

Moment of silence as Hiroshima recalls bomb

Tens of thousands gather for memorial on 60th anniversary of attack



Andy Rain / Sipa Press

Japanese pray at the Hiroshima Peace Park Memorial for atomic bomb victims on Saturday morning.

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HIROSHIMA, Japan - Hiroshima marked the 60th anniversary Saturday of the first atomic bomb attack with prayers and water for the dead and a call by the city's mayor for nuclear powers to abandon their arsenals and stop "jeopardizing human survival."

At 8:15 a.m., the instant of the blast, the city's trolleys stopped and more than 55,000 people assembled at Peace Memorial Park observed a moment of silence that was broken only by the ringing of a bronze bell.

A flock of doves was released into the sky. Then wreaths and ladles of water — symbolizing the suffering of those who died in the atomic inferno — were offered at a simple, arch-shaped stone monument at the center of the park.

Outside the nearby A-Bomb Dome, one of the few buildings left standing after the blast, peace activists held a die-in to commemorate the bombing that turned life to death for more than 140,000 and forever changed the face of war.

Remembering a day of horror

Fumie Yoshida was just 16 when Hiroshima was bombed. She survived but lost her father, brother and sister. On Saturday, she chose not to attend the formal memorial, but with a small group of friends paid her respects privately in the peace park.

"My father's remains have never been found," she said. "Those of us who went through this all know that we must never repeat this tragedy. But I think many Japanese today are forgetting."

In a "Peace Declaration," Hiroshima's outspoken Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba vowed to never allow a repeat of the tragedy and gave an impassioned plea for the abolition of nuclear weapons, saying the United States, Russia and other members of the nuclear club are "jeopardizing human survival."

"Many people around the world have succumbed to the feeling that there is nothing we can do," he said. "Within the United Nations, nuclear club members use their veto power to override the global majority and pursue their selfish objectives."

In a more subdued speech, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi offered condolences for the dead.

"I offer deep prayers from my heart to those who were killed," he said, vowing that Japan would be a leader in the international movement against nuclear proliferation.

An ongoing tragedy

Though Hiroshima has risen from the rubble to become a thriving city of 3 million, most of whom were born after the war, the anniversary underscores its ongoing tragedy.

Officials estimate that about 140,000 people were killed instantly or died within a few months after the Enola Gay dropped its deadly payload over the city, which then had a population of about 350,000.

Three days later, another U.S. bomber, Bock's Car, dropped a plutonium bomb on the Japanese city of Nagasaki, killing about 80,000 people. Japan surrendered on Aug. 15, 1945, ending World War II.

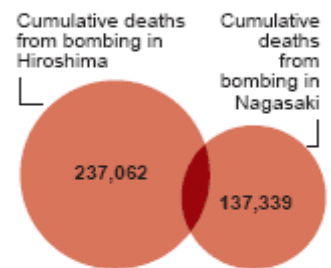
Including those initially listed as missing or who died afterward from a loosely defined set of bomb-related ailments, including cancers, Hiroshima officials now put the total number of dead in this city alone at 242,437.

This year, 5,373 more names were added to the list.

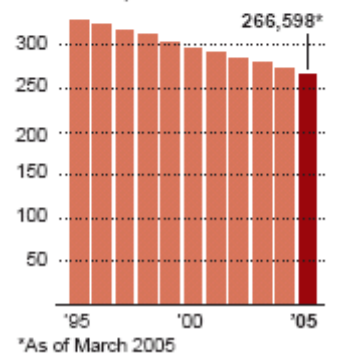
60 years after

The human suffering at Hiroshima and Nagasaki is the central legacy for the Japanese, rather than a debate over whether the nuclear weapon was necessary.

Atomic-bomb casualties



Survivors, in thousands



SOURCES: Japanese government; Hiroshima and Nagasaki cities AP

Dropping the bomb that ended the war

60 years later, the navigator of the Enola Gay feels no remorse

CHANTILLY, Va. - They insist they were ordinary men serving their country. But when the crew members of the Enola Gay arrived on the flight line on the morning of Aug. 6, 1945, they knew instantly it wasn't an ordinary mission.

They were going to drop the atomic bomb that day — a bomb they hoped would end the war.

Williams: I read your depiction of the morning of the mission. You said it was almost surreal.

Dutch Van Kirk: I wondered what it was all about, and I felt it was about the Manhattan Project. I described it incidentally as being like a Hollywood premiere.

Dutch Van Kirk was the navigator. The gleaming B-29 is, these days, restored and housed in the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum located in suburban Virginia.

Van Kirk: No one was officially telling anybody else anything about it. And if you figured it out for yourself, you better well keep it quiet.

There are only three crew members from the Enola Gay still living. Dutch was the only one well enough to travel for the 60th anniversary.

Weapons Specialist Dick Jeppson lives in Las Vegas. The pilot, Paul Tibbets, now age 90, lives in Columbus, Ohio. Tibbets named the plane after his mother.

Williams: As you look up at the list of names on the fuselage, every name is a memory.

Van Kirk: Every name is a memory, absolutely. And some of them left sooner than others.

Despite all the years and the gradual loss of all those names, when Dutch sees this plane, he's home. He's suddenly with his comrades again, and he remembers their mission like it was yesterday.

Van Kirk: When the bomb left the airplane, you've got the surge of course of releasing 9,400 pounds right away. Tibbets went into the turn 150 degrees to the right, pushed the nose down, lost about 2,000 feet to build enough speed, and we just ran like the devil trying to get away from the fireball and cloud.

The shock wave threw the massive bomber from side to side. En route home, the crew could still see the mushroom cloud from over 160 miles away.

About 70,000 people in the city of Hiroshima were killed instantly. The lingering radiation killed 70,000 more over the next five years.

But Dutch and his fellow crew members will have none of the controversy surrounding the bomb. They point out that the firebombing of Japanese cities earlier in the war killed four times as many people.

Williams: You told me the story about one photograph from the war that always kind of catches you — the Japanese soldier returning to his city that's been destroyed. Do you have remorse for what happened? How do you deal with that in your mind?

Van Kirk: No, I do not have remorse. I pity the people who were there. I always think of it as of being — the dropping of the atom bomb was an act of war to end the war.

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