

= Operation Ten @-@ Go =

Operation Ten @-@ Go (???? (Ky?jitai) or ja : ???? (Shinjitai) , Ten @-@ g? Sakusen) was a Japanese naval operation plan in 1945 , consisting of four likely scenarios . Its first scenario , Operation Heaven One (or Ten @-@ ichi @-@ g????) became the last major Japanese naval operation in the Pacific Theater of World War II . The resulting engagement is also known as the Battle of the East China Sea .

In April 1945 , the Japanese battleship Yamato (the heaviest battleship in the world) , along with nine other Japanese warships , embarked from Japan on a deliberate suicide attack upon Allied forces engaged in the Battle of Okinawa . The Japanese force was attacked , stopped , and almost destroyed by United States carrier @-@ borne aircraft before reaching Okinawa . Yamato and five other Japanese warships were sunk .

The battle demonstrated U.S. air supremacy in the Pacific theater by this stage in the war and the vulnerability of surface ships without air cover to aerial attack . The battle also exhibited Japan 's willingness to sacrifice entire ships , even the pride of its fleet , in desperate kamikaze attacks aimed at slowing the Allied advance on the Japanese home islands . This extremism reportedly contributed to the US decision to employ nuclear weapons against the Japanese .

= = Background = =

By early 1945 , following the Solomon Islands campaign , the Battle of the Philippine Sea and the Battle of Leyte Gulf , the once formidable Imperial Japanese Navy 's Combined Fleet was reduced to just a handful of operational warships and a few remaining aircraft and aircrew . Most of the remaining Japanese warships in the Combined Fleet were stationed at ports in Japan , with most of the large ships at Kure , Hiroshima .

As a final step before the planned invasion of the Japanese home islands , Allied forces invaded Okinawa on 1 April 1945 . In March , in briefing Emperor Hirohito on Japan 's response to the expected Okinawan invasion , Japanese military leaders explained that the Japanese Imperial Army was planning extensive air attacks , including the use of kamikaze . The emperor then reportedly asked , " But what about the Navy ? What are they doing to assist in defending Okinawa ? Have we no more ships ? " Now feeling pressured by the emperor to also mount some kind of attack , Japan 's Navy commanders conceived a kamikaze @-@ type mission for their remaining operational large ships , which included the battleship Yamato .

The resulting plan ? drafted under the direction of the Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet , Admiral Toyoda Soemu ? called for Yamato and her escorts to attack the U.S. fleet supporting the U.S. troops landing on the west of the island . Yamato and her escorts were to fight their way to Okinawa and then beach themselves between Higashi and Yomitan and fight as shore batteries until they were destroyed . Once destroyed , the ship 's surviving crewmembers were supposed to abandon the ships and fight U.S. forces on land . Very little , if any , air cover could be provided for the ships , which would render them almost helpless to concentrated attacks from US carrier @-@ based aircraft . In preparation for executing the plan , the assigned ships left Kure for Tokuyama , Yamaguchi , off Mitajiri , Japan , on 29 March . However , despite obeying orders to prepare for the mission , Vice @-@ Admiral Seiichi It? ? commander of the Ten @-@ Go force ? still refused to actually order his ships to carry it out , believing the plan to be futile and wasteful .

Other commanders of the Imperial Japanese Navy also had very negative feelings about the operation , believing that it was a waste of human life and fuel . Captain Atsushi ?i ? who commanded escort fleets ? was critical as fuel and resources were diverted from his operation . As he was told that the aim of this operation was " the tradition and the glory of Navy , " he shouted :

This war is of our nation and why should the honor of our " surface fleet " be more respected ? Who cares about their glory ? Damn fools !

(" Surface fleet " refers to capital ships , especially battleships that " should have won the war " .)

Vice Admiral Ryunosuke Kusaka flew from Tokyo on 5 April to Tokuyama in a final attempt to convince the assembled commanders of the Combined Fleet ? including Admiral It? ? to accept the

plan . Upon first hearing of the proposed operation (it had been kept secret from most of them) , the Combined Fleet commanders and captains unanimously joined Admiral Ito in rejecting it for the same reasons that he had expressed . Admiral Kusaka then explained that the Navy 's attack would help divert U.S. aircraft away from the Army 's planned kamikaze attacks on the U.S. fleet at Okinawa . He also explained that Japan 's national leadership , including the emperor , were expecting the Navy to make their best effort to support the defense of Okinawa .

Upon hearing this , the Combined Fleet commanders relented and accepted the proposed plan . The ship 's crews were briefed on the nature of the mission and given the opportunity to stay behind if desired ? none did . However , approximately 80 crew members who were new , sick , or infirm , were ordered off the ships . The ships ' crews now engaged in some last @-@ minute intense drills to prepare for the mission , mostly practicing damage @-@ control procedures . At midnight , the ships were fueled . Reportedly , in secret defiance of orders to provide the ships with only just enough fuel to reach Okinawa , the Tokuyama personnel actually gave Yamato and the other ships almost all of the remaining fuel in the port , although this probably still was not enough to allow the force to return to Japan from Okinawa .

= = Battle = =

At 16 : 00 on 6 April , Yamato , with Admiral Ito on board , the light cruiser Yahagi and eight destroyers departed Tokuyama to begin the mission . Two submarines ? USS Threadfin and Hackleback ? sighted the Japanese force as it proceeded south through Bungo Suido . Although they were unable to attack (due to the ships ' speed) , they did spend several hours shadowing the Japanese sortie and sending updates of its course to the U.S. fleet . The submarines ' messages , which were reportedly sent uncoded , were also picked up by radio operators on the Japanese ships .

At dawn on 7 April , the Japanese force passed the ?sumi Peninsula into the open ocean heading south from Ky?sh? toward Okinawa . They shifted into a defensive formation , with Yahagi leading Yamato and the eight destroyers deployed in a ring around the two larger ships , with each ship 1 @, @ 500 m (1 @, @ 600 yd) from each other and proceeding at 20 kn (23 mph ; 37 km / h) . One of the Japanese destroyers ? Asashimo ? developed engine trouble and turned back . U.S. reconnaissance aircraft began to shadow the main force of ships . At 10 : 00 , the Japanese force turned west to make it look like they were withdrawing , but at 11 : 30 , after being detected by two American PBM Mariner flying boats (the Yamato fired a salvo with her 460 mm (18 @. @ 1 in) bow guns using special " beehive shells " (????? (san @-@ shiki sh?san dan) but could not prevent the two planes from shadowing the Japanese force) , they turned back towards Okinawa .

Upon receiving contact reports early on 7 April , U.S. 5th Fleet commander Admiral Raymond Spruance ordered Task Force 54 , which consisted mostly of modernized Standard battleships under the command of Admiral Morton Deyo (which were engaged in shore bombardment) , to intercept and destroy the Japanese sortie . Deyo moved to execute his orders , but Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher , who commanded Task Force 58 (TF 58) , preempted Spruance and Deyo by launching a massive air strike from his carriers , without informing Spruance until after the launches were completed .

Around 10 : 00 on 7 April , Task Groups 58 @. @ 1 and 58 @. @ 3 (TG 58 @. @ 1 and 58 @. @ 3) began launching almost 400 aircraft in several waves from eight carriers (TG 58 @. @ 1 : USS Hornet , Bennington , Belleau Wood , San Jacinto ; TG 58 @. @ 3 USS Essex , Bunker Hill , Hancock and Bataan) that were located just east of Okinawa . The aircraft consisted of F6F Hellcat and F4U Corsair fighters , SB2C Helldiver dive bombers , and TBF Avenger torpedo bombers . After being informed of Mitscher 's launches , Spruance agreed that the airstrikes could go ahead as planned . As a contingency , Spruance ordered Admiral Deyo to assemble a force of six battleships (USS Massachusetts , Indiana , New Jersey , South Dakota , Wisconsin , and Missouri) , together with seven cruisers (including the battlecruisers USS Alaska and Guam) and 21 destroyers , and to prepare for a surface engagement with Yamato should the airstrikes prove unsuccessful .

Around 12 : 00 , the first American aircraft arrived over Yamato ; these were F6F Hellcat and F4U

Corsair fighters , which were under orders to deal with any Japanese aircraft that might appear to defend the ships below . None did .

Since it soon became obvious that the Japanese force had no air cover , the U.S. aircraft were able to set up for their attacks without fear of opposition from Japanese aircraft . U.S. bomber and torpedo aircraft arriving over the Yamato group ? after their two @-@ hour flight from Okinawa ? were thus able to circle the Japanese ship formation just out of anti @-@ aircraft range in order to methodically set up their attacks on the warships below . The first wave of U.S. carrier planes were spotted by a Japanese lookout on the bridge at 12 : 32 . Two minutes later , Yamato opened fire with her 460 mm main batteries . The Japanese ships stopped zigzagging and increased speed to 24 kn (28 mph ; 44 km / h) , beginning evasive maneuvers , and opened fire with their anti @-@ aircraft guns . Yamato carried almost 150 anti @-@ aircraft guns , including her massive 460 mm guns which could fire special " Common Type 3 " anti @-@ aircraft shells , known to the Japanese as " Sanshiki " . The U.S. torpedo airplanes mainly attacked from the port side so that if the torpedoes mainly hit from that side , it would increase the likelihood of the target ship capsizing .

At 12 : 46 , a torpedo hit Yahagi directly in her engine room , killing the entire engineering room crew and bringing her to a complete stop . Yahagi was hit by at least six more torpedoes and 12 bombs by succeeding waves of air attacks . The Japanese destroyer Isokaze attempted to come to Yahagi 's aid but was attacked and heavily damaged , and sank sometime later . Yahagi capsized and sank at 14 : 05 .

During the first attack wave , despite intensive evasive maneuvers that caused most of the bombs and torpedoes aimed at her to miss , Yamato was hit by two armor @-@ piercing bombs and one torpedo . Her speed was not affected , but one of the bombs started a fire aft of the superstructure that was not extinguished . Also , during the first attack wave , Japanese destroyers Hamakaze and Suzutsuki were heavily damaged and taken out of the battle . Hamakaze sank later .

At 13 : 00 exact , Yamato changed course to 180 degrees heading south .

Between 13 : 20 and 14 : 15 , the second and third waves of U.S. aircraft attacked , heavily concentrating on Yamato . During this time , Yamato was hit by at least eight torpedoes and up to 15 bombs . The bombs did extensive damage to the topside of the ship , including knocking out power to the gun directors and forcing the anti @-@ aircraft guns to be individually and manually aimed and fired , greatly reducing their effectiveness . The torpedo hits ? almost all on the port side ? caused Yamato to list enough that capsizing was now an imminent danger . The water damage @-@ control station had been destroyed by a bomb hit making it impossible to counter @-@ flood the specially designed spaces within the ship 's hull to counteract hull damage . At 13 : 33 , in a desperate attempt to keep the ship from capsizing , Yamato 's damage control team counter @-@ flooded both starboard engine and boiler rooms . This mitigated the danger but also drowned the several hundred crewmen manning those stations , who were given no notice that their compartments were about to fill with water . The loss of the starboard engines ? plus the weight of the water ? caused Yamato to slow to about 10 kn (12 mph ; 19 km / h) . At that same moment , the Americans launched another 110 aircraft from Task Group 58 . Twenty Avengers made a new torpedo run from 60 degrees to port . Yamato started a sharp turn to port but three torpedoes ripped into her port side amidships , jamming her auxiliary rudder in position hard port .

With Yamato proceeding more slowly and therefore easier to target , U.S. torpedo aircraft concentrated on hitting her rudder and stern with torpedoes in order to affect her steering ability , which they succeeded in doing . At 14 : 02 , after being informed that the ship could no longer steer and was unavoidably sinking , Admiral Ito ordered the mission canceled , the crew to abandon ship , and for the remaining ships to begin rescuing survivors . Yamato communicated this message to the other surviving ships by signal flag because her radios had been destroyed .

At 14 : 05 , Yamato was stopped dead in the water and began to capsize . Admiral Ito and Captain Aruga refused to abandon her with the rest of the survivors . At 14 : 20 , Yamato capsized completely and began to sink (30 ° 22 ' N 128 ° 04 ' E) . At 14 : 23 , she suddenly blew up with an explosion so large that it was reportedly heard and seen 200 km (110 nmi ; 120 mi) away in Kagoshima and sent up a mushroom @-@ shaped cloud almost 20 @, @ 000 ft (6 @, @ 100 m) into the air . Japanese survivor Yoshida Mitsuru said that her large explosion downed several U.S.

planes observing her end . The explosion is believed to have occurred when the fires ignited by bomb hits reached the main magazines .

Attempting to make it back to port , Japanese destroyer Asashimo was bombed and sunk with all hands by U.S. aircraft . The Japanese destroyer Kasumi was also crippled by U.S. carrier aircraft attack during the battle and had to be scuttled by other , relatively undamaged Japanese destroyers . Suzutsuki ? despite her bow being blown off ? was able to make it to Sasebo , Japan , by steaming in reverse the entire way .

The remaining three less @-@ damaged Japanese destroyers (Fuyutsuki , Yukikaze , and Hatsushimo) were able to rescue 280 survivors from Yamato (sources differ on the size of Yamato 's crew , giving it as between 2 @,@ 750 and 3 @,@ 300 men) , plus 555 survivors from Yahagi (out of a crew of 1 @,@ 000) and just over 800 survivors from Isokaze , Hamakaze , and Kasumi . Between 3 @,@ 700 and 4 @,@ 250 Japanese naval personnel perished in the battle . The ships took the survivors to Sasebo .

A total of 10 U.S. aircraft were shot down by anti @-@ aircraft fire from the Japanese ships ; some of the aircrews were rescued by seaplane or submarine . In total , the U.S. lost 12 men . Some of the Japanese survivors reported that U.S. fighter aircraft machine @-@ gunned Japanese survivors floating in the water . Japanese survivors also reported that U.S. aircraft temporarily halted their attacks on the Japanese destroyers during the time that the destroyers were busy picking up survivors from the water .

During the battle , the Japanese Army conducted an air attack on the U.S. naval fleet at Okinawa as promised , but they failed to sink any ships . Around 115 aircraft ? many of them kamikaze ? attacked the U.S. ships throughout the day of 7 April . Kamikaze aircraft hit Hancock , battleship USS Maryland , and destroyer USS Bennett , causing moderate damage to Hancock and Maryland and heavy damage to Bennett . About 100 of the Japanese aircraft were lost in the attack .

= = Aftermath = =

Ten @-@ Go was the last major Japanese naval operation of the war , and the remaining Japanese warships had little involvement in combat operations for the rest of the conflict . Suzutsuki was never repaired . Fuyuzuki was repaired but hit a U.S. air @-@ dropped mine at Moji , Japan , on 20 August 1945 , and was not subsequently repaired . Yukikaze survived the war almost undamaged . Hatsushimo hit a U.S. air @-@ dropped mine on 30 July 1945 , near Maizuru , Japan , and was the 129th , and last , Japanese destroyer sunk in the war .

Maryland was kept out of the war following the kamikaze attacks .

Okinawa was declared secure by Allied forces on 21 June 1945 , after an intense and costly battle . Japan surrendered in August 1945 , after being bombed twice with atomic weapons . The apparent willingness of Japan to sacrifice so many of its people using suicidal tactics such as Operation Ten @-@ Go and in the Battle of Okinawa reportedly was a factor in the American decision to employ atomic weapons against Japan .

The story of Operation Ten @-@ Go is revered to some degree in modern Japan as evidenced by appearances of the story in popular Japanese culture which usually portray the event as a brave , selfless , but futile , symbolic effort by the participating Japanese sailors to defend their homeland . One of the reasons the event may have such significance in Japanese culture is that the word Yamato was often used as a poetic name for Japan . Thus , the end of battleship Yamato could serve as a metaphor for the end of the Japanese empire .