

"DIVINE WIND"
The Century's Most Unheralded
Blow Job
or
Eat your Heart Out, Monica:
This is Louise.

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Deep in the recesses of the National Archives in Washington, D.C., hidden for over five decades, lie thousands of pages of yellowing and dusty documents. These documents, now declassified, still bear the stamp, "Top Secret." Contained in these pages are detailed plans for "Operation Downfall," the code name for the scheduled American invasion of Japan.

Only a few Americans in 1945, and probably fewer today, were aware of the elaborate plans that had been prepared.

"Operation Downfall" was prepared in its final form during the spring and summer of 1945. The plan called for two massive military undertakings to be carried out in succession, and aimed at the very heart of the Japanese Empire.

Each one bigger than Operation Overlord.

In the first invasion, in what was code named "Operation Olympic," American combat troops would be landed by amphibious assault during the early morning hours of November 1, on Japan itself. After an unprecedented naval and aerial bombardment, 14 combat divisions of American soldiers and marines would land on heavily fortified and defended Kyushu, the southernmost of the Japanese home islands.

On March 1, 1946, the second invasion, code named "Operation Coronet," would send at least 22 more American combat divisions against one million Japanese defenders to assault the main island of Honshu and the Tokyo plain in a final effort to obtain an unconditional surrender of Japan.

With the exception of a part of the British Pacific fleet, "Operation Downfall" was to be a strictly American operation. It called for the utilization of the entire United States Marine Corps, the entire U.S. Navy Pacific fleet, the U.S. 7th, 8th, and 20th Air Force, and the American Far Eastern Air Force. Over 1.5 million combat forces, with millions more in support, would be involved in these two assaults; in other words, a total of 4.5 million servicemen, over 40% of all servicemen still in uniform in 1945.

The invasion was to be no easy undertaking. Admiral William Leahy estimated over 250,000 casualties on Kyushu alone. Gen. Charles Willoughby, MacArthur's Chief of Intelligence, estimated one million casualties for the entire operation.

The previous year's casualties:
200,000 Wounded & Disappeared
10,000 Dead Marianas
5,500 Dead Leyte
9,000 Dead Luzon
6,800 Dead Iwo Jima
12,600 Dead Okinawa
2,000 Dead Peleliu

245,900

Impressive as it was, the massive invasion was not, however, without precedent.

In the year 1281, two magnificent Chinese fleets set sail for the Empire of Japan. Their purpose was to launch a massive invasion on the Japanese home islands and to conquer Japan in the name of the great Mongol Emperor Kublai Khan.

Sailing from China was the main armada, consisting of 3,500 ships and over 100,000 heavily armed troops. Sailing from ports in Korea was a second impressive fleet of over 900 ships, containing 42,000 Mongol warriors.

In the summer of that year, the invasion force sailing from Korea arrived ^{first} off the western shores of the southernmost Japanese island of Kyushu. The Mongols maneuvered their ships into position and methodically launched their assault on the Japanese coast. Like human surf, wave after wave of these oriental soldiers swept ashore at Hagata Bay, where they were met on the beaches by thousands of Japanese defenders who had never had their homeland successfully invaded.

The Mongol invasion force was a modern army, and its arsenal of weapons was far superior to that of the Japanese. Its soldiers were equipped with poisonous arrows, maces, iron swords, metal javelins and even gunpowder. The Japanese were forced to defend themselves with bows and arrows, swords, spears, and shields made from wood and bamboo.

The battle was fierce, with many soldiers killed or wounded on both sides. It raged on for days, but aided by the fortifications along their beaches of which the Mongols had no advance knowledge; and inspired by the sacred cause of the defense of their homeland, these ancient Japanese warriors pushed the much stronger Mongol invaders off the beaches and back into their ships lying at anchor in the bay.

The Mongol fleet then set back out to sea, where it rendezvoused with the main body of its army, which was arriving with the second fleet coming from China.

During the summer of 1281, this combined force of foreign invaders maneuvered off shore in preparation for the main assault on the western shores of Kyushu.

All over Japan elaborate Shinto ceremonies were performed at shrines, in the cities, and in the countryside. Hundreds of thousands of Japanese urged on by their emperor, their warlords, and other officials prayed to their Shinto gods for deliverance from these invaders. Japanese voices called upward for divine intervention.

Miraculously, as if in answer to those prayers, from out of the south a savage typhoon sprang up and headed toward Kyushu. Its powerful winds screamed up the coast where they struck the Mongol's invasion fleet with full fury, wreaking havoc on the ships and the men on board. The fleet was devastated. After the typhoon had passed, over 4,000 invasion craft had been lost and Mongol casualties exceeded 100,000.

All over Japan celebrations were held. Everywhere tumultuous crowds gathered in thanksgiving to pay homage to the "divine wind" that had saved their homeland from invasion. The Japanese fervently believed that it was this "divine wind" that would forever protect them.

And so it was, as the summer of 1945 came to a close, another powerful armada was being assembled to assault the same western coastline of Kyushu, where ⁶⁶⁴~~720~~ years earlier the Mongols had been repelled.

The assault fleet itself consisted of thousands of ships of every size, shape and description, ranging from mammoth battleships and aircraft carriers to small amphibious craft. They would be sailing from Okinawa, the Philippines and the Marianas. Crucial to the success of the invasion were nearly 4,000 army, navy and marine aircraft that would be packed onto the small island of Okinawa to be used for direct air support for the landing invasion forces.

By July of 1945, the Japanese knew the Americans were planning to invade.

Throughout the early summer, the Emperor and his government officials exhorted the military and civilian population to make preparations. Japanese radios cried out to the people to "form a wall of human flesh" and when the invasion began, to push the invaders back to the sea, and back to their ships.

The Japanese people fervently believed that the Americans would be repelled. They all seemed to share a mystical faith that their country could never be invaded successfully and that they, again, would be saved by the "divine wind."

The American invasion never came, as we know, because the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, America's "divine wind," ended the war.

Almost immediately American soldiers, sailors and airmen, in for the duration, were being discharged and sent home. By the fall of 1945, there remained approximately 200,000 combatants on Okinawa. The island, which would have been the launching platform for the invasion of Japan, was now peaceful.

In October, Buckner Bay, on the east coast of the island, was still jammed with vessels of all kinds--from Victory ships to landing craft. On the island itself, 150,000 soldiers lived under miles of canvas, in what were referred to as "tent cities." All over the island, hundreds of tons of food, equipment and supplies stacked in immense piles lay out in the open.

During the early part of the month, to the southwest of Okinawa just northeast of the Marianas, the seas were growing restless and the wind began to blow. The ocean skies gradually turned black and the large swells that were developing began to turn the Pacific Ocean white with froth. In a matter of only a few days, a gigantic typhoon had somehow, out of season, sprung to life and began sweeping past Saipan and into the Philippine Sea. As the storm grew more violent, it raced northward and kicked up waves 60 feet high. Navy meteorologists eventually became aware of the storm, but expected it to pass well between Formosa and Okinawa, and to disappear into the East China Sea.

Unexplainably, on the evening of October 8, the storm changed direction and abruptly veered to the east. When it did so, there was insufficient warning to allow the ships in the harbor to get underway in order to escape the typhoon's violence. By late morning of the 9th, rain was coming down in torrents, the seas were rising and visibility was zero. Winds were over 80 miles per hour; small crafts began to drag their anchors.

By late afternoon winds had risen to 100 miles per hour, rain was coming in horizontally, and even bigger vessels began dragging anchors in 50 foot seas.

As the winds continued to increase and the storm unleashed its fury, the entire bay at Buckner became a scene of devastation. Ships collided with one another; hundreds of vessels were blown ashore; hundreds were abandoned.

Sometime that afternoon, the winds peaked at 150 miles per hour. Ships were blown off the reefs and back across the bay to the south shore. Gigantic waves swamped all vessels.

On shore, twenty-plus hours of torrential rain and wind washed out roads and destroyed the island's store of rations and supplies. Aircraft were catapulted off runways; quonset huts sailed into the air; metal hangars were ripped to shreds, and the "tent cities" were obliterated. (Read Caswell account)

Finally, mercifully, after long hours of torture and destruction, the storm slowly headed out to sea. Two days later it returned for one more day of havoc. When it passed this time, men crawled out of caves, ditches and trenches to survey its damage.

Countless aircraft had been destroyed, all power was gone, communications and supplies were nonexistent. The toll on ships was staggering: 270 ships sunk, grounded or damaged beyond repair. Fifty-three ships abandoned as worthless. Out of 90 ships which needed major repair, only 10 were even worthy of complete salvage, the remaining 80 were scrapped.

According to Samuel Eliot Morrison, the famous naval historian, "Typhoon Louise" was the most furious and lethal storm ever encountered by the U.S. Navy in its entire history. Hundreds of Americans were killed, injured and

missing, ships sunk and Okinawa devastated.

News accounts at the time disclose that the press and the public back home paid little attention to this storm that struck the Pacific with such force. Indeed, the storm's existence is still a little-known fact.

Surprisingly, few people then, or even now, have made the connection that an American invasion fleet of thousands of ships, planes and landing craft, and a half million men might well have been in that exact place at that exact time, poised to strike Japan, when this typhoon enveloped Okinawa and its surrounding seas.

~~However,~~ had there been no bomb dropped or had it been simply delayed for only a matter of months, history might well have repeated itself. In the fall of 1945, millions of Japanese voices would have been raised upward in thanksgiving; tumultuous crowds would have gathered in delirious gratitude to pay homage to a "divine wind" which might have once again protected their country from foreign invaders, a "divine wind" they had named, centuries before, the "kamikaze."

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