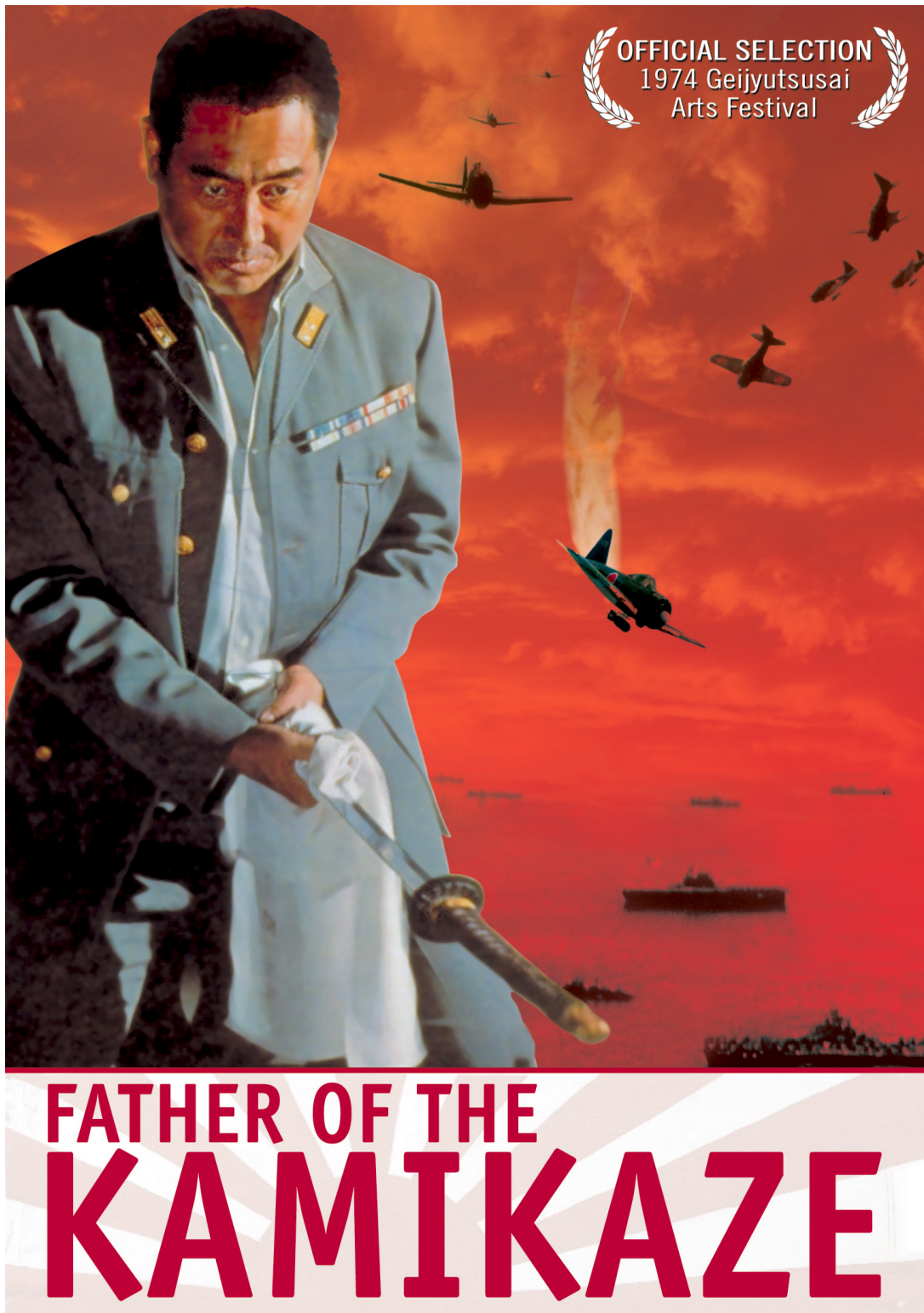
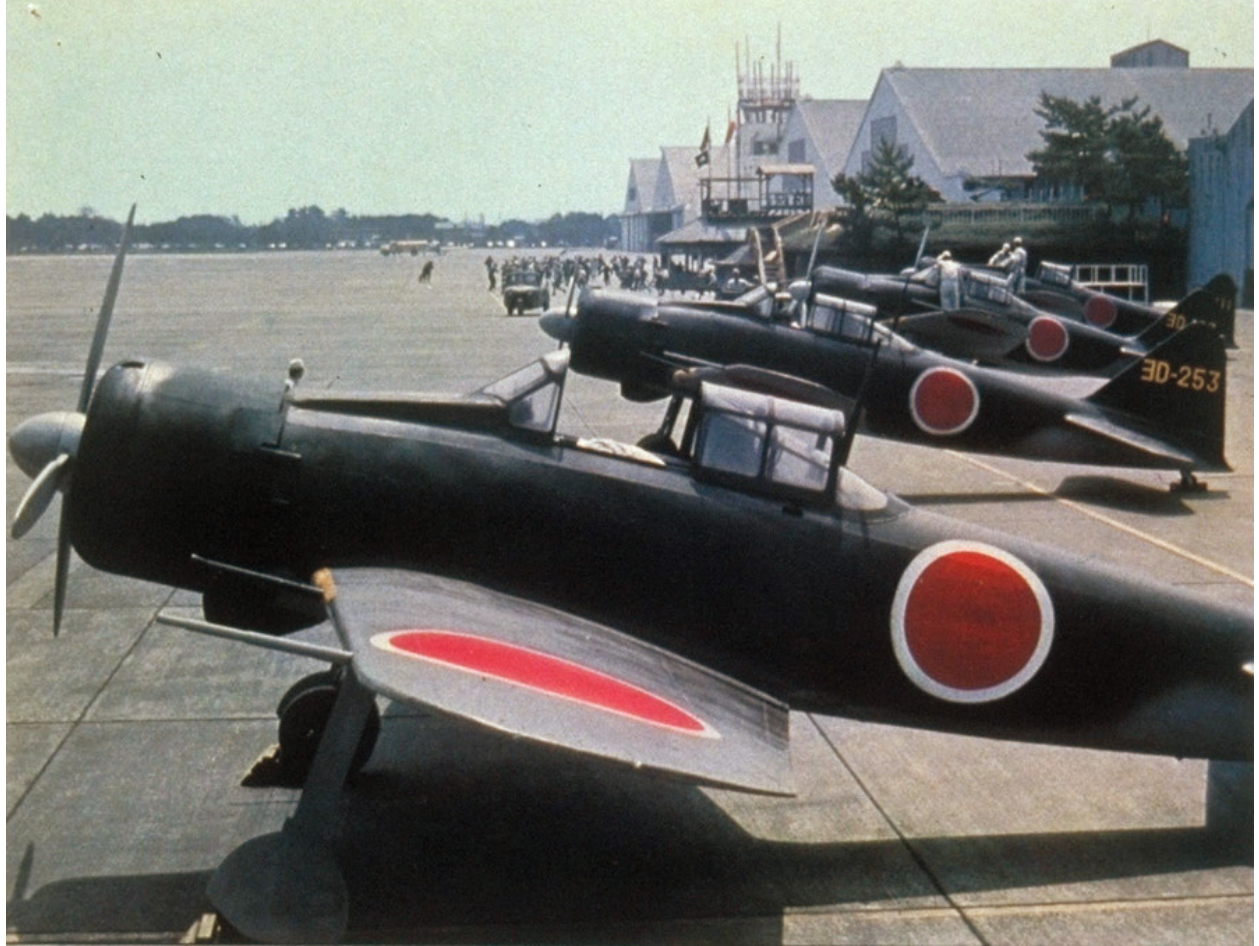


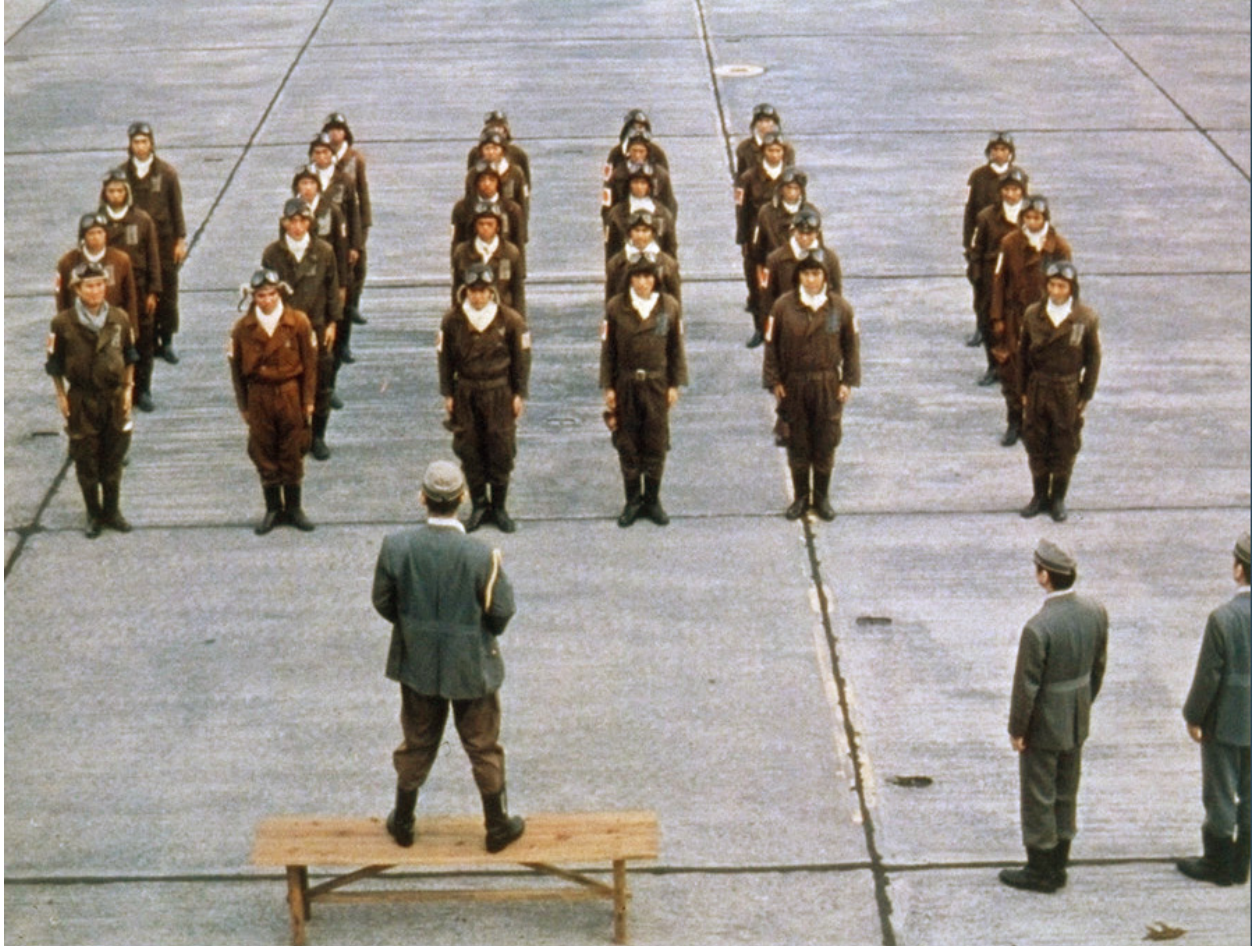
Editor's Note: The following program notes have been compiled using the best available sources. Due to the continued debate regarding certain elements of the Pacific War, discretion should certainly be practiced. AnimEigo's limited research is hardly definitive, especially regarding the more sensitive and controversial areas.











Koji Tsuruta (December 6, 1924 - June 16, 1987)

Known as Toshiro Mifune's acting rival in Japan (he co-starred in 17 films with Mifune), Koji was a famous actor who appeared in over 250 films. He is best known to Western audiences as Musashi Miyamoto's (Mifune) rival, Kojiro Sasaki, in Hiroshi Inagaki's *Samurai 3: Duel at Ganryu Island*. As a testament to his star power in Japan, he received top billing in the film over Mifune who was already an international star. However, before Koji became a screen legend he was known as one of postwar-Japan's most famous singers and had a multitude of hits. Even at age 46, Koji topped the charts with the single, "A Life full of Wounds" (1970), a song about being an old man in the modern world.

When he succumbed to lung cancer at age 63, he was buried with the Imperial Navy flag on his coffin, a commemoration to his service in the Navy at the end of WWII. He won a posthumous award for his career achievement from the Japanese Academy in 1988.

Kamikaze

Kamikaze is the name given to the Japanese suicide attacks that occurred near the end of the Pacific campaign of WWII. Although there were other similar attacks throughout the war, the "suicide attack" became synonymous with the time period during Japan's imminent defeat, near the beginning of 1944, a time when the Allied forces were advancing toward the Japanese islands.

During these attacks, Kamikaze pilots attempted to intentionally crash their aircraft into opposing ships, with the hope of inflicting more damage than a conventional attack would have caused. To ensure maximum damage, the aircrafts were usually stocked with extra explosives and full fuel tanks.

Kamikaze pilots were the most common form of Japanese suicide during the war, however the military used

other suicide attacks involving midget submarines, human torpedoes, speedboats, and divers.

Kamikaze etymology

The term kamikaze can be translated as “divine wind” (“kami” means “god”, “kaze” means “wind”) and originated in the thirteenth century when typhoons, given the name “kamikaze,” scattered the invading Mongol fleets. The formal Japanese term for the WWII suicide attacks is “tokubetsu kogeiki tai” (the abbreviated version is “tokkotei” or “tokko” for short) which translates to “special attack unit.” The term for the specific air attacks was “shinpu tokubetsu kogeiki tai” (divine wind special attack units).

However, a point of confusion is that the Japanese never used the term “kamikaze” in relation to the attacks. US translators used the indigenous Japanese pronunciation for “Shinpu” (which uses the same kanji characters as “kamikaze”), giving the English language the word “kamikaze.” This phrase eventually gained worldwide acceptance, and after the war, was reimported into Japan where the attacks are now known as “kamikaze tokubetsu kogeiki tai.”

Imperial Japanese Navy (1869 - 1947)

Modeled after the Great Britain's Royal Navy, the Imperial Japanese Navy was established during the Meiji Restoration and by 1920, had become the third largest navy in the world, trailing only the US and Great Britain. By 1941 the Japanese Navy was the most sophisticated navy in the world. However, the money and resources to support such an undertaking accounted for 32% of Japan's national budget (By comparison, the US military budget in 2007 accounted for 20% of federal spending, 29% of which went into the Navy/Marines). Japan's large fleet included 10 battleships, 10 aircraft carriers, 38 cruisers, 112 destroyers, 65 submarines, various auxiliary ships, as well as the Yamato, the largest and most heavily armed battleship in history.

Although the Japanese Navy enjoyed huge successes at the beginning of the war, the US ultimately gained the upper hand with their technological advances to its air and naval forces and had a greater industrial output. As seen in the film, the Navy eventually resorted to desperate measures during the last phase of the war, launching the kamikaze attacks. When Japan surrendered to the Allies at the conclusion of WWII, their entire military was dissolved. Currently, Japan's navy is part of the Japan Self-Defense Forces, and has strict limits on its ability to act. However, recent enmity with North Korea and China has reignited the debate over defense policy.

Historical Figures

Eleventh Air Fleet Chief of Staff, Rear Admiral Onishi Takijiro

Onishi Takijiro was born on June 2, 1891. He was an admiral in the Imperial Japanese Navy from the beginning of World War II, and became the head of the Naval Aviation Development Division in the Ministry of Munitions during the Pacific Campaign, where he eventually became known as the father of the Kamikaze. Although Onishi opposed an attack on Pearl Harbor because he knew it would lead to a war in which Japan could be forced into an unconditional surrender, he was still responsible for some of the technical details of the 1941 attack. When Onishi was promoted to vice admiral, he became very interested in psychology, specifically in studying how soldiers reacted during the critical times of war. In 1944, Onishi became the commander of the First Air Fleet in northern Philippines, which is where he is credited with introducing Kamikazes as a fighting tactic. When Onishi visited the 201st Navy Flying Corps headquarters on October 19, 1944, he was quoted as saying “In my opinion, there is only one way of assuring that our meager strength will be effective to a maximum degree. That is to organize suicide attack units composed of A6M Zero fighters armed with 250-kilogram bombs, with each plane to crash-dive into an enemy carrier... What do you think?” On August 16, 1945, after the unconditional surrender of Japan, Onishi committed seppuku in his quarters and left a suicide note apologizing for the 4000 kamikaze pilots he had sent to their deaths. He also urged the youth who had survived to rebuild Japan and work for peace among nations. Onishi offered his death as penance to the Kamikaze pilots and their families, and suffered without a kaishakunin (second), dying of self-inflicted injuries over a torturous period of 15 hours.

Eleventh Air Fleet Commander-in-Chief, Vice Admiral Tsukahara Nishizo

Born April 3, 1887 in Fukui Prefecture, but officially residing in Kofu city, Yamanashi Prefecture, Nishizo was an admiral in the Imperial Japanese Navy during the time of the War. Nishizo attended the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy, graduating 20th out of 119 in his class of 1908. In 1914 he was promoted to lieutenant and served on the Umikaze (destroyer) and several other ships. In 1920, Nishizo graduated from the Naval War College in Japan and was promoted to lieutenant commander, where he held a number of naval aviation staff positions. From 1925-1926, Nishizo was sent to the US and Europe and upon his return became the executive officer on the aircraft carrier Hoshō. In 1929, he was promoted to captain and was given command of Oi (a Kuma class light cruiser) and then Akagi (an aircraft carrier). Nishizo was promoted to rear admiral on November 15, 1935 during which he commanded fighter squadrons, and four years later, was once again promoted, this time to vice admiral. From September 10, 1941 to October 1, 1942, Nishizo was the Commander in Chief of the 11th Air Fleet, which was involved in the invasion of the Philippines (a victory for Japan). When the Allies landed on Guadalcanal and Tulagi in 1942, Nishizo moved the 11th Air Fleet to Rabaul to more closely direct air attacks against the Allied forces. From December 1, 1942 to September 15, 1944, Nishizo worked as the Director of Naval Air Command and was then promoted to full admiral on May 15, 1945. He died on January 10, 1966, and his grave is at the Tama Reien Cemetery in Tokyo.

Eleventh Air Fleet Senior Staff Officer, Captain Takahashi Chihaya

Takahashi served 27 years in the Navy. He was a naval officer who had a wide range of experience as a pilot having 2000 hours of flying time. From May 1941 to December 1942, he was the Chief of Staff of the 11th Air Fleet, during which he was in charge of operations in the Philippines, Celebes, and Malaya areas at the outbreak of World War II in 1941. When the threat of Japan's invasion became imminent, Takahashi then served as Senior Staff Officer for 3rd and 4th Air Fleets in 1945.

Commander Okamura Motoharu, Captain of the Tateyama Shinrai Unit

Okamura Motoharu was in charge of the Tateyama Base in Tokyo, as well as the 341st Air Group Home, and according to some sources, was the first officer to officially propose Kamikaze attack tactics, by arranging with his superiors for the first investigations on the plausibility and mechanisms of intentional body-crash attacks in June 15, 1944. He was a veteran fighter pilot, who instructed the Yokosuka Air Corps at the War's outbreak. He also commanded a fighter group under Vice Admiral Kimpēi Teraoka. He came up with the Hornet Corps, which meant that when a hornet attacks, he dies, but so does his enemy. Motoharu Okamura commented that "there were so many volunteers for suicide missions that he referred to them as a swarm of bees, explaining: 'Bees die after they have stung.'" The navy decided to put Motoharu's idea into practice, creating the Oka bomb which went into production in September 1944. The Oka was a small rocket glider with tiny wings and a cockpit and was attached to the bottom of a land-based bomber. The glider pilot would ride with the mother plane crew then when the target was reached, then board the Oka, and, after it was released, guide it to its target.

Upon acceptance of Okamura's idea, he was appointed to commander of Katori Air Base where he trained pilots and their crews how to use the bomb. Okamura was very valuable to Japan, and therefore his superiors wouldn't allow him to lead any missions. When the war ended, Okamura shot himself in the face as penance for sending so many young men to their deaths.

Commander Kozono Yasuna, Captain of the Atsugi Air Corps

Kozono Yasuna was the Commander of the Atsugi Airdrome, which was the top aviation base in Japan, where only the best pilots flew. When Japan was forced into an unconditional surrender, Yasuna, along with the Kamikaze pilots who had vowed to defend Japan to its end, revolted and held the base hostage for seven days. Yasuna was of the 251st Kokutai in Rabaul and came up with the idea of converting the J1N1-C (a twin engine craft used by the Japanese Imperial Navy) into a night fighter.

Minister of the Navy and Naval General Staff Secretary-General, Admiral Shimada Shigetaro

Shimada was born in 1883 and graduated from the Naval Academy in 1904. By 1929, Shimada had moved up in the ranks steadily and was promoted to Rear Admiral. Shimada held many posts within the navy; most notably as the Commanding Officer of the battleship Hiei and the C-in-C of the IJN 2nd Fleet. On February 21, 1944, Shimada became supreme commander of the Imperial Japanese Navy with the title of Naval Chief. Shimada's power made him many enemies in the naval General Staff and the Emperor's court. Prime Minister Hideki Tojo eventually asked Shimada to resign, after which he was then appointed as Chief of the General

Navy Staff. He retired from active duty on January 20, 1945, but after the war he was arrested as a war criminal and was convicted of five counts, including planning, participating, and waging an aggressive war against the U.S., U.K., China, and the Netherlands. An aggressive war is a crime under the customary international law and is defined as a military conflict waged in the absence of a "necessity of self-defense, instant, overwhelming, leaving no choice of means, and no moment of deliberation." He was sentenced to life in prison but was paroled in 1955. Shimada died in Tokyo on June 7th, 1976 at the age of 92.

Combined Fleet Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Toyoda Soemu

Toyoda Soemu was born on May 22, 1885 and died on September 22, 1957. He was a good student at the Imperial Japanese Navy Academy and quickly rose through the ranks before the War. On September 18, 1941, shortly before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Soemu was promoted to full admiral, and became C-in-C of the Kure Naval District. Soemu was strongly opposed to going to war against the US, believing that Japan could not win. Soemu became a member of the Supreme War Council, where he made a strong effort to increase funding for naval aviation. However, he was strongly opposed, specifically by the Army-dominated Imperial General Headquarters, and was demoted and reassigned to command the Yokosuka Naval District. On May 3, 1944, Soemu was appointed C-in-C of the Combined Fleet which was the main ocean going component of the Imperial Japanese Navy. Soemu implemented both "Plan A-go" and "Plan Sho-Go," which, while aggressive defensive strategies, led to Japan's defeat in the Battle of the Phillipine Sea and the Battle of Surigao Strait. From April 25, 1945 onward, Soemu was the final supreme commander of the Imperial Japanese Navy. Soemu played a large part in the issues concerning Japan's surrender, but did not agree with the stipulations set by an unconditional surrender, as he believed that Japan should continue fighting and defending Japan until the last man. When Japan's conditional surrender was rejected by the US, Emperor Hirohito ignored Soemu's protests and brought the war to an end with unconditional surrender. Soemu was charged as a war criminal, but was the only one of many accused that was not found guilty on all counts. He published his memoirs in 1950, and died in 1957 of a heart attack.

Minister of the Navy, Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa

Mitsumasa Yonai was born March 2, 1880 in Morioka, Iwate Prefecture, Japan and died on April 20, 1948. Yonai graduated from the 29th class of the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy in 1901 and ranked 68 out of 115 cadets. Yonai graduated from the Naval War College in 1912 and was then assigned as naval attache to Russia during World War I from 1915-1917. Over the years, Yonai moved up through the ranks and by April 1937 he had become full admiral and Navy Minister in the cabinet of Prime Minister Senjuro Hayashi. As Navy Minister, Yonai was alarmed by the growing tension between Japan, the US, and Great Britain, and began to promote peace and speak out against war, which made him unpopular and the target of many assassination attempts. Yonai was appointed Prime Minister of Japan on January 6, 1940 and was strongly backed by Emperor Hirohito. Yonai was very pro-British and pro-American and was against the Tripartite Pact (basically stating the alliance between Germany, Italy, and Japan which officially founded the Axis Powers) with Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. Yonai was pressured by the Pro-Axis Imperial Japanese Army and forced to resign on July 21, 1940. Yonai then became Navy Minister under Prime Minister Kuniaki Koiso and held the position until 1945. While Navy Minister, Yonai supported the Potsdam Declaration which outlined the terms of Japan's surrender, and also presided over the final dissolution of the Imperial Japanese Navy. After the war, Yonai spent the rest of his life rebuilding Japan. Yonai was featured on the cover of TIME magazine more than once during his lifetime and is only one of 23 Japanese individuals that have been featured on the cover. Yonai died of pneumonia at the age of 68. His grave is located in his hometown of Morioka.

Naval General Staff Secretary-General, Admiral Oikawa Koshiro

Oikawa Koshiro was born into a wealthy family on February 16, 1883 and died on May 9, 1958. He served as a midshipman after graduating from the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy, became lieutenant in 1911, and a captain in 1923. In 1928 he was promoted to rear admiral and just two years later was appointed to the Imperial Japanese Navy General Staff, where he soon became Director of the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy. Oikawa strongly pushed for ratification of the London Naval Treaty in the 1930s. He continued rising through the ranks until his promotion to full admiral in 1939, after which he began working in cabinet jobs, his first as Minister of the Navy in 1940 under Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoe. While Minister of the Navy, he wanted to maintain ties with the US to prevent war, and he also strongly opposed war with the Soviet Union in 1941. He was dropped from the cabinet when prime minister Tojo Hideki came to power in 1941, but continued to serve as Naval Councilor until he became chief of the Navy General Staff in 1944. He resigned in protest when

Emperor Hirohito refused to acknowledge any peace proposals at a time when the war was already lost. Oikawa retired from active duty on September 5, 1945, and also testified at the Tokyo war crimes trials.

Navy Lieutenant Seki Yukio

Seki Yukio was born in 1921 in Iyo Saijo in Shikoku, and planned a Navy career from an early age. In 1938, Yukio attended the Japanese Naval Academy at Eta-Jima. He graduated in 1941, a month before the Pearl Harbor attacks, and in 1942, Yukio enrolled in the Naval flying academy in Kasumigaura, Ibaraki and after basic training he was transferred to Usa, Oita, where he was trained as a dive bomber operating out of carriers. In September 1944, Yukio was transferred to Tainan, Taiwan and then to the 201st flotilla in the Philippines, leaving his wife behind in Kamakura. Lieutenant Yukio was given the chance by group commander Asaiki Tamai to lead a special attack which would lead to his death. It is said that Yukio closed his eyes, lowered his head, thought for 10 seconds, before saying "Please do appoint me to the post." Yukio became the leader of the squadron "Shikishima," which conducted the first official Kamikaze attack, and which was the first to sink an enemy ship. The attack was made on four escort carriers of Taffy 3. While Yukio agreed to the mission, it is said that he would do everything possible to drop the bomb without killing himself. Prior to the attacks, Yukio was quoted as saying that "Japan's future is bleak if it is forced to kill one of its best pilots. I am not going on this mission for the Emperor or for the Empire...I am going because I was ordered to!" It is still unknown today whether or not Yukio crashed into the American carrier as a kamikaze, but his bomb was critical in sinking the American ship.

201st Air Corp Executive Officer, Commander Tamai Asaichi

Commander Tamai Asaichi was the executive officer of the 201st Air Group which was based in the Philippines near the end of the war. On Oct 29, 1944, Asaichi, along with others was asked by Vice Admiral Takijiro Onishi to perform kamikaze missions to ensure the success of Operation Sho-Go. Asaichi agreed to carry out the attacks, and is noted for forming the first official kamikaze unit.

First Air Fleet Senior Staff Officer, Captain Inoguchi Rikihei

Inoguchi Rikihei was a naval officer who became an aviation officer toward the end of the war. He spent half of 1944 in New Guinea as an officer with the 153rd Air Corps, and was also a staff officer with the 23rd Air Squadron in Celebes. He was then named the Chief of Staff with the 1st Air Fleet in Aug 1944, a position which he held until the end of war, and which involved him in the operation of many special attack units. Both Rikihei's nephew, a kamikaze pilot, and his brother, a battleship captain, sacrificed their lives for Japan, and Rikihei was proud of the people who volunteered to carry out these suicidal attacks. In 1958, Rikihei, along with Tadashi Nakajima, wrote *The Divine Wind: Japan's Kamikaze Force In World War II*.

201st Air Corp Flight Captain Yokoyama Tamotsu

On June 18, 1940, Lieutenant Tamotsu Yokoyama was transferred to the Yokosuka Naval Air Corps because of his excellent flying technique. Yokoyama was a great fighter pilot, and he was responsible for organizing one squadron of the new 12Si fighters for operational testing by the Aeronautical Headquarters and then to take them to China. Yokoyama was considered to be a flying ace, which is a military aviator credited with shooting down several enemy aircraft during aerial combat.

Vice-Admiral Takeo Kurita

Vice Admiral Takeo (Takeo means warrior) Kurita was born in Mito city, Ibaraki prefecture on April 28, 1889 and died on December 19, 1977; he was a vice admiral in the Imperial Japanese Navy during World War II. He graduated from the 38th class of the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy and was ranked 28th out of 149 students. He rose through the ranks and was a rear admiral in command of Cruiser Division 7 at the time of the Pearl Harbor attacks. Kurita is best known as the Commander in Chief of the Imperial Japanese Navy 2nd Fleet during the Battle of the Sibuyan Sea and the Battle off Samar, which are both part of the Battle of Leyte Gulf. The Imperial Japanese Navy 2nd fleet included the largest battleships in the world, Yamato and Musashi. While Kurita believed in dying a respectable death, he did not believe in suicidal deaths, which in Japanese culture were held in high regard. Kurita was ordered to attack the American landings at Leyte, which Kurita thought was a waste of ships and lives. He hated his superiors for forcing him to carry out a suicidal mission while they remained safe at home. Kurita's ships were attacked three times, so Kurita called off his attack and

turned his fleet away from Leyte Gulf. In the next battle off Samar, Kurita was once again forced to retreat. Kurita was criticized by some for not fighting to the death and was removed from command but reassigned as commandant of the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy to protect him from assassination. Years later, Kurita privately admitted to a former Naval Academy student that he withdrew from the battle because he did not believe in wasting lives in a futile effort, believing that the war had been lost long before. Following the Japanese surrender, Kurita found work as a scrivener and masseur and lived out the remainder of his days quietly, making twice-yearly pilgrimages to the Yasukuni Shrine. He died in 1977 at the age of 88, and is buried at the Tama Reien cemetery outside of Tokyo.

Tactical Planning Director, Commander Terai Yoshimori

Terai Yoshimori served 17 years in the regular Navy. At the beginning of the War he was an Air Attache at the Japanese Embassy, and was later assigned duties at the Navy Department and Naval General Staff from June 1942 until the end of war. His duties involved training and allocations of pilots to the Naval Air Force through Naval Air Headquarters.

Minister of the Army, Admiral Army Anami Korechika

Korechika Anami was born February 21, 1887 and died August 15, 1945. He was the War Minister at the surrender of Japan. He attended the Imperial Japanese Army Academy and in 1918 he graduated from the Army War College with the rank of captain. In May 1943, Anami was promoted to full general, and in April 1945 was appointed War Minister. Anami was very outspoken in his opposition to Japan's surrender. Even after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Anami still would entertain the idea. Instead, he wanted a large scale battle to take place on Japanese soil. Emperor Hirohito ignored his arguments and requested an end to the war. Anami's supporters suggested that he either resign or vote against surrender. On August 14, 1945, Anami signed the surrender document and then committed suicide by seppuku the next day. His suicide note read: "I - with my death - humbly apologize to the Emperor for the great crime." Anami's grave is at Tama Reien Cemetery, in Fuchu, Tokyo, and his sword and blood-spattered uniform and suicide note are on display at the Yushukan Museum next to the Yasukuni Shrine.

Foreign Minister Togo Shigenori

Togo Shigenori was born December 10, 1882 and died on July 23, 1950. Togo was the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Japan at both the beginning and end of World War II. He also served as Minister of Greater East Asia in 1941 and again in 1945. Togo was among many of those who doubted that Japan could win a war against the United States and advocated the surrender of Japan to the US. He was for the acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration which he felt provided Japan with the best conditions for peace. While others still did not wish to surrender after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Togo was among the Cabinet Ministers who wished to surrender in the summer of 1945. While Togo did not wish to go to war, he refused to place the responsibility on others, so he signed the document of the declaration of war as if it were his sole responsibility. Togo was charged as a war criminal and was sentenced to 20 years in prison, where he died from an illness.

Chief of Staff, Admiral Umezu Yoshijiro

Umezu was born on January 4, 1882 in Oita Prefecture. He graduated from the 15th class of the Imperial Japanese Army Academy in 1903, and after graduating at the top of his class at the Army Staff College, he was sent to study in Germany and Denmark. In the 1920s and 30s, Umezu held a number of positions in the Imperial Japanese Army General Staff and was promoted to major general in 1930. In 1944, Umezu became Chief of the Imperial Japanese Army General Staff and a member of the Supreme War Council. Umezu was opposed to surrendering during World War II. He felt that Japan should fight on, but was inevitably forced by Emperor Hirohito to sign the surrender document. After the war, Umezu was charged as a war criminal and sentenced to life imprisonment on November 12, 1948. He died in prison of cancer in 1949.

Chief Cabinet Secretary, Sakomizu Hisatsune

Sakomizu was born August 5, 1902 and died July 25, 1977. Sakomizu was the chief secretary to the Cabinet of Japan during World War II. Under the newly-appointed Prime Minister Admiral Kantaro Suzuki, he investigated and analyzed the economic conditions of Japan. Sakomizu found that Japan's resources were being depleted rapidly and that the nation would not be able to support fighting a war for more than a few months. In addition

to what he referred to as “a great disruption of land and sea communication and essential war production,” coal and oil supplies were also in rapid decline, as well as a scarcity of health and support for the war effort. Sakomizu’s report provided valuable documentation to Japanese officials who supported a peace plan between the US and Japan.

Kodama Yoshio

Kodama Yoshio was born on February 18, 1911 in Nihonmatsu, Japan, and was a prominent figure in the rise of Japanese organized crime. Early in his life, Yoshio formed an ultranationalist group that plotted to assassinate opposition Japanese politicians. Yoshio was caught and subsequently served 3.5 years in prison. After his time in prison, Yoshio worked for the Japanese government moving supplies for the war effort out of continental Asia into Japan. While doing this Yoshio became involved in the drug trade, smuggling opiates to Japan along with the supplies that Japan was paying him to smuggle. He formed a vast network of allies and made millions of dollars smuggling drugs, making him one of the richest men in Asia. After World War II, Yoshio was arrested by the US as a war criminal. While imprisoned, Yoshio wrote about his experience in prison and wrote an autobiography called *I Was Defeated*. The US released Yoshio in the late 1940s, in exchange for his help in fighting Communism in Asia. Using his fortune and allies, he was able to root out Communist sympathizers and fight the socialist presence in Japan. Yoshio was involved in numerous scandals, many of which involved the CIA and US businesses. The Lockheed L-1011 sales scandal (bribery scandals that involved a series of bribes and contributions made by officials of the US aerospace company Lockheed from the late 1950s to the 1970s) marked the end of his career, and Yoshio died in his sleep in 1984 from a stroke.

As seen in the film, Kodama was very close to Onishi. However, it is unclear if Onishi was aware of Kodama's illicit activities.

“We have done all the research, based on our earlier skip-bombing training.”

Skip bombing was a low-level bombing technique used by Major William Benn of the United States Army Air Force against Imperial Japanese Navy warships during the Pacific War. To accomplish the maneuver, aircrafts would fly at very low altitudes at speeds up to 250 mph while releasing a “stick” of two to four bombs (up to 1000 pounds) equipped with four to five second time delay fuses. The bombs would skip over the water and would either bounce into the side of the ship and detonate, submerge and explode under the ship, or bounce over the target and explode as an airburst (detonate in air instead of making contact with the target). All of these outcomes were effective, but the drawback was that the technique required a large amount of skill and extensive training.

“Hey, the evening primrose is about to blossom.”

The evening primrose is a flower that gets its name because of its unique trait of opening in the evening. The primrose is usually yellow in color, but can also be found in white, purple, pink, or red. Evening primrose oil can be used for eczema and inflammation.

“I think the attack was launched from a fleet of carriers.”

The B-29 was one of the largest airplanes to be in service during WWII. It was extremely advanced for its time, featuring innovations such as a pressurized cabin, a central fire-control system and remote controlled machine gun turrets. It was the primary aircraft used by the US's firebombing campaigns against Japan in the final months WWII. B-29s were also used to carry the atomic bombs to Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Note: B-29's were not carrier-based, so Onishi is saying it wasn't a B-29 raid.

“General MacArthur’s invasion force, escorted by Admiral Halsey’s fleet was headed straight for the Philippines.”

General Douglas MacArthur was the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in the Pacific Theatre. He received the Medal of Honor for his service in the Philippines and on the Bataan Peninsula. MacArthur oversaw the occupation of Japan, implementing far-reaching democratic changes in the country.

Fleet Admiral William Halsey was the commander of the United States Third Fleet during part of the Pacific theatre during World War II.

When MacArthur returned back to the Philippines (Leyte Island) on October 20, 1944, with Allied forces, he was covered by aircraft from Admiral Halsey's carriers. The carriers provided air support for MacArthur until the rainy season ended.

“I have returned... (MacArthur's Famous Speech)

In March 1942, MacArthur was evacuated from the Philippines, but vowed to return. The islands soon fell to the Japanese and the Japanese occupation was extremely harsh. MacArthur supplied the Filipino guerilla resistance groups with weapons so they could keep control of the rural areas and in October 1944, MacArthur returned to the Philippines uttering the famous phrase, “I have returned.”

Note: The voice-over in the film is not his actual speech, but actually a combination of what he said and what he wrote in private letters.

“To accomplish this we will have to load each of our Zeros with 250 kilos of explosives and send them on suicide-bombing attacks.”

Regarded as the best carrier-based fighter in the world upon its introduction, the Mitsubishi A6M Zero was a lightweight fighter aircraft that was operated by the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service from 1940-1945. The “A” stood for the fighter, the “6” stood for the sixth model, and the “M” stood for Mitsubishi.

The Zero had a great combination of maneuverability and range and was justly feared by Allied pilots. However, the plane's reputation quickly declined with the introduction of improved Allied aircraft by 1942, which were more powerful, and had better weapons and armor.

“We want you to accept the white-feathered arrow... and command the attack.”

The white feathered arrow comes from an ancient Japanese legend of a god who shot a white feathered arrow onto the roof of the house where the girl he liked lived. This expression is now used to describe someone who has been singled out for a promotion. It can also be used to describe someone who has been singled out for a difficult task.

The U.S. submarines Darter and Dace... spotted the great armada off the Palawan passage, early dawn of October 23.

On October 23, 1944, US submarines Darter and Dace made contact with the Japanese Center Force that was approaching Palawan Passage. The submarines closed in on the Japanese, initiating the Battle of Surigao Strait phase of the Battle for Leyte Gulf. Darter sank the flagship Atago and seriously damaged another cruiser, Takao. Dace and Darter continued to track the damaged cruiser through Palawan Passage, but Darter became stuck on Bombay Shoal. The many efforts to get Darter off the shoal all failed. All confidential papers and equipment were destroyed and all the men were moved on to Dace. Efforts to destroy the ship were also made so the Japanese would not be able to use it. Both submarines received the Navy Unit Commendation, an award given by the Secretary to any ship, aircraft, detachment, or other unit of the US Navy which distinguishes itself against the enemy.

“Gunny!” (Jyuucho = gun leader/commander = equivalent to a gunnery sergeant)

Gunnery Sergeant is the 7th enlisted rank in the United States Marine Corps. A Gunnery Sergeant is typically in charge of coordinating logistics for a company-sized group of Marines. “Gunnies” are held in great esteem, and officers who ignore the advice of their Gunny do so at their considerable peril.

“At 10:45 AM., the Shinpu Shikishima Squadron attacked an enemy fleet containing four aircraft carriers 30nm north-east of Suluan Island.”

A nautical mile, used in the shipping and aviation industries, is a unit of length which corresponds to one minute of latitude along any meridian. One nautical mile converts to exactly 1,852 meters (1.15 statute miles).

Suluan Island is a small island in the Philippines and is best known as the first landing place of Ferdinand Magellan's Armada.

“Boss, this is my flight-bento, please give it to someone who’s hungry.”

A bento is a single portion takeout menu or a home packed meal that is common in Japan. A bento usually consists of rice, fish, meat, and vegetables.

April 1, 1945: The US invades Okinawa

The Battle of Okinawa (aka Operation Iceberg) was the largest amphibious assault of the Pacific campaigns of World War II. It lasted about three months, from March to June of 1945. The legendary battle is sometimes referred to as the “Typhoon of Steel” due to the ferocity of the fighting, the intensity of gunfire, and the sheer numbers of Allied ships and troops that assaulted the island.

In the end, more people were killed during the battle than in both atomic bombings combined. 90% of the buildings on the island were completely destroyed, and the lush tropical island was left a vast field of mud, lead, decay, and maggots. The U.S. occupation of Okinawa provided a base in an ideal strategic proximity to Japan, though American losses at Okinawa were so extensive that the U.S. Congress called for an investigation into the conduct of the U.S. military commanders. Some historians, such as Victor Davis Hanson, believe that Okinawa led directly to the use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, because the fierce defense and immense casualties led the U.S. to seek “alternative means to subdue mainland Japan, other than a direct invasion.”

“Fine, we’ll have a shogi duel when I return, so go set up the board.”

Shogi, which literally translates to “generals game” or “generals chess,” is a Japanese board game similar to chess. It is the most popular family of chess variants native to Japan.

“This outfit makes me look like Kiratsune has become a Vice Admiral.”

Kiratsune is a character from the 1936 film *Hishakaku and Kiratsune (Theater of Life)*, based on Koyo Ozaki's novel of the same name. In the film, Kiratsune is an old gangster who is released from an eight year sentence in a Shanghai prison to become a bodyguard.

“That’s a fine Kan’non statue. Young lady, you should take good care of it.”

The statue the lady carries is a likeness of Kan'nnon, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

“Prime Minister Suzuki, supported by Foreign Minister Togo and Navy Minister Yonai asked the Soviet Union, which was neutral towards Japan, to act as an intermediary but instead, the Soviet Union declared it was abrogating their treaty.”

The Japanese hoped that the Soviet Union, their nominal ally via a neutrality pact, would negotiate with the Western Allies.

Foreign Minister Togo Shigenori spoke with Sato Naotake, Japan's ambassador in Moscow, on the subject of establishing “firm and lasting relations of friendship” with the Soviet Union, focusing on the status of Japan-controlled Manchuria and “any matter the Russians would like to bring up.” After Sato met with Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov on July 11, he told Togo that “unconditional surrender or terms closely equivalent thereto” was all that Japan could expect to receive.

“Man, what a surprise. My balls have shrunk! If it’s broken, my woman will cry.”

The pinky-finger gesture done by the gangster here means “woman.”

“Not only was the nation running out of war machines and fuel but even saltpeter, a key ingredient in of gunpowder, was in short supply.”

The components of gunpowder are saltpeter (potassium nitrate), charcoal and sulfur.

Gunpowder was originally discovered in China during the 9th century by alchemist-monks who were searching for a potion of immortality. Today, potassium nitrate can be mass produced using the Haber Process, a reaction of nitrogen and hydrogen over an iron catalyst, which produces ammonia. After the process the ammonia is oxidized, creating nitrates that can be used for fertilizers or gunpowder.

They have no changes of clothes, so their underwear is infested with lice.

Fundoshi was the main form of underwear before World War II, until briefs and trunks hit the Japanese market.

“All they’ve been eating are daikon-radish leaves and potato vines.”

Daikon is a mild-flavored East Asian giant white radish and has a mild flavor. The leaves of daikon are also edible.

“The Grumman are pounding our airfields. If we engage them, we get shot down.”

Established in 1929, the Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation was the leading US producer of military and civilian aircraft in the 20th century.

During World War II, the F4F Wildcat and F6F Hellcat were the most famous fighter aircraft produced by the company.

June, 1945. The Soviet Union had captured Germany.

The Battle of Berlin was one of the last battles of the European Theatre of World War II and led to the capture and the surrender of Germany in May 1945. The battle lasted from April 1945 to early May 1945 and was one of the bloodiest battles in history.

“At the secret Yalta conference, the US promised Sakhalin Island and the Kuriles to Russia in return for declaring war on Japan.”

Roosevelt wanted the Soviet Union to enter the Pacific War with the Allies. For the Soviet Union to agree for a declaration of war against Japan, they wanted a USA-USSR recognition of Mongolian independence from China. This agreement went into effect without diplomatic negotiations with China. The Soviet Union attacked Japanese forces before a formal declaration of war was issued and seized northern parts of the Japanese archipelago (Sakhalin).

The Kremlin

Kremlin is the Russian word for “citadel,” “fortress,” or “castle.” It also refers to any major formidable central complex found in historic Russian cities. The most well known is the Moscow Kremlin, which is located in the center of Moscow (the capital of Russia). The Moscow Kremlin has four palaces and four cathedrals. It is also the residence of the President of Russia.

“In the meantime, on July 16, the Potsdam Declaration, an ultimatum to Japan was drawn up by the leaders of the US, Great Britain, and China.”

On July 26, the Allied forces (except for the Soviet Union) released the Potsdam Declaration, announcing the terms for Japan's surrender and warning that they would accept no deviation, alternatives, or delay. They called for the occupation and disarmament of Japan, along with the punishment of war criminals and those who had “misled the people of Japan into embarking upon world conquest.” However, it stated that Japan could maintain industries to pay reparations, and that the occupying forces would leave Japan when a “peacefully inclined and responsible government” had been established (it was not clarified if the Emperor was considered one of those who had “misled the people of Japan” or would be a part of the new government). The Allies warned that the consequence for rebuffing the Potsdam Declaration was “prompt and utter destruction.”

“That same day, the US detonated the world’s first atomic bomb in a desert in New Mexico.”

Trinity was the name given to the first test for a nuclear weapon. It was conducted by the US on July 16, 1945, 35 miles southeast of Socorro, New Mexico. The Fat Man bomb, which was the same design of the test bomb used in New Mexico, was dropped in Nagasaki, Japan a few weeks later. The Trinity detonation is considered as being the beginning of the Atomic Age.

“Meanwhile, the government, still hoping for Soviet mediation on Japan’s behalf had to placate extremists such as Vice-Admiral Onishi and so the Prime Minister declared that the Potsdam Declaration would be ‘ignored’.”

The Emperor's inner circle was divided on how to respond to this, with some advocating outright rejection and others wanting to measure the reaction of the Soviets. Although the Japanese people were alerted to the situation by the leaflets the Allies dropped over Japan, the Japanese papers downplayed the Declaration. Prime Minister Suzuki Kantaro supplemented this media campaign by stating that it was a “rehash of the Cairo Declaration” and that the government found no value in it.

Atomic bomb dropped on the city of Hiroshima. 247,000 dead. 130,000 injured.

Atomic bomb dropped on the city of Nagasaki. 74,800 dead. 40,000 injured.

On the morning of August 6, the 393rd Bombardment Squadron, aboard the B-29 Enola Gay, dropped the first atomic bomb (code-named “Little Boy”) on Hiroshima, leveling the city. Still, knowing how difficult building an atomic bomb was, many Japanese leaders refused to believe that the Americans had been successful. Worsening the situation was the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, who on August 9 broke the neutrality pact. On that same day, the United States dropped a second atomic bomb (code-named “Fat Man”), this time on Nagasaki.

“As there was now no hope of negotiating a peace, early on August 9th the Emperor informed the government that he had decided to accept the Potsdam Declaration, and the government immediately sent a telegram to the Allies acknowledging their acceptance of unconditional surrender.”

After the atomic bombs were dropped, the full cabinet split on a course of action, and the Emperor was asked to break the deadlock. After learning more of the conditions around his land, he said, “I swallow my tears and give my sanction to the proposal to accept the Allied proclamation.” The cabinet accepted his will, and announcements were sent to the Allies that the Potsdam Declaration would be accepted “with the understanding that Japan does not compromise to any demand which prejudices the prerogative of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler.” The Allies returned with an edict stating that the Emperor and the Japanese people would be under the rule of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (General Douglas MacArthur), and the “ultimate form of government shall be established by the freely expressed will of the people.”

The cabinet wanted to reject this, but Togo warned that they would not receive better terms. Facing a deadlock over continuing the war or surrendering to the Potsdam terms, the cabinet returned to the council of the Emperor. After listening to the arguments one more time, he maintained his position for surrender, and the cabinet immediately ratified his wishes.

“It’s Malaria. I had a bout of it in Rabaul.”

Malaria is a infectious disease caused by protozoan parasites (mosquitos). It is widespread in tropical and subtropical regions. There is no vaccine for malaria, but preventative measures can be taken to reduce the risk of infection.

While in Rabaul many Japanese troops died from Malaria because they could not control the mosquito problem. The Japanese also lacked any medical supplies which would fight malaria. The malaria problem was so bad that many Zero pilots claimed that ill health was the leading cause of death at Rabaul.

August 14th

The night of August 14 was a tumultuous one for the Japanese people. First, on that night, the final and largest

bombing raid of the Pacific was launched. 800 bombers and 200 fighters dropped 6,000 tons of explosives and incendiary weapons on eight Japanese cities. Even though this was only half of the explosive power of one of the atomic bombs, it did significant damage to the target cities.

Second, a group of Army officers launched a coup. They forged orders for the Imperial Guards Division and occupied the grounds of the Imperial Palace. At the same time, Army Minister Anami Korechika committed seppuku, leaving a message that he “humbly [apologized] to the Emperor for [his] great crime.” Anami had always been a fierce opponent of surrender, and it is unclear if his “great crime” was losing the war or his part in the Army’s attempted coup. The coup broke down in the night, and the group of Army officers were unsuccessful.

The events of August 14-15th are recounted in [Japan's Longest Day](#), also released by AnimEigo, starring Mifune Toshiro as Anami.

August 15th

At noon on August 15, the Emperor’s recorded speech to the nation, the “Imperial Rescript on Surrender,” was broadcast. It heralded the bravery and sacrifice of the Japanese people, spoke of the ferocity of the atomic bomb and its destruction, and touched upon the coming difficulties of the occupation. The Emperor’s speech concluded with this line: “It is according to the dictates of time and fate that We have resolved to pave the way for a grand peace for all the generations to come by enduring the unendurable and suffering what is unsufferable.”

Although Japan had surrendered to the Allied forces, they were still at war with the Soviets and the Chinese. The Soviet Union continued to fight until early September, taking the Kuril Islands. On August 28, Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, began the occupation of Japan. Japan formally surrendered on September 2, when Japanese officials signed the Japanese Instrument of Surrender in Tokyo Bay. This officially ended World War II.

“Sir... He slit his stomach in a straight line, then stabbed his own throat.”

Seppuku, also known as hara-kiri in English, is a form of Japanese ritual suicide by disembowelment. Traditionally, the warrior would dress ceremonially, with his sword in front of him and sometimes seated on special cloths, and write a death poem. With his selected attending assistant (kaishakunin, his second) standing behind him, he would open his kimono, take up his wakizashi (short sword) or tanto (knife) and plunge it into his abdomen. From there, he would perform a left-to-right cut and then a second slightly upward stroke to spill out his intestines.

On the second stroke, the kaishakunin would perform daki-kubi, all but decapitating the head from the body (a slight band was left attaching the head to the body - a skilled swordsman was needed!). Some samurai chose to perform the more taxing form of seppuku, known as jumonji-giri, in which there was no second. It involved a second, and more painful, vertical cut across the belly, and the warrior was expected to bear his suffering quietly until perishing from blood loss.

“A soldier’s primary duty is to be completely loyal.”

Here, Kozono is reciting from “Gun-jin choku ron” (The Imperial Discourse for Soldiers).

The Legacy of the Kamikaze: Modern Suicide Attacks in the New American Century

Suicide attacks have occurred throughout history, but only in recent years, perhaps due to the impetus of Japanese kamikaze pilots in World War II, has this specific attack tactic gained deadly notoriety as a means of warfare. The Japanese suicide pilots were a unique case due to their militarized organization coupled with their religious motivation. Even though some pilots were coerced and intimidated into their suicide attacks, many truly believed that they were dying for their Emperor, and that the divine wind was a blessing for their souls. The Japanese authorities organized kamikaze pilots into collective suicide units, and managed to mobilize 4,615 kamikaze during the War. However, there have been nearly half that number of suicide bombers in Iraq alone, with far less central organization to motivate them.

Although the kamikaze pilots may have been the first mainstream instance of organized suicide attacks, it wasn't until the 1980s that these actions became more rampant throughout other parts of the world, particularly the Middle East, with incidents involving explosives carried either by the attacker, or in a civilian vehicle delivered by surprise. A devastating 1983 truck bombing in Beirut killed 300, and the perceived success of the tactic began spreading to insurgent groups like the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka, and Islamist groups such as Hamas. Recently, suicide attacks have grown rapidly, from an average of less than five a year in the 1980s to 180/year at the turn of the century. Those who are hardest hit by suicide attacks have been targets in Sri Lanka, Israeli targets in Israel since 1993, Iraqis since the US-led invasion of the country in 2003, and Pakistanis and Afghans since 2005.

Though this film and others provide much insight into the motivation behind Japanese kamikaze attacks, the motivations behind suicide attacks in the last couple decades is still a highly-debated topic, with varying approaches. Many believe that contemporary suicide attacks have become popular because of their fatal effectiveness, but the attackers' motivation is often disputed. Some attribute over 90% of attacks prior to the Iraq Civil War to a goal of withdrawal of occupying forces, while others argue that since 2004 the majority of bombers have been motivated by the ideology of Islamist martyrdom. We'll examine some of these viewpoints below:

Profile and Motivation: Pathology, Idealism, and Religion

Pathology

There are many theories of attacker pathology, but there is not always a clear-cut motivation across-the-board, as many factors, including political and religious ideology, inevitably come into play.

One early reaction to contemporary suicide bombings was to assume that the attackers were motivated by despair, coming from a lower, neglected class of society. This viewpoint has been expressed by George W. Bush and the Dalai Lama, among others. Two separate 2007 Afghanistan studies found that 80% of the suicide attackers had some kind of disability, including mental illness, missing limbs, cancer, or any number of other life-threatening ailments. Also, unlike earlier portrayals of suicide bombers, the Afghan attackers were "not celebrated like their counterparts in other Arab nations. Afghan bombers are not featured on posters or in videos as martyrs."

However, further studies in other terror networks did not show the same correlation. One particular study of 400 Al Qaeda attackers "found a lack of antisocial behavior, mental illness, early social trauma or behavioral disorders such as rage, paranoia, narcissism" in the subjects. Another 2003 study "casts doubt on the widely held belief that terrorism stems from poverty, finding instead that terrorist violence is related to a nation's level of political freedom." More specifically, this is "experienced during times of political transitions, when governments are weak..."

Some economists suggest that the tactic of a suicide attack "goes beyond symbolism and is actually a response to commodified, controlled, or devalued lives, as the suicide attackers apparently consider family prestige and financial compensation from the community as compensation for their own lives."

Idealism

Those who subscribe to the doctrine of asymmetric warfare will view suicide attacks as a result of an imbalance of power, in which groups of little power attempt to demoralize targets with much greater power. Those with significant power, of course, need not resort to such guerilla tactics to achieve their aims, so consequently, suicide attacks are overwhelmingly associated with smaller, irregular fighting forces, which often embrace religious overtones of martyrdom, believing that their sacrifices will be rewarded in the afterlife. Attackers can often justify their actions in this way because they are fighting conditions or forces that they perceive as unjust.

One of the most prolific experts on contemporary suicide bombers is Robert Pape, director of the Chicago Project on suicide terrorism. His studies have drawn many interesting conclusions, including his findings that 95% of recent suicide attacks have the same strategic goal: "to cause an occupying state to withdraw forces from a disputed territory." Pape found that targeted countries often had a democratic government with a policy influenced by public opinion, but that there were many other characteristics at stake, including religious differences between the target and attacker, grassroots support for the attack, Islam, especially the influence of

Salafi Islam, brutality and cruelty of occupiers, competition among militant groups, and poverty, immaturity, poor education, past history of suicide attempts, or social maladjustment of the attackers. One correlation he could make for certain was that attackers were overwhelmingly from the educated middle classes, and are also disproportionately male (though the Chechen rebels and Kurdistan Workers Party have a history of employing women attackers).

Though suicide attackers are often a part of a group, some describe recent suicide attack campaigns as a new development in martyrdom, which Hugh Barlow calls predatory martyrdom. They say that some individuals are inspired by emails, radical books, and the internet, and then act alone, motivated by their own extremist ideals.

Religion

According to the Chicago Project on Suicide Terrorism, out of 300 suicide terror attacks from 1980-2003, 224 (or 75%) involved Islamist groups or terror acts in Muslim-majority lands. Other studies have concluded that the massive increase in suicide bombings over the last 5 years are motivated by the ideology of Islamist martyrdom. According to The Independent, as many as 2,000 Muslim suicide bombers (as of early 2008), have killed at least 13,000 men, women, and children in Iraq alone.

However, several scholars and analysts, including Roper Pape, who found that 95% of suicide attacks from 1980 to early 2004 were a direct response to foreign occupations, dispute the claim that Muslim suicide bombers are a product of Islamic fundamentalism. Pape says, "Though it speaks of Americans as infidels, al-Qaeda is less concerned with converting us to Islam than removing us from Arab and Muslim lands."

Though many Sunni scholars reject suicide, there are several outspoken Muslim authorities who support suicide attacks on perceived enemies of Islam. Some Islamist militant organizations (like Al-Qaeda and Hamas) argue that suicide operations are justified according to Islamic law, despite Islam's strict prohibition of suicide and murder. Though there is obviously debate within the Muslim community, the outspoken extremists have created and perpetuated the notion in Western eyes that this is solely a religious issue, and many interpret the Muslim jihad as a violent, universal holy war against the Judeo-Christian way of life. This idea was perpetuated by U.S. neoconservatives immediately following 9/11, who immediately associated the attacks from Saudi Muslim extremists into a larger religious context in order to justify the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, in accordance with the Plan for a New American Century (PNAC). The danger of Islamophobia is immediately apparent in public opinion of foreign policy, even at the time of this writing.

In September 2008, this idea was perpetuated by a pro-McCain group who sent 28 million DVDs to swing states entitled *Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West*, a film which has been criticized as a propaganda film "for portraying Islam as a threatening religion bent on the destruction of Western civilization, interspersing incendiary commentary with images of Nazis and suicide bombing indoctrination." The religious motivation behind suicide attacks is a cornerstone of America's War On Terror, which has certainly been a key election issue in the past few years, and, arguably, for years to come.

A Philosophical Note

One thing that we should all reflect upon is that almost all suicide attackers commit their acts absolutely believing that they are doing the right thing. When a person is absolutely sure that they are right, they are the most vulnerable to making tragic errors, because in such circumstances human beings tend to ignore evidence that contradicts their firmly held positions. Far from being a sign of weakness, doubt and uncertainty are the best friends we have, because they make us make careful, considered decisions.