



Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Hiroshima, Japan

Nuclear bomb exploded 8.15am, 6 August 1945.

- Code name: Little Boy.
- Uranium gun-type fission using 50–70 kilograms of enriched uranium.
- Explosive yield: the equivalent of 15,000 tons of TNT.
- 90,000 killed immediately; 145,000 died within months.
- Obliterated 10 square kilometres of the city.
- Ten seconds after the bomb exploded, shockwaves destroyed everything within a four-kilometre radius.

Nagasaki, Japan

Nuclear bomb exploded 11.02am, 9 August 1945.

- Code name: Fat Man.
- Plutonium fission, using 6.2 kilograms of plutonium.
- Explosive yield: the equivalent of 21 000 tons of TNT.
- 40,000 killed immediately; 75,000 dead by end of 1945.
- Detonated 500 metres above Nagasaki and total destruction spread about 1 kilometre.

Today's thermonuclear weapons are 100 to 1000 times more destructive than the earlier bombs used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Predicted effects of a 1 megaton nuclear weapon

Immediate

- Electromagnetic pulse causes electricity, cars, telephones, radios and TV to fail.
- Bomb flash blinds everyone up to 80 kilometres away.
- Burns suffered by those within 20 kilometres of the blast.
- Blast shatters windows to a radius of 15 kilometres leading to injury.
- Radiation contamination 5 kilometres downwind of the blast.
- A plume of radiation rises up 20 kilometres into the atmosphere, allowing spread to major capital cities (effects of radiation include bone marrow suppression, gastrointestinal diarrhoea and contamination of water reservoirs).
- Mass fires lead to superheated winds and toxic smoke.
- Hurricane force winds compound the devastation.

Later

- Psychological trauma.
- Water, food and fuel shortages spark panic buying and looting.

Long Term effects of nuclear winter

- Atmospheric dust clouds result in a nuclear winter.
- Surface water freezes causing animals to die – many species become extinct.
- Reduced sunlight – plants die, then animals.
- Radioactive fallout – increases genetic mutations leading to cancers.
- Weeks or months later light and heat returns.
- Ozone depletion leads to greenhouse effect.
- UV exposure causes animals to go blind.
- Pests proliferate – plagues of insects and opportunistic life-forms.

“Nuclear weapons were needed to defeat Japan in World War Two”

It is widely believed, particularly in the United States, that the use of nuclear weapons against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was necessary to defeat Japan in World War II. This is not, however, the opinion of the leading US military figures in the war, including General Dwight Eisenhower, General Omar Bradley, General Hap Arnold and Admiral William Leahy.

General Eisenhower, who was the Supreme Allied Commander Europe during World War II and later US President, wrote: “I had been conscious of a feeling of depression and so I voiced [to Secretary of War Stimson] my grave misgivings, first on the basis of my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary, and secondly because I thought that our country should avoid shocking world opinion by the use of a weapon whose employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives.

“It was my belief that Japan was, at that very moment, seeking some way to surrender with a minimum loss of ‘face’...”

Not only was the use of nuclear force unnecessary, its destructive force was excessive, resulting in 220,000 deaths by the end of 1945.

Source: David Krieger and Angela McCracken, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, www.wagingpeace.org

Censorship in the nuclear age

SHORTLY AFTER the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the United States' strategic bombing survey hired a Japanese film unit to record the physical and medical effects of the bomb. They were then edited to produce a documentary entitled "The Effects of the Atomic Bombs Against Hiroshima and Nagasaki". The finished film was shipped to the U.S. in May 1946 with much publicity. It was declared 'top secret' and locked in a vault, never to be shown to the American public. Only in the late 1960s was it returned to the Japanese.

In their book "Hiroshima in America: A Half Century of Denial", Robert Jay Lifton and Greg Mitchell suggest why American officials were uncomfortable with the footage: "The Japanese newsreel team had gone into hospitals to document the burn and radiation effects. They not only photographed a burned-out trolley car, but the rows of bodies and bones that surrounded it. Even the footage of strictly physical phenomena featured troublesome imagery: radioactive sand clogging wells used for drinking water; dead stalks of rice seven miles from the hypocenter; the silhouette of a painter on a ladder, his brush outstretched, permanently etched onto the surface of a concrete wall by the flash of the bomb."

America's reluctance to deal with the human impact of the only cases of atomic bombing of civilian populations has persisted. In 1995, the Smithsonian museum in Washington had planned an exhibition featuring the "Enola Gay", the airplane that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. The exhibition was to not only recall the events surrounding the bombing, but also examine the bomb's impact on people, and feature documents showing that high-ranking military leaders had doubts about dropping the bomb. In response, the American Air Force Association, supported by several right wing politicians, launched a major campaign attacking the exhibit as revisionist and defending America's use of the atomic bomb. The exhibition in its proposed form had to be cancelled.

Source: M.V. Ramana, IPPNW Global Health Report "Bombing Bombay", www.ippnw.org/IPPNWBooks.html#Bombay

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