

# Was the atomic bomb necessary history essay



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After six horrible long years, the war in Europe finally came to an end, but for the war in the Pacific it was still a fierce fighting ground. After the end of the war in Europe the United States began to shift their focus towards the war in the Pacific. The summer of 1945, after three-and-a-half years of cruel and bloody war, American leaders knew that Japan was defeated. It was running desperately short of vital supplies and faced the prospect of mass starvation. Even though that did not mean that Japan was ready to surrender. Although their leaders recognized that it was impossible for them to win the war, they fought in the hopes of securing surrender terms that they would find acceptable. The president at the time Harry S. Truman and his advisers considered various methods of forcing the Japanese to surrender, including, if it ever came to it the invasion of the Japanese home islands. The invasion, if it became necessary, was scheduled to begin around November 1, 1945 ("The World At War").

### **Was the Bomb a Necessary Action to End the War?**

Truman was committed to ending the war at the earliest possible moment, and he wanted to save as many American lives as he could ("The World At War"). There were several options he could choose as his island hopping campaign had shown strongly, little by little we began to capture every little island in the Pacific that Japan had controlled. Further and further we went we became increasingly closer to the main land of Japan, the only question was how long could Japan hold out?

The Japanese leaders recognized their fate was dim, and they just began to try to hold on in hopes of securing better surrender terms. With them still putting up a battle it was still causing American soldier deaths. With the

Japanese leaders being stubborn Truman recognized that even though his island hopping campaign was extremely successful it was going to take more than controlling the islands in the Pacific. Then the plan of invading Japan was developed.

“ The U. S military turned its attention toward Okinawa, located only 350 miles from the Japanese home islands. Japanese leaders considered the defense of Okinawa as their last chance to hold off an invasion of Japan, and they were prepared for their forces to battle to the death. During the three-month battle, the Japanese attempted to inflict as much damage as possible on the invaders. By the time Okinawa was officially declared secure on July 2, more than 20, 000 U. S troops and some 107, 000 Japanese and Okinawan military and civilian personnel were dead” (“ Dropping the Bomb”).

After witnessing the devastation caused to American troops and civilians on an island 350 miles off the shore of Japan. Post atomic bomb prediction estimates have claimed the possibility of up to a million casualties in the a U. S invasion of Japan. The first phase of the invasion of Japan code named operation OLYMPIC, which involved the invasion of the island of Kyushu. It was later calculated that this phase would alone have taken two months and resulted in 75, 000 to 100, 000 U. S casualties just to invade a small island and with the predictions of the casualties of the main land being around 1 million U. S deaths was enough for Truman to devise another plan The Manhattan Project.

## **The Manhattan Project/The Bomb is Built**

In 1939 Leo Szilard, one of the world's top physicists, learned that German scientist had split the uranium atom. Szilard had been the first scientist to suggest that splitting the atom might release enormous energy. Worried that the Nazis were working on an atomic bomb, Szilard convinced the world's best known physicist, Albert Einstein, to sign a letter Szilard had drafted and send it to President Roosevelt. Roosevelt responded by setting up a scientific committee to study the issue. They began a program to build the atomic bomb, code named the Manhattan Project ("The American Vision, 750").

Before this point in the war, the Manhattan Project was a project in developing an atomic bomb. The scientist of the Manhattan Project were developing atom bombs using uranium and plutonium. The first three completed bombs were successfully tested at Alamogordo, New Mexico on 16th July, 1945 ("Manhattan Project"). The bomb was made to be used, just as a psychological weapon, rather than a purely military tool.

Following the successful test detonation of the atomic bomb in Alamogordo, sharp debate arose advisers to U. S. President Harry S. Truman regarding whether to employ the new weapon against Japan. In early June, the interim committee submitted its recommendation to Truman that the atomic bomb should be used against Japan as soon as possible. American planners believed that employing the bomb would, in all likelihood, bring the war to speedy end, saving many American lives. Many of the scientists working on the Manhattan Project disagreed, suggesting instead that a demonstration of the weapon be made to United Nation members and delivered with an

ultimatum to Japan. Stimson convened a scientific panel to review the use of the atomic bomb further.

## **The Bomb Is Dropped**

With the United States ready to deploy more troops to Japan for the invasion, Truman gave a final surrender ultimatum. After the Japanese rejecting the final surrender ultimatum issued on July 26, 1945, Truman decided to employ the atomic bomb.

“ In the early morning hours of August 6, 1945, a B-29 bomber named Enola Gay took off from the island of Tinian and headed north by northwest toward Japan. The bomber’s primary target was the city of Hiroshima, located on the deltas of southwestern Honshu Island facing the Inland Sea. Hiroshima had a civilian population of almost 300, 000 and was an important military center, containing about 43, 000 soldiers. The bomber, piloted by Colonel Paul Tibbets, flew at low altitude on automatic pilot before climbing to 31, 000 feet as it neared the target area. At approximately 8: 15 a. m.

Hiroshima time the Enola Gay released “ Little Boy,” its 9, 700-pound uranium bomb, over the city. Tibbets immediately dove away to avoid the anticipated shock wave. Forty-three seconds later, a huge explosion lit the morning sky as Little Boy detonated 1, 900 feet above the city, directly over a parade field where soldiers of the Japanese Second Army were doing calisthenics. Though already eleven and a half miles away, the Enola Gay was rocked by the blast. At first, Tibbets thought he was taking flak. After a second shock wave (reflected from the ground) hit the plane, the crew looked back at Hiroshima. “ The city was hidden by that awful cloud boiling up, mushrooming, terrible and incredibly tall,” Tibbets

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recalled. The yield of the explosion was later estimated at 15 kilotons (the equivalent of 15, 000 tons of TNT)" (" The Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima). More than 70, 000 people were killed instantly, only about a third whom were military personnel.

The United States again demanded surrender, but Japan, dismissing the threat as American propaganda, refused. Three days later, a second atomic bomb, codenamed " Fat Man" was dropped on Nagasaki, killing more than 70, 000 people.

" The next break in the weather over Japan was due to appear just three days after the attack on Hiroshima, to be followed by at least five more days of prohibitive weather. The plutonium bomb, nicknamed " Fat Man," was rushed into readiness to take advantage of this window. No further orders were required for the attack. Truman's order of July 25th had authorized the dropping of additional bombs as soon as they were ready. At 3: 47 a. m. on August 9, 1945, a B-29 named Bock's Car lifted off from Tinian and headed toward the primary target: Kokura Arsenal, a massive collection of war industries adjacent to the city of Kokura" (The Atomic Bombing of Nagasaki).

" Nagasaki was an industrial center and major port on the western coast of Kyushu. As had happened at Hiroshima, the " all-clear" from an early morning air raid alert had long been given by the time the B-29 had begun its bombing run. A small conventional raid on Nagasaki on August 1st had resulted in a partial evacuation of the city, especially of school children. There were still almost 200, 000 people in the city below the bomb when it exploded. The hurriedly-targeted weapon ended up detonating almost

exactly between two of the principal targets in the city, the Mitsubishi Steel and Arms Works to the south, and the Mitsubishi-Urakami Torpedo Works (right) to the north. Had the bomb exploded farther south the residential and commercial heart of the city would have suffered much greater damage” (The Atomic Bombing of Nagasaki).

Although the destruction at Nagasaki has generally received less worldwide attention than that at Hiroshima, it was extensive nonetheless. Five days later from the drop of the Fat Man on August 14th Japan surrendered unconditionally.

### **Was using the bomb Necessary in the End?**

There are many uncertainties and complexities surrounding the end of World War II. But the answer to the fundamental question of whether the use of the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was necessary appears to be yes. It was necessary to end the war as quickly as possible. And yes it was necessary to save the lives of American troops, perhaps numbering in the several thousands even millions (American Decades, 387)

Truman was committed to ending the war at the earliest possible moment, and he wanted to save as many American lives as he could. He never estimated the potential losses in the hundreds of thousands and had no evidence, maybe is he had this evidence he may not had dropped the bomb. But in the end it was necessary to end the war.

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