the increase in speed. Do your best. Push forward with all your might. You have lived for 20 years or more. You must exert your full might for the last time in your life. Exert supernatural strength.

At the very moment of impact

Do your best. Every deity and the spirits of your dead comrades are watching you intently. Just before the collision it is essential that you do not shut your eyes for a moment so as not to miss the target. Many have crashed into the targets with wide-open eyes. They will tell you what fun they had.

You are now 30 metres from the target

You will sense that your speed has suddenly and abruptly increased. You feel that the speed has increased by a few thousandfold.

It is like a long shot in a movie suddenly turning into a close-up and the scene expands in your face.

The moment of the crash

You are two or three metres from the target. You can see clearly the muzzles of the enemy's guns. You feel that you are suddenly floating in the air. At that moment, you see your mother's face. She is not smiling or crying. It is her usual face.

Points to remember when making your last dive

Crashing bodily into a target is not easy. It causes the enemy great damage. Therefore the enemy will exert every means to avoid a hit.

Suddenly you may become confused. But hold on to the unshakeable conviction to the last moment that you will sink the enemy ship.

Remember when diving into the enemy to shout at the top of your lungs: "*Hissatsu!*" ["Sink without fail!"] At that moment, all the cherry blossoms at Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo will smile brightly at you.

From Kamikaze: Japan's Suicide Gods by Albert Axell and Hideaki Kase (Longman)

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