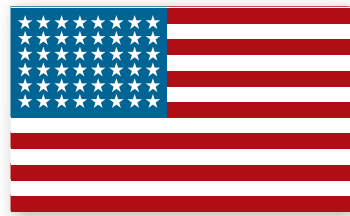


V-J DAY: THE END OF WORLD WAR II

The invasion that never was

WILLIAM NEFF | THE PLAIN DEALER



Unaware of research on the atomic bomb, U.S. military planners argued that an invasion of Japan's home islands was the only way to force an unconditional surrender.

Allied forces were pounding the once-mighty Japanese Empire by the summer of 1945.

Japan's cities lay in ruins from ceaseless B-29 bombing raids. Its armed forces were crippled.

Still, the Japanese were a long way from quitting. The Americans knew that their top-secret plan to invade the home islands — a two-stage offensive called **Operation Downfall** — could be the most costly battle of the Pacific War. The invasion would take place



MacArthur

under the overall command of Gen. Douglas MacArthur. More than 1.5 million soldiers and 3 million support personnel — or more than

heavy, and there was no way of knowing how long the operation would ultimately take. The end of World War II was nowhere in sight.

40 percent of all servicemen still in uniform in 1945 — would participate in the two amphibious assaults, codenamed "Olympic" and "Coronet." Casualties were expected to be extremely

... and the Japanese knew we were coming.



The Americans had considerable difficulty wresting Iwo Jima and Okinawa from Japanese armies that were isolated and under-supplied, but determined to fight to the death. In the invasion of Japan itself, they would face the hard core of that nation's remaining forces.

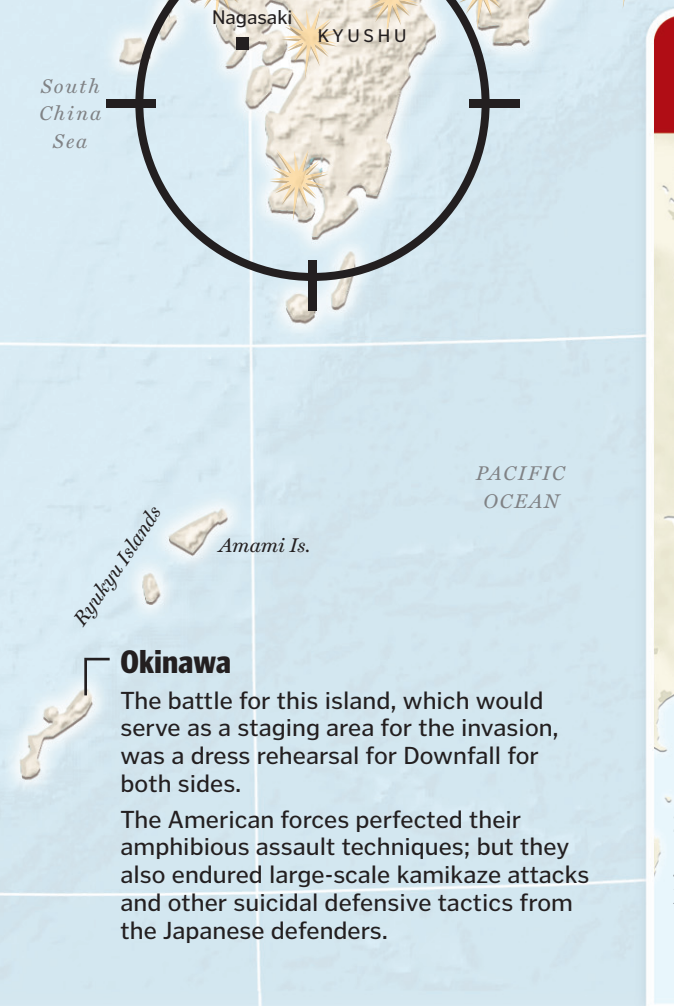
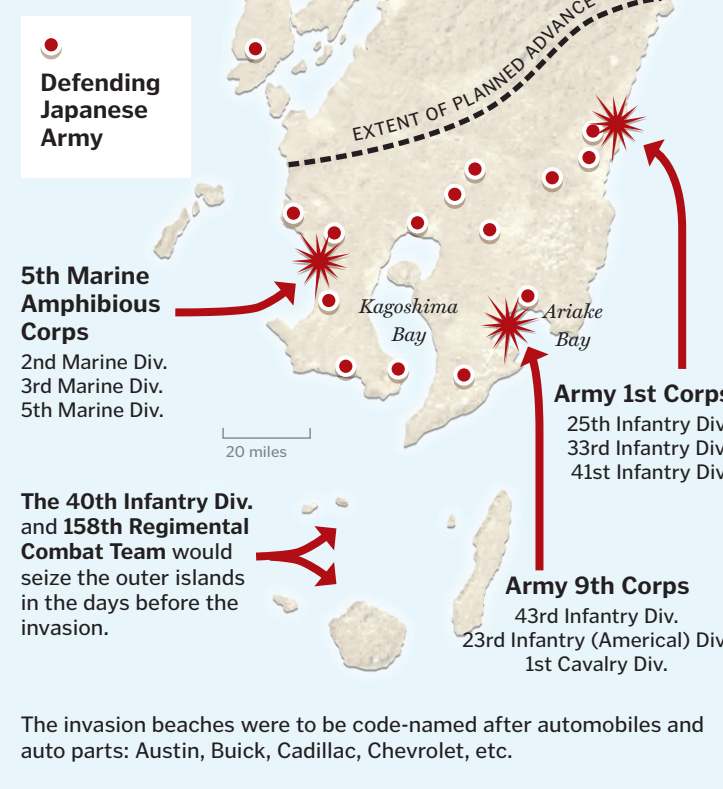
The Japanese had been carefully hoarding their remaining resources — especially aircraft, fuel and pilots — against the inevitable American invasion. Their plan was to greet the invasion fleets with nonstop waves of **kamikaze attacks** — suicide crash-dives by pilots

determined to sacrifice their lives to sink an Allied ship. After that, the Americans would face a numerically superior force including 14 crack army divisions, thousands of naval troops and tank and artillery brigades, dug in behind defensive networks of offshore mines, beach obstacles and hidden guns.

Japanese planners hoped that by wearing the Americans down and fighting them to a stalemate, they could force the U.S. to back off from its demand for unconditional surrender and negotiate better terms.

OPERATION 'OLYMPIC' | NOV. 1, 1945

The plan: 252,150 Army troops and 87,640 Marines would storm ashore in the early morning. The plan covered not only the invasion, but the occupation of southern Kyushu and its transformation into a base from which to launch Operation 'Coronet' the following year.

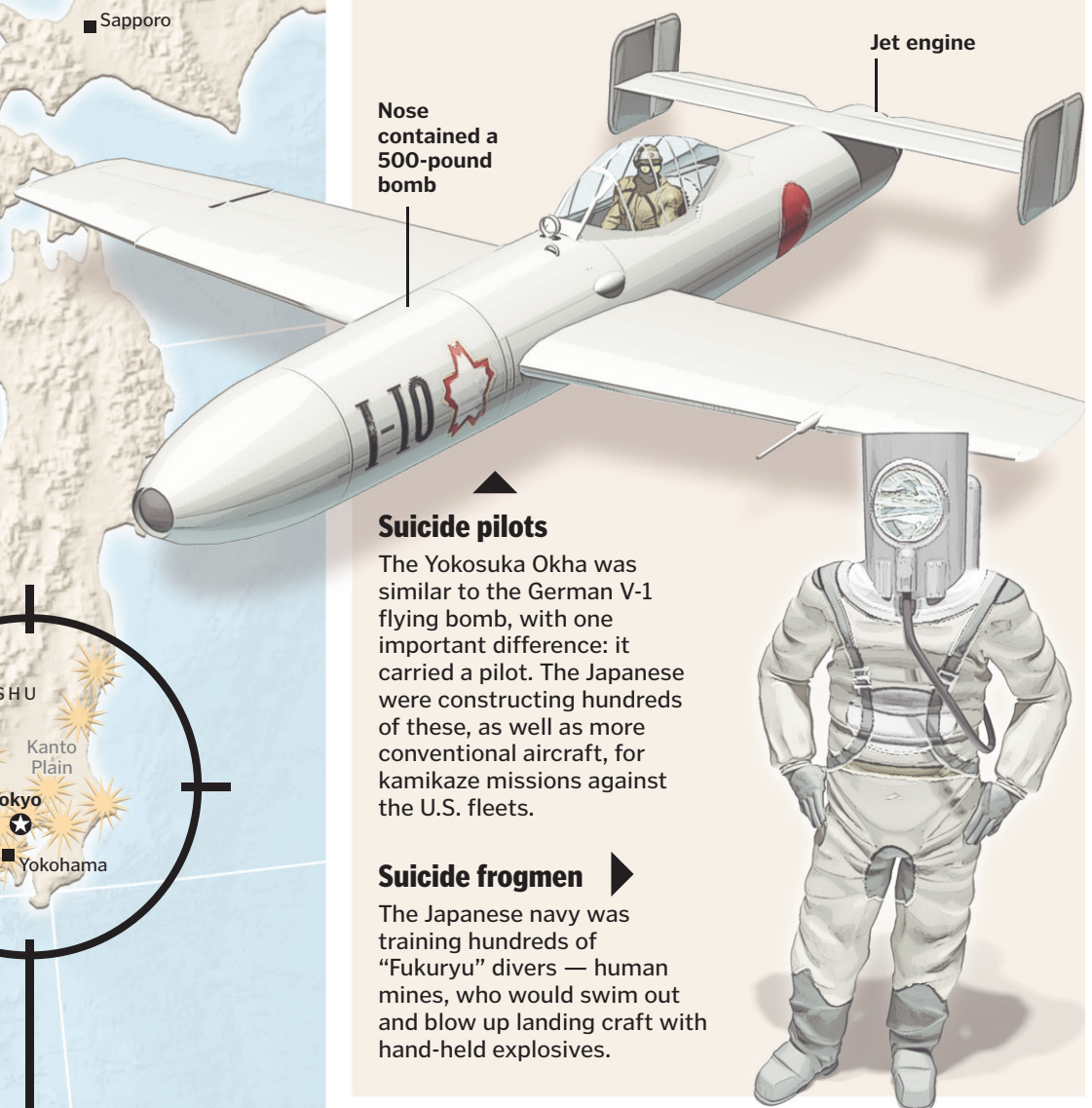


OPERATION 'CORONET' | MARCH 1946

Plans for Coronet were much more tentative than those for Olympic, since a) the operation could go forward only if Olympic succeeded, and b) military planners still hoped that the invasion of Kyushu would persuade the Japanese to surrender before Coronet became necessary.



Unlike Olympic, Coronet had no final line of advance; the invasion would continue until the Japanese were subdued.



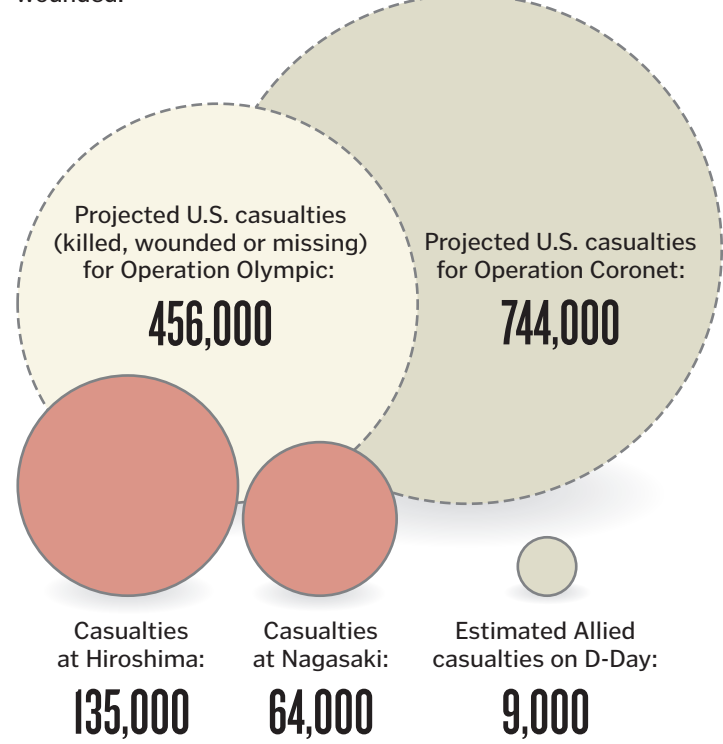
Jet engine
Nose contained a 500-pound bomb

Suicide pilots
The Yokosuka Okha was similar to the German V-1 flying bomb, with one important difference: it carried a pilot. The Japanese were constructing hundreds of these, as well as more conventional aircraft, for kamikaze missions against the U.S. fleets.

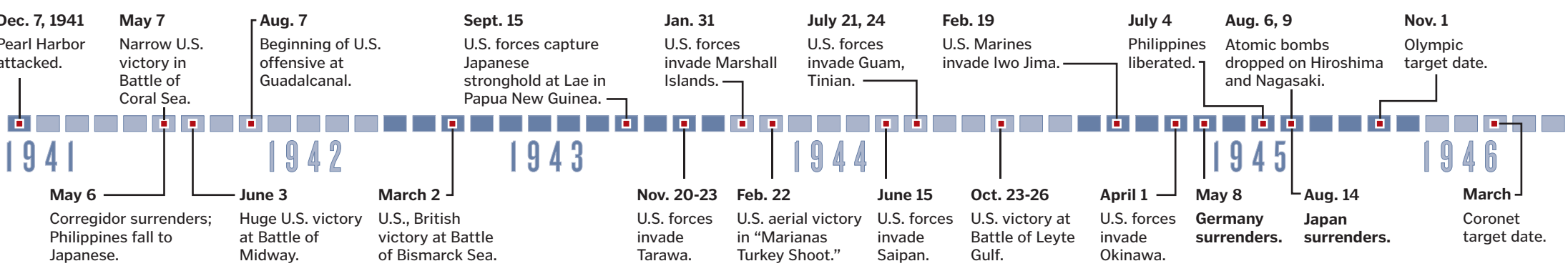
Suicide frogmen
The Japanese navy was training hundreds of "Fukuryu" divers — human mines, who would swim out and blow up landing craft with hand-held explosives.

CASUALTY COMPARISON

Estimates of how many Americans would be killed or injured in the planned invasion varied widely. The numbers here were projected by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and do not include the many thousands of Japanese who would also have been killed or wounded.



FROM TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH | THE PACIFIC CAMPAIGN



SOURCES: "The Invasion of Japan" by John Ray Skates (University of South Carolina Press, 1994); "Code-Name Downfall: The Secret Plan to Invade Japan — And Why Truman Dropped the Bomb" by Thomas B. Allen and Norman Polmar (Simon & Schuster, 1995); "The Historical Atlas of World War II" by John Pimlott (Henry Holt and Company, 1995)