

U.S. NAVY OPERATIONS IN WORLD WAR II

"ON THE VERGE OF BREAKING DOWN COMPLETELY"

SURVIVING THE KAMIKAZE OFF
OKINAWA, 1945



GUY J. NASUTI

During the Battle of Okinawa (1 April–22 June 1945), American sailors confronted their most destructive enemy of the Pacific War: the kamikaze of the Imperial Japanese Special Attack Corps.

Over the course of what quickly became the deadliest engagement ever fought by the U.S. Navy, American naval officers and their crews developed new tactics to counter the brutal onslaught of a suicidal enemy whose sole purpose was to demoralize the U.S. fleet and inflict as many casualties as possible. With Japanese hopes for a negotiated peace fading, the nation's military leaders viewed the kamikaze as their last hope to prevent U.S. forces from reaching the home islands and compelling Japan's unconditional surrender. Indeed, for the first time in the war, the number of U.S. sailors who perished was greater than the number of American soldiers or Marines who died fighting to secure the island.

Drawing on the accounts of enlisted sailors, NHHHC Historian GUY J. NAUSTI sheds new light on the desperate struggle off Okinawa and provides fresh insight into the terrifying ordeal of men under the relentless assault of suicide attacks. Ultimately, American sailors' tenacity and ability to adapt in order to win during World War II should serve as enduring inspiration to those serving in the U.S. Navy today.



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