

America's War with Japan

- By 1942 the situation in the Pacific seemed desperate. Japan controlled much of China, the nations of eastern and southern Asia, and a string of Pacific islands.
- The war against the Japanese differed in several important respects from combat in Europe.
 - First, most of the fighting took place in dense jungle terrain.
 - Second, the main American offensive was amphibious landings of marines on small islands.
 - Finally, naval rather than air supremacy proved to be the key to victory.
- General Douglas MacArthur was commander of the nation's Army forces in the Pacific.
- In May 1942 American and Filipino defenders surrendered the Philippine Islands to the Japanese-
 - General MacArthur led the defense but evacuated when the situation became hopeless.
 - Before he left, he promised the people of the Philippines, "I shall return."
- The United States had several victories following the fall of the Philippines.
 - In May, a Japanese push toward Australia was stopped in the

Battle of Coral Sea.

- With savage fighting, key islands were slowly taken from Japanese control.
 - Of special importance was the capture of the Mariana Islands, which included Guam.
 - They were large enough for abundant airfields for American super-bombers, and they were close enough to Japan to permit round-trip bombing.
 - The first sustained air attacks on Japan were launched in November 1944.
 - The massive fire-bomb raid on Tokyo, March 9-10, 1945,
 - destroyed over 250,000 buildings, gutted a quarter of the city
 - killed an estimated 83,000 people.
- General MacArthur was moving northwest for the Philippines with 600 ships and 250,000 men. .
 - He arrived ashore in the Philippines with the statement: "People of the Philippines, I have returned.
Rally to me."
 - In a series of battles, the Americans defeated the Japanese there. American casualties numbered over 60,000.
- A desperate 25-day fight was carried out on the tiny island of Iwo Jima.
 - This island was needed as a place for damaged American bombers to land upon returning from Japan.
 - After 4,000 American casualties the island was captured in March 1945.
 - The following month, in a major naval battle off Midway Island, a

huge Japanese force moving on Hawaii was forced to turn back after sustaining heavy losses in a three-day engagement .

- That victory ended the Japanese advance, forcing them to adjust their plans to those of their opponents.
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- With the victories of Coral Sea and Midway, the United States was on the offensive.
 - An island-hopping strategy, the brainchild of MacArthur, was utilized.
 - This consisted of "leapfrogging" the islands, bypassing some of the most heavily fortified Japanese posts, capturing nearby islands, setting up airfields on them, and then neutralizing the enemy bases through heavy bombing.
 - Deprived of supplies from the homeland, the Japanese outposts would slowly wither and die.
 - The major American strategy was based on the ideas of General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz.
 - MacArthur's Southwest Pacific forces moved toward the Philippines from the south
 - Nimitz's Central Pacific forces island-hopped from the west to the Philippines, where both forces linked up for the final assault on Japan.
 - The United States had brilliant success with their strategy in the Pacific.
 - Okinawa, a well-defended Japanese island, was next on the list .

- It was needed for closer bases from which to bomb enemy cities.
 - Fighting dragged on from April to June of 1945.
 - The Japanese soldiers finally surrendered after 80,000 American deaths and far more Japanese casualties.
- The American navy sustained severe damage in the battle over Okinawa.
- The Japanese kamikazes crashed their bomb-carrying planes onto the decks of ships, sinking over 30 and badly damaging many more.
 - Fortunately, the Navy had developed floating dry docks to quickly repair ships and keep up the pressure on the Japanese.
- Strategists in Washington were planning the next move, which would be an all-out invasion of Japan. In spite of the devastation of American bombing and Navy defeats, the Japanese outwardly showed no willingness to surrender unconditionally.
- In the 1930's nuclear physicists had shown that the splitting of uranium atoms let loose tremendous energy.
- During the war, American scientists had urged President Roosevelt to develop a bomb using the energy of the atom before the Germans did.
 - Among the international team of scientists who urged the building of such a bomb was Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, Albert Einstein.
 - Congress, at Roosevelt's blank-check request, made available nearly \$2 billion for the project, which became known as the Manhattan Project .

- There were several options discussed as to how exactly to use the bomb. It was already considered by most to be a legitimate weapon.
 - Some suggested it be used as a bargaining tool, to threaten the enemy into surrender, or perhaps be demonstrated to show the enemy the strength of the new weapon.
 - Others suggested that U. s. allies should be informed about the new weapon, so that the United States would not keep a monopoly on it and cause a postwar arms race.
 - Others saw no reason at all to inform American allies. Military advisors reminded President Truman, who had replaced Roosevelt upon his death, that conventional bombing had not been enough to bring Japan to surrender, and told him that an American invasion of Japan might result in as many as 1 million American casualties.

- In July 1945 the United States successfully tested the I atomic bomb at Alamogordo in the New Mexico desert .
 Truman decided to use the bomb on Japan if necessary-
 - His official reasons being;
 - to end the war as quickly as possible
 - to avoid the need for an American invasion and, therefore. to save American lives.

- Shortly after the successful test, Truman met with Churchill and stalin at Potsdam where he issued a declaration to the Japanese that they faced "prompt and utter destruction" unless they surrendered at once.
 - The Japanese government did not reply.

- With Japan still refusing to surrender, on August 6, 1945, a lone American bomber, the Enola Gay, dropped one atomic bomb on the military-base city of Hiroshima, Japan.
 - Two thirds of Hiroshima was instantly destroyed by the blast.
 - Some 70,000 people were killed instantly in the searing heat
 - Another 100,000 were wounded or missing from the blinding flash of death.

- Two days later, on August 8, Stalin entered the war against Japan, exactly on the deadline date previously agreed upon with his allies.
 - Soviet armies quickly overran the depleted Japanese defenses in Manchuria and Korea in a six-day assault .

- Fanatically resisting, the Japanese still did not surrender.
- On August 9, American airmen dropped a second atomic bomb on the naval-base city of Nagasaki.
 - The explosion took the lives of about 80,000.
- Finally, Japan surrendered on August 10, 1945.
 - They sued for peace with the provision that Emperor Hirohito be permitted to retain his throne.
 - The formal surrender took place on September 2, 1945, on the deck of the American battleship Missouri in Tokyo Bay.