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Bombings Worse than Nagasaki and Hiroshima **by Laurence M. Vance**

The world knows all too well about the atomic bombs the United States dropped on Hiroshima on Monday, August 6, 1945 (“Little Boy”), and on Nagasaki on Thursday, August 9 (“Fat Man”). “Dropping the bombs ended the war,” said President Harry Truman.

They may have ended the war, but they did not end the bombing of Japan.

On August 14, 1945, *after* the two atomic bombs had been dropped on Japan, and *after* Emperor Hirohito had agreed to surrender because “the enemy now possesses a new and terrible weapon with the power to destroy many innocent lives and do incalculable damage,” General Henry Harley “Hap” Arnold, to boost his already over-inflated ego (he was made a five-star general in 1944), undertook a completely unnecessary act of terror from the skies over Japan that had never before been seen. In their 1953 book *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, Wesley F. Craven and James L. Cate state:

Arnold wanted as big a finale as possible, hoping that USASTAF could hit the Tokyo area in a 1,000-plane mission: the Twentieth Air Force had put up 853 B-29’s and 79 fighters on 1 August, and Arnold thought the number could be rounded out by calling on Doolittle’s Eighth Air Force. Spaatz still wanted to drop the third atom bomb on Tokyo but thought that battered city a poor target for conventional bombing; instead, he proposed to divide his forces between seven targets. Arnold was apologetic about the unfortunate mixup on the 11th and, accepting Spaatz’ amendment, assured him that his orders had been “co-ordinated with my superiors all the way to the top.” The teleconference ended with a fervid “Thank God” from Spaatz. Kennedy had the Okinawa strips tied up with other operations so that Doolittle was unable to send out his VHB’s. From the Marianas, 449 B-29’s went out for a daylight strike on the 14th, and that night, with top officers standing by at Washington and Guam for a last-minute cancellation, 372 more were airborne. Seven planes dispatched on special bombing missions by the 509th Group brought

the number of B-20's to 828, and with 186 fighter escorts dispatched, USASTAF passed Arnold's goal with a total of 1,014 aircraft. There were no losses, and before the last B-29 returned President Truman announced the unconditional surrender of Japan.

This was the largest bombing raid in history. Yet, many timelines of World War II do not even list this event as having occurred.

But although this was the largest bombing raid, it was not the deadliest. In fact, the atomic bombs dropped on Japan were not even the deadliest. Because high-altitude precision bombing was viewed as not effective enough, the Army Air Force began using incendiary attacks against Japanese cities. After months of studies, planning, and several incendiary bombing test runs, Tokyo was firebombed on the night of March 9, 1945, by low-flying B-29's with increased bomb loads. Seventeen hundred tons of bombs were dropped in a densely populated area (an average of 103,000 people per square mile) of twelve square miles. The result was just what one would expect: as many as 100,000 dead, over 40,000 wounded, over 1,000,000 made homeless, over 267,000 buildings destroyed. The water boiled in some small canals because of the intense heat. This was the most destructive air attack in history. It killed more people than the dropping of an atomic bomb.

The Tokyo firebombing raid was followed by larger ones against Nagoya, Osaka, and Kobe, some of Japan's largest cities. Then Nagoya was hit again. All in all, 1,595 sorties had flown in 10 days, dropping over 9,300 tons of bombs. Japanese cities — large and small — were continually hit with conventional and incendiary bombs through the end of the war.

But the bombing of Japanese cities was not war, it was wholesale murder. How, then, does this act of terrorism continue to be defended almost sixty-five years later? Simple. Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. In fact, nothing U.S. forces did to Japan during the war matters because of Pearl Harbor.

But even if FDR didn't have prior knowledge of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and even if the United States didn't provoke Japan into firing the first shot (See Robert Stinnett's excellent book *Day of Deceit: The Truth about FDR and Pearl Harbor*, which persuasively argues that he did have prior knowledge and did provoke Japan into firing the first shot), Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor still doesn't justify bombing the civilian population of Japan. Why is it that the 9/11 attacks on America are considered acts of terrorism but a 1000-plane bombing raid on Tokyo after the dropping of two atomic bombs isn't?

Pearl Harbor or no Pearl Harbor, the bombing of Tokyo on August 14, 1945, was a despicable act — worse than the firebombing of Tokyo, worse than Hiroshima, and worse than Nagasaki — because it was so unnecessary.

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