

## H-Gram 053: The End of the Imperial Japanese Navy and the Surrender of Japan

16 September 2020

*This H-gram covers the final U.S. carrier strikes against the remnants of the Imperial Japanese Fleet in July 1945; the series of U.S. battleship shore bombardments of the Japanese Home Islands; the aerial mining campaign against Japan (Operation Starvation); and the final surrender of Japan and ceremony aboard Missouri (BB-63). It also covers events of Operation Desert Shield during September 1990.*

### **75th Anniversary of World War II: The End of the Imperial Japanese Navy and Surrender of Japan**

*"Welcome to Atsugi from Third Fleet," read the banner that greeted General MacArthur's advance team when they landed in Japan on 28 August 1945. They'd been beaten by a pilot from carrier Yorktown (CV-10), who, against all orders (and common sense), had brazenly landed at Atsugi after the cease-fire, but before the official surrender, and ordered the Japanese to put up the sign. For probably obvious reasons, the pilot's name appears to be unknown to history.*



*General of the Army Douglas MacArthur signs the Instrument of Surrender, as Supreme Allied Commander, on board USS Missouri (BB-63), 2 September 1945. Behind him are Lieutenant General Jonathan M. Wainwright, U.S. Army, and Lieutenant General Sir Arthur E. Percival, British Army, both of whom had just been released from Japanese prison camps. Officers in the front row, from Percival on, are (left to right): Vice Admiral John S. McCain, USN; Vice Admiral John H. Towers, USN; Admiral Richmond K. Turner, USN; Admiral William F. Halsey, USN; Rear Admiral Robert B. Carney, USN; Rear Admiral Forrest Sherman, USN; General Walter C. Krueger, U.S. Army; General Robert L. Eichelberger, U.S. Army; General Carl A. Spaatz, USAAF and General George C. Kenney, USAAF (USA C-4627).*

*In my previous H-grams (051 and 052), I discussed the final U.S. Navy air strikes on Japan and the Navy's participation in the development and employment of the atomic bombs, so parts of this H-gram are out of sequence. These actions were nevertheless important to the outcome of the war.*

## **The End of the Imperial Japanese Navy, July 1945**

*By July 1945, what was left of the Japanese navy was starved for fuel and critical maintenance, and was no longer capable of offensive operations. It was barely capable of any defensive operations beyond being used as floating coastal defense batteries, and U.S. Navy commanders knew it. Nevertheless, Fleet Admiral Nimitz, who had smelled the stench of death and humiliation of defeat when he first arrived at Pearl Harbor in December 1941, wanted the Imperial Japanese Navy utterly destroyed and ordered the Third Fleet commander Admiral William F. Halsey to do it. Over the objection of his Fast Carrier Task Force (TF-38) commander, Vice Admiral John "Slew" McCain, and most of the carrier air group planners, Halsey ordered massive airstrikes against the heavily defended (by anti-aircraft guns) main Japanese naval base at Kure, on the Inland Sea. As it was too shallow for torpedoes, a previous strike on Kure on 19 March 1945 by Fifth Fleet (TF-58) using only bombs had damaged, but not sunk, most of the remaining Japanese ships in the harbor, at a cost of two U.S. aircraft carriers knocked out of action, one (Franklin, CV-13) for the duration of the war.*

*Nevertheless, McCain carried out his orders and, in two massive air strikes on 24 and 28 July, Task Force 38's 16 fleet carriers flew over 3,600 offensive sorties against Kure and other targets surrounding the Inland Sea. At a cost of 101 U.S. Navy aircraft and 88 men, TF-38 aircraft sank one of the two (non-operational) Japanese fleet carriers present (the second was blasted by a 2,000-pound bomb, but stubbornly remained afloat), and the one escort carrier. All three of the battleships, two heavy cruisers, and light cruiser present were sunk (despite all of them being extensively camouflaged and distributed about the harbor in hard-to-hit spots among steep hills), along with other ships sunk or badly damaged.*

*The destruction in the harbor was so complete that even two armored cruiser veterans of the 1905*

*Battle of Tsushima and one ancient pre-Dreadnaught battleship were sunk. One previously damaged, non-operational light carrier survived (her camouflage was so good she was not seen) and, somewhat miraculously, Japan's first aircraft carrier, Hosho, also survived. Due to the very shallow water, a number of ships that were sunk on the first day were attacked again and bombed deeper into the mud on the second day of strikes. These were among the very last of 334 warships and 300,000 Japanese sailors lost in the war; only a handful of mostly-damaged Imperial Japanese Navy ships remained afloat.*

## **Battleship Shore Bombardments, July/August 1945**

*Throughout the month of July and into August 1945, the carriers of Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet ranged up and down the east coast of the Japanese home islands, attacking targets essentially at will. One of the last such strikes, on 9-10 August, disrupted Operation Tsurugi, a Japanese navy plan for 60 Betty bombers with 600 navy and army commandos on board to fly a one-way mission against the U.S. B-29 bases in the Marianas.*

*With virtually no Japanese opposition (the Japanese were holding back about 12,000 mostly well-hidden aircraft to oppose the anticipated invasion), an emboldened Halsey ordered a series of audacious bombardments of key Japanese industrial installations ashore by Third Fleet battleships and other surface combatants, sometimes at night, sometimes in broad daylight. In the first such bombardment, on 15 July, three battleships and two heavy cruisers shelled a major iron and steel production facility at Kamaishi on northern Honshu. On the next day, three different battleships and two light cruisers blasted a major industrial facility at Muroroa, Hokkaido. In a night bombardment only 80 miles from Tokyo on 17-18 July, five U.S. battleships and one British battleship laid waste to electronics production facilities at Hitachi. The last bombardment hit Kamaishi again*

on 9 August, with the heavy cruiser Saint Paul (CA-73) firing the last salvo (Saint Paul also fired the last shot of the Korean War).

### **Operation Starvation: The Aerial Mining Campaign by B-29 Bombers: March-September 1945**

Although relatively unknown today, because neither the U.S. Navy nor U.S. Air Force had much interest in making a big deal of it, the aerial mining campaign by U.S. Army Air Forces B-29 Superfortress bombers (Operation Starvation) sank more Japanese ships (over 500) in the last six months of the war than all other causes combined, including U.S. submarines. Worse (from an Air Force perspective) the post-war Strategic Bombing Survey determined that the 5 percent of B-29 sorties that the Air Force reluctantly committed to the mining campaign actually caused more disruption to Japanese industrial war production than did the direct "precision" daylight raids on Japanese factories by choking off the flow of raw materials that the factories needed. Had the war not ended when it did, the mining campaign would soon have resulted in mass starvation in Japan, an alternative to the atomic bombs (but not necessarily more humane) toward ending the war.

Pushed by Admiral Nimitz over the Army Air Forces' institutional lack of interest, the proposed mining campaign was finally enthusiastically endorsed by the new commander of the XXI Bomber Command, Major General Curtis LeMay, who sought and received a much greater commitment to the mission than the Air Forces had initially agreed. Between 27 March and the end of the war, the 160 B-29s of the 313th Bomb Wing laid 12,135 sophisticated bottom influence mines in 26 different fields during 46 missions. During 1,529 sorties, 15 B-29s and 103 airmen were lost, but over 670 Japanese ships were sunk or severely damaged. In terms of cost of the platforms and cost in lives, the strategic aerial mining campaign was the most cost-effective ship-killing operation of the war.

For more on the Kure strikes, shore bombardments and Operation Starvation, please see attachment H-053-1.



At the Kure naval base: "The Emperor's Cruiser Aoba," watercolor on paper, Standish Backus, 1945 (88-186-AD).

### **The Japanese Decision to Surrender, August 1945**

Both the Japanese army and navy had independent atomic weapons programs, and their leaders understood full well the extreme difficulty in trying to develop an atomic bomb. The reaction of Admiral Toyoda, chief of the Navy General Staff, when informed of the Hiroshima explosion, could be summed up as, "If it really was an atomic bomb, the United States can't have very many of them, and most Japanese cities have already been laid waste by B-29 firebombing raids, anyway." Toyoda was one of six members of the key decision-making body for the government of Japan, the Supreme Council for the Direction of the War, which consistently remained deadlocked between hardliners who wanted to "fight until extinction" and those who wanted to negotiate a response (that protected the emperor's position) to the Allies' Potsdam Declaration. This called on Japan to accept either "unconditional surrender" or "prompt and utter destruction." It took the profound combined shock events of the Soviet entry into the war and the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki (both on 9 August), a highly effective

leaflet-dropping operation, and ultimately the emperor's personal decision to accept the Allied terms to bring about the first surrender of Japan to a foreign power in history. Even then, the emperor's decision was nearly thwarted by a coup attempt that came dangerously close to succeeding.

### **The Japanese Surrender: August/September 1945**

Fleet Admiral Nimitz' directive of 15 August stated, "With the termination of hostilities against Japan, it is incumbent on all officers to conduct themselves with dignity and decorum in the treatment of the Japanese.... The use of insulting epithets in connection with the Japanese as a race or as individuals does not now become the officers of the United States Navy." With that, Nimitz set in motion a process of magnanimity in victory that would, in astonishingly short order, transform Japan from a bitter foe into a great friend and ally of the United States.

Indeed, although the mighty array of over 250 warships in Tokyo Bay and the low-altitude fly-over by 450 Navy carrier aircraft and hundreds of B-29s was meant to leave no doubt in Japanese minds as to who the victor was, the entire surrender proceedings aboard the battleship Missouri were conducted with the dignity and decorum that Nimitz expected, and which astonished the defeated Japanese, who expected to be treated as they had treated those they had conquered.

Appointed by President Truman as the Supreme Commander Allied Powers (SCAP) in Japan, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur stated in his opening remarks, "It is my earnest hope, and indeed the hope of all mankind, that from this solemn occasion a better world shall emerge out of the blood and carnage of the past—a world founded on faith and understanding, a world dedicated to the dignity of man and the fulfillment of his most cherished wish for freedom, tolerance, and justice." The terrible war ended, and the world was changed.

During World War II, 36,950 U.S. Navy personnel were lost due to enemy action.

For more on the surrender of Japan, please see attachment H-053-2.



USS Indiana (BB-58) fires a salvo from her forward 16-inch/45-caliber guns at the Kamaishi plant of the Japan Iron Company, 250 miles north of Tokyo. A second before, USS South Dakota (BB-57), from which this photograph was taken, fired the initial salvo of the first naval gunfire bombardment of the Japanese Home Islands. The superstructure of USS Massachusetts (BB-59) is visible directly behind Indiana. The heavy cruiser in the left center distance is either USS Quincy (CA-71) or USS Chicago (CA-136) (80-G-K-6035).

### **30th Anniversary of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, September 1990**

The guided missile frigate Reid (FFG-30) fired the first shot of Desert Shield/Desert Storm on 18 August 1990 and, later the same day, it was followed by USS Robert G. Bradley (FFG-49). In separate incidents, both ships fired across the bows of Iraqi tankers leaving the Arabian Gulf, the first attempted enforcement actions of United Nations Security Council Resolution 661 (passed 16 August), which declared an embargo on Iraqi oil (and stolen Kuwaiti oil) from leaving Iraq and prohibited goods from entering. The tankers called our bluff and kept going as the actual use of force to enforce the embargo was not authorized by the UNSC until 26 August. Nevertheless, also on 18 August, England (CG-22) and Scott (DDG-995) diverted ships in the Red Sea and North Arabian Gulf, the first diversions of Operation Desert Shield. By the beginning of September, U.S. Navy enforcement of the UN sanctions was

*well underway, averaging 40 intercepts and four boardings per day—1,000 intercepts by 16 September.*

*On 19 August, the Commander of the U.S. Seventh Fleet, Vice Admiral Henry H. Mauz, was designated as the Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (COMUSNAVCENT) after flying in to Bahrain. By the time the SEVENTHFLT/NAVCENT flagship, Blue Ridge (LCC-19), arrived in Bahrain on 1 September, three U.S. aircraft carriers and a battleship were already on station in the Central Command area of operations (AOR), ready to counter any further Iraqi aggression. Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August, the carrier Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69) transited the Suez on 7 August, the same day that Independence (CV-62) arrived in the Gulf of Oman (U.S. Air Force F-16s first arrived in Saudi Arabia on 10 August). Battleship Wisconsin (BB-64) transited the Suez on 17 August and entered into the Arabian Gulf on 24 August. Saratoga (CV-60) came through the Suez on 22 August. A fourth carrier, John F. Kennedy (CV-67), arrived in the Red Sea on 14 September.*

*The first fast sealift ships arrived on 27 August. As there were no established U.S. bases in Saudi Arabia, without sealift the Air Force and Army would have run out of bombs and ammunition in short order had the war commenced at that point. The hospital ship Comfort (T-AH-20) arrived 7 September and Mercy (T-AH-19) by 23 September. Between 4 and 11 September, 20 Atlantic and Pacific Fleet amphibious ships arrived in the CENTCOM AOR and, by 16 September, all were in the Gulf of Oman, carrying the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB), the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), and 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment.*

*On 31 August, Biddle (CG-34) conducted the first boarding under UNSCR 661; the empty ship was allowed to proceed into Aqaba, Jordan. On 4 September, Goldsborough (DDG-20) intercepted and boarded the Iraqi cargo ship Zanoobia, which*

*was found to be carrying prohibited cargo and was diverted, the first diversion of an Iraqi-flag ship. On 27 September, Elmer Montgomery (FF-1082) had to fire warning shots to get the Iraqi tanker Tadmur to stop for boarding.*

*For more on the initiation of Operation Desert Shield, please see attachment H-052-3.*



*USS Blue Ridge (LCC-1), U.S. Seventh Fleet flagship, underway in the Pacific, 1990 (NH 107691).*

*As always, you are welcome to forward H-grams to spread these stories of U.S. Navy valor and sacrifice. Prior issues of H-grams, enhanced with photos, can be found here ... plus lots of other cool stuff on Naval History and Heritage Command's website. I had hoped to get this H-gram done before the 2 September anniversary of the surrender of Japan, but, oh well ...*



"Ise was Hyuga's Sister," watercolor on paper, Standish Backus, 1946. Wreck of the Japanese battleship-carrier Ise, Kure, Japan (88-186-AL).

## H-053-1: The End of the Imperial Japanese Navy

*H-Gram 053, Attachment 1*  
Samuel J. Cox, Director NHHC  
September 2020

### ***Air Raid on Yokosuka, 18 July 1945***

By July 1945, what was left of the Imperial Japanese Navy was immobilized in Japanese ports due to lack of fuel and critical maintenance. Japanese ships contributed to the anti-aircraft

defenses of several major bases, several of which, especially the main naval base at Kure, were already heavily defended by shore-based anti-aircraft weapons, making air attacks on the bases a formidable prospect. Although some argued that attacking the ships was unnecessary as the Japanese navy was a spent force, Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz wanted them destroyed, and Admiral William Halsey carried out his orders.

Following strikes by Task Force 38 carrier aircraft in the Tokyo area on 10 July, photo-reconnaissance analysis revealed Japanese battleship *Nagato* deep in a cove at Yokosuka. *Nagato* was the flagship of the commander-in-chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, at the time of

the attack on Pearl Harbor. (There is a meticulously accurate full-scale replica of *Nagato* in the opening scene of the 1970 Pearl Harbor movie *Tora! Tora! Tora!* The super-battleship *Yamato* was commissioned on 16 December 1941 and Yamamoto shifted his flag to her in February 1942.) By the spring of 1945, *Nagato* had been relegated to a floating coastal defense battery to defend against landings in Sagami Wan and Tokyo Bay. Most of her anti-aircraft weapons were removed and placed on high hills around the ship. Her secondary battery was also removed and dispersed to be used in an anti-landing role at Yokosuka. Moreover, she was anchored in water that was too shallow for torpedoes. In addition, she was heavily camouflaged with netting to include potted pine trees and other plants.

Commencing about 1540 on 18 July, about 100 SB2C Helldiver dive-bombers from carriers *Essex* (CV-9), *Yorktown* (CV-10), *Randolph* (CV-15) and *Shangri-La* (CV-38) attacked the NAGATO, followed by F6F Hellcats from *Belleau Wood* (CVL-24). In order to maximize underwater hull damage, the dive-bombers had orders to aim for near misses. The raid was originally scheduled for 0400, but was delayed due to bad weather. Three waves of 592 aircraft struck Yokosuka and other targets toward Tokyo, led by 62 TBM Avengers, each armed with four 500-pound bombs, which attacked the 154 heavy anti-aircraft guns and 225 machine guns around Yokosuka harbor.

At 1540, 60 Helldivers dove on *Nagato*, led by planes from *Yorktown* and *Randolph*. At 1552, *Nagato* took a direct hit by a 500-pound bomb, which killed her commanding officer, Rear Admiral Miki Otsuka, along with the executive officer, the radar officer, and 12 other sailors. An ensign briefly assumed command until a severely burned commander (the main battery gunnery officer) took charge. Shortly afterward, another bomb hit the aft shelter deck and exploded at the base of the No. 3 16-inch gun turret, killing about 25 men and destroying four 25-mm anti-aircraft

gun mounts. Later, a 5-inch rocket hit the fantail (some accounts say it was an 11.75-inch "Tiny Tim" rocket). It was a dud and passed out the starboard side. The converted minesweeper *Harashima Maru* was alongside *Nagato* and was blown in two. Despite the intensity of the attack with 270 tons of bombs, *Nagato* remained afloat. She would finally capsize and sink on 29 July 1946 only after being severely damaged by the second atomic bomb test at Bikini Atoll on 24 July (the first test on 1 July only caused moderate damage).

The attack on Yokosuka ended at about 1610. The old (a 1905 Battle of Tsushima veteran) armored cruiser *Kasuga*, the incomplete small destroyer *Yaezakura*, and submarine *I-372* were sunk. The pre-dreadnaught battleship *Fuji* (also a Tsushima veteran, used as a training vessel) and the obsolete destroyer *Yakaze* (used as a target-control vessel) were damaged. U.S. losses in the attack were 14 aircraft and 18 aircrewmen, most lost in the intense anti-aircraft fire at Yokosuka. Although the results of the raid were a disappointment, what was not known at the time was that the bomb that destroyed *Nagato's* bridge hit the spot where Admiral Yamamoto had given the order to attack Pearl Harbor.



*Japanese battleship Nagato, moored off the Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, 9 September 1945 (80-G-374671).*

## ***Raids on Kure and the Inland Sea, 24-28 July 1945***

The Fast Carrier Task Force (TF 38) and other elements of the Third Fleet had been operating continuously at sea since early July, conducting multiple strikes on the Japanese home islands (some of these are covered in H-Gram 051), interspersed with massive replenishment-at-sea operations, and dodging several typhoons. On 21-22 July, Third Fleet conducted what is probably the largest single replenishment-at-sea operation in history. Over 100 ships received 6,369 tons of ammunition, 379,157 barrels of fuel oil, 1,635 tons of stores and provisions, 99 replacement aircraft, and 412 replacement personnel from the oilers, ammunition ships, stores ships, and escort carriers of Task Group 30.8, commanded by Rear Admiral Donald B. Beary, an unsung hero of World War II (he received two Legion of Merits for executing the extraordinary logistics effort for the Third and Fifth Fleets from October 1944 to the end of the war).

The commander of the Third Fleet, Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr., received orders from Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz to destroy the remnants of the Imperial Japanese Navy, most of which were at the heavily defended naval base at Kure, on Japan's Inland Sea (the body of water between Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu that had served as a sanctuary from U.S. submarine attacks). The commander of TF-38, Vice Admiral John "Slew" McCain, Sr., argued against the mission, and most of his staff strongly opposed it. Kure had been hit previously on 19 March during Fifth Fleet Commander Admiral Raymond Spruance's third series of attacks on the Japanese home islands. About 240 aircraft from Vice Admiral Marc "Pete" Mitscher's Task Force 58 carriers attacked Japanese ships in Kure, while others attacked targets around the Inland Sea. Although most of the Japanese ships in Kure on that day had been hit, none had been sunk, and 11 F6F Hellcat fighters and two TBM Avenger torpedo bombers had been lost in the heavy flak. Worse, the relatively small Japanese air counter-attack had

inflicted grievous damage to carrier *Franklin* (CV-13) and severe damage to *Wasp* (CV-18). *Wasp* only returned to the fight on 25 July 1945 and *Franklin* never would. The 19th of March had cost almost 1,000 U.S. sailors and airmen their lives (see H-Gram 043). Nevertheless, Halsey had his orders.

In the meantime, the Japanese went to great lengths to protect the remaining ships at Kure, which included two new aircraft carriers (without aircraft), three smaller carriers, three battleships, two heavy cruisers,, and other ships, all of which were essentially immobilized due to lack of fuel. The ships were widely scattered about the harbor, tucked right against steep hills on the shoreline in shallow water, and heavily camouflaged—to the point where the carriers had fake buildings, potted trees, and even sand "roads" on their flight decks in addition to deceptive paint jobs and extensive netting—each protected by nearby anti-aircraft artillery on the hills. All of this made the ships very difficult targets to find and to hit, and even if the ships sank, they weren't going very far down in 25 feet of water.

Due to the shallow water in Kure Harbor as well as the extensive triple-A ringed the harbor, the U.S. Navy planners ruled out using torpedoes as both impractical and too deadly to the torpedo bombers. However, the TBM Avengers did employ a new weapon for this operation: radar-fuzed airburst bombs that proved far more effective at taking out anti-aircraft guns than trying to hit a dug-in gun emplacement with a conventional bomb. Although the guns themselves could often survive an airburst, their crews didn't. Another weapon used by a few Avengers on this strike was the rarely employed 2,000-pound general-purpose bomb, of which the carriers only embarked a handful.

As TF-38 steamed south to get in launch position for the strike on Kure, Destroyer Squadron 61, commanded by Captain T. H. Hederman, was detached to conduct an anti-shipping sweep

through Sagami Wan (south of Tokyo) on the night of 22-23 July. Shortly after midnight, DESRON 61 detected four radar contacts and opened fire with guns and torpedoes, sinking the 800-ton cargo ship *No. 5 Hakutetsu Maru* and damaging the 6,919-ton freighter *Enbun Maru*. The minesweeper *W-1*, sub chaser *CH-42*, and shore batteries mounted a spirited but ineffective defense and no U.S. ships were hit as they exited the area. This was the last surface engagement of the war (not counting those conducted by the Soviets).

On the morning of 24 July, Task Force 38 included 15 fast carriers (nine *Essex*-class and six *Independence*-class light carriers) with over 1,200 aircraft. This would grow with the arrival of *Wasp* from repair the next day. It was also augmented by the four British carriers of Task Force 37. TF-38 was escorted by eight fast battleships, 15 cruisers, and 61 destroyers. The British force also included a battleship, six cruisers, and 18 destroyers. Because the strike on Kure was intended by Nimitz to be a final revenge for Pearl Harbor, the British force was specifically excluded and given targets in the Osaka area instead. In short, the U.S. Navy didn't want to share credit with anyone else (the Royal Navy or the U.S. Army Air Forces) for the final destruction of the Japanese navy. Of note, of the U.S. carriers, none had even been launched at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack, although all the *Essex*-class units had been authorized and ordered in 1940 and 1941 before the attack.

TF-38 was divided into three task groups:

- TG 38.1 (Rear Admiral Thomas L. Sprague) included *Lexington* (CV-16), *Hancock* (CV-19), *Bennington* (CV-20), *Belleau Wood* (CVL-24), and *San Jacinto* (CVL-30)
- TG 38.3 (Rear Admiral Gerald F. Bogan) included *Essex* (CV-9), *Ticonderoga* (CV-14), *Randolph* (CV-15), *Wasp* (CV-18), *Monterey* (CVL-26), and *Bataan* (CVL-29)

- TG 38.4 (Rear Admiral Arthur W. Radford) included *Yorktown* (CV-10), *Shangri-La* (CV-38), *Bon Homme Richard* (CV-31), *Independence* (CVL-22), and *Cowpens* (CVL-25)

*Shangri-La* and *Bon Homme Richard* were new arrivals. Almost all the other carriers had been knocked out of action at some point by *kamikaze* and had been repaired and returned to the fight.

### **TF-38 Carrier Strikes, 24 July**

At 0440 on 24 July 1945, TF-38 commenced launching the first of 1,363 sorties to strike Kure Naval Base and numerous other targets around the Inland Sea. The Japanese continued to withhold the vast majority of their aircraft, waiting for the main invasion, and steadfastly maintained that discipline throughout. The initial fighter sweeps by Hellcats and Corsairs encountered little opposition, but claimed shooting down 18 Japanese aircraft in the air, destroying another 40 on the ground, and damaging 80 on the ground. During the day, TF-38 aircraft dropped 599 tons of bombs and fired 1,615 rockets. Although the ships in Kure were the primary target, with little air opposition, U.S. fighters went on a rampage around the Inland Sea, shooting up anything of value in sight, including 16 locomotives, three oil tanks at Kure and another at Tano, damaging barracks, warehouses, power plants, factories, and about 20 hangars. In Kure itself, 22 warships totaling 258,000 tons were sunk or badly damaged. An additional 53 vessels totaling about 17,000 tons were sunk in various harbors and bays around the Inland Sea.

The new carrier *Amagi* (commissioned August 1944) had never been operational due to lack of trained carrier pilots, and only had a skeleton crew on board, but was a main focus of the attacks on 24 July. She was the second of six fleet carriers of a modified *Hiryu* design (about 17,500 tons, capable of embarking about 57 aircraft) that the Japanese tried to build during the war. The

lead ship, *Unryu* had been completed, but was sunk on 19 December 1944 by submarine *Redfish* (SS-395) while being used as an aircraft ferry and ammunition transport. *Amagi* and *Katsuragi* were completed, but never embarked their own air groups. *Kasagi*, *Aso*, and a somewhat larger design, *Ikoma*, were never completed as construction was suspended due to lack of material.

*Amagi* had suffered some damage during the 19 March raid. On 24 July, she was attacked by 30 carrier aircraft in the morning and another 20 in the afternoon, and suffered numerous near misses that caused her to start to list even before she was hit by a 2,000-pound bomb at 1000. This caused a huge explosion and massive destruction. The big bomb was delivered by an Avenger from either *Bennington* or *Hancock*. As the flooding continued, the skipper ordered the ship abandoned, over the objection of the engineers. The abandon-ship order was considered premature (and the skipper subsequently relieved of command) as counter-flooding corrected *Amagi*'s list and at the end of the attack she was still afloat.

The new carrier *Katsuragi* had been slightly damaged in the 19 March raid and got off lightly again on 24 July as her extensive camouflage appeared to work well and *Amagi* attracted most of the attacks. *Katsuragi* was attacked by 10-12 aircraft and hit by one 500-pound bomb that destroyed a gun sponson and killed the gun's entire 13-man crew, but otherwise inflicted little structural damage.

Light carrier *Ryuho* (capable of 30 aircraft) had survived the Battle of the Philippine Sea, but had been badly damaged by three bombs and two rockets during the 19 March raid and had not been repaired. However, her camouflage was so good on 24 July—and good discipline kept her crew from anti-aircraft fire that would have given her away—that she was not attacked by any U.S. aircraft.

The old carrier *Hosho* (Japan's first aircraft carrier, and the first ship in the world designed to be, and completed as a carrier) was hit by one bomb and slightly damaged on 24 July. She would survive the war.

The escort carrier *Kaiyo* had been badly damaged by near misses on 19 March. She was discovered by U.S. fighters on 24 July and attacked with rockets, but probably not seriously damaged. However, as she was trying to reach another port, she struck a U.S.-laid magnetic mine that caused severe damage and flooding aft. She was under tow by destroyer *Yukaze* when she was attacked by Hellcat fighters and hit with two rockets. She was then deliberately grounded to prevent sinking.

Following the loss of four carriers at the Battle of Midway, the Japanese battleships *Ise* and *Hyuga* had been converted in 1943 into "hybrid" battleship-carriers by replacing the aft two twin 14-inch gun turrets with a hangar and flight deck (they retained the two 14-inch gun turrets forward and the two amidships). They could carry about 22-24 aircraft, with the intent for half to be Judy dive-bombers (which would have to land on a conventional carrier or on land) and half floatplane fighters that could be recovered. Although they had carried no aircraft, the two battleship-carriers were part of the Japanese decoy carrier force during the Battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944, and although all four of the Japanese carriers were lost, *Ise* and *Hyuga* survived. They both also survived the 19 March raid on Kure (*Ise* with two bomb hits and *Hyuga* with three bomb hits), but their luck ran out in July.

Commencing at 0615, *Ise* was attacked by 30 aircraft, suffering four direct hits and numerous nearmisses. At noon, another 30 planes attacked and *Ise* took a direct hit on the bridge that killed her skipper, Captain Mutaguchi. Over 50 of her crew were killed and she began to settle by the

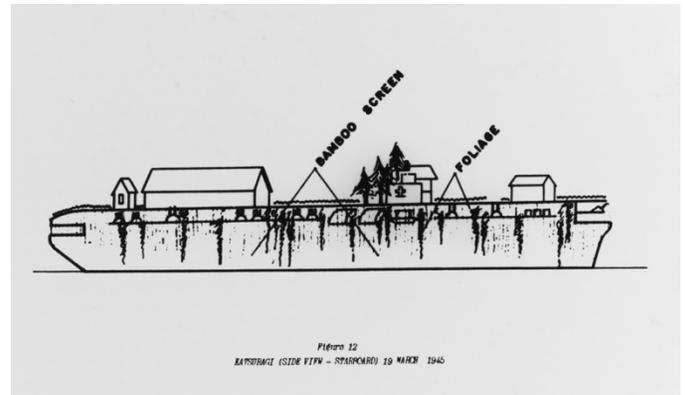
bow. Although the bow was on the bottom, she was technically still afloat when the raid ended.

Over 50 aircraft attacked battleship *Hyuga* with 200 bombs during the course of the day with 10 direct hits and about 30 damaging near misses that opened seams, causing flooding. During the fifth attack, three bombs hit near the bridge in quick succession, killing her skipper, Rear Admiral Kiyoshi Kusakawa (Japanese battleship captains had been given promotions to rear admiral to buck up morale). *Hyuga* began to settle by the stern with over 200 dead and 600 wounded. The battleship finally came to rest on the shallow bottom on 26 July.

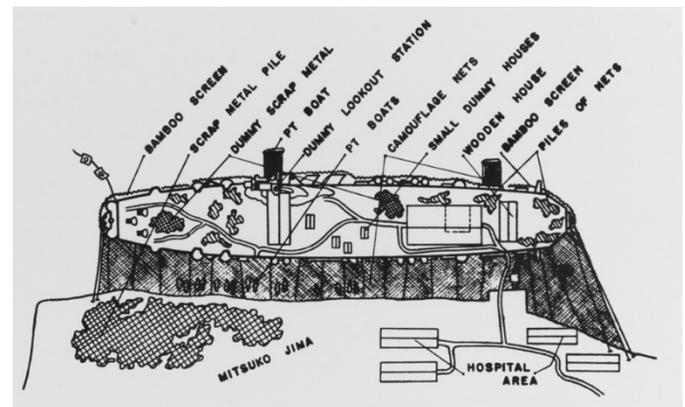
Battleship *Haruna* was the last survivor of a class of four ships originally built as battle-cruisers during World War I, and due to their speed were frequent escorts of the Japanese carrier force. Her sisters *Hiei* and *Kirishima* had been lost in surface actions at Guadalcanal in November 1942, and *Kongo* had been sunk in the Formosa Strait by submarine *Sealion* (SS-315) on 21 November 1944. *Haruna* had survived the battles of Midway, Santa Cruz, Philippine Sea, and Leyte Gulf, and she had shelled U.S. Marines on Guadalcanal. She had taken one bomb hit with light damage during the 19 March raid. Her luck continued on 24 July as she was only attacked by about 10 planes and suffered a gash above waterline from a bomb hit aft. (This gash, however, would ultimately prove fatal.)

The heavy cruiser *Tone* was a veteran of the Pearl Harbor attack (her floatplane verified that the U.S. Pacific Fleet was not at the Lahaina anchorage off Maui an hour before the attack) and had survived the battles of Eastern Solomons, Santa Cruz, Philippine Sea, Leyte Gulf, and numerous lesser engagements. She'd taken one bomb hit during the 19 March raid that jammed her No. 3 8-inch turret. On 24 July, she was attacked by about 100 aircraft during the day, suffering four direct hits and seven near misses. Leaking badly, she was deliberately beached.

Like *Tone*, the heavy cruiser *Aoba* was a veteran of numerous battles including Coral Sea, Savo Island, and Cape Esperance. She escaped damage during the 19 March raid, but on 24 July she was attacked by 30 carrier aircraft with one direct hit and a near miss that caused significant damage below the waterline. Attempts to counter-flood were only partially successful, and *Aoba* settled to the shallow bottom with a starboard list.



Camouflage scheme comprising false buildings, trees, and foliage used on Japanese carrier *Katsuragi* while she was moored at Kure, 1945 (NH 82539).



Camouflage scheme used on *Katsuragi* while she was moored alongside Mitsuko Island, Kure Bay, 24-28 July 1945 (NH 82540).

The relatively new light cruiser *Oyodo* (commissioned February 1943) was the flagship for the commander-in-chief of the Combined Fleet before the headquarters moved ashore in September 1944. She then served as the flagship of Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa, in command of

the Japanese decoy carrier force during the Battle of Leyte Gulf. During the raid on Kure in 19 March, she'd taken serious damage from three bomb hits and had been beached to prevent sinking, with a loss of 52 of her crew. Subsequently repaired, on 24 July she was attacked by about 50 carrier aircraft and was hit by five bombs, one of which started a fire that took two days to extinguish. But, at the end of the day, she was still afloat and fighting back.

The elderly (1921-vintage) light cruiser *Kitakami* had been modified in late 1944 to carry eight *Kaiten* manned suicide torpedoes, but never operated with them. On 24 July, she was damaged by strafing and near misses, with 32 of her crew killed.

The 1909-vintage *Dreadnaught*-type battleship *Settsu* (which by 1940 was used as a radio-controlled target ship), was attacked by 30 Hellcat fighters near the Japanese naval academy at Etajima. She was struck by three bombs and many near misses, and was deliberately run aground. She settled to the shallow bottom on 26 July. What might have been the oldest warship sunk in World War II, three near misses on the armored cruiser *Iwate* (commissioned 1901) opened her seams and she sank.

Other ships sunk or severely damaged in the attack on Kure included one large oiler and two destroyers. In addition to the ships at Kure, U.S. aircraft hit and damaged the aircraft carrier *Aso*, under construction (60 percent complete) at Kobe.

British Task Force 37 flew 257 sorties in the Osaka area on 24 July, claiming to damage some destroyers and destroyer escorts. The British strikes did discover the heavily camouflaged escort carrier *Shimane Maru* hidden in Shido Bay. *Shimane Maru* was a relatively new escort carrier, converted from an oiler, which had never been operational, and had been badly damaged in the 19 March raid on Kure. This time, she was hit by aircraft from HMS *Victorious*, broke in two,

and sank. Although not much of a carrier, this was technically the only carrier vs. carrier action in Royal Navy history. (A case could be made that the first was when Japanese carriers sank HMS *Hermes* in the Indian Ocean on 9 April 1942, although *Hermes'* aircraft had been disembarked. *Shimane Maru*, however, was equally as defenseless.)

During the night of 24-24 July, TF 38 aircraft flew a number of night harassment air raids (*Bon Homme Richard* was equipped and trained as a "night carrier.") In addition, Task Group 35.3, commanded by Rear Admiral Cary Jones, which included the light cruisers *Wilkes-Barre* (CL-103), *Pasadena* (CL-65), *Springfield* (CL-66), and *Astoria* (CL-90) along with six destroyers, bombarded the Kushimoto seaplane base at Cape Shionomisaki, inflicting moderate damage.

### ***TF-38 Carrier Strikes, 25 July***

On the morning of 25 July, TF-38 commenced launching additional strikes around the Inland Sea, expanded to include the Nagoya-Osaka area. The carriers launched 655 sorties before increasingly foul weather truncated the operation at 1300. Nevertheless, TF-38 aircraft dropped 185 tons of bombs and fired 1,162 rockets, sinking nine merchant ships of about 8,000 tons total, and damaging a destroyer and about 35 other vessels. Eighteen Japanese planes were shot down, with 61 more claimed destroyed on the ground and another 68 claimed damaged. Ground targets hit included locomotives, gasoline trucks, 20 hangars, tunnels, and other railroad infrastructure.

### ***TF-38 Carrier Strikes, 28 July***

On 28 July, TF-38 and TF-37 launched another massive series of strikes at targets around the Inland Sea. The primary target was once again Kure Naval Base to finish off the Japanese warships, and in some cases bomb them deeper into the mud. Commencing at 0443, TF-38

launched 1,602 sorties that expended 605 tons of bombs and 2,050 rockets. In what appeared to be a completely uncoordinated action, U.S. Army Seventh Air Force B-24 four-engine bombers flying from Yontan airfield on Okinawa flew a series of raids throughout the day targeting Japanese navy ships in Kure, but hitting only one already sunken ship. The B-24s did draw considerable flak; two were shot down and eight damaged.

The already badly damaged carrier *Amagi* was attacked by 50 carrier aircraft in the morning and another 30 in the afternoon, with one direct hit and numerous near misses. (B-24 bombers also bombed her around 1200, with no hits.) By 1000 on 29 July, *Amagi* had settled to the bottom in shallow water with a 70-degree list. Although she was mostly still above water, *Amagi* was technically the last Japanese carrier sunk in World War II.

The carrier *Katsuragi*, lightly damaged on 24 July, was attacked by 10-15 aircraft, taking two direct hits including a devastating one from a 2,000-pound bomb just aft of the island, which caused massive damage and killed the executive officer and most of those on the bridge. Despite the extensive damage topside, damage below the waterline was minimal and the ship remained afloat, and was still afloat at the end of the war. The non-operational light carrier *Ryujo* once again escaped being attacked due to her good camouflage. The old carrier *Hosho* was not hit, either.

The already-grounded escort carrier *Kaiyo* was attacked by 16 VBF-83 Corsairs from *Essex* with 54 rockets. Eighteen hits were claimed; probably only three hit, but *Kaiyo* came to rest on the bottom in shallow water. Although technically sunk, she would be attacked by 12 U.S. Army Airforces B-25 twin-engine bombers on 9 August. The wingtip of the lead B-25 hit *Kaiyo's* camouflage netting and the aircraft crashed into the water.

Sixty aircraft attacked the battleship-carrier *Ise*, scoring six direct hits and nine damaging near misses. At 1100, Helldivers from *Hancock* hit *Ise* with four more bombs, followed by *Hancock* Corsairs carrying bigger 1,000-pound bombs and hitting with five of them. The tough battleship finally settled to the bottom with her main deck awash. At 1400, 24 B-24s bombed the sunken ship, but all missed.

Although already on the bottom, battleship-carrier *Hyuga* still took many hits and was finally abandoned. She was also bombed by 24 B-24s with no hits.

Battleship *Haruna's* luck finally ran out. She was attacked nearly continuously throughout the day by dozens of aircraft, which accumulated 13 direct hits and 10 damaging near misses. As she took on a list, the gash from the hit from the 24 July raid was submerged and tons of water flooded into the ship. She finally settled to the bottom in shallow water, with 65 of her crew dead. B-24s attacked her, too, with no hits.

The already-beached heavy cruiser *Tone* was attacked yet again by numerous carrier aircraft, suffering two more direct hits and seven near misses. She took on a 21-degree port list and despite counter-flooding settled to the shallow bottom. (Although the Imperial Japanese Navy generally behaved with more respect for the rules of armed conflict than the Japanese army, *Tone* was the site of a notable exception, when on 18 March 1944, 72 seamen captured from the British freighter *SS Behar* were beheaded. Rear Admiral Sakonjo, who ordered the executions, was hanged by the British as a war criminal after the war.)

Although already on the bottom, heavy cruiser *Aoba* was attacked again by 10 carrier aircraft in the morning and 10 more in the afternoon with a cumulative four direct hits, which set the ship on fire. At 1600 in the afternoon, after a day of utter futility, the Army Air Forces' B-24



*Surrendered destroyers, submarines, and other ships of the Imperial Japanese Navy moored at Kure after the end of World War II, circa October 1945. Ships include destroyers, Hanatsuki Natsutsuki, Harutsuki, Yoitsuki, and Yukaze; and submarines I-47, I-36, I-402, I-203, I-58, and I-53 (NH 94884).*

bombers finally hit something: Four bombs hit the sunken *Aoba*, blowing off her stern.

Light cruiser *Oyodo* was attacked by 40 dive-bombers and fighters, taking four more direct hits and numerous near misses that ruptured hull plating. She began to list. After several hits near the bridge, the commanding officer ordered counter-flooding, which failed to correct the list. Abandon ship was ordered, but too late. At about 1200, the ship rolled over on her side. About 223 of her crew were killed in the attack or trapped when she ended up on her side in shallow water. Another 180 crewmen were wounded. At some point later, U.S. fighters fired rockets into her exposed underside.

With more bomb-carrying aircraft than remaining targets, U.S. carrier aircraft attacked Battle of Tsushima veteran armored cruiser *Izumo*, moored at the Japanese Etajima naval academy. Three near misses caused the ship to capsize.

The new destroyer *Nashi* (completed 15 March 1945) was also sunk near Kure by TF-38 aircraft with one direct bomb hit and a near miss. British aircraft sank two frigates, *CD No. 4* and *CD No. 30*.

Task Force 38 fighters attacked 30 Japanese airfields in conjunction with the Kure raid on 28 July, claiming 115 Japanese destroyed on the ground and 21 in the air. Other targets struck and destroyed included 14 locomotives, four oil cars, two railroad roundhouses, three oil tanks, three warehouses, one hangar, and a transformer station. Other targets damaged included eight locomotives, 13 hangars, 8 factories, two copper smelters, two lighthouses, one railroad station, multiple roundhouses, numerous oil tanks, two radio stations, various barracks, and the Kawasaki aircraft factory.

If nothing else, the Kure raids were a case study in how hard it is to hit even a stationary ship with bombs, and how hard it was to sink a ship using only bombs, although the fact that Japanese ships were built extremely tough was a significant factor as well. The heavy flak that disrupted aim didn't help either.

In the four-day operation, TF-38 flew 3,620 offensive sorties (plus 672 British sorties from TF-37). U.S. aircraft dropped 1,389 tons of bombs, fired 4,827 rockets, and claimed 52 Japanese aircraft shot down and another 216 on ground. There were 170 Navy Crosses awarded, five of them posthumously. The cost was high: 101 U.S. Navy aircraft were downed and 88 men killed.

By the end of the strikes on Kure, the Imperial Japanese Navy had been virtually annihilated. Of 25 Japanese aircraft carriers and escort carriers, only five were still afloat, all damaged. Of 12 battleships, only *Nagato* was still afloat. Of 18 heavy cruisers, only two, badly damaged, remained at Singapore. Of 22 light cruisers, only two survived. Of 177 destroyers, only five remained. The Imperial Japanese Navy lost 334 warships (out of 611 total vessels) and just over 300,000 men during the course of the war. Over 2,000 Japanese merchant ships were sunk with tens of thousands of crewmen lost.



*Japanese aircraft carrier Amagi, shown capsized at Kure, October 1945 (80-G-351749).*

### **Countering Operation Tsurugi, 9-10 August**

In August 1945, U.S. intelligence got wind of a Japanese navy plan to launch a long-range airborne suicide commando attack on the U.S. B-29 bases in the Marianas. Code-named Operation *Tsurugi* ("Sword"), the plan went through several iterations, but in its final form called for 30 navy P1Y Frances twin-engine bombers and 60 G4M Betty bombers to carry 300 commandos of the 101st Kure Special Naval Landing Force and 300 commandos of the army's 1st Raiding Regiment to the Marianas, with a target date of 19 August 1945. Twenty G4Ms would take Navy commandos to Guam. Twenty G4M's would take army commandos to Saipan. Another 20 G4Ms would take army and navy commandos to Tinian. The P1Ys would strafe the airfields before the specially modified G4Ms belly-landed on the airfields and disgorged their troops to do as much damage as possible on what was intended to be a one-way suicide mission. There was also a plan to seize an intact B-29 and fly it back to Japan (which almost certainly wouldn't have worked).

With advanced warning, Fleet Admiral Nimitz ordered Admiral Halsey to take the Third Fleet north and attack the staging airfields for the operation near Misawa in northern Honshu and

on Hokkaido. On 9 August, as the Soviets invaded Japanese-occupied Manchuria and southern Sakhalin Island, a large strike from Task Force 38 carriers came in at treetop level (the better to see dispersed planes in heavy camouflage). TF-38 launched 1,212 offensive sorties. The carrier planes claimed 251 aircraft destroyed on the ground and 141 damaged. At least 20 of the P1Y's and 29 G4M's earmarked for Operation *Tsurugi* were among those destroyed. On 10 August, TF-38 planes attacked again, launching 1,364 sorties and hitting two previously unlocated airfields, among other targets. British Task Force 37 also contributed. Despite the damage and disruption, the Japanese did not actually cancel the operation, but it was rendered moot when the emperor announced a cease-fire on 15 August. The U.S. Navy lost 34 aircraft and 19 airmen during the strikes, while the British lost 13 aircraft and nine airmen. A Royal Canadian Navy pilot flying an F-4U Corsair from HMS *Formidable* was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross for sinking the Japanese destroyer-escort *Amakusa*. (Japanese sources indicate his damaged plane crashed into the bay, but the award citation says he crashed into the *Amakusa* after hitting it with a 500-pound bomb.)



*Battleships and heavy cruisers steam in column off Kamaishi, at the time they bombarded the iron works there, as seen from USS South Dakota (BB-57). USS Indiana (BB-58) is the nearest ship, followed by USS Massachusetts (BB-59). Cruisers Chicago (CA-136) and Quincy (CA-71) bring up the rear (80-G-490143).*



*Bombardment of the iron works at Kamaishi, 14 July 1945: Sixteen-inch shells explode at the target. Photographed from USS South Dakota (BB-57) (80-G-K-6034).*

## ***Shore Bombardments of Japan, July-August 1945***

Following the fall of Okinawa to U.S. forces in late June 1945, the Japanese ceased massed *kamikaze* attacks, although small numbers would occasionally try to achieve surprise (see H-Gram 051). In fact, they ceased most air operations of any kind (including fighter defenses against B-29 bombers) in order to conserve aircraft for the final defense of Japan. Most aircraft were dispersed away from airfields and carefully camouflaged. The comparative lack of Japanese air activity emboldened the commander of the Third Fleet, Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr., to commence a series of battleship shore bombardments against coastal Japanese industrial targets, at first cautiously, and then with increasing audacity. Part of the rationale for the bombardments was to draw out Japanese aircraft so they could be shot down, but the Japanese steadfastly refused to take the bait.

### ***Kamaishi, Northern Honshu, 14 July***

In broad daylight, at 1210 on 14 July, three fast battleships, two heavy cruisers, and nine destroyers of Task Unit 34.8.1 (Bombardment Group Able) opened fire on the Kamaishi works of

the Japan Iron Company on the east coast of northern Honshu. Commanded by Rear Admiral John Shafroth, the force included the battleships *South Dakota* (BB-57), *Indiana* (BB-58), and *Massachusetts* (BB-59), and heavy cruisers *Quincy* (CA-71) and *Chicago* (CA-136). Shafroth had temporarily relieved Vice Admiral Willis "Ching" Lee (the Navy's foremost expert on radar-directed gunfire). Lee had been recalled by Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King to set up Experimental Task Force 69 (ETF-69) at Casco Bay, Maine, to develop improved tactics to defeat Japanese *kamikaze*. Lee, however, died of a heart attack on 25 August, before returning to the Far East.

The bombardment of Kamaishi was preceded by months of meticulous planning and was covered by a special combat air patrol of 20 fighters from carrier Task Group 38.1. At 1055, the flagship *South Dakota* hoisted a signal that read, "Never forget Pearl Harbor." Haze limited visibility to 14,000-20,000 yards. Thus, the ships fired based on radar at a range of 26,000 yards because of the need to remain clear of potentially mined waters inside the 600-foot depth curve. The Japanese were essentially caught by surprise, and ineffective anti-aircraft fire was directed against the CAP. During the battleship bombardment, three large merchant ships and a small escort ship sortied from the inner bay and somewhat miraculously sailed through a storm of gunfire from U.S. destroyers without being hit before escaping. One Corsair fighter was shot down strafing a destroyer-escort.

The U.S. ships ceased fire at 1419 after expending 802 16-inch, 728 8-inch, and 825 5-inch shells. Most of the shells landed in the target area with direct hits noted on open hearths, coke ovens, foundries, a rolling mill, and other steel mill infrastructure. An oil tanker, a small ship, and two barges in the harbor were also sunk. The damage and destruction was actually even worse than it appeared, setting back production by about two months (i.e., for the rest of the war). Concussions from the explosions overturned cooking stoves

and caused numerous fires to break out in the city, which Japanese propaganda played up. Nevertheless, and despite the propaganda, the psychological effect was profound. Post-war analysis indicated that the battleship bombardment instilled far more fear in the Japanese population than high-explosive or incendiary bomb attacks. The bombers came from far away, but the ships were right on the doorstep in sight, and no amount of propaganda could cover that up.

### ***Muroran, Southern Hokkaido, 15 July***

On the night of 14-15 July, Task Unit 34.8.2 (Bombardment Group Baker), under the command of Rear Admiral Oscar C. Badger, detached from the carrier task force to make a run for Muroran, Hokkaido. The audacious approach would require a three-hour run with land on three sides, going in and going out. At 0936 on 15 July, fast battleships *Iowa* (BB-61), *Missouri* (BB-63), and *Wisconsin* (BB-64), light cruisers *Atlanta* (CL-104) and *Dayton* (CL-105), and eight destroyers opened fire on the Nihon Steel Company and the Wanishi Ironworks, Japan's second largest producer of coke and pig iron. Badger's flagship *Iowa* hit the Nihon furnaces on the second salvo and *Missouri's* gunfire resulted in a massive explosion (much to Halsey's satisfaction, as *Missouri* was his flagship). *Wisconsin's* ninth salvo also caused a "terrific explosion."

At 1025, the U.S. force ceased fire after expending 860 16-inch shells, of which 170 were direct hits. The damage to the plants at Muroran was even more severe than at Kamaishi. Over 2,500 houses in Muroran were destroyed by secondary fires caused by concussion. Again, the psychological impact was perhaps even more severe than the physical, as Halsey later stated that the bombardments showed the Japanese that "we made no bones about playing in his front yard." The Japanese war minister was forced to formally apologize for the inability to do anything about Third Fleet's attacks.

### ***Hitachi, East Coast of Honshu, 17-18 July***

Emboldened by the first two bombardments and the virtual lack of Japanese opposition, Admiral Halsey ordered yet another shore bombardment, this time on the coast of Honshu only 80 nautical miles from Tokyo, albeit at night. Again commanded by Rear admiral Badger, this time Bombardment Group Baker included battleships *Iowa*, *Missouri* (with Halsey embarked), *Wisconsin*, *North Carolina* (BB-55), and *Alabama* (BB-60), and light cruisers *Atlanta* and *Dayton*, and eight destroyers. Badger's force was joined by the British battleship *King George V* (with Vice Admiral Sir Bernard Rawlings, RN, Commander Task Force 37 embarked), and two British destroyers. The targets were in Hitachi, a major electronics production center. The force opened fire at 2314 on 17 July and delivered 1,206 16-inch shells plus 267 14-inch shells from the British battleship, badly damaging several plants and installations, and virtually wiping out the copper production capability of the Hitachi mine. From this point on, Third Fleet ships shelled Japanese targets almost every day that weather and refueling requirements permitted.

Of note, night air cover was provided by aircraft from Night Carrier Air Group NINE ONE (CVG(N)-91) embarked on newly arrived carrier *Bon Homme Richard*. *Bon Homme Richard* was the last Essex-class carrier to be completed in time to see combat in World War II. The "Bonnie Dick" was designated the "night carrier" after *Enterprise* (CV-6) was knocked out of action by a *kamikaze*, hence the CV(N) designation (which doesn't mean "nuclear"). CVG(N)-91 was specially equipped and trained for night operations. She would be the only carrier to serve as an "attack" carrier in three wars: World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Combining her Korean and Vietnam record, her aircraft shot down more MiG jet fighters than any other carrier. Her official name is also misspelled: The name of John Paul Jones's ship was *Bonhomme Richard* (which was correctly applied to LHD-6).

### ***Cape Nojima, 18-19 July***

A less-successful bombardment occurred the night of 18-19 July, when Task Group 35.4, commanded by Rear Admiral Carl Holden, swept Sagami Wan (off Kamakura). After finding no shipping, the light cruisers *Topeka* (CL-67), *Duluth* (CL-87), *Oklahoma City* (CL-91), *Atlanta*, and five destroyers bombarded the Cape Nojima radar site (near the entrance to Tokyo Bay). The cruisers fired 240 6-inch rounds, which all fell short, blowing up rice paddies and a village.

### ***Hamamatsu, 29-30 July***

On the night of 29-30 July, Rear Admiral Shafroth's Bombardment Group Able made a high-speed run to Hamamatsu (on the east coast of Honshu near Nagoya). The force included battleships *South Dakota*, *Massachusetts*, *Indiana*, and HMS *King George V*, heavy cruisers *Quincy*, *Boston* (CA-69), *Saint Paul* (CA-73), and *Chicago*, and 10 U.S. and three British destroyers. *Bon Homme Richard's* night air group provided night gunfire spotting. The force made two bombardment runs from 2315 to 0027, inflicting damage on an Imperial Government Railway locomotive factory and destroying other critical railway infrastructure. This would be the last time a British battleship ever fired main battery guns in battle. Although Hamamatsu had previously been hit by over 30 air raids, the battleship bombardment caused over 30,000 civilians to flee the city.

### ***Shimizu, 30-31 July***

On the night of 30-31 July, seven destroyers commanded by Captain J. W. Ludewig (Commander Destroyer Squadron 25) in *John Rogers* (DD-574) penetrated deep into Suruga Wan (the next major bay south of Sagami Wan), but found no shipping. The force then unleashed a very effective seven-minute bombardment (1,100 5-inch shells) at industrial facilities near

Shimizu, badly damaging an oil company and an aluminum plant (118 factory buildings damaged or destroyed). The aluminum plant had already run out of raw materials and had ceased production.

### ***Kamaishi, 9 August***

On 9 August 1945, Rear Admiral Shafroth's Bombardment Group Able struck Kamaishi for a second time. Battleships *South Dakota*, *Indiana*, and *Massachusetts*, heavy cruisers *Quincy*, *Chicago*, *Boston*, and *Saint Paul*, and nine destroyers were joined by British light cruiser HMS *Newfoundland*, New Zealand light cruiser HMNZS *Gambia*, and three British destroyers. British battleship *King George V* developed engineering problems and did not participate. Halsey later stated, "By now our contempt for Japan's defenses was so thorough that our prime consideration in scheduling this bombardment was the convenience of the radio audience back home." That the Japanese were deliberately holding back about 12,000 *kamikaze* aircraft didn't hurt.

The 9th of August was already a momentous day. At 0001, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and Soviet troops conducted devastatingly quick and massive attacks into Japanese-occupied Manchuria and into southern Sakhalin Island, at that point considered part of Japan proper. At 1102, the B-29 "Bockscar" dropped an atom bomb on Nagasaki, the second since the one on Hiroshima on 6 August. At 1247, the Allied ships opened fire, blasting Kamaishi essentially at will. The Japanese did put up fairly heavy anti-aircraft fire against the combat air patrol (20 fighters) and ship-launched gunfire spotting planes. *Gambia* took the anti-aircraft batteries under fire, while the battleships and other cruisers continued to pummel the steel plant and other infrastructure. After expending 850 16-inch shells, 1,440 8-inch shells, and 2,500 5-inch shells, there wasn't much left. Numerous fires ignited in the city and several air raid shelters took direct hits, causing

considerable civilian casualties. In addition, many Korean slave laborers were killed, along with about 42 Allied prisoners of war. The bombardment also destroyed refrigeration plants that supported Kamaishi's large fishing industry.

The bombardment of Kamaishi is often described as the last shore bombardment of World War II. However, fighting between the Soviets and Japanese continued even after the 15 August cease-fire, until 3 September, and probably involved shore bombardments by Soviet ships during the occupation of the Kuril Islands. The heavy cruiser *Saint Paul* fired the last salvo of the war from a major warship. Also of note, *Saint Paul* had the distinction of firing the last round from sea during the Korean War, an 8-inch shell, autographed by Rear Admiral Harry Sanders, timed to hit a North Korean gun emplacement a few seconds before the armistice went into effect on 27 July 1953.

### ***Operation Starvation: The Aerial Mine Campaign Against Japan, March-August 1945***

As early as 1942, plans were being developed in the U.S. Navy for the use of U.S. Army Air Forces long-range strategic bombers for an aerial mining campaign against Japan. That year, the Navy requested that the Air Force send some personnel to attend Mine Warfare School at Yorktown, Virginia. The Air Force subsequently added minelaying to the course of study at the School of Applied Tactics in Orlando. By 1944, the staff of the commander-in-chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, had developed detailed operations plans to mine Japanese waters using the new B-29 Superfortress bombers once airfields in the Marianas Islands in range of Japan had been secured. Admiral Chester Nimitz advocated strongly for the idea. The initial U.S. Army Air Forces response was lukewarm at best, as Air Force Chief of Staff General Henry "Hap" Arnold viewed it as a major distraction from the primary

strategic bombing mission of destroying Japanese industrial infrastructure.

By a directive on 22 December 1944, General Arnold finally agreed to commit to conducting a mining campaign, but with significantly less resources than Admiral Nimitz had asked for, and with a number of conditions. The campaign would not commence until the XXI Bomber Command (the B-29s in the Marianas) reached full strength (expected in April 1945). It would only be conducted when the weather precluded attacking industrial targets ashore and would be limited to 150-200 sorties per month.

However, following the lackluster performance of the B-29s against Japanese industrial targets in the first months of 1945 using conventional high-altitude daylight "precision" bombing tactics, the new commander of the XXI Bomber Command, Major General Curtis LeMay, was in search of new and different ways to use the B-29s to achieve greater success. One of these was the switch to nighttime incendiary bombing of Japanese cities, which was more effective, but also killed hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians. Another was the aerial mining campaign, which LeMay enthusiastically endorsed. In fact, he successfully advocated for a much greater level of effort than had originally been approved by General Arnold.

Under General LeMay's beefed-up plan for "Operation Starvation," the XXI Bomber Command committed an entire bomber wing (about 160 B-29s) with the intent to prevent the importation of raw material and food to Japan (Japan was not self-sufficient in either). The operation would also prevent the Japanese from supplying or reinforcing troop garrisons anywhere else and disrupt the shipping of material in Japan's Inland Sea, which, due to Japanese mines and heavy air cover, had been immune from U.S. submarine attacks.

The 313th Bomber Wing arrived at Tinian in February 1945 and the U.S. Navy established the Tinian Mine Assembly Depot No. 4 with 12 officers and 171 enlisted men, with the purpose of training the B-29 crews and modifying the B-29s to carry the mines. Each B-29 was modified to carry either 12 Mark 26 or Mark 36 1,000-pound mines or seven Mark 25 2,000-pound mines. All these mines were parachute-retarded bottom influence mines, with magnetic fuzing, and with either pressure or acoustic sensors. All had variable sensitivity settings, randomly set arming delays, and ship counters (one to nine). The mines did not have any kind of deactivation capability and the pressure mines were considered "unsweepable" with the technology of the time (the Japanese approach to sweep them was to use suicide boats).

Phase I of Operation Starvation targeted the Shimonoseki Strait between Honshu and Kyushu (site of a little known 1863 battle between USS *Wyoming* and U.S.-built ships belonging to Japanese warlords in 1863, which I will cover in some future H-gram). On the night of 27 March, the commander of the 313th, Brigadier General John H. Davies, led 102 B-29s on a successful mission to mine Shimonoseki Strait, losing three aircraft with another eight damaged. By 12 April, the B-29s had sown 2,030 mines in the strait on seven missions of 246 sorties. The result exceeded expectations. Within the first month, 113 Japanese merchant ships struck mines and sank in the strait, representing 9 percent of Japan's remaining merchant fleet.

Phase II commenced on 3 May 1945. B-29s mined the approaches to Tokyo, Nagoya, Kobe, and Osaka, and re-seeded Shimonoseki Strait. For this phase, most of the mines were the "unsweepable" 2,000-pound Mark 25 bottom influence mines. Phase III expanded the minelaying operation to the west coast of Japan and even to Korea to block shipping from the mainland of Asia to Japan. By May, the mines were sinking more ships than U.S. submarines (although this was also a

function of the fact there wasn't much Japanese shipping left that dared to sail on the high seas). Phase IV of Operation Starvation commenced 7 June and extended and replenished already existing minefields laid in the earlier phases. Phase V was termed the "total blockade," commencing 9 July until the end of the war, by which time the 313th had flown 1,529 sorties in 46 missions, laying 12,135 mines in 26 different minefields, for a loss of 15 B-29s and 103 aircrewmembers.

About 670 Japanese ships were sunk or badly damaged (just under 500 sunk), totaling over 1.25 million tons by the mines. In the last six months of the war, the mines sank more Japanese ships than all other causes combined. The Japanese devoted almost 350 ships (many commandeered fishing trawlers) and 20,000 men to a largely unsuccessful countermine activity. The mine activity did result in an increasing scarcity of food for the Japanese population that would have led to mass starvation had the war not ended. Although the 313th Bomb Wing sorties accounted for less than 5 per cent of the XXI Bomber Command's total sorties, the post-war Strategic Bombing Survey as well as Japanese accounts indicated that the disruption of the transport of critical raw materials actually had a greater effect on reducing Japanese war production than did the direct attacks on Japanese factories, with a bomber loss rate consistent with all XXI Bomber Command operations. In terms of damage inflicted per unit cost, the mines were the most cost-effective means to sink ships during the war. (Of note, during the war, U.S. submarines laid a total of about 650 mines.) The mines of Operation Starvation also sank a number of Japanese ships even after the war.

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Sources include: *The Naval Siege of Japan: War Plan Orange Triumphant*, by Brian Lane Herder, Osprey Publishing, 2020; *Hell to Pay: Operation Downfall and the Invasion of Japan, 1945-1947*, by D.H. Gianreco, Naval Institute Press,

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# H-053-2: The Surrender of Japan

H-Gram 053, Attachment 2

Samuel J. Cox, Director NHHC

September 2020

## *The Japanese Decision to Surrender*

At the time of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, senior decision-making authority in Japan was vested in the six-member Supreme Council for the Direction of the War. Three of the members were active duty or retired Imperial Japanese Navy admirals. The ultimate decision maker in Imperial Japan was Emperor Hirohito, whom the Japanese believed to be divine. However, making mistakes is bad for a divinity's reputation, so the emperor only directly intervened on rare and extremely important matters. Emperor Hirohito was routinely kept informed of the course of the war, and it became increasingly common for senior leaders of the army and navy to apologize to the emperor when something went badly. Nevertheless, the emperor rarely directly told any government, army, or navy leaders what to do.

Most (but not all, especially in the army) senior leaders of Japan understood that an outright victory against the United States was unlikely and that sooner or later the overwhelming industrial might of the United States would overpower Japan. Thus, the Japanese objective was to play for a negotiated end to the war on terms as favorable to Japan as possible. Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto recognized this at the very start, and the whole point of the Pearl Harbor attack was to destroy the U.S. Pacific Fleet to force the United States to negotiate. As the war continued and went badly, the Japanese objective was to inflict so much cost in blood on U.S. forces that the



*The Japanese surrender ceremony in progress, as seen from USS Missouri's foredeck, with the Marine guard and Navy band in the center foreground and the ship's embarkation ladder at lower left. The backs of the Japanese delegation are visible on the O-1 level deck, to the left of 16-inch gun turret No. 2 (SC 210628).*

American people would tire of the war and force the U.S. government to negotiate. Although this was the objective, it was not until the very end that the Japanese considered initiating such negotiations; the idea was to force the United States to offer terms first. The problem for the Japanese was that the perfidy of the "sneak attack" on Pearl Harbor led to an unwavering U.S. war objective of "unconditional surrender." From the very beginning, the United States had no interest in negotiations.

In the early years of the war, General Hideki Tojo held three of the six positions on the Supreme

Council; prime minister, minister of war (army), and chief of the army general staff. Tojo was arguably the man most responsible for pushing Japan into the war, although he had plenty of support. He did not have complete dictatorial power, as the Navy strongly asserted its independence, but he effectively quashed any serious attempts to negotiate an end to the war while he had the power to do so. However, when the Marianas Islands fell to U.S. forces in July 1944, senior Japanese leadership understood that the war was effectively lost, and no amount of propaganda could hide the fact. Tojo received the blame and was forced out, having lost face. The next prime minister only lasted until the United States took the Philippines.

With the loss of the Marianas and the Philippines, some members of the new Japanese government under Prime Minister Admiral (retired) Kantaro Suzuki got serious about negotiations and approached the government of the Soviet Union under Josef Stalin to intercede. The Soviets and Japanese had signed a neutrality pact in April 1941, two years after a particularly nasty, but short, border war in Manchuria, during which both sides suffered thousands of casualties, but the Japanese were decisively defeated. The Japanese believed that the Russians would help because the neutrality treaty enabled the Russians to send many troops from the Far East at the critical moment to blunt Hitler's offensive into Russia in 1941.

What the Japanese didn't know was that Stalin had no intention of keeping the neutrality pact past its usefulness and had promised the Allies at the Tehran Conference in November 1943 that he would eventually join the war against Japan. At the Yalta conference in February 1945, Stalin promised he would enter the war against Japan 90 days after the defeat of Germany (and he kept his word almost to the day). What the Japanese also didn't know was that U.S. intelligence was reading the Japanese diplomatic code (Purple) as fast as they were, and was fully aware of the

Japanese negotiation attempts and that the Russians were deliberately stringing the Japanese along. The United States also knew that the Japanese leadership was seriously split between a few who were in favor of a negotiated peace and those who were in favor of a die-hard fight to the end.

As of 6 August 1945, the Supreme Council for the Direction of the War was made up of the Prime Minister Admiral (retired) Kantaro Suzuki, Minister of Foreign Affairs Shigenori Togo, Minister of the Army General Korechika Anami, Minister of the Navy Admiral Mitsumasa Yonai, Chief of the Army General Staff General Yoshijiro Umezu, and Chief of the Navy General Staff Admiral Soemu Toyoda.

The prime minister, Admiral Suzuki, had been commander-in-chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet in 1924 and had retired in 1929. As a captain, he had made a port call in the United States in 1918 in command of the armored cruiser *Iwate* (sunk by U.S. carrier aircraft in the strikes on Kure in July 1945).

The minister of the navy, Admiral Yonai, was technically an active duty navy flag officer (a requirement of the position). Yonai had become a full (four-star) admiral and navy minister in 1937 and had been appointed prime minister in 1940, but had been forced out by the army due to his opposition to going to war and his pro-American leanings. Of the six members of the council, he was the only one openly in favor of an early negotiated peace. Being "open" carried serious risk of assassination.

Admiral Soemu Toyoda replaced Admiral Koshiro Oikawa on 29 May 1945, following the first serious formal discussion about ending the war. Oikawa believed the war was clearly lost and resigned when the Supreme Council refused to consider peace proposals formally. Toyoda, along with Generals Anami and Umezu, held a vociferous hardline "fight to extinction" view (which was actually the Supreme Council's formal position in

a vote taken 6 June). Suzuki and Togo kept their real opinions close to their vests. The challenge for the Japanese was that any major decision regarding the course of the war required the unanimous consent of the Supreme Council. It was not until 22 June (after the fall of Okinawa) that the emperor, in a typically enigmatic way, expressed support for ending the war (without a fight to the death for everyone).

Between 16 July and 2 August, President Truman, Josef Stalin, and Winston Churchill met at Potsdam in defeated Germany. (Actually, in a surprising display of ingratitude, Prime Minister Churchill was voted out of office during the conference and replaced by new Prime Minister Clement Atlee.) The Potsdam Declaration was issued on 26 July and specified terms for the surrender of Japan. After somewhat incongruously laying out a number of conditions, the declaration concluded that Japan proclaim "unconditional surrender" or face the alternative, "prompt and utter destruction." The declaration made no mention of the Japanese emperor.

The Supreme Council haggled over the Potsdam Declaration, but repeatedly failed to achieve unanimous consensus as the hardliners refused to budge, voting 4 to 2 to reject the declaration. The Supreme Council also did not have a sense of urgency because Japanese intelligence had assessed, correctly, that the United States would not invade Kyushu (also a correct assessment) until November 1945. U.S. leaders, on the other hand, were aware of the status of the debate due to the broken Japanese diplomatic codes.

The first atomic bomb blast on 6 August had little impact on the Supreme Council when they were informed almost immediately. Both the Japanese army and navy had their own independent atomic weapons development efforts and the leaders knew full well how difficult it was to make a bomb. Admiral Toyoda was skeptical that the devastation of Hiroshima was caused by an atomic bomb, but if it was, Toyoda stated, correctly, the United

States couldn't have very many. Most Japanese cities had already been laid waste with hundreds of thousands dead as a result of incendiary raids by B-29s and Hiroshima was just one more (the radiological effects were little understood by anyone at that point). U.S. planners associated with Project Alberta (the employment of the atomic bomb) had correctly anticipated exactly such a reaction by the Japanese, which is why it was believed necessary to hit the Japanese with a second bomb as soon as possible (see H-Gram 052) to bluff them into thinking that the United States had plenty more. Of note, a third bomb would not have been ready until 19 August and fourth not until late September, followed by a long gap in development.

Historians and others have had a long-running food fight over whether the Soviet entry into the war or the second atomic bomb was what really caused the Japanese to sue for peace. In Cox's opinion, the answer is "yes." It was a one-two punch of profound shock.

Word of the Soviet invasion of Japanese-occupied Manchuria and southern Sakhalin Island reached Tokyo at about 0400 on 9 August. It would be a couple days before the Japanese truly understood the full scope of the debacle as the massive Soviet multi-directional combined arms attack cut through the vaunted (but skeletonized) Japanese Kwantung Army like butter, stopping only when Soviet fuel supply couldn't keep up with the tanks. What the Japanese leadership did immediately grasp was that the clock was just about to run out for negotiations. While the U.S. invasion was not expected until November, the Soviets could, in theory, be in Hokkaido in a week. The Japanese who supported peace overtures experienced a demoralizing realization that the Soviets had been lying to them all along.

The Soviet invasion of Manchuria is often characterized as the Russians jumping in at the last moment. This is not the case. The Soviet intervention was very carefully planned and

executed, with the full support of the United States. It was the United States that, at the last moment (after news that the atomic bomb worked), decided that Russian intervention that had been actively sought wasn't such a good idea after all. The sense that Russian entry into the war with Japan was not really necessary had been building in the last year of the war in senior U.S. military and especially Navy leadership. Nevertheless, although the Russians supplied their own tanks, artillery, and men, the vast majority of the munitions that enabled the Soviet attack were supplied by the United States in a major stream of neutral-flag shipping across the North Pacific to Soviet Ports at Petropavlovsk and Vladivostok. (The amount of munitions transferred to the Soviets by sea dwarfed the far more famous aerial supply of China "over the Hump"—the Himalayas.) The Japanese knew of this shipping, but took no action against it for fear of bringing the Russians into the war. The Soviet offensive would not have been possible without this U.S. support, at least not as soon as it occurred.

In addition, the U.S. Navy was the major participant in a secret program to provide the Soviets with lend-lease ships and aircraft through Alaska, specifically with the intent of using them against the Japanese. Between March 1945 and the end of the war, at an isolated location in the Aleutian Islands, the U.S. Navy trained 12,000 Soviet Navy personnel and transferred 149 ships and vessels (mostly frigates, mine warfare, and amphibious vessels) in an operation known as "Project Hula," the largest transfer program of the war.

The news of the Soviet offensive sent the Supreme Council into urgent session, with Prime Minister Suzuki and Minister of Foreign Affairs Togo coming out in favor of opening a negotiating channel to the United States via Switzerland and Sweden, along with Navy Minister Yonai. Togo's proposal to accept the Potsdam Declaration with the condition that the emperor's position be preserved (something the declaration did not

specifically address). The hardliners countered with a proposal that added additional conditions (which the Allies would certainly reject). As the discussion was going on, General Amani and General Umezu were secretly taking steps to implement martial law to prevent any such negotiations from happening at all. At 1030, Suzuki reported to the council that the emperor was in favor of ending the war quickly. Nevertheless, the council was still deadlocked 3-3 at 1100 when word of the Nagasaki bomb was received, and remained so even afterward.

With the Supreme Council still deadlocked, the full cabinet met at 1430 on 9 August, again arriving at a 3-3 vote. Arguments raged in a series of meetings late into the night. Finally, Suzuki requested an impromptu imperial conference with the Supreme Council and the emperor, which commenced at midnight and continued until 0200. Finally, Suzuki informed the emperor that consensus was impossible and requested that Hirohito break the stalemate. The emperor sided with Togo's proposal to make an offer to accept the Potsdam Declaration with the condition that the emperor's position be preserved. Suzuki then implored the Supreme Council to accept the emperor's will.

On 10 August, the Japanese government sent a telegram via the Swiss, which was immediately intercepted by U.S. intelligence. As U.S. leaders evaluated the Japanese proposal, President Truman ordered a halt to the bombing of Japan and that the next use of an atomic bomb would require explicit presidential authorization (the second one didn't). As a result, Chief of Naval Operations Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King sent a "Peace Warning" message to Nimitz. Nimitz had already ordered Halsey to conduct another round of carrier strikes on the Japanese home islands, which he then countermanded.



*White-painted Japanese Mitsubishi G4M-1 Betty at Ie Shima, 19 August 1945, after carrying the Japanese surrender delegation there to meet with General MacArthur. Note aircraft's "surrender" markings: green crosses superimposed over the Japanese national insignia (NH 81963).*

On 12 August, the United States responded to the Japanese offer, stating that "The ultimate form of government of Japan, in accordance with the Potsdam Declaration, to be established by the freely expressed will of the Japanese people." The Japanese found the response to be ambiguous, which it was, provoking more heated discussion in the Supreme Council whether to hold out for an "explicit guarantee" of the emperor's position. The same day, the emperor informed his family members that he had made a decision to surrender.

On 13 August, U.S. B-29s dropped leaflets all over Japan, making public the Japanese proposal and the U.S. counterproposal. A strong case can be made that it was actually the psychological impact of this huge leaflet drop that tipped the balance (making it one of the most effective psyops campaigns in history), although by this time the full magnitude of the collapse of Japanese defenses in Manchuria and Sakhalin Islands was also known to the Supreme Council, which finally agreed that the language in the U.S. counterproposal was good enough.

The U.S. counterproposal of 12 August directed the Japanese response to be sent in the clear. However, the Japanese sent their response

message to their embassies in Switzerland and Sweden in code, which the United States initially interpreted as a "non-acceptance." In addition,, there was a major spike in Japanese military message traffic, raising concern that an all-out *banzai* attack was in the works. As a result, President Truman reluctantly ordered a resumption of bombing. Over the course of 14 August, over 1,000 B-29s bombed Japan in the largest single day of strikes in the war, which also wiped out the last operational oil refinery in Japan. Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet geared up for a resumption of carrier strikes on the Tokyo area, set for daybreak on 15 August (see H-Gram 051).

On 14 August, Emperor Hirohito met with senior army and navy leaders. Admiral Toyoda, General Anami, General Umezu, and most military leaders wanted to fight on. An exception was the commander of the Second Army, who would be responsible for the defense of southern Japan and whose headquarters in Hiroshima had been obliterated. He argued that continued fighting was futile. Finally, the emperor announced that he had decided to accept the terms of the Potsdam Declaration with the "will of the people" caveat. The emperor having announced a decision, the Supreme Council and the full cabinet unanimously ratified it. The Foreign Ministry sent a coded message to the Japanese embassies around the world of their intent to accept the Allied terms, which was intercepted and reached Washington at 0249 on 14 August (late afternoon 14 August Tokyo time). However, the intercept of Japanese intent did not constitute the actual official Japanese response, so plans for Navy strikes on 15 August continued.

At 2300 on 14 August (Tokyo time) the emperor made a gramophone recording reading his statement to the Japanese people of his decision to surrender (without ever actually using that word), which was to be broadcast to the Japanese people over the radio at noon on 15 August. A couple of trusted members of the emperor's

personal staff then hid the copies of the recording.

Meanwhile, a coup attempt was underway, led by Major Kenji Hatanaka and other mid-grade army officers who were against surrendering. By midnight, the renegade army group surrounded the Imperial Palace and gained access under the false pretense of defending the palace against an outside revolt. Hatanaka shot and killed Lieutenant General Takeshi Mori, the commander of the Palace Guard, who had become suspicious. Other renegades fanned out across Tokyo and tried to assassinate Prime Minister Suzuki and other government officials. Despite threats of death, the palace officials who knew where the recordings were refused to acknowledge their whereabouts. The renegades then searched throughout the labyrinthine palace in an attempt to find and destroy the recordings. The search was severely hampered when Tokyo was blacked out in response to the very last B-29 bombing mission of the war, which targeted the oil refinery north of Tokyo. The rebels could not find the recordings and, by about 0800 in the morning, the coup fizzled as key army units failed to rally to the rebels' side.

Just before dawn, aircraft from Halsey's carriers had begun launching to attack targets in the Tokyo area. Two hours later, as the first wave of carrier aircraft were approaching their targets, the Pacific Fleet Intelligence Officer, Captain Edwin Layton, barged into Nimitz' office with the intercept of Japan's official acceptance of unconditional surrender. Nimitz ordered a flash message sent to cease all offensive air operations. The carrier planes were recalled before any bombs were dropped, but four U.S. Hellcats were shot down by Japanese fighters on the way back, and their pilots lost.



On board USS *Nicholas* (DD-449), two U.S. Navy officers examine a Japanese officer's sword, 27 August 1945. The Japanese were on board to provide piloting services for Third Fleet ships entering Sagami Wan and Tokyo Bay. Note other Japanese swords and sword belts on the table in the foreground (80-G-332611).

Fleet Admiral King's reaction to the news was, "I wonder what I am going to do tomorrow."

At noon, 15 August 1945, Emperor Hirohito's radio address went out to the Japanese people. It was the first time the vast majority of Japanese people had ever heard his voice. Because of the poor quality of the recording and the archaic style of Japanese used in the Imperial Court, most of the people didn't understand what he was saying. But, for the first time in its history, Japan had surrendered to a foreign power.

General Anami committed suicide before the address. General Umezu and Minister of Foreign Affairs Togo were tried and convicted as war criminals and died in prison. Admiral Toyoda would be the only member of the Japanese military tried for war crimes and acquitted. Admiral Yonai would be the only member of the Supreme Council to remain in his position after the war. Admiral Suzuki resigned as prime minister upon the announcement of the surrender.

President Truman allowed Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy to address the American public on the

radio. (Leahy was the senior U.S. military officer with a position roughly analogous to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.) Leahy's words are still relevant: "Today we have the biggest and most powerful navy in the world, more powerful than any other two navies in existence. But, we must not depend on this strength and this power alone. America's true strength and secret weapon, that really won the war, came from our basic virtues as a freedom-loving nation."

After the war, the United States would learn that the estimates of 5,000-7,000 Japanese *kamikaze* that would oppose the U.S. invasion were far too low. The real number was over 12,000, plus about 5,000 *Shinyo* suicide boats and several hundred midget submarines. In a future H-gram, I will discuss the U.S. plan for the invasion of Japan (Operation Downfall) and the Japanese counter (Operation Ketsugo).



*The Japanese delegation comes on board USS Nicholas (DD-449) to be taken to USS Missouri (BB-63) for the surrender ceremonies, 2 September 1945 (SC 210641).*

## **The Japanese Surrender**

Fleet Admiral Nimitz issued a directive upon the termination of hostilities against Japan: "It is incumbent on all officers to conduct themselves with dignity and decorum in the treatment of the Japanese and their public utterances in

connection with the Japanese ...the use of insulting epithets in connection with the Japanese as a race or as individuals does not now become the officers of the United States Navy."

On 19 August, two Japanese Navy G4M Betty bombers took off from an airfield near Tokyo, carrying a delegation of 16 Japanese officers led by Lieutenant General Torashiro Kawabe, the Vice Chief of the Army General Staff. In accordance with directions from General MacArthur's headquarters, the two planes were disarmed, painted completely white, with green crosses replacing the red "meatballs." The U.S. forces gave the planes the call signs "Bataan 1" and "Bataan 2." The aircraft initially flew northeast as there was serious concern they might be shot down by rogue Japanese fighters, which had fired on U.S. reconnaissance aircraft after the cease-fire. They picked up an escort of U.S. Army Air Forces P-38 fighters and B-25 bombers, and flew to Ie Shima airfield, on a small island just off Okinawa. One terrified young Japanese airman offered a bouquet of flowers to the Americans, which was rebuffed. At Ie Shima, the delegation transferred to a U.S. C-54 transport plane (also call letters B-A-T-A-A-N) and flew to Nichols Field, near Manila. There were no negotiations. The Japanese were given directions for what they needed to do to prepare for the formal surrender and subsequent occupation of Japan.

The Japanese delegation was given instructions that originated from Fleet Admiral Nimitz regarding the Japanese navy. All Japanese ships were to remain in port pending further directions. Any ships at sea were to immediately report their position by radio in the clear, remove breechblocks from all guns, and train main battery weapons fore and aft. All torpedo tubes were to be emptied. Searchlights were to be on and vertical at night. Submarines at sea were to surface and fly a black flag or pennant and proceed to designated Allied ports. All aircraft were to be grounded, harbor defense booms opened, navigation lights lit, obstacles removed,

explosives secured, and minefields removed (the minefields would prove to be a major challenge, especially those laid by the United States).

The first U.S. aircraft to land in Japan were two Army Air Forces P-38 fighters on an armed reconnaissance mission that ran low on fuel and landed at a field on Kyushu on 25 August. An hour later, a B-17 landed with fuel for the fighters and then all took off.

The lead elements of the U.S. 11th Airborne Division were scheduled to land at Atsugi Airfield, near Tokyo on 26 August to conduct initial reconnaissance and set up communications. However, typhoon conditions caused the operation to be delayed by two days (as was General MacArthur's subsequent arrival).

On 27 August, a fighter pilot of Carrier Air Group 88 on *Yorktown* (CV-10) brazenly landed at Atsugi, in defiance of orders, and directed the startled Japanese to hang a banner that read, "Welcome to Atsugi from Third Fleet," which would greet the U.S. Army advance team when they arrived on 28 August.

Also on 27 August, the lead elements of Third Fleet entered Sagami Wan (the bay on the Kamakura/Zushi side of Miura Peninsula—Yokosuka is on the other side of the peninsula). Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet flagship, *Missouri* (BB-63), entered in company with destroyers *Nicholas* (DD-449, 16 Battle Stars) *O'Bannon* (DD-450, 17 Battle Stars) *Taylor* (DD-468, 15 Battle Stars), *Stockham* (DD-683, 8 Battle Stars), and *Waldron* (DD-699, 4 Battle Stars). *O'Bannon* had the most Battle Stars of any U.S. destroyer, with the distinction of having suffered no combat deaths in some of the most horrific battles of the war. *Nicholas*, *O'Bannon*, and *Taylor* were specifically selected by Halsey, "because of their valorous fight up the long road from the South Pacific to the very end."

Following *Missouri* into Sagami Wan was a Royal Navy squadron led by battleship *Duke Of York*, flagship of Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser, commander of the British Pacific Fleet.

The small Japanese destroyer-escort *Hatsuzakura* ("Early Blooming Cherry"), one of the very last ships commissioned in the Imperial Japanese Navy (May 1945), brought harbor pilots and translators to *Missouri*. *Nicholas* then distributed them to other ships. On the Yokosuka side, the Japanese towed the battleship *Nagato* (the only Japanese battleship still afloat) out to anchor in Tokyo Bay in an attempt to salvage some shred of dignity.

On the morning of 28 August, the minesweeper *Revenge* (AM-110) led a group of minesweepers to ensure the path into Tokyo Bay was clear. Then, the first of 258 Allied ships steamed into Tokyo Bay. The first to enter were destroyer-minesweepers *Ellyson* (DMS-19), *Hambleton* (DMS-20), and destroyer-minelayer *Thomas E. Fraser* (DM-24). Then came the new *Gearing*-class destroyer *Southerland* (DD-743) and then *Twining* (DD-540). Next was the anti-aircraft light cruiser *San Diego* (CL-53), flagship of Rear Admiral Oscar C. Badger, commander of the occupation task force. (With 18 Battle Stars, *San Diego* was second only to carrier *Enterprise* (CV-6), which had earned 20 Battle Stars.) Next came destroyer-transport *Gosselin* (APD-126), destroyer *Wedderburn* (DD-684), and then seaplane tenders *Cumberland Sound* (AV-17) and *Suisun* (AVP-53).

Battleships *South Dakota* (13 BB-57) and *Missouri* (BB-63) entered Tokyo Bay, followed by six more U.S. and two British battleships. With 15 Battle Stars, *South Dakota* was tied with *North Carolina* (BB-55) for the most Battle Stars of any battleship, although *South Dakota* had suffered the most casualties of any battleship after Pearl Harbor. *North Carolina* remained on duty at sea off Japan with all the U.S. carriers, except for light

carriers *Cowpens* (CVL-25) and *Bataan* (CVL-29), which entered Tokyo Bay.

*Missouri* was selected for the site of the surrender ceremony by President Truman upon the recommendation of Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal. Not only was Missouri President Truman's home state, but the ship had been christened by his daughter Margaret. Forrestal also engineered a graceful compromise between the Army and the Navy after Truman named General MacArthur the Supreme Commander Allied Powers (SCAP), somewhat to the Navy's chagrin, which held that the service had done far more to bring about the defeat of Japan than McArthur and the Army. Forrestal suggested that the formal surrender be held aboard a ship, and that McArthur would sign for the Allied Powers and Nimitz would sign for the United States. The proposal was accepted.

*Missouri* anchored 4.5 nautical miles northeast of the spot where Commodore Mathew C. Perry's four-ship squadron had anchored in July 1853, an event that resulted in the "opening" of Japan to U.S. trade, literally at the point of a gun (actually, 73 of them). Halsey requested that the U.S. Naval Academy Museum (now part of NHHHC) dispatch the flag that had flown on Perry's flagship USS *Susquehanna* during the Japan expedition. Lieutenant John K. Bremyer, of the Navy's top secret courier service, carried the 31-star flag 9,000 miles, leaving Washington, DC, on 23 August with only stops for fuel at Columbus, Ohio; Olathe, Kansas; Winslow, Arizona; San Francisco; Pearl Harbor; Johnston Island; Kwajalein; Guam; and Iwo Jima. The last leg was via an Army-Navy rescue seaplane that arrived in Tokyo Bay on 29 August, and the whaleboat from *Missouri* smashed the plane's tail in the choppy seas. Halsey intended to fly the flag, but it was too fragile and had been backed by linen on the front side (so the stars are on the right). The flag was framed and mounted over the entrance to Captain Stuart S. "Sunshine" Murray's in-port cabin on the O-1 level, where it is visible in photos

of General MacArthur reading his opening statement. The flag is now back at the Naval Academy Museum.

On 29 August, Nimitz and his staff arrived in Tokyo Bay aboard two PB2Y Coronado seaplanes and embarked on battleship *South Dakota*. The same day, anti-aircraft light cruiser *San Juan* (CL-54) entered Tokyo Bay with destroyer *Lansdowne* (DD-486) and hospital ship *Benevolence* (AH-13), and linked up with destroyer-transport *Gosselin* to commence Operation Swift Mercy, the location, care, and repatriation of Allied prisoners of war. The first camp liberated was the Omori Camp, the largest in the Tokyo area. The senior allied POW in the camp was Commander Arthur L. Maher, who was also the senior survivor of the heavy cruiser *Houston* (CA-30), sunk in the Sunda Strait on 1 March 1942. Camp conditions were so appalling that Operation Swift Mercy was accelerated by 24 hours (ahead of General MacArthur's arrival) and, by the next day, 1,500 POWs had been rescued from Omori, with many more to follow from elsewhere in Japan.

Also on 30 August, the destroyer-transport *Horace A. Bass* (APD-124) pulled alongside battleship *Nagato* and put a prize crew of 91 sailors from battleship *Iowa* (BB-61) aboard, led by her executive officer, Captain Thomas J. Flynn. The group included 49 explosive ordnance disposal personnel of UDT-18. When Flynn ordered the captain of *Nagato* to lower the rising sun flag, the Japanese captain tried to delegate it to a lower-ranking officer, but Flynn insisted the Japanese captain haul it down himself. Flynn then assumed command of the Japanese battleship. At 1030, *San Diego* docked at Yokosuka, following the landing of the 4th Marine Regiment. Nimitz and Halsey went ashore and toured the Yokosuka Naval Base.

That same day, General MacArthur landed at an airfield near Yokosuka, two days later than originally planned due to a typhoon, and then proceeded to his new headquarters in Yokohama

in an old U.S.-made car that broke down multiple times. Nimitz and Halsey paid a call on MacArthur at his headquarters on 1 September, proceeding to Yokohama by the more reliable destroyer *Buchanan* (DD-486).



*Japanese Foreign Ministry representatives Katsuo Okazaki and Toshikazu Kase, and Lieutenant General Richard K. Sutherland, U.S. Army, correcting an error on the Japanese copy of the Instrument of Surrender at the conclusion of the surrender ceremonies, 2 September 1945. Photographed looking forward from USS Missouri's superstructure. Note the relaxed stance of most of those around the surrender table. The larger ship in the right distance is USS Ancon (AGC-4) (USA C-4626).*

At morning colors at 0800 Sunday on 2 September, *Missouri* hoisted the flag that the press claimed was flying over the U.S. Capitol on 7 December 1941, and which had subsequently flown over Casablanca, Rome, and Berlin when those cities fell to the Allies. According to *Missouri's* skipper, Captain Murray, it was "just a plain GI-issue flag." The national flags of all the Allied signatory nations were flown from the halyards.

At 0803, Allied representative arrived onboard *Missouri* from *South Dakota* via *Buchanan*. Nimitz arrived on a motor launch shortly afterward and broke his flag on *Missouri*. Halsey had already shifted his flag to *Iowa*. MacArthur arrived just after Nimitz. Both Nimitz's blue five-star flag and MacArthur's red five-star flag were flown at the exact same height, although Nimitz initiated a salute when MacArthur came on board and

MacArthur returned the salute. The uniform of the day had been a matter of significant discussion, but MacArthur and Nimitz actually had little difficulty reaching agreement with words to the effect, "We fought the war without ties, we'll have the ceremony without ties." So for the Navy, the uniform for officers was long-sleeve open-neck khakis, no ties, no ribbons—and for enlisted, white jumpers.

The table for the surrender proceedings was set up on the O-1 level, starboard side, just aft of the No. 2 16-inch gun turret. Two copies of the surrender document were on the table, one for Allies to keep and one for the Japanese to take. The senior signing officials for the Allied nations were in the front rank behind the table and other Allied officers behind them. Senior U.S. Navy and Army officers were in ranks inboard of the table. Staff officers and crew of *Missouri* crammed into every square foot of the ship that had a line of sight to the table. Commodore Perry's flag was prominently displayed above the arrayed officers.

In the line of U.S. officers was Vice Admiral John "Slew" McCain, who had just been relieved of command of Task Force 38, partly as a result of the findings of the board of inquiry following the damage suffered in Typhoon Viper. McCain just wanted to leave, but Halsey strong-armed him into staying for the ceremony, for which McCain subsequently expressed great gratitude. McCain returned to the United States four days later and died of a heart attack the next day.

Missing from the line-up was Admiral Raymond Spruance. Spruance was invited by MacArthur but declined. Nimitz and Spruance had agreed that Spruance should stay at sea, just in case of some Japanese perfidy. Spruance was aboard his flagship, battleship *New Jersey* (BB-62), off Okinawa during the ceremony.

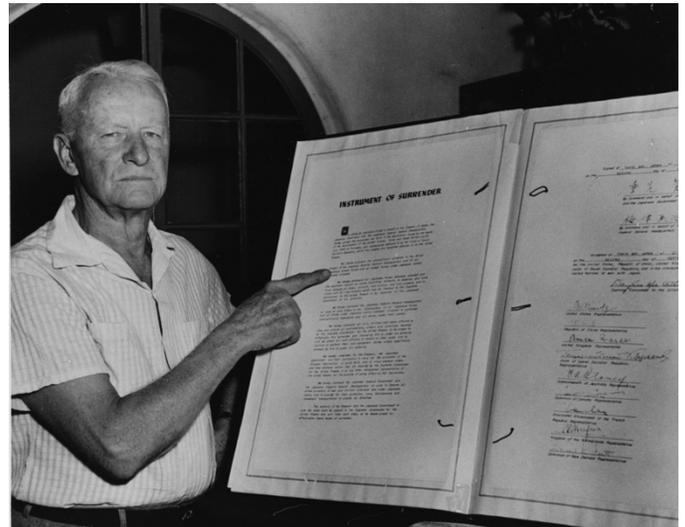
The destroyer *Lansdowne* picked up the 11-man Japanese delegation from Yokohama, arrived alongside *Missouri*, and transferred the

delegation to a launch that arrived at *Missouri* at 0856. The delegation was led by Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu, signing for the Japanese government, and Chief of the Army General Staff Yoshijiro Umezu, signing for the Japanese military. When Umezu was informed it would be his duty to sign, it took the personal intervention of Emperor Hirohito to keep him from committing suicide. The other nine members of the delegation were three each from the Foreign Ministry, army, and navy. The delegation was piped aboard *Missouri*, but no salutes were rendered. There was dead silence aboard the ship throughout the entire proceeding. Shigemitsu had difficulty climbing the ladder from the launch to the main deck and then to the O-1 level because of his artificial leg (he had lost his right leg in 1932 in an assassination attempt by a Korean independence activist). *Missouri* sailors with broomsticks in their pants had rehearsed this to get the timing right so that the ceremony could start at precisely 0900.

General MacArthur convened the proceedings and, following the national anthem, gave a short, powerful speech that included the words, "It is my earnest hope, and indeed the hope of all mankind, that from this solemn occasion a better world shall emerge out of the blood and carnage of the past—a world founded on faith and understanding, a world dedicated to the dignity of man and the fulfillment of his most cherished wish for freedom, tolerance, and justice."

MacArthur then directed the Japanese to sign. Shigemitsu got confused about where to sign, so MacArthur directed his Chief of Staff, General Richard Sutherland, to show Shigemitsu the appropriate line. After the Japanese signed, MacArthur signed first for the Allied Powers, using six pens. Nimitz signed next for the United States using two pens. He signed the Allied copy with a pen given to him three months earlier by Y. C. Woo, a Chinese refugee neighbor of Nimitz in Berkeley where the two families had become very close. (Nimitz returned the pen to Woo after the

ceremony, who re-gifted it to Chiang Kai-shek, and it ultimately wound up in a museum in the People's Republic of China, where it is today.) Nimitz then signed the Japanese copy using the same 50-cent green Parker Duofold pen he had carried throughout the war, which is now in the Naval Academy Museum. Nimitz confessed in a letter to his wife that he was thankful that he managed to sign in the right place.



*Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, USN, in his home at Berkeley, California, circa 1948, holds a copy of the Instrument of Surrender of the Japanese Empire (NH 62463).*

Eight other representatives of the Allied powers then signed the documents in the following order (which also matched the order in which they were arrayed behind MacArthur): China: General Hsu Yung-chang for China; Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser for Britain; Lieutenant General Kuzma Derevyanko for the Soviet Union; General Sir Thomas Blamey for Australia; Colonel Moore-Gosgrove for Canada (he did manage to sign in the wrong place, which caused a kerfuffle with the Japanese foreign ministry representatives until the signature was lined out and corrected); General Jacques Leclerc for France; Lieutenant Admiral Conrad Helfrich for The Netherlands; and Air Vice Marshal Sir Leonard Isitt for New Zealand.

Following a benediction, the ceremony ended at 0925. There were no salutes or handshakes. As

the Japanese were departing, 450 carrier planes and 600 B-29 bombers commenced the greatest airpower demonstration flyover in history.

History and Heritage Command (NHHC)  
*Dictionary of American Fighting Ships (DANFS)* for  
U.S. ships.

After the ceremony, the Soviet representative and Russian photographers staged a photo shoot at the surrender table that made it look like Lieutenant General Derevyanko was dictating terms to the Japanese. The Soviet delegation had generally made a nuisance of themselves before and during the ceremony, particularly when those on top of turret No. 2 stood up deliberately and blocked the view of many of the photographers.

Fleet Admiral Nimitz flew back to his forward headquarters on Guam the next day, taking along a Marine who had just been liberated from a Japanese prison camp. Nimitz described the Marine as “about the happiest young man I ever saw.” In all, 62,614 U.S. Navy personnel did not come home from the war; 36,950 due to enemy action.

Perhaps the last word should go to a Japanese naval officer who survived the war, Vice Admiral Masao Kanazawa: “Japan made many strategical mistakes, but the biggest mistake of all was starting the war.”

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Sources include: *The Naval Siege of Japan: War Plan Orange Triumphant*, by Brian Lane Herder, Osprey Publishing, 2020; *Hell to Pay: Operation Downfall and the Invasion of Japan, 1945-1947*, by D.H. Gianreco, Naval Institute Press, 2009; *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Vol. XIV: Victory in the Pacific, 1945*, by Samuel Eliot Morison, Little, Brown and Co., 1960; *The Admirals: Nimitz, Halsey, Leahy and King—The Five-Star Admirals Who Won the War at Sea*, by Walter R. Borneman, Back Bay Books, 2012; *The Fleet at Flood Tide: America at Total War in the Pacific, 1944-1945*, by James D. Hornfischer, Bantam Books, 2016; *Nimitz at Ease*, by Captain Michael A. Lilly, USN (Ret.), Stairway Press, 2019; combinedfleet.com for Japanese ships; and Naval

## H-053-3: Operation Desert Shield, September 1990

*H-Gram 053, Attachment 3*  
Samuel J. Cox, Director NHHC  
September 2020

### **Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm—Part Two: September 1990**

This ongoing series is a departure from my normal H-grams in that this is a personal recollection. I was the “Iraq Subject Matter Expert” on the intelligence staff of Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, for the entirety of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, serving under Vice Admiral Hank Mauz and Vice Admiral Stan Arthur. I first wrote this a number of years after the fact, but I kept it true to what I believed and understood to be true at the time. So, my dim view of joint operations as conducted during Desert Storm (which held the Navy back from making maximum contribution to the war) and U.S. Central Command, particularly the intelligence support architecture, will be readily apparent. My penance for this heresy was to spend 12 of the next 21 years in joint commands, including three years as commander of the U.S. Central Command Joint Intelligence Center, in which I had the opportunity to see vast improvement in U.S. joint operations.



*"50-Caliber Watch," oil on canvas board, John Charles Roach, 1991. Two armed sailors in protective gear stand watch near a .50-caliber machine gun on board USS O'Brian (DD-975) in the Persian Gulf (91-049-D).*

### **Desert Storm Deployment, USS Blue Ridge (LCC-19), August 1990–June 1991 (Operation Desert Shield, September 1990–January 1991)**

#### **Mina Salman, Bahrain, 1 September 1990**

USS *Blue Ridge* made a triumphal entry into Bahrain. The air conditioning had already broken and my stateroom was over 95 degrees. Prepared to be greeted by terrorists on the dock, the .50 caliber machine guns were mounted and the quarterdeck watch was armed to the teeth, all behind piled sandbags.

On the opposite side of the pier, the quarterdeck watch of USS *LaSalle*, flagship of the two-star Middle East Force Commander, was dressed in their usual shorts, sandals, and tropical white uniform shirts, reportedly looking at us like we were from outer space. Painted white to reflect the intense heat, *LaSalle* had been in the Arabian Gulf for years. Now, *LaSalle's* normal role as flagship for the senior U.S. naval commander in the region was being subsumed by the "foreigners" from the Western Pacific aboard the *Blue Ridge* with our three-star admiral.

The omens on *Blue Ridge* were not auspicious. The night before our arrival, the senior gunner's mate was instructing the quarterdeck watchstanders in the safe operation of the .45-caliber pistol and managed to accidentally discharge a round into the overhead of the chief's mess.

Within the first week, there were two more accidental discharges on the quarterdeck. The joke quickly went around that standard operating procedure on the *LaSalle* was to "duck" whenever the watch changed on the *Blue Ridge*. Shortly after, all the guns were taken away from the sailors. We'd take our chances with the terrorists.

Still starved to learn more about Iraqi readiness and operating patterns since the end of the Iran-Iraq War, I went to the Middle East Force intelligence office on the *LaSalle*. I was dismayed to discover that because of six-month and one-year tour rotations they had even less corporate knowledge than I did and their sense of urgency did not seem particularly acute. Years of being treated like a backwater had taken its toll.

Although they may have gotten a good laugh at the mighty *Blue Ridge*, it wasn't long before the Middle East Force was swept by several high-profile firings, including the senior intelligence officer.

## **Mina Salman, Bahrain early September 1990: "Maritime Interception Operations"**

A U.S. Navy warship fired the first shot of the conflict with Iraq. I believe it was the frigate USS *Reid* that fired a shot across the bow of an Iraqi tanker in an unsuccessful attempt to get the tanker to stop. The incident is a bit fuzzy in my memory because it happened about 18 August, when the *Blue Ridge* was still in the Pacific and we were already experiencing major communications backlogs; many messages simply went into a black hole. By the beginning of September, the maritime interception operations (MIO) enforcing United Nations Security Council resolutions against Iraq were in full swing, and the Seventh Fleet (now designated U.S. Naval Forces Central Command—NAVCENT), under the command of Vice Admiral Mauz, was in charge of it. As other services commenced deploying assets and building up for future conflict, the Navy immediately began operations against the enemy.

One of the first things the United Nations Security Council did after Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait was to slap economic sanctions on Iraq that prohibited Iraq from selling oil abroad, to include its own oil or oil stolen from Kuwait. The enforcement mechanism was initially somewhat vague and there was some disagreement among Security Council members as to whether or how much force could be used to enforce the sanctions. It took several weeks to sort out UN and U.S. policy. In the meantime, U.S. warships began encountering Iraqi merchant ships, but did not have clear guidance on what to do. In the shooting incident in August, the Iraqis called our bluff because the U.S. Navy had not yet received direction or approval for using more force. During this confused period, a number of Iraqi merchant ships and tankers successfully returned to Iraq while others made their way to ports of nations that were still friendly to Iraq, particularly the port of Aden, Yemen, and, to a lesser extent, Aqaba, Jordan, and Port Sudan.

By the beginning of September, with the paperwork now in order, the U.S. Navy, joined by coalition navy partners, began enforcing the sanctions in earnest. Coalition navy forces were authorized to stop and board any ship leaving Iraq or Kuwait to ensure it was not carrying oil, and to stop, board, and divert ships of any nation that were inbound to Iraqi or Kuwaiti ports, or to Aqaba, Jordan, that were found to be carrying prohibited cargo.

The first Iraqi merchant ship to be boarded and searched by a U.S. warship was the cargo vessel *al Karamah* off of Aqaba at the very end of August, but since she was empty, she was allowed to proceed into Aqaba. The first Iraqi merchant vessel to actually be diverted was the cargo ship *Zanoobia* in early September, which was forced to put into Muscat, Oman, and eventually had to return to her port of origin with her cargo of tea.

Perhaps the most memorable MIO event occurred in mid-September. The Iraqi supertanker *al Fao* was transiting from Aden to Iraq off the coast of Oman when she was intercepted by the frigate USS *Brewton* and the Australian frigate HMAS *Darwin*. The skipper of *al Fao* ignored repeated queries and demands for his ship to heave to and prepare to be boarded. *Darwin* was assigned the mission of on-scene commander because the Australians were actually given more aggressive rules of engagement by their government than the U.S. Navy had been. After *al Fao* ignored several warning shots across the bow, the skipper of *Darwin* used some ingenuity. *Darwin* streamed her larne (a floating target used for practice bombing by aircraft) and then cut across the bow of *al Fao* with the larne in tow. The skipper of *al Fao* had no clue what the larne was, whether it was some kind of explosive device or something to foul his screws. Sufficiently spooked, *al Fao* finally stopped and consented to boarding. After all that, however, *al Fao* was determined to be empty, and a loophole in the sanctions regime allowed empty ships to return to

Iraq, so *al Fao* was let go. After this example, several other large empty Iraqi tankers departed Aden and made a successful break for it back to Iraq, a decision that would have serious consequences after the war started.

By October, most of the 20 or so ships in the Iraqi merchant fleet were pretty much fixed in place, either back in Iraq or in Aden. Inbound traffic to Iraq dropped off dramatically as most nations of the world agreed to honor the sanctions voluntarily. Large-scale boarding activity continued off the port of Aqaba, and coalition naval forces had the difficult task of sorting out legitimate cargo that was destined for Jordan from illegitimate cargo that was being smuggled through Jordan to Iraq, frequently with falsified manifests and paperwork. By the end of year, over 6,000 merchant ships had been intercepted and somewhere around 750 boarded. It was extremely demanding, tough work by boarding teams from coalition ships, mostly out of the media spotlight, which was focused on U.S. Air Force and Army deployments to the Arabian Peninsula. Possibly the worst duty during Desert Shield/Storm was to be a boarding party inspecting a "Sheep Ship" (ships taking live sheep, usually from Australia, to Saudi Arabia for slaughter) in the typical withering heat of the Middle East, in a revolting stench that was beyond belief.

From an intelligence perspective, providing support to ships engaged in MIO was an exercise in considerable frustration, primarily because there was no truly reliable way to get intelligence information to destroyers and frigates that weren't operating in close company with an aircraft carrier. It was even harder to get it to the numerous non-U.S. warships that joined in helping enforce the sanctions. Very few surface ships had the capability to receive Special Compartmented Information (SCI) message traffic, which prevented them from getting anything classified higher than basic secret-level intelligence. There was no way to transmit

pictures or diagrams to them. In some cases, we were able to get complete ship's plans of vessels that were about to be boarded, but had no way to get the plans from the flagship to the ships that would actually be conducting the boarding hundreds of miles away. Even regular communications systems were completely overloaded and backlogged, especially during the August/September period and then again in November during the second surge of deploying units. Numerous intelligence messages were simply lost in the ether, to the frustration of everybody. Message traffic transmitted at the highest precedence (flash or op immediate) could frequently take days to weeks instead of minutes to reach its destination. Messages sent at priority or routine precedence were basically doomed to oblivion.

The most difficult MIO event occurred following Christmas in a deliberate Iraqi challenge to the sanctions-enforcement regime. The Iraqi freighter *Ibn Khaldoon* loaded a cargo of sugar, milk, tea, and other foodstuffs (for the "starving" Iraqi babies), and about 250 international peace activists, and commenced a transit inbound for Iraq. The Iraqis were hoping to use the activists to create an incident and came very close. The boarding would have to be handled with great care in order to prevent a public relations disaster. In this case, we also managed to get the schematic plans of the *Ibn Khaldoon* to the boarding vessels by putting them in an empty sonobuoy (normally used to track submarines) and dropping it from an S-3 to be retrieved from the water by the boarding ship. During the boarding in the Gulf of Oman, the peace activists formed a human chain to resist the boarding team. A scuffle ensued when one of the activists made a grab for a boarding team member's weapon, forcing the boarding team to fire warning shots and tear gas, the first and only time that happened during a boarding. After being diverted to Oman, searched, and forced to offload some prohibited goods, *Ibn Khaldoon* and her cargo of misguided souls were eventually

allowed to continue to Iraq, where they would arrive just a few days before the start of the war to be cynically used by the Iraqi government as "human shields."

Maritime interception operations continued for another 13 years after the end of the war.



"Hospital Ship Comfort at Sitra," watercolor by John Charles Roach, 1991. Hospital ship USS Comfort (T-AH-20) with a barge alongside, in port Sitra, Bahrain (99-049-T).

### Mina Salman, Bahrain, Late September 1990

What do you say to a man who has lost his family, his country, and everything except his ship? I could only figure that my boss, Commander Wayne Perras, didn't know what to say either as he made small talk and waxed eloquent about how good the shrimp cocktail was. The scene just struck me as totally bizarre. The Kuwaiti skipper must have thought we were from Mars.

We were hosting a meeting and dinner with the commanding officer of *Istiqlal*, one of the two Kuwaiti missile patrol boats to have escaped from Kuwait in the first hours of the stunningly rapid Iraqi invasion. The rest of the Kuwait navy had been captured without having a chance to get underway or even fire a shot.

The skipper had little to say as we dined off the fine china, silver, and linen in the Flag Mess (the dining room for the admiral's staff), eating the excellent food while the Iraqis were systematically

looting and destroying much of our guest's country. There had already been reports of Iraqis killing numerous innocent civilians. The Kuwaiti seemed lost in thought. When he spoke, he described how he had just barely been able to get his missile boat underway and escape the harbor as Iraqi special forces closed in on the first night of the invasion. He stated he had no idea if the family he'd left behind was alive or dead. To say this put a damper on the rest of the conversation was an understatement, since it caused the rest of us to ponder how we would react if we were in his shoes. Although we were concerned by the prospect of an undetermined and extended separation from our families, at least we knew they were safe back in Japan. His situation certainly put things in stark perspective. (Of note, however, sometime during this deployment, the Japanese terrorist group Chukaka Ha fired a couple of homemade rockets in the general direction of the U.S. Navy housing compound near Yokohama. Although nothing was hit, it did get our attention.)

The Kuwaiti skipper then described how he had engaged in a gun battle with an Iraqi *Osa*-class missile boat as his own vessel fled the harbor at Ras al Qalayah. He claimed he had actually hit the Iraqi boat and he was pretty certain he had sunk it. This would be a great achievement, since the *Osa* boats were the most dangerous units in the Iraqi navy with their proven SS-N-2 Styx antiship missiles. Commander Perras shot me a quizzical glance, since neither of us had heard any report at all about a battle between Iraqi and Kuwaiti naval vessels. As the staff current intelligence officer, it was my job to know the status and operations of the Iraqi navy, so I found the Kuwaiti skipper's claim of utmost interest.

Afterward, my boss and I discussed the plausibility that an Iraqi *Osa* boat had been sunk on the opening night of the war. There had been absolutely no report from any source suggesting that there had been any kind of naval battle at all. Nevertheless, the order of battle in the official

database for the Iraqi navy said there were five *Osa II* and two *Osa I* PTGs (missile patrol boats) and I had been unable to account for two of the *OSA II*s since the beginning of the war. If one of them had been sunk, that would certainly help explain why.

I'd been deeply suspicious of the order-of-battle numbers for several weeks. I was familiar with Iraqi navy operating patterns during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, and it was highly unusual for Iraqi vessels to be out of port for more than a few hours at a time, or a day or two at most. The best explanation I could come up with when I briefed the admiral was that the Iraqis might be keeping the two missing missile boats tied up to one of the many Kuwaiti oil platforms they had captured in the northern Arabian Gulf, either as a defensive dispersal tactic or to be waiting in ambush for our forces should we venture that far north. I assessed it was highly unlikely they would have been operating at sea for that long or that they would have been patrolling completely undetected.

In my first phone call to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) headquarters in Tampa, I specifically asked if they could verify if there had been synoptic imagery coverage (i.e., near-simultaneous coverage of all Iraqi naval facilities) that showed all seven *Osa* boats at the same time, because I was having doubts the two missing *Osas* actually existed. The officer on the other end of the phone seemed offended by my insinuation that the order-of-battle database might be wrong, and asserted that, yes, CENTCOM was sure all seven *Osas* existed, which didn't answer my question about synoptic coverage. CENTCOM was wrong.

A couple weeks later, analysts at the Naval Operational Intelligence Center in Suitland, scrubbing old reporting, determined that the two missing *Osa*'s had in fact actually been sunk by Iranian aircraft during an engagement in the northern Arabian Gulf in 1988 near the end of the Iran-Iraq War. No one had bothered to update the

database. Explaining to the admiral that the two "unlocated" Osa boats actually didn't exist wasn't the high point of my career as an intelligence officer.

The Osa discrepancy was only the first of many I discovered as I closely scrutinized the databases. I had several analytic disputes with CENTCOM, such as why the database indicated that Iraqi Tu-22 Blinder bombers carried AS-4 missiles (a highly lethal long-range anti-ship missile), when the Soviets had never exported either the AS-4 or the variant of the Blinder capable of carrying it? Why had half the SA-6 surface-to-air missile (SAM) launchers supposedly in the Iraqi inventory never been located?

One of my more frustrating exchanges with CENTCOM concerned their assertion that the Iraqis had the AS-11 (a highly lethal medium-range anti-ship missile) that I also knew the Soviets had not exported to that point. I argued that they had it confused with the AS.11 (a French-made helo-launched, wire-guided anti-tank missile) that the French had widely exported. CENTCOM seemed to view the discrepancies as trivial (the difference between a "dash" and a "dot"), but the distinction was critical. If the Iraqis really had the top-of-the-line Soviet ship-killer AS-4 or AS-11 missiles, it was highly unlikely the Navy would have risked operating aircraft carriers in the very confined waters of the Arabian Gulf where it would be extremely difficult to defend against those types of high-speed missiles. In effect, U.S. Navy forces operated in the Arabian Gulf because I advised my boss to blow off the official order of battle.



*"Interdiction and Confirmation," watercolor by John Charles Roach, 1991. Maritime interdiction operations (MIO) in the Persian Gulf during Operation Desert Shield (99-049-C).*

Some time after the war, I ran into a CENTCOM officer who remarked that, of all the service components during Desert Storm, Naval Forces Central Command had submitted by far the fewest numbers of formal "requests for information" (RFIs) to Central Command, something he found inexplicable. So, I explained, "Well, after getting bum gouge on five out of the first seven RFIs, I didn't see the point in asking for more bad intelligence." We submitted the rest of our RFIs directly to the CIA via our embarked Joint Inter-Agency Liaison Element (JILE) team, or directly to the Navy Operational Intelligence Center, bypassing and ignoring CENTCOM.

In my heart, I had hoped the Kuwaiti skipper's account of sinking an Osa had been true; that he, practically alone among the Kuwaiti military, had

extracted some cost to the Iraqis for invading his country. Unfortunately, it wasn't.

(To be continued in *Part 3: October 1990*)

### **Manama, Bahrain. Late September 1990**

It was the first night off the ship for most of the NAVCENT intelligence staff since our arrival in Bahrain four frenzied weeks earlier. We'd worked non-stop at breakneck pace because no one was sure whether the Iraqi halt at the Saudi-Kuwait border was permanent, or whether the Iraqi Republican Guard armored divisions would resume offensive operations at any moment; there was precious little to stop them if they chose to attack. But one night, we decided we just had to go ashore, and half a dozen intelligence officers piled into our duty car and went looking for dinner and alcohol.

The mood in Bahrain was eerie and grim. I imagined it was akin to Paris in early 1940, waiting for the other shoe to drop. The Bahrainis had generously taken in huge numbers of Kuwaiti refugees fleeing the brutal Iraqi occupation and yet the capital, Manama, seemed ghostly and deserted. Most businesses were shuttered. Commercial flights had been suspended after most Western expatriates had evacuated. Those few diehard "expats" that remained, mostly Brits, were throwing nightly "backs to the wall" blowout parties as if there would be no tomorrow.

We found a restaurant that had been highly recommended and was actually open: *Senor Paco's*. It struck me as a cross between Rick's American Café in *Casablanca* and Chi-Chi's. I had a strange "What's wrong with this picture?" feeling. We'd steamed thousands of miles to a war zone, on the far side of the globe, deep in the heart of the exotic and mysterious Islamic world—so we could eat chimichangas and drink margaritas.

I also noted that one grenade on the outdoor patio would have taken out the entire intelligence staff.