

The japanese kamikaze essay



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Prior to the formation of kamikaze units, deliberate crashes had been used as a last resort when a pilot's plane was severely damaged and he did not want to risk being captured, or he wanted to do as much damage to the enemy as possible since he was crashing anyway; this was the case in both the Japanese and Allied air forces. According to Axell & Kase, these suicides "were individual, impromptu decisions by men who were mentally prepared to die. "[2] In most cases, there is little evidence that these hits were more than accidental collisions, of the kind that sometimes happen in intense sea-air battles.

One example of this occurred on 7 December 1941 during the attack on Pearl Harbor. First Lieutenant Fusata Iida's plane had been hit and was leaking fuel, when he apparently used it to make a suicide attack on Kaneohe Naval Air Station. Before taking off, he had told his men that if his plane was badly damaged he would crash it into a "worthy enemy target". [3] The carrier battles in 1942, particularly Midway, had inflicted irreparable damage on the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service (IJNAS), such that they could no longer put together a large number of fleet carriers with well-trained aircrews. 4] Japanese planners had assumed a quick war and were ill-prepared to replace the losses of ships, pilots, and sailors; at Midway, the Japanese lost as many aircrewmen in a single day as their pre-war training program had produced in a year. [5] The following Solomons and New Guinea campaigns, notably the Battles of Eastern Solomons and Santa Cruz, further decimated their veteran aircrews and replacing their combat experience proved impossible. [6] During 1943-44, U. S. forces were steadily advancing towards Japan. Japan's fighter planes were becoming

outnumbered and outclassed by newer U. S. made planes, especially the F6F Hellcat and F4U Corsair. Tropical diseases, as well as shortages of spare parts and fuel, made operations more and more difficult for the IJNAS. By the Battle of the Philippine Sea in 1944, the Japanese now had to make do with obsolete aircraft and inexperienced aviators, against the better-trained and more experienced US Navy airmen, and its radar-directed combat air patrols. The Japanese lost over 400 carrier-based planes and pilots, effectively putting an end to their carriers' potency, an action referred to by the Allies as the "Great Marianas Turkey Shoot".

On 19 June 1944, planes from the carrier Chiyoda approached a US task group. According to some accounts, two made suicide attacks, one of which hit USS Indiana. [7] The important Japanese base of Saipan fell to the Allied forces on 15 July 1944. Its capture provided adequate forward bases which enabled U. S. air forces using the B-29 Superfortress to strike the Japanese home islands. After the fall of Saipan, the Japanese high command predicted that the Allies would try to capture the Philippines, which were strategically important because of their location between the oilfields of Southeast Asia and Japan.

In August 1944, it was announced by the Domei news agency that a flight instructor named Takeo Tagata was training pilots in Taiwan for suicide missions. [8] Another source claims that the first kamikaze mission occurred on 13 September 1944. A group of pilots from the army's 31st Fighter Squadron on Negros Island decided to launch a suicide attack the following morning. [9] First Lieutenant Takeshi Kosai and a sergeant were selected.

Two 100 kg (220 lb) bombs were attached to two fighters, and the pilots took off before dawn, planning to crash into carriers.

They never returned, but there is no record of an enemy plane hitting an Allied ship that day. According to some sources, on 14 October 1944, USS Reno was hit by a deliberately-crashed Japanese plane. [10] However, there is no evidence that the attacker planned to crash. [citation needed]

Masafumi Arima Rear Admiral Masafumi Arima, the commander of the 26th Air Flotilla (part of the 11th Air Fleet), is also sometimes credited with inventing the kamikaze tactic.

Arima personally led an attack by about 100 Yokosuka D4Y Suisei (“Judy”) dive bombers against a large Essex-class aircraft carrier, USS Franklin near Leyte Gulf, on (or about, accounts vary) 15 October 1944. Arima was killed and part of a plane hit Franklin. The Japanese high command and propagandists seized on Arima’s example: he was promoted posthumously to Admiral and was given official credit for making the first kamikaze attack. However, it is not clear that this was a planned suicide attack,[11] and official Japanese accounts of Arima’s attack bore little resemblance to the actual events.

On 17 October 1944, Allied forces assaulted Suluan Island, beginning the Battle of Leyte Gulf. The Imperial Japanese Navy’s 1st Air Fleet, based at Manila, was assigned the task of assisting the Japanese ships which would attempt to destroy Allied forces in Leyte Gulf. However, the 1st Air Fleet at that time only had 40 aircraft: 34 A6M Zero carrier-based fighters, three Nakajima B6N Tenzan (“Jill”) torpedo bombers, one Mitsubishi G4M (“

Betty”) and two Yokosuka P1Y Ginga (“ Frances”) land-based bombers, and one additional reconnaissance plane.

The task facing the Japanese air forces seemed impossible. The 1st Air Fleet commandant, Vice Admiral Takijiro Onishi decided to form a suicide attack force, the Special Attack Unit. In a meeting at Mabalacat Airfield (known to the U. S. military as Clark Air Base) near Manila, on 19 October, Onishi told officers of the 201st Flying Group headquarters: “ I don’t think there would be any other certain way to carry out the operation [to hold the Philippines], than to put a 250 kg bomb on a Zero and let it crash into a U. S. carrier, in order to disable her for a week. “