

= Attack on Yokosuka =

The attack on Yokosuka was an air raid conducted by the United States Navy on 18 July 1945 during the last weeks of the Pacific War . The Japanese battleship Nagato was the raid 's main target , though anti @-@ aircraft positions and other warships at Yokosuka Naval Arsenal were also attacked . Other U.S. Navy and British Royal Navy aircraft struck airfields in the Tokyo area .

While Nagato was only lightly damaged , the American aircraft sank a destroyer , a submarine and two escort vessels and damaged five small vessels . The Allied pilots also claimed the destruction of several locomotives and 43 Japanese aircraft as well as damage to another 77 aircraft . Japanese anti @-@ aircraft guns shot down twelve American and two British aircraft .

= = Background = =

During July 1945 the U.S Third Fleet , which was led by Admiral William Halsey , conducted a series of air raids and naval bombardments against targets in Japan . These attacks were made by the Third Fleet 's striking force , Task Force 38 ( TF 38 ) , which was commanded by Vice Admiral John S. McCain and included nine fleet carriers , six light carriers and their escorts . Almost one thousand aircraft were embarked on board these carriers . On 10 July TF 38 's aircraft struck airfields around Tokyo and claimed to have destroyed 340 Japanese aircraft on the ground and two in the air . No Japanese aircraft responded to this attack as they were being held in reserve to mount large @-@ scale suicide attacks on the Allied fleet during the expected invasion of the country later in 1945 . Following this raid , the Third Fleet conducted raids on Hokkaido and northern Honshu on 14 and 15 July which sank large numbers of ships and destroyed 25 aircraft on the ground . The American warships then sailed south and on 16 July were joined by the British Pacific Fleet 's ( BPF 's ) main striking force , which was designated Task Force 37 ( TF 37 ) , and comprised three aircraft carriers and their escorts .

By July 1945 the Imperial Japanese Navy 's ( IJN 's ) remaining large warships were unable to put to sea due to shortages of fuel and the dangers of attack from Allied aircraft and submarines . While most of these warships were anchored near the major naval base at Kure and other locations in the Seto Inland Sea , Nagato and several smaller warships were stationed at Yokosuka Naval Arsenal in Tokyo Bay . At this time the battleship was moored alongside a pier facing northwest and covered in camouflage that was intended to make her difficult for aircraft to spot . All of Nagato 's secondary armament and about half her anti @-@ aircraft guns had been removed and emplaced on nearby hills from where they could provide protection to the naval base . Although the battleship 's boilers were not lit , she received steam and power from the submarine chaser Fukugawa Maru No. 7 and an auxiliary boiler located on the pier . The destroyer Ushio was also docked nearby in a position where she was able to protect the battleship with her 25 mm anti @-@ aircraft guns .

Nagato 's presence at Yokosuka was revealed to the Allies by photographs taken during the 10 July raid on the Tokyo area . On 16 July Halsey and Vice Admiral Bernard Rawlings , the commander of TF 37 , met to plan raids on the Tokyo area . Halsey was determined to sink the remnants of the IJN , and placed a particularly strong emphasis on attacking Nagato as she had been Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto 's flagship during the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 . Due to the battleship 's position within a well defended harbor , the Third Fleet 's planners assessed that aircraft which attempted the straight and level flight needed to launch torpedoes against her would suffer heavy losses , and so decided to use dive bombing tactics instead . As the landward side of the naval base was mountainous , the approaches which could be used by dive bombers were limited .

= = Attack = =

On 17 July the American and British fleet attempted to strike the Yokosuka Naval Arsenal and other targets in the Tokyo area . While two waves of aircraft were dispatched , the attack was frustrated by heavy cloud over the region and further attacks were canceled . The aircraft which reached the Tokyo area struck airfields north of the city and caused little damage . While the naval base was not

attacked , it was overflown by an American fighter and its defenders were readied to respond to attacks . On the night of 17 ? 18 July American and British warships bombarded the city of Hitachi .

The next day , the Allied fleet sailed south looking for weather which was better suited to conducting flight operations . Conditions improved during the morning , and at 11 : 30 am the day 's air strikes began to launch . The British aircraft of TF 37 were dispatched against airfields in the Tokyo area . The size of this attack was considerably reduced from what was planned , however , as the fuel system on board HMS Victorious had become contaminated with water and the carrier could only launch six Vought F4U Corsair fighters . TF 38 's main effort was directed against Yokosuka Naval Arsenal , with Nagato being designated the raid 's primary target . A smaller number of American aircraft were also dispatched to raid Japanese air fields .

The attack on Yokosuka began at about 3 : 30 pm on 18 July . The first wave of American aircraft attacked the anti @-@ aircraft batteries around the naval base , and succeeded in neutralizing them . Following this , the aircraft of VF @-@ 88 attacked Nagato with bombs . A 500 pound general @-@ purpose bomb struck the battleship 's bridge , killing her commanding officer , Rear Admiral Otsuka Miki as well as the executive officer and at least nine other men . Another 500 pound bomb later struck Nagato and detonated near her officer 's mess , killing about 22 sailors and knocking out four 25 mm guns . The only other direct hit on the ship was made by a 5 @-@ inch ( 130 mm ) shell or rocket which did not explode . In addition , 60 bombs landed in the harbor near Nagato , causing breaches to her double hull which let 2 @,@ 000 tons of water into the ship . By the time the attack concluded at 4 : 10 pm , 35 of the battleship 's 967 officers and men had been killed . The overall damage to the ship was later assessed as being light .

American aircraft also attacked several other ships docked at Yokosuka . The unfinished Matsu class destroyer Yaezakura broke in two and sank after being bombed , and the submarine I @-@ 372 was destroyed by another bomb ; at the time the submarine 's crew was ashore and did not suffer any fatalities . Two escort vessels and a torpedo boat were also sunk . In addition to these losses , five other ships , including the obsolete destroyer Yakaze and training ships Fuji and Kasuga were damaged . Despite their proximity to Nagato , Fukugawa Maru No. 7 and Ushio were not damaged . The British and United States aircraft dispatched against airfields claimed to have destroyed 43 Japanese aircraft and damaged another 77 . The pilots of these aircraft also claimed the destruction of several railway locomotives . Allied losses in the attacks made on 18 July were 12 U.S. Navy aircraft , two Royal Navy aircraft and 18 aircrew . The Allied pilots were disappointed they had not sunk Nagato , despite the battleship being the primary target of the raid .

= = Aftermath = =

Following its attacks on the Tokyo Bay area on 18 July , the Allied fleet sailed away from Japan to be refueled . Its next attacks were made against the main body of the IJN in Kure and the Inland Sea on 24 , 25 and 28 July . These raids sank three battleships , an aircraft carrier and several other warships but cost the Allies 133 aircraft and 102 aircrew killed . The Third Fleet and elements of the BPF continued strikes against targets in Japan until the end of the war on 15 August 1945 .

After the attack on Yokosuka , the Nagato 's crew removed all casualties from the ship and conducted limited repairs . Some of the ship 's ballast tanks were also flooded to give the impression that she had been sunk . During the early hours of 2 August Nagato was ordered to put to sea to intercept an Allied force . However , this sortie was canceled before she had completed preparations to leave port as the report of Allied ships was determined to be false . On 30 August the ship was surrendered to the U.S. Navy . She was one of the target ships for the two atomic bomb tests conducted at Bikini Atoll on 1 and 28 July 1946 during Operation Crossroads , and sank there during the night of 29 ? 30 July .