

Kamikaze: Japan's Last Bid for Victory

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“Little Boy” from California to Tinian Island. “The Deep (July 30–August 4, 1945)” details events leading up to the attack, the sinking, and the rescue. “Trial and Scandal (August 5, 1945–June 30, 1949)” summarizes the legal proceedings and argues persuasively that the process was tainted. The last book, “An Innocent Man (Summer 1999),” ties together the concerted efforts of a few individuals that led to McVay’s exoneration.

Short sections covering periods between 1997 and 2005 follow each chronological book, tracking the efforts of Captain William J. Toti, the skipper of USS *Indianapolis* (SSN 697), *Indy*’s namesake submarine, to locate Mochitsura Hashimoto, submarine commander who sank *Indianapolis* and testified at the 1945 court-martial, and gain his support to exonerate McVay. These sections bolster rather than interrupt the flow of the primary story, particularly in the last book, and culminate with coverage of the sixtieth-anniversary gathering of survivors and their families in 2005. The story concludes with a short “Final Log Entry” about the discovery of the cruiser 18,000 feet below the surface of the Philippine Sea seventy-two years after it was sunk.

In dividing their work, Vincent, a USN veteran and author of numerous nonfiction books, focused on the delivery of the bomb, the court-martial, and McVay’s subsequent exoneration, while Vladic, an acclaimed documentary filmmaker and the world’s leading expert on *Indianapolis*, focused on the survivors and their families. Their joint passion to tell the whole story of *Indy* and its crew is evident throughout the book.

While the story is well constructed and captivating, the book is also a well-documented, scholarly work. The

authors combine hundreds of hours of interviews with survivors, rescue crews, family members, and friends with primary sources, including official Navy records, and numerous photographs, charts, graphs, and maps to produce a full understanding of what happened and why. The “Final Sailing List,” cross-referenced from eight sources, is a fitting tribute to the ship’s 1,195 crewmembers.

The twenty-two-page bibliography seemingly references every document, article, interview, film, and book ever produced on *Indianapolis*, including Doug Stanton’s *New York Times* best seller *In Harm’s Way: The Sinking of the USS Indianapolis* (Holt, 2001). Supported by years of research and hundreds of additional interviews, Vincent and Vladic’s *Indianapolis* should be the first choice for new audiences fascinated with the excerpt from Quint’s war story. For those familiar with the sinking and its aftermath, *Indianapolis* is worthy of your attention as the definitive account of this World War II tragedy.

JEFFREY BOVARNICK



Kamikaze: Japan’s Last Bid for Victory, by Adrian Stewart. Philadelphia: Pen and Sword Aviation, 2020. 209 pages. \$29.95.

The very first, and possibly the second, “suicide dive” that Japanese pilots made in World War II occurred on the first day of Japan’s war against the United States, during the attack on Pearl Harbor and other sites on Oahu. Although as the author of *Kamikaze: Japan’s Last Bid for Victory* notes, these pilots’ missions were fundamentally different from those that came later, “the motives behind them help to

explain the Kamikaze creed” (p. 3). It was the attacks toward the end of the war conducted by the “Divine Wind Special Attack Unit,” which the Imperial Japanese Navy established officially in October 1944, that were notorious. Although suicide attacks were not limited to the kamikaze aerial attacks, it is the latter intentional rather than earlier impulsive suicide attacks that receive the most attention.

The Japanese warrior of World War II was a fierce opponent, one who considered suicide charges or other means of achieving death to be preferable to surrendering—death before dishonor. American and Allied soldiers and Marines fighting island by island frequently met with stiff resistance, including suicidal attempts to kill them, whether in small or large numbers. In the Allies’ methodical movement toward the Japanese home islands, reclamation of territory occupied by Japanese ground forces came at a very high cost in human life. In the waning months of the war in the Pacific, Japan’s airpower was diminishing much faster than its ground forces; so too had its power at sea largely been destroyed. Unable to stop the tightening naval noose around the home islands, Japan began a new tactic of kamikaze attacks.

Adrian Stewart’s volume—consisting of eight chapters, a sixteen-page insert of photographs, and four maps—provides an informative and enjoyable study of this aspect of the war in the Pacific theater. Although more-extensive treatments exist, this book is worth reading as an introductory overview of the kamikaze phenomenon. Ideologically grounded in and inspired by events of the Mongol invasions of Japan in 1274 and 1281, the attacks

drew on Japanese history, religion, nationalism, and patriotism to attempt to deter or delay invasion and defeat.

The first chapter, “Death Is Lighter than a Feather,” aptly situates the kamikaze perspective within historic Japanese beliefs on death and defeat. Stewart makes a distinction between suicide attacks earlier in the war—such as those at Attu and Guadalcanal and against USS *Hornet* and *Enterprise*—and later kamikaze operations, but he sees in both the legacy of the Bushido code of the samurai.

Chapter 2 views the beginnings of kamikaze tactics in 1942, with the later establishment of the Kamikaze Corps prior to the Battle of Leyte Gulf. The third and fourth chapters consider the effects of the failure of the Japanese SHO plan for defense of the Philippines and those islands’ subsequent fall. Throughout the book, Stewart skillfully weaves together historical narrative with presentation of pilots’ final letters to family members, their other words, and other evidence of their motivations. In so doing, the author achieves the difficult task of showing the human element of these warriors. As he observes, “All Kamikaze pilots, without exception, were devoted patriots” (p. 61). Even so, the toll they exacted on the Allies was not insignificant, especially in the Battle of Okinawa, as the author presents in chapter 7. During that campaign, of March–June 1945, 1,900 kamikaze sorties sank twenty-six ships and inflicted damage on 176 more (p. 162). As time went on, the Kamikaze Corps relied increasingly on ill-trained pilots and older aircraft.

Stewart’s work balances the experiences of the attackers and of the attacked, and in so doing shows the fighting spirit, resolve, and capabilities of those

who were targets of the kamikazes as well. The final chapter, "The Moon Rose Radiant," presents the immediate postconflict stand-down and the responses of surviving kamikaze pilots. The kamikaze attacks were operational and strategic failures, but their tactical effects, at least psychologically, were enormous. These warriors left a legacy to be studied and compared with those of other wars and other suicide warriors.

Readers interested in the personal side and stories of the pilots will want to supplement this volume by reading *Kamikaze Diaries: Reflections of Japanese Student Soldiers* by Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney (University of Chicago Press, 2006) and *Blossoms in the Wind: Human Legacies of the Kamikaze* by M. G. Sheftall (NAL Caliber / Penguin, 2005). Also not to be overlooked is the classic 1958 account by Rikihei Inoguchi and Tadashi Nakajima, with Roger Pineau, *The Divine Wind: Japan's Kamikaze Force in World War II* (Naval Institute Press, repr. 2013). Yet for a first book to read on the subject, Stewart's *Kamikaze* is very good and insightful. The separate index of Australian, British, Japanese, and U.S. ships is very helpful, as is his discussion of the oft-overlooked attacks against Australian and British ships. It is well worth reading.

TIMOTHY J. DEMY



British Naval Intelligence through the Twentieth Century, by Andrew Boyd. Barnsley, U.K.: Seaford, 2020. 800 pages. \$52.95.

In a most-welcome study of British intelligence bureaucracies in the modern age, Andrew Boyd has provided a major contribution to the historiography of

maritime strategy. His single-volume history provides a comprehensive, chronological analysis of the relevant administrative trends and key personalities and reveals many fresh insights into the contemporary question of British intelligence. Responding to the standard historiographical narratives, Boyd challenges many myths and provides corrective observations for his readers to consider. He examines the secret history of the British Empire while simultaneously considering the role of the Dominions and Commonwealth. From the late nineteenth century to the present, British naval strategy has evolved under the influence of intelligence. The bureaucracies involved largely have remained behind closed doors, yet intelligence organizations have helped to define the world into the twenty-first century.

Boyd draws from original documentary sources—archival holdings, contemporaneous firsthand accounts, and memoirs—to address critical problems in the official histories and other historiography of British intelligence, including addressing the major myths. Historiographical trends in recent scholarship have muddied the waters, and thankfully Boyd has addressed them. By taking the chronological approach, he has provided a better interpretation of the bigger questions, explaining *why* people in the past acted as they did *at the time*.

Among many other examples, Boyd demonstrates the influence of the First World War on efforts to renew the transatlantic relationship between the British Empire and the United States. Boyd then uses this history to correct many popular myths surrounding the heroic story of British code breakers