

numerous toasts with Scotch whisky, which Cho had carried from Shuri Castle.

Then, at 4 a.m. on June 22, both Ushijima and Cho began preparations for their suicide. A Japanese prisoner, who learned the details of their deaths from witnesses, wrote an account of the generals' last moments: "Four o'clock, the final hour of hara-kiri: the commanding general, dressed in full field uniform, and the chief of staff, in a white kimono, appeared. The chief of staff says as he leaves the cave first, 'Well, Commanding General Ushijima, as the way may be dark, I, Cho, will lead the way.' The commanding general replies, 'Please do so, and I'll take along my fan since it is getting warm.' Saying this, he picked up an Okinawan-made Kuba fan and walked out quietly fanning himself.

"These are calm minds that face death. The generals passing before the row of their subordinates give the air of immortals walking by.

"The moon, which had been shining until now, sinks below the waves of the western sea. Dawn has not yet arrived, and at 4:10 a.m. the generals appeared at the mouth of the cave. Four meters from the mouth, a sheet of white cloth is placed on a quilt. This is the ritual place for the two generals to commit hara-kiri.

"The commanding general and the chief of staff sit down on the quilt, bow in reverence toward the eastern sky, and Adjutant J respectfully presents the sword. At this time several grenades were hurled near this solemn scene by the enemy troops who observed movements taking place beneath them."

Unperturbed by these explosions, the two generals calmly proceeded with the prescribed ritual. Each man bared his stomach for disembowelment by a ceremonial knife, at the same time bowing his head for decapitation by the adjutant's drawn saber. According to the Japanese prisoner's account, the end came quickly. "A simultaneous shout and a flash of a sword, then another repeated shout and a flash, and both generals had nobly accomplished their last duty to their Emperor."

The day of Ushijima's death, June 22, marked the end of organized Japanese resistance on Okinawa. The two remaining pockets, Hill 85 and the Ara-saki area, had fallen to regiments of the 77th Infantry and 6th Marine Divisions. To solemnize the official end of the campaign, General Geiger

caption for photo

Great mounds of brass artillery shell casings await salvage at Yonabaru on June 27, 1945, five days after the battle for Okinawa ended. During the campaign, U.S. field guns fired 1,766,352 rounds in support of the troops—more than were fired by Americans in any other Pacific campaign.

raised the American flag over his headquarters near the Kadena airfield.

There still remained 10 days of mopping up—the perilous task of rounding up Japanese stragglers, thwarting prisoners who tried to blow up themselves and their captors with grenades, checking out overlooked caves and tunnels, killing bypassed soldiers who refused to surrender.

When Graves Registration teams had finally completed counting all the bodies, the figures told a story that came as no surprise to the fighting men: Okinawa had been the bloodiest land battle of the Pacific war. The Japanese had lost approximately 110,000 killed and 10,755 taken prisoner during the 83-day land struggle for the island. The victory on Okinawa had cost the Army and Marines 7,613 killed and missing, 31,807 wounded and 26,211 other casualties, most of them victims of combat fatigue. Added to these losses were heavy casualties among sailors and Naval aviators who had provided more than three months of supply, air and artillery support for the land operations. Kamikaze attacks and conventional air strikes had killed 4,320 and wounded 7,312 Naval personnel.





The terrible cost of the Okinawa campaign—coming on top of the 26,000 casualties on Iwo Jima—provoked cries of outrage from influential American journalists, who laid the blame on "ultraconservative tactics." General Douglas MacArthur, who had conducted most of his Pacific campaigns with remarkably little loss of life, joined the controversy, accusing Admiral Nimitz' command of "sacrificing thousands of American soldiers because they insisted on driving the Japanese off the island" instead of cordoning off southern Okinawa and letting the enemy troops there wither on the vine.

But whatever the cost of Okinawa to the Americans, the loss of the island was a savage blow to the Japanese. In Tokyo, the recently formed government of Prime Minister Kantaro Suzuki was stunned by the defeat. "The Prime Minister now admitted that the war situation was far worse than he thought," reported veteran diplomat Mamoru Shigemitsu. "Okinawa left little room for doubt as to the outcome of the war." In fact, Okinawa had made it possible for the Japanese officials to seriously contemplate what had once been the unthinkable: the possibility of sending out peace feelers.

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 AMERICAN FORCES  
 DIVERSIONARY FEINT  
 LANDING BEACHES  
 FIRST JAPANESE DEFENSE LINE

0      10      20  
 Scale of Miles



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 1979*