



## When Intelligence Made a Difference

<<< WORLD WAR II >>>

### The Final Campaign

#### Intelligence and the Invasion of the Japanese Home Islands and the A-bomb Decision<sup>1</sup>

by Peter C. Oleson

#### INTRODUCTION - THE SITUATION IN THE PACIFIC IN THE SPRING/SUMMER OF 1945

Japanese resistance on Okinawa ended by 22 June 1945. While Japanese kamakazi air raids from the southern Japanese island of Kyushu and Formosa (Taiwan) continued, tactical SIGINT alerted US forces, which, using radar, decimated many attacking formations. Six days later General Douglas MacArthur announced the end of Japanese resistance in the Philippines. By the end of June, the Japanese home islands were cut off from their forces in the East Indies and Southeast Asia and from essential raw materials, especially oil. US submarines now operating in the internal Sea of Japan were sinking marus sailing to Japan from the Korean



Source: Military Intelligence Service

peninsula and Manchuria. The economic situation in the Japanese home islands was rapidly deteriorating with lack of raw materials and food scarcities.

The Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff<sup>2</sup> in February 1945 adopted a strategic plan to invade Kyushu and intensify the air and sea blockade of Japan, in anticipation of invading the Kanto Plain and Tokyo on Honshu. General MacArthur was named as the commander of Operation Downfall and tasked to develop the necessary operational plans. He urged quickly invading Kyushu by 1 November 1945.

With airfields in the Marianas, Iwo Jima and now Okinawa, the allies intensified the air war over the Japanese home islands. Starting in mid-June 1944, B-29 raids on the Japanese islands had begun. A special B-29 reconnaissance aircraft flew over Japan in October 1944, taking more than 7,000 images, that combined with the intelligence reports from US Naval Attachés in Japan prior to the war, helped determine what would be the industrial targets for subsequent B-29 raids.<sup>3</sup> It was difficult to conduct precision bombing from 30,000 feet altitude where B-29s operated to frustrate Japanese fighters and anti-aircraft artillery. In March 1945, Major General Curtis LeMay, commanding the XXI Bomber Command in the Pacific, changed tactics. As much of Japanese industry was intermingled with residential areas, by employing napalm B-29s began to burn out Japanese cities. On 9-10 March 1945 the

firebombing of Tokyo destroyed large sections of the city and killed an estimated 100,000 people.<sup>4</sup> On 10 July 1945 the XXI Bomber Command conducted the first of the 1,000 B-29 aircraft raids against Japan. By mid-summer 1945, B-29s had burned out 60 cities.<sup>5</sup> In early August, B-29s in a psychological oper-

2. The Combined Chiefs of Staff encompassed British and American military leaders. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff was an informal group created to have an equivalent to the British Chiefs of Staff Committee. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were formalized in the National Security Act of 1947.

3. Ian W. Toll. *Twilight of the Gods: War in the Western Pacific, 1944-1945*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2020, p. 347.

4. Seven major raids burned out most of Tokyo. (Toll, p. 659). *United States Strategic Bombing Survey*, Summary Report (Pacific War), p. 18.

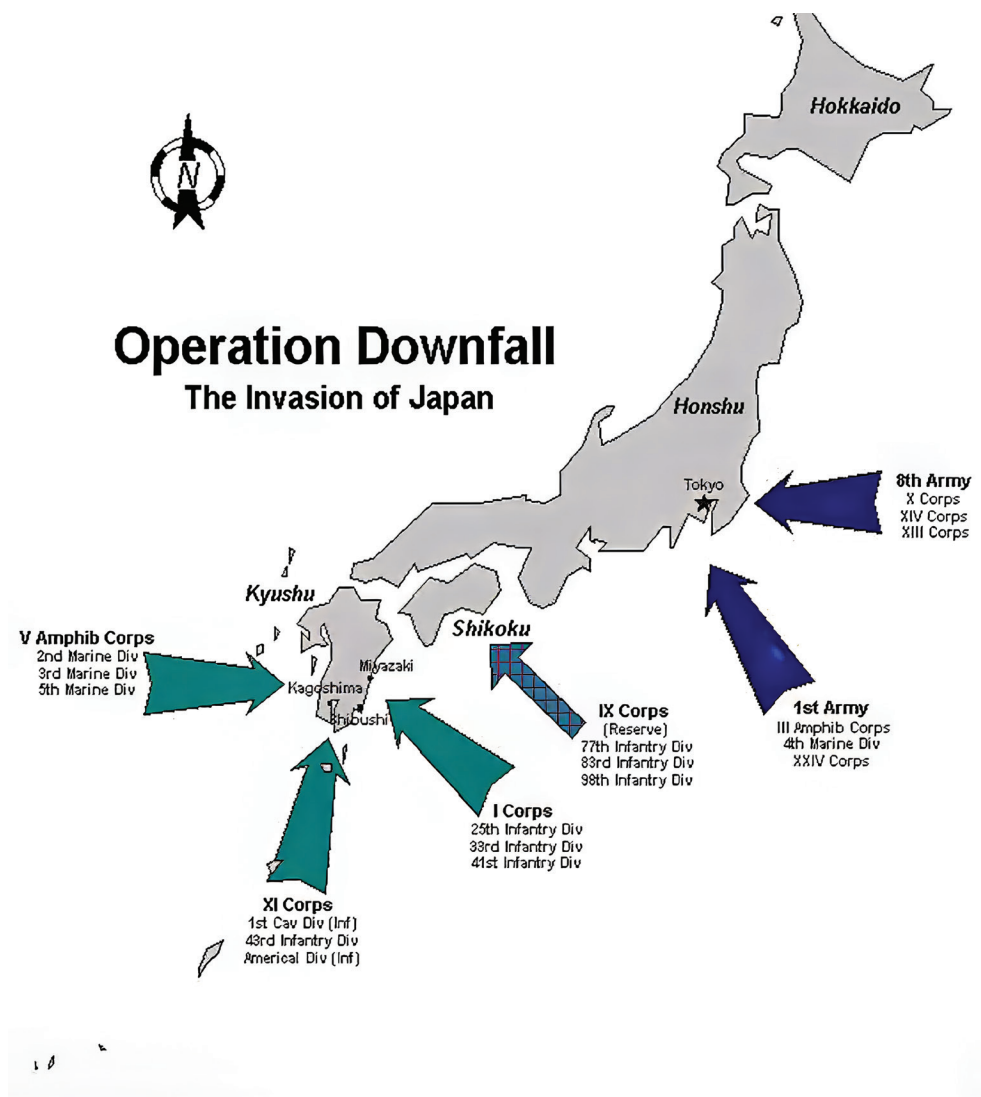
5. Evan Thomas. *Road to Surrender: Three Men and the Countdown to the End of World War II*, New York: Random House, 2023, p. 50.

1. This is the final article of the series on intelligence and the Pacific campaigns of World War II. Previous articles by this author can be accessed on-line at [https://www.afio.com/22\\_intelligencer.htm#WIMAD](https://www.afio.com/22_intelligencer.htm#WIMAD).

ation started dropping leaflets on targeted cities that would be hit two to three days later causing widespread panic.<sup>6</sup> B-29s also mined the Shimonoseki Strait between the southern island of Kyushu and the main island of Honshu.

With the devastation of the Imperial Japanese Navy, the US Navy began operating up and down the Japanese islands. On 16-17 February Admiral Raymond Spruance's Fifth Fleet Task Force 58 naval aircraft bombed the Tokyo area in a surprise raid. The task force's radio-intelligence had located 14 Japanese picket boats via DF, which were sunk.<sup>7</sup> A second raid was conducted on 25 February. On 10 July the Navy's bombers from 17 carriers returned and again attacked the Tokyo area.<sup>8</sup> Then foraying north on 15 July carrier air, as well as battleships and heavy cruisers conducting shore bombardment, struck at northern Honshu and Hokkaido, which had previously been untouched.<sup>9</sup> The lack of Japanese resistance was partially due to a naval deception operation.

Japanese analysts had learned that radio silence – a total communications blackout – indicated a U.S. attack was imminent. The goal of the complex deception was for the Japanese to believe that after TF 38



Courtesy of the US Army Corps of Engineers

made [its] air strike on Tokyo [on] 10 July, it [would turn] south to support a possible invasion of southern Japan. The task force, meanwhile, actually headed north under strict radio silence to strike Hokkaido and northern Honshu islands, areas outside the range of B-29 bombers. The USS *Tucson* (CL 98) impersonated Halsey's command ship, the USS *Missouri* with deceptive radio transmissions. Naval radio-intelligence units verified that the Japanese fell for the hoax and "rushed troops to defend against a putative invasion at the southern end of their homeland." The real Task Force 38 achieved total surprise when it struck targets in northern Japan.<sup>10</sup> A week later Task Force 38 struck the Tokyo area again and naval aircraft sank two dozen, and the last remaining, IJN warships in a "coup de grâce"<sup>11</sup>

6. Toll, *Twilight of the Gods*, pp. 688-9.

7. Corry Station, Command Display. <https://stationhypo.com/2020/02/23/battle-of-iwo-jima-radio-intelligence-comint-report/#more-13336>.

8. Fleet Admiral Nimitz rotated the commanders of the Central Pacific fleet. When Admiral Spruance was in command it was Fifth Fleet. The carrier task force was TF 58. When Admiral "Bull" Halsey relieved Spruance it became Third Fleet and the carrier task force became TF 38. Halsey relieved Spruance on 28 May 1945 and remained in command until 2 September when Japan surrendered. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fast\\_Carrier\\_Task\\_Force](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fast_Carrier_Task_Force).

9. Toll, *Twilight of the Gods*, pp. 661-3.

10. "You were most deceitful", Parts 1 – 4, Station Hypo. <https://stationhypo.com/2020/11/06>.

11. Toll, *Twilight of the Gods*, pp. 661-3.

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## OPERATION DOWNFALL – THE INVASION OF THE JAPANESE HOME ISLANDS

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“On 3 April 1945, the Joint Chiefs formally directed General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, then Commander in Chief of US Army Forces in the Pacific (CINCPAC), and Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet and the Pacific Ocean Area (CINCPAC), to develop plans and begin preparations for an invasion of Kyushu.”<sup>12</sup>

The fierce resistance on Iwo Jima and Okinawa “gave US planners a glimpse of what almost certainly awaited an invasion of mainland Japan.”<sup>13</sup>

Operation “Downfall consisted of two phases: an invasion of southern Kyushu in late 1945 ([Operation] Olympic), to be followed by an invasion of Honshu in the spring of 1946 (Coronet).” “MacArthur told General of the Army and Chief of Staff George C. Marshall that he could take Kyushu with the forces already in the Pacific.”<sup>14</sup> But MacArthur’s plans were immediately controversial.

While Marshall supported an invasion of the home islands, others did not. Navy and Army Air Force leaders favored continued blockade and bombing, especially Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, the Chief of Naval Operations, who was influential with President Roosevelt, and Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy, who was FDR’s chief of staff. As the de facto chairman of the JCS, Leahy was most influential and was wary of a bloody invasion of Japan aware that kamakazi’s at Okinawa has hit 200 ships and killed 4,900 Navy sailors. Marshall believed that blockade and bombing would take too long.<sup>15</sup>

MacArthur estimated there would be only 31,000 casualties in the initial assault on Kyushu. This figure was disputed by others. Casualty estimates became a central issue, especially for President Truman,

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12. Douglas J. MacEachin, “The Final Months of the War with Japan,” Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 1998, p. 5. <https://www.cia.gov/resources/csi/books-monographs/the-final-months-of-the-war-with-japan/>.

13. Benjamin Brimelow, “Why the US’s final World War II victories over the Japanese made it think twice about actually invading Japan.” <https://www.businessinsider.com/battles-of-iwo-jima-okinawa-made-us-reconsider-japan-invasion-2021-3>.

14. Toll, *Twilight of the Gods*, pp. 645.

15. There were six five-star officers during World War II. Most senior was Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy (date of rank of 15 December 1944). Others were General of the Army George C. Marshall (16 December 1944), Fleet Admiral Ernest King (17 December 1944), General of the Army Douglas MacArthur (18 December 1944), Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz (19 December 1944), General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower (20 December 1944), General of the Army Henry Arnold (21 December 1944). Admiral Halsey was promoted to five stars on 11 December 1945, after the war. General Omar Bradley was also promoted to five stars on 22 September 1950.

who assumed the presidency upon the death of FDR on 12 April.

Other controversies also arose. Historian Ian Toll noted that “[i]nternecine frictions and rivalries in the Pacific were growing worse, not better.”<sup>16</sup> MacArthur, a supreme ego and self-promoter, “was ‘constitutionally incapable’ of working jointly with almost everybody,” according to journalist Douglas Waller, and he “demanded total control of every outfit in his theater.”<sup>17</sup> Arguments over command relationships resulted in personal relations between Nimitz and MacArthur becoming “frosty.”<sup>18</sup>

MacArthur “wanted no dissenting voices, no alternative analyses – as far as he was concerned, the business of intelligence was to mesh analysis with what the commander had already decided to do...” Historian Doug MacEachin noted, “MacArthur’s practice was to not allow intelligence to interfere with his aims.”<sup>19</sup> But the questions of estimated casualties for an invasion would not go away.

“Knowledge of the strength and disposition of Japanese defenses that would be encountered in an invasion was heavily dependent on intercepted communications.” “In mid-1944, as the planning process was picking up momentum, the Japanese Army forces that US intelligence had identified on Kyushu consisted of only one combat division and two depot divisions.”<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately, the Japanese, having watched U.S. island landings for several years, had deduced the criteria that planners used. Therefore, the Japanese guessed where the Americans would land and prepared accordingly. “[T]o put it bluntly, they had figured us out.”<sup>21</sup>

From the Japanese perspective, they wanted to buy time in the hope that war weariness in the Allied countries, in combination with concerns about high casualties, would produce a softening of the unconditional surrender demands.<sup>22</sup>

War weariness was a major concern for Secretary of War, Henry Stimson. “By March 1945, war wea-

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16. Toll, *Twilight of the Gods*, pp. 646.

17. David A. Foy, *Loyalty First: The Life and Times of Charles A. Willoughby, MacArthur’s Chief Intelligence Officer*, Philadelphia: Casemate, 2023, p. 20.

18. Nimitz kept a photo of MacArthur in his office. When asked why, he responded “It’s to remind me not to be a horse’s ass.” (Toll, *Twilight of the Gods*, p. 647.)

19. Foy, *Loyalty First*, pp. 8, 46.

20. MacEachin, “The Final Months of the War with Japan,” pp. 5-6.

21. Mark F. Cancian, *Inflicting Surprise: Gaining Competitive Advantage in Great Power Conflicts*, A report of the CSIS International Security Program, Jan. 2021.

22. MacEachin, “The Final Months of the War with Japan,” p. 35.



ness is settling in, certainly among congressmen under pressure from business leaders and their lobbyists chafing at war rationing and regulatory red tape. Stimpson's immediate concern is that Americans will not be willing to make the added sacrifices necessary to finish the fight."<sup>23</sup>

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## THE MANHATTAN PROJECT

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Churchill and FDR agreed to join atomic research and on "December 28, 1942, FDR signed an order to commence major industrial construction" of the "Manhattan Project." Under the direction of Major General Leslie Groves, the chief designer at Los Alamos National Laboratory was physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer. Oppenheimer was "confident" the Manhattan project could deliver three bombs – one uranium and two plutonium – by mid-1945.<sup>24</sup> On 16 July 1945 a plutonium device was tested at Alamogordo, New Mexico, codenamed "Trinity," with an equivalent of 20 kilotons of TNT.

Groves understood the radiation issue associated with atomic bombs as early as 1943 but kept it so compartmentalized that it was poorly known by top American officials. He apparently wanted the bomb to be seen as a deadly form of traditional warfare rather than a new, inhumane type.<sup>25</sup> This, of course, denied political leaders critical information.

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## FINAL DECISION-MAKING

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By July 1945, ULTRA COMINT indicated that the build-up of Japanese forces in the intended invasion area was greater than predicted. This called

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23. Thomas, *Road to Surrender*, p. 19.

24. Toll, *Twilight of the Gods*, pp. 667-8, 670. The official name of the effort was the "Development of Substitute Materials." The British referred to it as "Tube Alloys."

25. William J. Broad. "The Black Reporter Who Exposed a Lie About the Atom Bomb," *New York Times*, Aug. 9, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/09/science/charles-loeb-atomic-bomb.html>. Exploding atom bombs emit two kinds of radiation. In the first seconds, the expanding fireball sends out colossal bursts of neutrons and gamma rays powerful enough to speed through the air for miles and still penetrate steel, concrete and human bodies. They break chromosomes and upend the body's cellular machinery, causing sickness, cancer and death. These disrupters vanish instantly and are hard to measure directly. Atomic detonations also generate a second, more persistent and detectable wave. The split atoms of nuclear fuel produce hundreds of different kinds of radioactive fragments, including Strontium-90 and Cesium-137. They can emit their own deadly rays for years. Detecting them is easy. The clicking sounds of Geiger counters reveal the radiating particles.

into question MacArthur's intelligence estimates on casualties. American casualties had soared in late 1944-early 1945 – the Battle of the Bulge (19,246 killed and 89,101 wounded, captured or missing), Iwo Jima (26,571 killed and wounded), and Okinawa (46,622 total casualties).<sup>26</sup> Former President Herbert Hoover told Truman, who had been in the Oval Office only a few weeks, that his contacts planning Operation Downfall predicted a half a million Americans killed. Hoover later told Secretary of War Stimpson it would cost between half a million and a million men. Historian Evan Thomas noted "Truman [was] appalled by the American casualties on the embattled island of Okinawa... Truman [knew from SIGINT] that the Japanese homeland [would] be defended by fight-to-the-end soldiers holed up in caves, kamakazi suicide planes, and, reportedly, women and children armed with pitchforks. The Battle of Japan will be, as he put it, 'Okinawa from one end of Japan to the other.'"<sup>27</sup> Fleet Admiral Leahy communicated to senior officials that the president's "decision on [Operation Downfall] would take into account 'economizing to the maximum extent possible in the loss of American lives.'" And the Army's Director of Operations, Major General J. E. Hull described Truman as "very much disturbed over losses on Okinawa."<sup>28</sup>

Even Marshall grew skeptical of the invasion plans. Pointing out that the build-up on Kyushu had been carried out at the expense of troop reductions in other locations, Marshall queried MacArthur about "possible alternative objectives." MacArthur's response was dismissive. He said he did "not, repeat not, credit the heavy strengths reported to you in southern Kyushu." MacArthur's practice was to not allow intelligence to interfere with his aims.<sup>29</sup>

Truman said he agreed that the plan presented by the Chiefs was the best choice under the circumstances, but he added that he 'had hoped there was a possibility of preventing an "Okinawa from one end of Japan to the other.'" A Joint War Plans memo of 2 August concluded "the dimensions of the opposing forces and defensive preparations on Kyushu mandated a fundamental re-examination of US invasion plans."<sup>30</sup> SIGINT identified the continued build-up of Japanese forces on Kyushu. On 21 July, the US Mil-

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26. National World War II Museum. Asia-Pacific combat deaths totaled at the time 108,504. (*U.S. Army Battle Casualties and Non-battle Deaths in World War II*, U.S. Department of the Army, pp. 5-8).

27. Thomas, *Road to Surrender*, pp. 55-6, xiv.

28. MacEachin, "The Final Months of the War with Japan," pp. 13, 15.

29. Thomas, *Road to Surrender*, p. 56. MacEachin, "The Final Months of the War with Japan," pp. 32-3.

30. MacEachin, "The Final Months of the War with Japan," pp. 17, 25.

itary Intelligence Service's daily summary reported that three entirely new Japanese Army divisions had suddenly been discovered on Kyushu. Another was discovered within the next few days, bringing the confirmed total to ten combat divisions and two depot divisions. Intercepted communications provided tenuous evidence that an eleventh combat division was being moved there from Honshu. Estimated military manpower on Kyushu had reached 534,000.<sup>31</sup> Even this estimate was significantly low.<sup>32</sup>

Truman left for the Potsdam conference with Churchill and Stalin on 7 July, arriving on the 15th. On the evening of 16 July he received a cryptic notification that the atomic bomb had been successfully tested. Three days later, while Truman was still in Europe, General Carl Spaatz headed to Guam as the new head of Strategic Air Forces in the Pacific, carrying written instructions for his new command to deliver the first "special bomb" as soon after 3 August as weather permitted. MacEachin writes that these instructions were sent to Washington from Potsdam via courier as early as 22 July.<sup>33</sup> Thus, Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb was made sometime before the conclusion of the Potsdam conference on 2 August.

Many scholars believe the worsening balance of forces on Kyushu, as reflected in COMINT, played a major role in Truman's decision. At the end of July at Potsdam Marshall told the president that the invasion of Japan would "cost a minimum of a quarter-million and possibly a million American casualties."<sup>34</sup> However, for all practical purposes the decision on whether to use atomic bombs against Japan had already been reached by the time the president arrived in Potsdam. On 1 June the "Interim Committee," chaired by Stimson, that included political advisers in and out of the government, scientists, and industrialists, with Marshall and Groves also involved... had recommended to Truman that the atomic bomb be used as soon as possible, against a military-industrial target in Japan, and without prior warning.<sup>35</sup>

When Spaatz arrived in the Pacific in July he briefed both Nimitz and MacArthur on his orders. MacArthur had not known of the atomic bomb.<sup>36</sup>

The Potsdam declaration demanded "unconditional surrender" of Japan. But what did "unconditional surrender" mean? The Allied objectives of unconditional surrender were (a) the unrestricted occupation of Japanese territory, (b) total authority in the governing of Japan, (c) dismantlement of Japan's military and military-industrial complex ("demobilization"), (d) a restructuring of Japanese society ("demilitarization"), and (e) Allied-run war crimes trials—in effect doing to Japan what was being done to Germany.<sup>37</sup> Japanese leaders, were dedicated to *Kokutai*—the imperial system headed by the emperor. Unconditional surrender, which meant the end of the emperor's rule, was anathema to them. Joseph Grew, who was acting Secretary of State and former ambassador to Japan, knew that "without orders from the emperor, the Japanese diehards [would] never give up."<sup>38</sup> Stimson told Truman: "The United States will need the emperor 'to save us from a score of Iwo Jimas and Okinawas all over China and the New Netherlands'..." "The emperor is 'the only source of authority in Japan under the Japanese theory of the State.' Only the emperor can persuade Japan's troops—five million of them, massed in armies scattered all over Asia—to lay down their arms."<sup>39</sup> Leahy, the most senior US military person by rank and aide to the president, commented that keeping the emperor was a "minor matter compared with delaying a victory in the war..."<sup>40</sup> The US agreed to retaining the emperor.

Also agreed at Potsdam was that the USSR would enter the war against Japan. Stalin played dumb at Potsdam when Truman informed him that the US had developed a new powerful weapon. Truman did not know that Stalin knew about the secret Manhattan Project before he did. Stalin had been receiving reports on the subject since 1941 from spies in the US.<sup>41</sup>

On 6 August Hiroshima, which had previously been little hit, was the target of the first atomic bomb. Following the bombing Truman publicly announced the A-bomb's existence. Three days later on 9 August

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31. MacEachin, "The Final Months of the War with Japan," p. 20.

32. Postwar information would show that there had in fact been 14 Japanese combat divisions on Kyushu. (MacEachin, "The Final Months of the War with Japan," p. 33.) "There were, in fact, approximately 900,000 soldiers... defending Kyushu. Three air armies... had 3,300 aircraft, including 2,100 *kamakazis*, ready to strike the invaders. Another 5,225 [Japanese] navy aircraft, almost 4,000 dedicated to suicide roles, complemented the force." (Edward J. Drea. *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War against Japan, 1942-1945*, Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1992, p. 222, citing Hayasi Saburo, *Taiheiyō senso rikusen gaishi* (Translation: *An Overview of Army Operations in the Pacific War*), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1951, pp. 258-9).

33. MacEachin, "The Final Months of the War with Japan," p. 28.

34. Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA*, p. 222.

35. MacEachin, "The Final Months of the War with Japan," p. 29.

36. Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA*, p. 222.

37. MacEachin, "The Final Months of the War with Japan," pp. 33-4.

38. Thomas, *Road to Surrender*, p. 53.

39. Thomas, *Road to Surrender*, p. 168.

40. Ibid.

41. <https://ahf.nuclearmuseum.org/ahf/history/soviet-atomic-program-1946/#:~:text=At%20the%20Potsdam%20Conference%20in,weapon%20of%20unusual%20destructive%20force>. See also Marian Smith Holmes. "Spies Who Spilled Atomic Bomb Secrets," *Smithsonian Magazine*, April 19, 2009. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/spies-who-spilled-atomic-bomb-secrets-127922660/>.

Nagasaki was also struck with the remaining plutonium bomb.<sup>42</sup>

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## JAPANESE INTERNAL SQUABBLES

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MAGIC and ULTRA intercepts<sup>43</sup> gave US planners insight into contemporaneous military and political developments in Japan. Of special interest were the plans of the Supreme Council for the Direction of the War. The Council included the Prime Minister, the Army and Navy Ministers, the Foreign Minister, and the military chiefs of the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy. Seventy-seven-year old Prime Minister Baron Kantarō Suzuki, a former admiral, was installed on 7 April 1945. Also, of interest were the communications of the only civilian member of the Council, Foreign Minister Shigenori Togo, whose politics were often at odds with others on the Council.<sup>44</sup>

Through MAGIC the US knew of Togo's outreach to Moscow asking it to negotiate an end to the war via Japanese Ambassador Sato. An 11 July MAGIC intercept gave the first indication that Emperor Hirohito "was behind [the] diplomatic appeals to Moscow" to mediate an end to the war.<sup>45</sup>

Following Hiroshima Togo met with the emperor who "declared the war must end." But hardliners in the Council delayed any action until an investigation of Hiroshima could be conducted. The hardliners on the Council, which consisted of all the military members, refused to attend an 8 August meeting.<sup>46</sup>

On the evening of 8 August Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov informed Japanese Ambassador Sato of the USSR's declaration of war. Immediately, 89 Soviet divisions (1.5 million troops) and aircraft attacked Manchuria, Korea, Sakhalin, and the Kurile Island chain. Japanese intelligence had not detected anything.<sup>47</sup>

"On the morning of 9 August, after the United States dropped two atomic bombs and Russia declared war on Japan, the Supreme Council... deadlocked on whether to surrender. The vote was... three to three. The more powerful leaders, the ones who ran the army, wanted to keep on fighting. For five more days, Japan teetered on the edge of a coup d'état by the military that

would have plunged Japan into chaos and extended the war for many bloody months," historian Thomas writes. Through MAGIC and ULTRA the US learned that War Minister General Korechika Amani on 10 August directed all Japanese Army units to fight to the death. Intercepts revealed that "... the distant armies of Imperial Japan – in China, Indonesia, and Southeast Asia—[were] vowing to fight to the death no matter what the politicians [were] saying in Tokyo"<sup>48</sup> "...[I]ntelligence signals [were] flashing that Japan [was] not giving up but digging in." It was a bleeding strategy (Shukketsu) intended to make the US want peace. Amani even proposed the idea of national suicide: "Wouldn't it be beautiful," he said.<sup>49</sup>

The combination of the dropping of the atomic bombs and the Soviet invasion convinced the Japanese government to surrender. Over the continued objections of Army hardliners, those desiring peace, supported by the emperor, won out. On 10 August the Japanese government agreed to surrender.<sup>50</sup> On the night of 13 August, B-29s dropped leaflets in Japanese announcing Japan's offer of surrender. The secrecy of the debates within the Supreme Council was exposed. Hearing of a possible coup d'état by Army officers, Emperor Hirohito on 14 August informed the Supreme Council that he had decided to end the war and would address the nation over the radio, something never done before. He recorded his remarks for broadcast the next day. Plotters then seized the Imperial Palace seeking the recording, but were unsuccessful when Army Chief of Staff General Yoshijiro Umezumi refused to support a coup and General Shizuichi Tanaka, commander of the Eastern Army, arrived to restore order.<sup>51</sup> The emperor's address was broadcast at noon on 15 August.

While scattered kamakazis continued to fly, "[d]eciphered message after deciphered message testified to the force of the Imperial Rescript (shoshō)... as [Japanese] radio messages of compliance poured into Tokyo from units strewn from Java to North China."<sup>52</sup> 15 August was VJ Day. On 2 September formal surrender documents were signed on the USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.

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48. Thomas, *Road to Surrender*, p. 191.

49. Thomas, *Road to Surrender*, pp. 150, 158, 193, 225.

50. Cancian, *Inflicting Surprise*.

51. Thomas, *Road to Surrender*, pp. 198-200. Hardliner General Korechika Anami upon failure of the attempted coup committed ritual suicide. Leader of the insurgents, Colonel Masehiko Hatanaka, Anami's brother-in-law, shot himself in the head. (Thomas, *Road to Surrender*, pp. 206-7.)

52. Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA*, p. 225. Thomas, *Road to Surrender*, p. 209.

42. Toll, *Twilight of the Gods*, pp. 702-4, 714-8.

43. MAGIC was the codeword for the decryption of Japanese diplomatic messages. ULTRA was the overall codeword given to all decryptions.

44. Thomas, *Road to Surrender*, p. 50.

45. Toll, *Twilight of the Gods*, p. 680.

46. Toll, *Twilight of the Gods*, p. 704.

47. Toll, *Twilight of the Gods*, p. 706.



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## CONCLUSIONS

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Historians argue over what brought the war in the Pacific to an end. Japanese scholar Augustine Kobayashi wrote: "... while conventional wisdom holds that the atomic bombs ended the Pacific War, it was America's blockade of Japan that brought the empire to its knees."<sup>53</sup> National Defense University research fellow Frank Hoffman notes: "After the battles of early 1945, when Japan lost the Philippines and Okinawa, United States forces sat astride its vital oil life line. Strategically the war was won."<sup>54</sup> Despite the insights from MAGIC and ULTRA intercepts it was impossible for decision-makers in Washington to comprehend the intransigence in Tokyo.<sup>55</sup> In fact, it took the devastation visited on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Russia's surprise entry into the war, to overcome the "fight to the end" faction of the Japanese Supreme Council.

The use of atomic bombs was almost immediately controversial. War Correspondent John Hersey wrote an article "Hiroshima" in *The New Yorker* on 31 August 1946, which ignited a storm of criticism over the use of the atomic bombs. Second guessing by scientists and revisionist intellectuals about civilian deaths was extensive. In *Harper's Magazine* of February 1947 Stimson wrote in response... that using the A-bomb was the "least abhorrent choice" to end the war. "The Japanese had moved close to a million men and thousands and thousands of kamakazis of one

kind or another... into position in anticipation of an American invasion of Kyushu. The cost was projected to be several hundred thousand Americans killed or wounded." Other estimates were that up to 250,000 Chinese, Southeast Asians, and Indonesians, still under the rule of the Japanese Army, were dying per month as the war continued.<sup>56</sup> The debate, however, has never ended.

Allied intelligence was crucial in winning the war in the Pacific. Communications intelligence in its various forms (direction finding, traffic analysis, and decryption) was the most valuable strategic asset. Coupled with coast watchers, guerrillas, some spies, aerial and submarine reconnaissance, document and prisoner exploitation, and analysis by late 1943 the allies had organized a formidable intelligence system in the Pacific. The development of sensors – directional radar and ELINT receivers, advanced sonars, magnetic anomaly detection, and the bathythermograph—provided Allied ships, submarines, and aircraft distinct tactical intelligence advantages over Japanese forces. But the decryption of Japanese Navy, Army, logistics, and diplomatic communications gave the allies an unparalleled strategic advantage in indications and warning (e.g., at Coral Sea, Midway, and the Philippine Sea) and strategy development. American industrial strength provided the muscle to win the war; intelligence provided the intellect.

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53. Augustine Kobayashi. "America's Submarine War – How the 'Silent Service' Quietly Brought About the Downfall of Japan," *MilitaryHistoryNow.com*, 25 July 2016, <https://militaryhistorynow.com/2016/07/25/americas-submarine-war-how-the-silent-service-quietly-brought-about-the-downfall-of-japan/>.

54. Frank Hoffman. Talkin' World War II: Blockades & Subs in the Pacific," *War on the Rocks*, Oct. 7, 2013, <https://warontherocks.com/2013/10/talkin-world-war-ii-blockades-and-submarines-in-the-pacific/>.

55. Thomas, *Road to Surrender*, p. 227.

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56. Thomas, *Road to Surrender*, pp. 223, 227. "On August 23, Japanese radio estimated that 260,000 persons had been killed, 412,000 injured and 9,200,000 made homeless by all allied air attacks, including the Navy's carrier – based strikes and the atomic bombings. (Hanson W. Baldwin. "America at War: Victory in the Pacific," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1945.)