

## Kokura Luck

"Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima. It is an atomic bomb. We are now prepared to obliterate more rapidly and completely every productive enterprise the Japanese have above ground in any city. If they do not now accept our terms they may expect a rain of ruin from the air the like of which has never been seen on this earth."  
President Harry S. Truman



Mission: Hiroshima  
Plane: B-29; Enola Gay;  
Ser. # 45-MO-44-86292

Weapon: "Little Boy" Uranium Bomb  
Date: August 6, 1945

Operation Centerboard...

### The SEVEN B-29's of the Hiroshima Mission:

"Enola Gay", piloted by Col. Tibbets carries the "Little Boy" uranium bomb.

"The Great Artiste", piloted by Maj. Charles Sweeney, is assigned to drop the three instruments used to measure the blast effects of the bomb.

"#91" (unnamed at the time - later "Necessary Evil"), flown by Capt. George Marquardt, carries the scientific observers.

"Top Secret", flown by Capt. Chuck Knight, acts as a standby aircraft and flew to Iwo Jima in the event of mechanical problems with the Enola Gay.

"Straight Flush" will act as a weather plane and fly ahead to primary target of Hiroshima.

"Jabbitt III" will act as a weather plane and fly ahead to the secondary target of Kokura.

"Full House" will act as a weather plane and fly ahead to the alternate target of Nagasaki.



Mission: Nagasaki  
Plane: B-29; Bockscar;  
Ser. # 36-MO-44-27297

Weapon: "Fat Man" Plutonium Bomb  
Date: August 9, 1945

Special Mission #16

## The SIX B-29's of the Nagasaki Mission:

"Bockscar", piloted by Maj. Charles Sweeney carried the "Fat Man" plutonium bomb.

"The Great Artiste", piloted by Capt. Fred Bock, was assigned to drop the three instruments used to measure the blast effects of the bomb.

"The Big Stink", flown by Maj. James Hopkins, carried the scientific observers.

"Full House", flown by Capt. Ralph Taylor, acts as a standby aircraft and flew to Iwo Jima in the event of mechanical problems with Bockscar.

"Up an' Atom", piloted by Capt. George Marquardt, will act as a weather plane and fly ahead to primary target of Kokura.

"Laggin' Dragon", piloted by Capt. Charles McKnight, will act as a weather plane and fly ahead to the secondary target of Nagasaki.

## Why Hiroshima?

Hiroshima was chosen as the primary target since it had remained largely untouched by bombing raids, and the bomb's effects could be clearly measured. While President Truman had hoped for a purely military target, some advisers believed that bombing an urban area might break the fighting will of the Japanese people. Hiroshima was a major port and a military headquarters, and therefore a strategic target. Also, visual bombing, rather than radar, would be used so that photographs of the damage could be taken. Since Hiroshima had not been seriously harmed by bombing raids, these photographs could present a fairly clear picture of the bomb's damage.

The Hiroshima mission went off smoothly. On August 6, 1945, The Enola Gay lifted off from Tinian Island in the Northern Marianas at two A.M. The flight was uneventful, the weather cooperated, and, at 8:15 A.M. bombardier Major Thomas W. Ferebee released

Little Boy. The Enola Gay returned uneventfully at Tinian.

Answer the following:

1. What is the name of the plane that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima? What type of bomb was used?
2. What is the name of the plane that dropped the bomb on Nagasaki? What type of bomb was used?
3. Which plane was also on the Hiroshima Mission?
4. Why was Hiroshima chosen for the first bombing?

## Road to Nagasaki

When a second mission was approved, Kokura was the primary target and Nagasaki was the secondary target.

Originally scheduled for August 11, 1945, the mission was advanced to August 9 due to weather concerns.

A typhoon was threatening Iwo Jima, the mission rendezvous point. Yakushima, off the Kyushu coast, became the new rendezvous point and four B-29's were deployed as rescue planes in case crews needed to ditch over water.

Just before takeoff from Tinian, flight engineer Master Sergeant John D. Kuharek discovered that one of the fuel pumps was not operating, effectively cutting Bock's Car's fuel supply by 640 gallons. This could jeopardize a safe return and under other circumstances would have meant canceling the mission. But, to convince the Japanese that Hiroshima was not a one-time occurrence, it was decided to proceed.

While the two weather planes, Up an' Atom and Laggin' Dragon, were reporting favorable conditions over both Kokura and Nagasaki, Bock's Car was the scene of a heart-stopping discovery: the red arming light on the black box connected to Fat Man was lit, indicating that the firing circuit had closed. A half hour later weaponeer Captain Frederick L. Ashworth and his assistant 2nd Lieutenant Phillip M. Barnes had isolated the failed switch that had caused the malfunction and corrected the problem.

Bockscar and The Great Artiste rendezvoused at Yakushima island and waited for The Big Stink, which was nowhere to be seen.. After circling for 40 minutes, Bockscar and The Great Artiste finally head in the direction of Kokura. The additional 30 minutes that Bockscar and The Great Artiste took to wait ended up costing the mission clear, visual

bombing conditions over Kokura. These crucial minutes saved Kokura from utter destruction and placed Nagasaki forever in the history books.

Sweeney and his crew were under orders to only bomb visually. When they got to Kokura they found the haze and smoke obscuring the city as well as the large ammunition arsenal that was the reason for targeting the city. They made three unsuccessful passes, wasting more fuel, while anti-aircraft fire zeroed in on them and Japanese fighter planes began to climb toward them. The B-29s broke off and headed for Nagasaki. The phrase Kokura's Luck was coined in Japan to describe escaping a terrible occurrence without being aware of the danger.

Clouds covered Nagasaki when Bockscar arrived. Contrary to orders, weaponeer, Ashworth determined to make the drop by radar if they had to due to their short fuel supply. At the last minute a small window in the clouds opened and bombardier Captain Kermit K. Beehan made the drop at 10:58 A.M. Nagasaki time.

Fat Man exploded at 1,840 feet above Nagasaki and approximately 500 feet south of the Mitsubishi Steel and Armament Works with an estimated force of 22,000 tons of TNT.

### Answer the following:

1. Why was the mission changed from the 11<sup>th</sup> of August to the 9<sup>th</sup>?
2. Why was the mission rendezvous point changed from Iwo Jima to Yakushima Island?
3. What was wrong with Bockscar's fuel supply? Why wasn't the mission cancelled?
4. What went wrong with the bomb aboard Bockscar?
5. Why do Bockscar and The Great Artiste wait an extra 30 minutes at the rendezvous point? How does this benefit Kokura?
6. Why could they not complete the bomb drop on the target? How many times did they try?
7. After the unsuccessful bomb run, what do Bockscar and The Great Artiste decide to do? Why?
8. What was the weather like at Nagasaki?
9. What is referred to by the phrase "Kokura Luck"?