



## KAMIKAZE ATTACKS Okinawa, 1945



### PROLOGUE

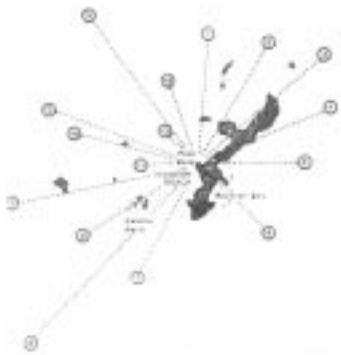
The spring and summer months of 1945 were anxious times for crews on American ships in the Pacific theater of World War II. While continually advancing toward the Japanese home islands in preparation for final invasion, U.S. forces incurred significant losses in these final months of the war.

By early April, the Allies had secured the island of Okinawa, within 1,000 miles of Tokyo. Desperate to forestall the advance of Allied forces, the Japanese had already turned to the highly destructive and deadly 'kamikaze' tactics. A combination of religious, political and cultural forces resulted in the deployment of suicide pilots, dispatched on one-way solo or group missions to crash into American ships to prevent the advance and anticipated invasion.

Destroyers were stationed around Okinawa, screening for enemy action through the use of radar and attacking enemy kamikazes to protect the larger capital ships and ground forces. As a direct result, ninety percent of all destroyers in and around Okinawa were either damaged or sunk. USS CASSIN YOUNG proved no exception to the rule, and was struck twice by kamikaze attacks. Admiral King, commander in chief of the U.S. Fleet, at this point declared: "For out of this total war must come total victory."

### APRIL 12, 1945

After the American forces landed at Okinawa, USS CASSIN YOUNG took up radar picket duty:



Heath Haggerty,  
Machinist's Mate

*"We were just out there as an early warning system. Bait, you know. They had a string of destroyers clear around the islands....They got hit so much they doubled up. They had two destroyers at each station. Then they tripled up.... The kamikazes came down from Japan...it was horrendous."*

USS CASSIN YOUNG's luck ran out on April 12.



Paul M. Jones,  
Executive Officer

*"We were stationed around like a clock. We had moved over to the ... 12 o'clock station... as the planes got 10-15 miles away, we heard reports from out talkers, saying that 'They are coming down like candles!'...There are just so many planes coming in that we couldn't get them all, and one of them hit the upper radar and the foremast. And he was carrying a 21" shell that exploded on contact, spreading shrapnel throughout the whole deck."*

One man was killed, 59 were wounded, but the war was not over. USS CASSIN YOUNG was repaired in a matter of weeks and returned to Okinawan waters by June 1, 1945.

JULY 30, 1945

USS CASSIN YOUNG was patrolling the entrance to Buckner Bay on the night of July 30. At 3:36 am, a lone kamikaze, evading radar detection, struck the ship on the starboard side near the forward smoke stack. Twenty two men were killed aboard ship and 45 were wounded in and around the devastated forward fire (boiler) room.

Heath Haggerty,  
Gunner's Mate



*"My battle station was on this forty millimeter, it was about 3 or 3:30 am, there was somewhat of a moon...they picked up a bogey quite a few thousand yards out. You know we weren't too impressed because it was quite a ways out....We turned everything on and just seconds later, they told us, 'Action starboard, commence firing,' ...and I thought 'What the hell happened here?' First they say he was 12,000 yards away, and now he's right here...."*

George T. Finnegan,  
Navigator



*"There was pandemonium on the deck, because what they were trying to do is get people out of the fire room and still secure the ship so that there wouldn't be any further extension of the damage...different areas of the ship were badly hit."*

James Marrs,  
Quartermaster

*"That plane came in and hit the starboard whaleboat while it was rigged out. You always had one lifeboat when you are at sea that was rigged out on davits, so you could get it over the side quick. And he flew into it. So all the force was out there....If he had hit us, I think we would have probably sunk. And that's where the force went. And that's where we were lucky, in that respect."*

Paul M. Jones  
Executive Officer



*"When you go into action, when you join the service, you wonder how you will react in battle. And I must say everybody reacted perfectly. Sure, you were scared as hell. You were scared when the General Alarm went off. But everybody did his job. Everybody did a fabulous job."*

## AFTERMATH

Much feared by the Japanese, the invasion of Japan never took place. Instead, with the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, 1945 and the subsequent Japanese surrender, the war was effectively over in the weeks following the July 30 kamikaze attack.

James Marrs,  
Quartermaster



*"On the way back to Saipan, Ulithi, we had a ceremony like burial at sea, except that we didn't actually bury anybody. And then, when we came back after the war was over, we had a kind of memorial service for the guys we had lost, and the fact that we were out of the war."*

One of the last ships to be hit by kamikaze fire, USS CASSIN YOUNG had fought steadfastly to the end in a time of "total war".

*Photos courtesy U.S. Navy and National Park Service*

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