

Reference Notes

Montgomery City-County Public Library

The B-29 in History

"So long as there are men there will be wars." - Albert Einstein

Very few could argue against war having a profound impact on society and the power to evoke immense change. Everything that has happened in the last seventy-one years has been affected by one day in 1945. On that day an airplane delivered this instrument of change.

The airplane was a B-29 "Superfortress," and the instrument was a uranium-based nuclear weapon, "Little Boy," and the day was August 6, 1945. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki set the tone for global politics for the next forty-six years.

The B-29 first saw life as the XB-29, a set of two flyable prototypes in August 1940. The moniker B-29 coming from its official military designation which superseded Boeings official name "Superfortress". Both parts of its name reflected its predecessor

the B-17 "Flying Fortress". The B-29 had one of the shortest development periods in aerospace history which was four years. Its successors, B-52 & B-2 took six and eight years of development, respectively.

The development of the "Superfortress" was accelerated and in many cases, updates and upgrades were made just days after a plane rolled off the assembly line. This project was simply known as the "Battle of Kansas". Through a trial and error process; problems with overheating engines, pressure seals, and a computerized fire control system were resolved. The B-29's were ready for flight by 1944 and would be used against the Japanese.

At 8:00 a.m. (JST), a B-29 "Superfortress" flew through the skies

near southern Japan and in minutes it would be part of history. For that moment it was just a plane on a mission. Before August 6, 1945, a number of B-29's flew missions over Japan mostly dropping tons of firm bombs on its cities.

Shortly after the B-29's entrance into the war, dozens of them were loaned to Great Britain and other allies. They were used as part of a misinformation campaign by disguising their range. After the war, they would be used in support of the new "Cold War".

Supplying allies was done through the *U.S. Lend Lease Act*, which supplied our allies with low-cost/no-cost equipment and materials. In regards to the B-29's, because of growing mistrust, Russia was not supplied with them.

In response, the
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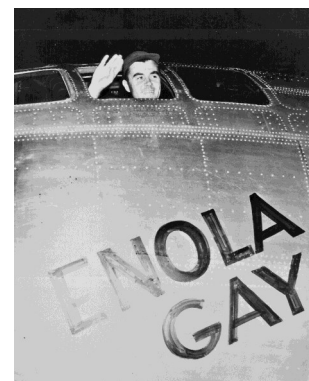
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Pathfinder 2



Col. Paul W. Tibbets, Jr., pilot of the ENOLA GAY



LITTLE BOY being loaded in to the ENOLA GAY

LaRuth Martin & Suzanne
Horton, Editors

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Russian's approached the problem with a little ingenuity. During the course of the war in Europe Russia was bound by the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact. This allowed them to seize equipment used against Japan if it entered their borders. During 1944 several B-29's made emergency landings in Russian territory. The Russians stripped one plane down, then used equipment off of a crashed B-29 and reversed engineered the parts. Using others as standing models and training on a third the Russian's developed a B-29 clone known as the Tu-4.

This new war would be a war of expanding nuclear arsenals and based on ideological conflict. This was the Cold War which was con-

ducted in secret, in far off lands, under our oceans, and in space. After the war, the B-29 would be used in support of the new "Cold War".

The Cold War began on the day that the B-29 flew and a device was dropped. The explosive result was fifty years of proxy wars in places like Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan. The "Superfortress" used was the "Enola Gay" and it dropped one of the only two atomic weapons ever used in war. As the dust cleared on that day and the days that followed a war ended and a new one began. Because after all, man's indulgence for war never changes!

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