

On the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki comes this war-room account from inside the cabinets of the United States and Japan leading to Armageddon on August 6, 1945.

Here are the strategy sessions, fierce debates, looming assassinations, and planned invasions that resulted in history's first use of nuclear weapons in combat, and the ensuing chaotic days as Japan struggled to respond to the reality of nuclear war.

As America's World War II bombing campaign incinerated Japan's cities, two military giants locked in a death embrace. The leaders of the US called for the "unconditional surrender" of the Japanese Empire while developing history's deadliest weapon and weighing an invasion that would have dwarfed D-Day. Their enemy responded with a last-ditch plan termed Ketsu-Gô—the suicidal resistance of every able-bodied man and woman in the "Decisive Battle" for the homeland.

But had Emperor Hirohito's generals miscalculated the Americans' progress on the atomic bomb? How close did President Truman come to ordering an invasion?

Within the Japanese Supreme Council at the Direction of War—the "Big Six"—Foreign Minister Shigenori Tōgō risked assassination in his crusade to convince his government's militarist fanatics to save his country from annihilation.

Despite Allied warnings of Japan's "prompt and utter destruction" and that the Allies would "brook no delay," the Big Six remained defiant, refusing to surrender after the atomic bombings and Russia's entry into the war.

How did Japanese leaders come to this impasse? The answers lie in this nearly day-by-day account of the struggle to end the most destructive conflict in history.

David Dean Barrett is a military historian, specializing in World War II. He has published work in *WWII Quarterly* magazine, *US Military History Review*, and *Global War Studies*. He is the history content consulting producer for Lou Reda Productions' two-hour documentary on World War II's US Eighth Air Force, which will air as a prime time global event on National Geographic in late 2020. David has been a frequent guest speaker for more than a decade on the use of the atomic bomb in the final days of WWII and the end of the Pacific War. Mr. Barrett has a master's degree in history from the University of Colorado, Denver, and owns One With History, Inc. He lives in Littleton, Colorado.

READ BY STEPHEN GRAYBILL



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