

Hiroshima and Nagasaki

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On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped an atomic bomb, on a mostly civilian population in Hiroshima, that killed an estimated 140,000 people by the end of the year, and 200,000 by 1950. On August 9, another atomic bomb was dropped, on another mostly civilian population, in Nagasaki. That one killed 70,000 by the end of the year, and 140,000 by 1950.

The reason for this mass killing? We were told the bombings saved US troops' lives, because without them, a massive invasion of the island, resulting in huge numbers of casualties, would have been necessary. This was a lie.

Six out of the seven five-star officers that received their fifth star in WWII agreed that the atomic bombs were unnecessary. General Douglas MacArthur said the bombing was "completely unnecessary from a military point of view", the Japanese were "already beaten." General Dwight Eisenhower said, "the Japanese were ready to surrender and it wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing." General Henry Arnold said, "the Japanese were already on the verge of collapse." General Curtis LeMay said, "the atomic bomb had nothing to do with the end of the war."

These were not just field assessments. It was known for a fact that Japan was ready for peace. On July 12, 13, and 18 cables explicitly saying as much were intercepted. President Truman called the cable of the 18th "the telegram from the Jap emperor asking for peace."

Even if this hadn't been known, it was also well understood that the Soviet entrance into the Pacific War would defeat Japan prior to the planned US invasion. On the 17th of July, Truman wrote in his diary, "He'll [Stalin] be in the Jap War on August 15. Fini Japs when that comes about." The US invasion was scheduled for November.

So clearly the atomic bombs that our government dropped on civilian populations, killing hundreds of thousands of people, were not necessary, and the pretext we were given was a lie. Why then were they dropped? We need not speculate, we have the answer directly from those involved. Brigadier General Leslie Groves, the head of the Manhattan Project, told physicist Joseph Rotblat, who was working on the project, "You realize of course that the main purpose of this project is to subdue the Russians." Other concerned scientists were told the same by Truman advisor Jimmy Byrnes. It was well known that Japan was already defeated. The bombs were to send a message to Russia. They did not end WWII. They started the Cold War.

That's right, hundreds of thousands of innocent people were targeted and killed for a political purpose. When that happens to us, we call it terrorism. When we do it to others, we call it self defense. [Actually, during WWII, our targeting of civilian populations was called terrorism. Today's killers are much more careful with their language.]

US participation in WWII was necessary and just; something that as Americans we can all be proud of. But these two great acts of terror, among others, were inexcusable. And recognizing them as such is not merely academic. We must come to terms with crimes of the past, in order to prevent crimes in the future.

For the full story, check out Oliver Stone's and Peter Kuznick's *The Untold History of the United States*.

Note: *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of An American Myth*, by Gar Alperovitz, 1995, is a comprehensive study of the subject. Chapter 4 of *Untold History of the United States* provides a good summary.