

Following the surrender of German Forces and the end of World War II in the European Theatre, the United States turned its full attention towards the Japanese. Throughout the campaign to slowly take back the pacific islands, the death toll of American servicemen continued to rise. After the horrific battles of Saipan, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa, the United States became anxious about how costly an invasion of the Japanese mainland would be.

Meanwhile, in 1942 President Roosevelt had authorized a research program to develop nuclear weapons named the Manhattan Project. Two years and two billion dollars later the first atomic bomb was tested on July 16, 1945. The United States had now found its means of ending the war quickly.

Although initial ideas for the atomic bomb included dropping the bomb on remote, unpopulated, or industrial targets, it was decided that the only way to persuade the Japanese to surrender unconditionally was to drop the bombs on large cities.

The choice was made President Truman to drop two atomic bombs on August 6 and 8, 1945 on Hiroshima and Nagasaki Japan. This decision was ultimately reached because the United States government feared a long and bloody invasion of the Japanese main lands.

Although popular thought often views the atomic bomb as being much more destructive than conventional bombing during World War II, in fact, one night of conventional bombing over Tokyo in March of 1945 killed as many civilians as the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

The radioactive fallout that lingered over the country made the atomic bombs so deadly. Because of the haste of the U.S. government to use the atomic bomb, these effects were not anticipated.

Following the only actual use of nuclear weapons in world history, Japan, fearing further attacks, surrendered. The allied forces celebrated “Victory in Japan” on August 15, 1945. However, the official Japanese signing of an unconditional surrender was September 2, 1945.

V-J Day, short for “Victory in Japan” Day, is a national day of recognition of this end of World War II in the Pacific Theatre.

**This brief Historical analysis was compiled by Kevin Poland,
Governments Documents, Forsyth Library using:**

Jones, Jacqueline. *Created Equal: a social and political history of the United States*. New York: Longman, 2002.