

saved American lives. In the perspective of the times, that's really all that matters.¹¹

The contributions of these men to the memorial suggest, at the very least, the misplacement of the overall strategy for the bomb's use in the following three points:

- Given the quantity of ordnance expended against Japanese targets, there is no reason to believe that, had the Army Air Force chosen to bomb those cities with conventional weapons, the damage and death toll would have been vastly different, as Beser suggests.
- The unidentified contributor is careful to note “[t]he atrocities [*sic*] perpetrated by the Japanese war machine on the innocent people of Korea, China, Singapore, and the Philippines [*sic*],” prisoners of war and “countless others whose only crime was to be seen as insignificant by the Japanese.” Indeed, Japanese atrocities against people of these and other nations are well-documented, although numbers tend to vary, estimates range from 6 million to 30 million – with the majority of victims being of Chinese ethnicity.¹² Stories abound about killing competitions among Japanese soldiers¹³ and sexual slavery.¹⁴ The Japanese are also known to have

¹¹ Beser, Larry (1995 July 19) in *Remembering Nagasaki: The Decision*. Retrieved October 26, 2006 from <http://www.exploratorium.edu/nagasaki/commentary/decision.html>

¹² Wikipedia.org, “Japanese war crimes” (2006 Oct 22). Retrieved October 26, 2006 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_war_crimes. also, Bataan-Corregidor Memorial Foundation of New Mexico, Inc., “Report of Japanese Atrocities, Bataan Death March, Palawan Massacre”, Retrieved October 26, 2006 from <http://www.angelfire.com/nm/bcmfof/nm/atrocities/atrocities01.html>. Additional information on Japanese atrocities may be found at <http://www.centurychina.com/wiihist/> and <http://www.kimsoft.com/kr-japan.htm>. Please note that some of these sites include explicit and disturbing imagery.

¹³ Wikipedia.org, “Contest to Cut Down 100 People” (2006 Oct 20), Retrieved October 26, 2006 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contest_To_Cut_Down_100_People

¹⁴ San Francisco State University, “The Comfort Women Project” (2002 Mar 3), Retrieved October 27, 2006 from <http://online.sfsu.edu/~soh/comfortwomen.html>. See also Wikipedia.org, “Comfort Women” (2006 Oct 20), Retrieved October 26, 2006 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comfort_women.

conducted human physiological experimentation, germ and biological warfare studies, and torture upon prisoners in infamous secret military units such as Unit 731.¹⁵ More than 2,200 war crimes trials were held in Tokyo and “in many other cities through Asia and the Pacific during 1946-51,” according to the Japanese War Crimes article.

- As General William Tecumseh Sherman once said, “War is Hell.” Beser points out the “basic immorality of

war” and is correct in doing so, adding that the objective of war is victory. Was dropping the bomb any more “morally indefensible” than intentionally freezing, then amputating the exposed,

frozen limbs of prisoners until only a head and torso remained? Does the experimentation with toxic gases and other chemical weaponry on prisoners imply a higher moral ground? What about the abduction of between 80,000 and 200,000 female Filipino, Taiwanese, Thai, Vietnamese, Korean and Chinese for the purpose



Two Japanese officers, Toshiaki Mukai and Tsuyoshi Noda competing to see who could kill (with a sword) one hundred soldiers first. The bold headline reads, "Incredible Record in the Contest to Cut Down 100 People—Mukai 106 – 105 Noda—Both 2nd Lieutenants Go Into Extra Innings." Note the baseball metaphor.

¹⁵ Wikipedia.org, “Unit 731” (2006 Oct 17). Retrieved October 26, 2006 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unit_731. See also Wick, Daniel L. (1995 Aug 6) “Japanese Atrocities Against POWs [Review of the book *Prisoners of the Japanese: POWs of World War II in the Pacific*]. San Francisco Chronicle. Retrieved October 27, 2006 from <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/1995/08/06/RV35197.DTL>

of sexual slavery for soldiers as part of *official Japanese military standard operating procedure*? Shall we compare the mass killings of 6 million in Japanese occupied territories to the 210,000 lost in the two atomic bombings? Should we discuss the massacres at Alexandra Barracks Hospital, Laha, Nanking, Manila, Parit Sulong, Sook Ching and Tol Plantation? How about the chemical weapon attacks at Changde and Kamingye? Maybe the death marches at Bataan and Sandakan?¹⁶ What about the 20,000 women raped at Nanking *alone*?¹⁷ No discussion about the “moral defensibility” of any of these actions is required beyond the recognition that war *itself* is “morally indefensible.”

There was clearly more of Hell for Sherman to see.

These points bring us to the conclusion that the ethical considerations of dropping the atomic bomb are also moot – with two caveats which return us to the question of *overall strategy* and bring questions about how the targets were selected into sharp relief.

- Bluntly, if the bomb was meant to impress the Soviets, it shouldn't have been dropped on Japan. Paradoxically, the American public identifies use of the bomb squarely with Japan – and Alperovitz' close examination of the military leadership fails to produce any evidence any target other than Japan was even considered – nor that the question of “why drop it on Japan?” was ever raised.

¹⁶ Wikipedia.org contains content on each of these massacres and chemical weapon attacks, and death marches. For easiest access, visit the section called “Major incidents” on the page titled “Japanese war crimes” (the first reference in footnote 12 pertains.)

¹⁷ San Francisco State University, *supra* note 14.

- The second caveat is largely about Nagasaki, but touches on planning concerns of both missions. First, the obvious question: If the *overall strategy* of the use of the atomic bomb was all about impressing the Soviet Union, why drop a second bomb? Furthermore, why drop a second a bomb so soon after the first – in other words, “Why weren’t the Japanese given additional time to evaluate the results of the first bombing” (Alperovitz, p.532)? Because, according to Alperovitz, the goal had always been to use one bomb of *each type* – one plutonium bomb using the “implosion” mechanism, and the other a uranium bomb using a more straightforward “gun-type” mechanism. In other words, use of a single bomb only was not seriously considered. Furthermore, the military orders were to launch “two attacks within a short period of time for psychological as well as tactical reasons” (p.533). It seems that part of the overarching strategy for determining bombing locations really did have something to do with military relevance – only inversely:

Target committee files declassified in the 1970s record discussions delineating these initial criteria for determining possible targets: (1) they be important targets in a large urban area of more than three miles diameter, (2) they be capable of being damaged effectively by a blast, and (3) they are likely to be unattacked [*sic*] by next August. (p.524)

These files also confirm that the 20th Air Force was “laying waste” all of the “important primary target[s]” – which excluded both Hiroshima and Nagasaki (p.523). Had either of these cities any significant military value, the 20th would not have allowed either to exist largely unscathed into August, 1945. These locations were chosen because the Project wanted to know what kind of damage these weapons were capable of in optimal conditions – meaning finding targets that had no significant preexisting damage. Obviously they had no significant preexisting damage *because they had no appreciable military value* and that point raises