

## *Godzilla: Minus One* Notes

### THE FILM

- Callback: Odo Island. Kamikaze base. Different. Locals mention Godzilla.
- Why money an order to "die honorably" when the outcome is sure?
- Dead deep sea fish = portent
- Callback: Proto Godzilla is Godzillasaurus and looks like G98.
- As suggested by Damon Noyes, Godzilla's spines rising and falling during the atomic breath is like rods in a nuclear reactor.
- Yamazaki skirts possible political issues by having the anti-Godzilla operation carried out by civilians (former military, though) because both the US and Japanese governments are unwilling to do anything. The Americans are concerned any military movements will antagonize the Soviets. Aside from some stock footage of MacArthur and a few others, we never see any Americans in the film. It's a reasonable explanation that puts out heroes at a disadvantage.
- The ending reminds me of the end of *The Planet Eater*, except (as much as I defend the trilogy), it's better implemented here. It's better crafted and more emotional.
- I was shocked that the atomic bombings are never mentioned or depicted. The air raids (fire bombings) are mentioned. This prompted me to change my Toku Topic after acquiring a page of research. The Bikini Atoll test (Operation: Crossroads) is briefly shown, confirming Godzilla is nuclear-based. But aside from some talk of radiation, nuclear themes aren't mentioned much.
- Does the ending rob Shikishima of his development?
- From what I read, the black "bruise" implies Noriko has radiation sickness.
- What would a sequel be about?
  
- Sources:
  - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Godzilla\\_Minus\\_One](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Godzilla_Minus_One)
  - <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt23289160/>
  - [https://wikizilla.org/wiki/Godzilla\\_Minus\\_One](https://wikizilla.org/wiki/Godzilla_Minus_One)
  - <https://kaijuunited.com/2023/09/27/that-monster-will-never-forgive-us-the-director-of-godzilla-1-0/>
  - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyushu\\_J7W\\_Shinden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyushu_J7W_Shinden)
- "...it is the 37th film in the Godzilla franchise, Toho's 33rd Godzilla film, and the fifth film in the franchise's Reiwa era."
- Shinji Higuchi stated that Toho couldn't make a Godzilla film until 2020 as per their contract with Legendary. Toho exec Keiji Ota said *Shin Godzilla* wouldn't get a sequel and expressed interest in a shared cinematic universe.
- After *The Great War of Archimedes* in 2019, Yamazaki was appointed to make a Godzilla film and spent a year developing the script. The pandemic delayed production, allowing him to write the script for three years. "Yamazaki said in an interview for the Japanese

magazine *Aera* that the worldwide anxiety and government unreliability during the pandemic was one of his major inspirations for the story.”

- Yamazaki cited his favorite G-film, GMK, as an inspiration, saying “in a discussion with [director] Kaneko at a screening of GMK: ‘I had forgotten the contents of GMK for a while, but it seems like I self-consciously thought about it when writing the scenario for *I.O.* Without realizing it, I was under considerable influence.”
  - Yamazaki has stated that *Godzilla Minus One* was also inspired by the original 1954 *Godzilla* film, Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975), and the films of Hayao Miyazaki. *Godzilla* (2014) director Gareth Edwards identified Spielberg's films *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and *Jurassic Park* (1993), as well as Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk* (2017) as other potential influences on the film.
- This is the third time Yamazaki has worked on *Godzilla*. “His first being *Always: Sunset on Third Street 2* (2007), which featured the fictional monster in the film's dream-like opening. During preproduction on *Minus One*, he also directed and created the effects for Seibu-en Amusement Park's motion simulator attraction *Godzilla the Ride: Giant Monsters Ultimate Battle* (2021); the design of *Godzilla* in *Minus One* is a variation of the one in *Godzilla the Ride*.”
- “On February 18, 2022, Robot Communications announced the film, under the working title *Blockbuster Monster Movie* (超大作怪獣映画, Chōtaisaku Kaijū Eiga), via a casting call on their official website. Robot stated Yamazaki would direct and that the film would be presented by Toho. The next day, *HuffPost* writer Kenji Ando mentioned the conjecture from fans on social media whether the film would be a remake of the 1954 film. Ando also noted that it is a period piece set in postwar Japan between 1945 and 1947, citing Yamazaki's comments from an interview regarding his depiction of *Godzilla* in *Always: Sunset on Third Street 2*: ‘You can't have *Godzilla* unless it's the Shōwa era.’”
  - It was announced as a *Godzilla* film Nov. 3, 2022 (Godzilla Day).
- Yamazaki's vision: “Postwar Japan has lost everything. The film depicts an existence that gives unprecedented despair. The title *Godzilla Minus One* was created with this in mind. In order to depict this, the staff and I have worked together to create a setting where *Godzilla* looks as if ‘fear’ itself is walking toward us, and where despair is piled on top of despair. I think this is the culmination of all the films I have made to date, and one that deserves to be ‘experienced’ rather than ‘watched’ in the theater. I hope you will experience the most terrifying *Godzilla* in the best possible environment.”
  - The rumored title was “*Godzilla Zero*,” suggesting it was a prequel. A brief rumor before the trailer dropped in summer 2023 was that it was a *Shin Godzilla* prequel.
- The estimated production budget is \$15 million.
- Toho built a 1:1 scale replica of the Kyushu J7W Shinden fighter, donating it to the Tachiarai Peace Memorial Museum in Chikuzen, Fukuoka in 2022 under anonymity, only revealing their involvement after the film's release.
  - “...the J7W was a response to Boeing B-29 Superfortress raids on the Japanese home islands.”

- “The Shinden was expected to be a highly maneuverable interceptor, but only two prototypes were finished before the end of war. A jet engine-powered version was considered, but never even reached the drawing board.”
- “On 3 August 1945, the prototype first flew, with Tsuruno at the controls, from Mushiroda Airfield. Two more short flights were made, a total of 45 minutes airborne, one each on the same days as the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki occurred, before the war's end. Flights were successful, but showed a marked torque pull to starboard (due to the powerful engine), some flutter of the propeller blades, and vibration in the extended drive shaft.”
- “After the end of the war, one was scrapped; the other was claimed by a U.S. Navy Technical Air Intelligence Unit in late 1945, dismantled, and shipped to the United States.” (Some sources claim that the USN took the first built while others state that it was the second.)
- “The sole surviving J7W1 was reassembled, but has never been flown in the United States; the USN transferred it to the Smithsonian Institution in 1960. Its forward fuselage is currently on display at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center annex (at Dulles Airport) of the National Air and Space Museum in Washington DC. According to the NASM, 'miscellaneous parts' are stored at Building 7C at the older storage/annex facility, the Garber Facility in Suitland, Maryland.”
- “Visual effects were handled by Shirogumi at their studio in Chōfu, under the supervision of Yamazaki and direction of Kiyoko Shibuya.”
  - “During an interview alongside Shinji Higuchi (co-director of *Shin Godzilla*), Yamazaki noted that *Godzilla's* scenes of destruction in *Minus One* were inspired by Higuchi's effects from *Gamera 3: Revenge of Iris*, directed by the above-mentioned Shusuke Kaneko.”
- The score was composed by Naoki Sato, a frequent collaborator with Yamazaki and anime composer. His credits include *Pretty Cure*, *Eureka Seven*, *Stand by Me Doraemon*, *Dragon Ball Super: Super Hero*, *Space Battleship Yamato*, the live-action *Rurouni Kenshin* films, *Parasyte Part 1-2*, and *The Great War of Archimedes*.
- “*Godzilla Minus One* had its American red carpet premiere and screening at the Directors Guild of America Theater Complex in Los Angeles on November 10, 2023, with Yamazaki and Kamiki in attendance.” (I know someone who was there).
- “Hideaki Anno...called the film ‘well-made’ and praised the film's technical prowess, feeling that Japan has improved in the field of visual effects. *Godzilla* (2014) director Gareth Edwards admitted to feeling ‘jealous,’ adding that ‘this is what a *Godzilla* movie should be’ and that the film should be ‘mentioned as a candidate for the best *Godzilla* movie of all time.’ At the film's American premiere, *Godzilla: King of the Monsters* (2019) director Michael Dougherty told Yamazaki and Kamiki that the film was ‘amazing.’”
  - “Video game designer Hideo Kojima hailed the film, feeling that ‘*Godzilla*, the plot, the VFX, Ifukube's music, Mr. Hamabe's appearance, and the applause afterward’ were ‘nothing but pluses,’ joking that ‘the result was +120 points, so I would like to change the title.’”

- “During an interview published in the October 30th issue of *Aera*, director Takashi Yamazaki stated in regards to the film's ending: ‘I think it's more cinematic if it doesn't end neatly and properly. It's not just so a sequel can be made, it's also so the characters are kept alive in the hearts of the audience.’ On the film's opening day, Yamazaki also indicated that he desires to make another Godzilla film, saying: ‘I wonder if you'll let me shoot one more picture?’”
- It was distributed outside Japan by Toho International.
- “In his rampage through Ginza, Godzilla destroys the Wako headquarters. The same building has appeared in several other pieces of Godzilla media, including the original *Godzilla* (1954).”
- “Instead of creating a new roar, the crew simply played the original Godzilla roar over loud speakers and recorded the audio.”
- “This Godzilla film became the fastest release entry in the U.S, one month after its premiere in Japan. The previous record holder was *Shin Godzilla* (2016), which took under three months to release in the US after its initial Japanese premiere.”
- “When asked about the differences between the American adaptations and the Japanese originals, Yamazaki stated that while the American Godzilla is focused on being more monstrous, the Japanese interpretation is both as a monster and as a god.”
- “According to Yamazaki, his Godzilla would remain close to the themes of Ishirō Honda's original film, stating, “I love the original Godzilla, and I felt I should stay true to that spirit, addressing the issues of war and nuclear weapons.””
- “Yamazaki was a big fan of *Shin Godzilla* (2016), with its success motivated Yamazaki to finally make his own film, though he wanted to take his film in a different direction to avoid directly imitating it. Nevertheless, Yamazaki hosted a screening with director Hideaki Anno and revealed that Anno had actually stopped by during filming, much to the excitement of lead actors Ryunosuke Kamiki and Minami Hamabe. Anno complimented Yamazaki's work, and praised the Ginza scene in particular.”
- “According to director Yamazaki, his Godzilla includes uniquely Japanese aspects, mentioning, ‘There is a concept in Japan called “tatarigami” (spirits that bring calamity). There are good gods, and there are bad gods. Godzilla is half-monster, but it's also half-god.’”
- “Yamazaki's film takes inspiration from and homages various previous Godzilla films. Aside from the original film, *Godzilla*, *Mothra* and *King Ghidorah: Giant Monsters All-Out Attack* (2001) informed Godzilla's antagonistic portrayal. The protagonists being regular people takes cues from *Godzilla Raids Again* (1955), including both films having pilots as main characters, and their characterizations are reminiscent of Ishirō Honda's *Godzilla* films. The main protagonist, Koichi Shikishima, shares his character motivation with the main protagonists of *Godzilla vs. Megaguirus* (2000) and *Godzilla Against MechaGodzilla* (2002). The political background, dealing with the US and Soviet Union, is an approach shared by *The Return of Godzilla* (1984). *Godzilla*'s origins are explored similarly to *Godzilla vs. King Ghidorah* (1991). Likewise the film shares the thematic climax of a rag tag group of people coming together to confront Godzilla from *Shin Godzilla* (2016).”

- “The name Shikishima of the protagonist coincides with the name of a squadron that conducted the first successful kamikaze attack. The ‘Shikishima’ squadron, led by Lieutenant Yukio Seki, hit and sank USS St. Lo in 1944.”
- “The lead character's name Koichi, was a nod to Koichi Kawakita, the special effects director of the late '80s through the '90s Godzilla films.” (Maybe?)
- “As of 2019 he [Yamazaki], was reportedly the fourth-highest grossing director in Japan behind Katsuyuki Motohiro (Space Travelers, Psycho-Pass: The Movie, & Shaolin Girl), Kunihiko Yuyama (various Pokémon movies), and the master of animation Hayao Miyazaki (Spirited Away, Howl’s Moving Castle, & The Boy and the Heron). In 2014, Yamazaki had two films within the top three highest grossing domestic Japanese films with number 1– Stand By Me Doraemon [Sutando Bai Mī Doraemon]–and at number 2– The Eternal Zero[Eien no Zero].”
- “Yamazaki is not one to shy away from controversy. The director has been accused of being pro-war and a war–crime denier but has gone on record multiple times during the press–tours for both films, in 2014 when addressing the claims for The Eternal Zero, ‘It’s centered on its human drama, with the war era as a backdrop... It’s similar to Titanic (1997), which was a love story set against the backdrop of the Titanic sinking. The film depicts the war as a complete tragedy, so how can you say it glorifies war?’”
- “Then in 2019 when discussing The Great War of Archimedes: ‘...my generation may be the last generation whose parents knew about the war and were able to listen to first-hand information. I think it’s better to have it as one of the themes you draw [upon]. At the time of The Eternal Zero, some people criticized it as ‘glorifying war’ or ‘[being] belligerent’ but I don’t understand why people took it that way. I think [Archimedes] as well as ‘Eternal Zero’ are solid anti-war movies. I think it’s best to make an anti-war movie that only focuses on the horrors of war, but if you do that, it won’t reach the hearts of the general public. In order to deliver it, it has to be entertainment. I wish I could convey my anti-war message like a blow to the body.”
- ‘Furthermore elaborating on the choice of doing a Battleship Yamato movie, ‘It is estimated that more than 3,000 people died when she sank. It is said that 4,000 people died in kamikaze attacks... That was really shocking.’ Also commenting on the portrayal of Admiral Yamamoto in Archimedes, “I portrayed him as a person with a deep and interesting dark side. That makes him feel like a living person. It’s interesting to see the unworthy parts of fine people... Like Kenji Mizoguchi’s ‘Chikamatsu Monogatari’ [a.k.a. The Crucified Lovers] (1954), and at the end of that movie, the heroine, Kyoko Kagawa, shows the happiest face even though she is in a tragic situation where she is about to be sentenced to death. I think this dual structure is what [Archimedes] is all about.”’
- “From his work on the Always trilogy, many people commented on how Yamazaki was able to bring the Shōwa emotions back to Yamazaki because the Shōwa era never left him. He said, ‘I’m... proud of the fact that I was born in the year of the Tokyo Olympics. Even though the Heisei era is over, I feel like I’m still in the Shōwa era. I’m not used to the Heisei era, so I find it strange that the Shōwa era is so far away... It was a time of excitement.’”

- Yamazaki: “I really like nostalgic things. Things like the feeling that you can’t be a child anymore, and that it’s okay to be a child even when you grow up. There are times when I feel like I haven’t grown up at all. When I’m making [films], I feel like I’m [back] at the school [film] festival.” Adding on in a later interview, “I really like nostalgia because I think the way of life back then can give us hints for the way we live now.”
- Yamazaki: “I’ve wanted to make a Godzilla movie for a long time... I’ve always had the image of Godzilla as a nuclear threat or a monster that reflects the shadow of war... If I was going to [do a Godzilla movie], I wanted it to be from that era, there was an idea that the Great East Japan Earthquake was going to be the inspiration, but Shin Godzilla depicted it so vividly that I wanted to do it in the post-war era to counteract that. I realized that it would be really difficult to make the main story of Godzilla... It was quite difficult. I thought that this would not be possible unless we made significant technical advances.”

### TOKU TOPIC: KAMIKAZE PILOTS

- Sources:
  - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamikaze>
  - <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/japans-kamikaze-pilots-wwii>
  - <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/1947/july/who-were-kamikaze>
  - <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/how-effective-was-the-japanese-kamikaze-campaign>
  - <https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/article/japans-kamikaze-pilots-hit-hundreds-of-ships/>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vN5XQfmols8>
- (Read Haruo Araki letter)
  - Araki: “Father,” wrote Haruo, “I was unable to catch your attention.”
  - “On his forehead he was wearing a white headband with Japan’s rising-sun emblem. The students at the girls’ school near the base had “cut their fingers and filled in the red sun with their own blood.” Copies of these photos were later given to Haruo’s wife.”
  - “At the time, Lieutenant Araki’s wife Shigeko—who was carrying their child—was proud of her husband’s sacrifice. ‘I thought it was natural that Haruo would die,’ she wrote later. ‘It would have been shameful for him to go on living.’ She herself had been trained at the factory where she worked to use sharpened bamboo spears on invading enemy soldiers, and would have had no compunction about killing the enemy. ‘It was for Japan,’ she explained later, ‘it was to preserve and protect the country. We were sending our loved ones off to die... It was the least we could do on the home front.’ Her chief concern was that his sacrifice had not been in vain, and that he had managed to sink a ship: ‘Otherwise,’ she wrote, ‘he still lies at the bottom of the cold Okinawan sea for nothing.’”
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- Ian Kikuchi: "In the later stages of the Second World War in the Pacific, Japan was faced by overwhelming American naval power. Increasingly unable to make effective air attacks against American ships, Japanese forces turned to suicide attacks, using pilots flying aircraft laden with bombs as improvised missiles, in the hope of destroying Allied ships at the cost of the aircraft and the pilot's life. The suicide attackers were known as the kamikaze."
- Wikipedia: "The Japanese word *kamikaze* is usually translated as 'divine wind' (*kami* is the word for 'god,' 'spirit,' or 'divinity,' and *kaze* for "wind"). The word originated from *Makurakotoba* of waka poetry modifying "Ise" and has been used since August 1281 to refer to the major typhoons that dispersed Mongol-Koryo fleets which invaded Japan under Kublai Khan in 1274 and 1281."
  - "Because of that incident, and because the facts blended nicely with the Japanese mythology pertaining to the divine origin of Japan, the popular belief that divine assistance would thwart an enemy invasion of Japan had gained wide credence in Japan. But the suicide pilots themselves would have been agreeably surprised to discover that they were a divine wind. They regarded themselves as part of the Tokubetsu Kōgekitaï, generally abbreviated to Tokkō and meaning 'Special Attack Force.'"
- These suicide attacks were seen as a desperate tactic to halt an advancing foe and as a means of honorable escape from a humiliating plight.
- "The concept of individual suicide was accepted within Japanese society, particularly among those descended from the warrior, or Samurai, class. Suicide was generally accepted as the way to atone for failure, and ritual suicide, also known as seppuku and harakiri, was common among the military of Japan. It would appear repeatedly during the Pacific war, beginning at Guadalcanal and lasting to, and even after, Japan's surrender."
- "Suicide as a doctrinal military tactic, however, did not enter Japanese military policy until October 1944. By then, the Americans were invading the Philippines and the Palau Islands, threatening to cut off Japanese lines of supply from the Far East. Without those supplies, Japan could not sustain its war effort much longer."
- "To surrender, on the other hand, was seen as dishonourable, hence the contempt the Japanese felt for prisoners of war. Japanese soldiers believed that when they fell on the field of battle they would become kami, or gods, and join the nation's spirits at the Shinto shrine of Yasukuni in Tokyo. Hence the typical farewell from members of the Shimpū (Divine Wind) Special Attack Corps: 'I'll meet you at the Yasukuni Shrine!'"
- "The elaborate sake parties which occasionally took place prior to a mass suicide mission or to hara-kiri were not held primarily as a means of fortifying the spirit but as a symbol of an anticipated act of self-immolation for the greater glory of the Emperor. Such parties provided the only means by which a sentimental people could enjoy in advance the acts which they contemplated."
- These pilots were trained to believe that life rather than death was the exception on the battlefield. "And for that reason it was not surprising when captured Japanese pilots and others calmly and dispassionately stated that a suicide dive was merely an assignment as such, and hardly distinguishable from that of reconnaissance or air attack."

- “For the most part, Japanese pilots and airmen were either angered or astonished that we would even assume that a Japanese pilot would require special training for death. Captain Inoguchi expressed the matter in another way when he stated that ‘the Kamikaze spirit is uniformly Japanese.’”
- Ian Kikuchi: "I think inevitably different pilots had different feelings. Kamikaze pilots are typically thought of as being fanatical zealots, eager to die for their country and their Emperor. It's likely that some really did feel that way. Others will have had more mixed feelings, and acted more out of a sense of obligation than enthusiasm. And not all kamikaze pilots were volunteers; after the volunteers ran out others were shamed or coerced into 'volunteering'."
- The Allies, who were influenced Judeo-Christian traditions that valued the sanctity of life, were shocked by these attacks. But the word “suicide” doesn't have the negative connotations. “Two versions—*jiketsu* (self-determination) and *jisai* (self-judgement)—‘suggest an honorable or laudable act done in the public interest.’ There is, moreover, no ethical or religious taboo regarding suicide in Japan's traditional religion of Shintoism. Instead, the Japanese samurai warrior code of bushido—heavily influenced by Shintoism, as well as Buddhism and even Confucianism—revered self-sacrifice and fighting to the bitter end for emperor and country.”
- “The origins of the modern Kamikaze are traced to Luzon, in the Philippines, in October 1944.” There Vice Adm. Takijiro Ohnishi, the recently appointed commander of Japanese Naval Air Forces in the Philippines, laid out a plan to use their meager 30 planes to defend the Japanese fleet from an oncoming American attack from Leyte for a week. He said, “In my opinion, there is only one way of assuring that our meager strength will be effective to a maximum degree. That is to organize suicide attack units composed of Zero fighters armed with 250-kilogram bombs, with each plane to crash-dive into an enemy carrier...What do you think?” After some silence and then discussion, Commander Tamai, the senior pilot, volunteered his unit. The name of the unit was *Shimpu*, another name for *kamikaze*.
- The first attack was carried out Oct. 25, 1944, sinking the USS St. Lo and damaging the USS Kitkun Bay and USS White Plains. However, these reports were exaggerated by the Japanese commanders to include total destruction of the latter two ships and some light cruisers. The program continued, sinking and damaging more ships.
  - Voice over: "In 1944, a Special Attack Force was formed, a group of official kamikaze pilots. Their first significant action took place at the Battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944."
  - Ian Kikuchi: "At Leyte Gulf, the Japanese attempted to prevent Allied forces from occupying the Philippines, precipitating one of the largest naval battles in history."
  - “In total, five ships were sunk and 23 were heavily damaged by kamikaze attacks.”
- Emperor Hirohito's message to naval aviators through Ohnishi: “Was it necessary to go to this extreme? They certainly did a magnificent job.” This upset Ohnishi when he read it, and he determined to prove the tactic's effectiveness to the emperor.



- Ian Kikuchi: "Most of the aircraft used for kamikaze strikes are standard Japanese combat aircraft. Foremost among them is the Mitsubishi Zero fighter. This aircraft had given the Japanese navy control of the skies through 1941 and 1942, but by the start of the kamikaze campaign in 1944, the Zero is outclassed by more powerful American fighters."
  - "During the kamikaze campaign, around 650 Zero fighters are expended, more than any other type, but the campaign sees the use of a wide variety of aircraft, even including wooden biplane trainer planes."
  - Voice over: "Alongside the use of Zeros and other aircraft in the Kamikaze campaign, the Japanese also began to develop an aircraft specifically designed for suicide missions – the Yokosuka MXY-7 Ohka."
  - Ian Kikuchi: "Work begins on the design of the Ohka in 1943, actually before the first kamikaze attacks are made. The idea comes from a Japanese transport pilot named Mitsuo Ōta. Initially his designs go nowhere, but in 1944 he's summoned to present his design to the Japanese Navy. From June 1944, following heavy Japanese aircraft losses in battle around the Mariana Islands, development transfers to the Japanese naval arsenal at Yokosuka. Test flights begin in October 1944, with a successful test flight of a rocket-powered Ohka in November 1944."
  - Voice over: "The IWM's Ohka is a model 11 – the only operational variant."
  - Ian Kikuchi: "The Ohka is rocket-powered glider carrying a large, 1,200-kilo explosive warhead. It's about 6 metres long and 5 metres wide. With its rockets lit it could reach 400mph, and in its final dive its speed might reach as much as 575mph."
  - "The Ohka's rockets had limited range, and so it had to be carried into action by a larger aircraft, typically a twin-engine Mitsubishi G4M bomber. Once the bomber reached the target area, the Ohka pilot would detach himself from the bomber, ignite his rockets, and aim for an enemy vessel."
  - Voice over: "Once the rockets were ignited, the pilot would fly the missile towards the target. The Ohka could reach incredible speeds, making it difficult to counter the attack, but also difficult for the Ohka pilot to control. Updated versions of the Ohka were in development aiming to fix some of the aircraft's flaws, but these were not developed in time, and only the Ohka-11 saw active service."
  - "The Allied troops who encountered these attacks referred to the aircraft as Baka Bombs, a Japanese word meaning 'foolish.'"
  - "The word Ohka in Japanese means 'Cherry Blossom.'"
  - Ian Kikuchi: "The cherry blossom is a popular symbol in Japanese culture. Cherry blossom is beautiful, but its beauty is short-lived, and soon the petals fall from the trees, or are blown away by the wind. For the Japanese, the cherry blossom has become a symbol for the fleeting nature of human life."
  - Ian Kikuchi: "One of Ohka's biggest weaknesses was its limited range, and its need to be carried into battle by a larger bomber plane. Its parent aircraft was vulnerable to interception. In their first combat sortie, the Japanese attacked with 16 bombers carrying Ohka, escorted by 30 Zero fighters. They were intercepted

by two squadrons of US naval fighters, with the loss of every single bomber and their Ohka."

- Voice over: "On the 1 April 1945, the first day of the invasion of Okinawa, six G4Ms carried Ohkas into battle. It's uncertain whether any of the Ohkas hit their targets, but the USS West Virginia was damaged. None of the G4Ms returned. Just over a week later, nine G4Ms and Ohkas went into battle again. This time, a destroyer was hit and sunk – the USS Mannert L. Abele. Over April, May and June, numerous attacks were launched by the Ohkas and the G4Ms against the US fleet off Okinawa. Many of the G4Ms were destroyed, and many Ohkas failed to hit their targets, likely falling victim to anti-aircraft fire."
- Another reason for kamikaze pilots was a lack of skilled aviators. Attrition whittled down their numbers, and kamikazes required little training. They just needed to be able to take off, fly at a distance, and crash into enemy ships. Formation flying was only optional.
- Kamikaze Corps were established in other branches in Japan to fend off Americans.
  - "One such method was known as the 'Kaiten'—a manned suicide torpedo that was intended to sneak into American-held harbors and sink enemy ships at anchor. Then came the "Ohka" (Cherry Blossom)—a human-piloted bomb released from a carrying aircraft over the target and flown into that target by the pilot."
  - "There were also suicide explosive speedboats ("Shin'yo" or Sea Quake)—small plywood craft filled with explosives and driven by a crew of one or two into enemy ships as they approached the shore of a Japanese base. Hundreds of these were later captured unused in the Philippines and Okinawa."
  - "At the war's end, near Okinawa, even the Imperial Japanese Navy's super-battleship, the IJN Yamato, was turned into a form of Kamikaze."
- "Some ships just seemed to draw the attention of the Kamikazes. One such ship was the Australian heavy cruiser HMAS Australia. Perhaps because her appearance different from that of American ships, she was hit repeatedly, although her near-identical sister ship, HMAS Shropshire, who often sailed alongside her, was never hit. Some called her 'the Kamikaze Magnet.'" It was attacked five times. "She was first targeted in Leyte Gulf on October 21, 1944, leading some Australians to claim that she was the first victim of the Kamikazes, and not the USS St. Lo."
- 2,000 servicemen died in kamikaze attacks during the Battle of Okinawa (April 1 to June 22, 1945). "They were at the centre of a desperate and ill-thought out strategy by the Imperial General Headquarters in Tokyo—known as Operation Ten-Go—to defeat the next phase of the American advance in the Pacific. ... The plan was to sink so many American ships that the US Fifth Fleet would withdraw, abandoning its troops on Okinawa who could then be mopped up by the large Japanese garrison. It failed, though various forms of kamikaze attack—including planes, manned rockets and human torpedoes—did sink 36 American ships and damage a further 368, inflicting 10,000 casualties (half of them killed.)"
  - "Alongside the Ohka, the Japanese continued to fly Kamikaze missions with Zero fighters and a variety of other aircraft and even suicide boats. Between April and

June the Japanese flew over 400 kamikaze sorties at Okinawa. The British Pacific Fleet also came under fire from kamikaze attacks in the battle. Significant damage was done to the Task Force, but nothing debilitating. The armoured flight decks of the British carriers meant they fared better under these bombardments than the US carriers with flight decks made of wood. Ultimately, Kamikaze missions played a significant role in the Battle of Okinawa, but it was not enough to turn the tide for the Japanese."

- “The first major Japanese announcement concerning the ultimate use of Tokkō, or Kamikaze, pilots was made by the Domei News Agency during the summer of 1944, after the fall of Saipan, Tinian, and Guam, the islands which the Japanese Imperial Command had long regarded as the key to Japan’s inner defense, and the loss of which had provoked Fleet Admiral Nagano, Supreme Naval Adviser to the Emperor, to exclaim that “Hell is on us!” To those of us who knew the Japanese, however, and who had the opportunity constantly to speak to certain Japanese prisoners of war, it was obvious that the Army, Navy, and Marine victories in the Marianas were not only an exceedingly critical blow but that a desperate Japanese counter-measure was psychologically necessary. Thus, the Domei boast in August, 1944, that suicide pilots were being trained merely constituted the anticipated psychological counter-measure.’
- “...in the Okinawa Campaign the carriers Hancock, Intrepid, Bunker Hill, and Enterprise, as well as two destroyers, were all heavily damaged by suicide crashes. The complete list of ships damaged is, of course, much longer.”
- “...but one of the chief devices used was to have diversionary planes drop “window” to deceive our radar, while the suicide planes themselves came in for their dives. Besides our own anti-aircraft and fighter planes, however, one of the biggest flies in the Japanese ointment was their own lack of sufficient and adequate radar. The Japanese sought to compensate for the effectiveness of our anti-aircraft by deploying large numbers of suicide craft at only a few bases, and by sending out large numbers of planes.”
- “The general policy at first presumably was for suicide pilots to fly as high as possible, and then, as Captain Inoguchi has noted, to drop to 80 or 90 meters (240 to 270 feet) as soon as it was obvious that they had been detected by American radar. Later, apparently, the best approach altitude was determined to be about 3,000 meters. Once the enemy was sighted, the Kamikaze pilot was to drop to 500 meters and then perform a 45° dive. In attacking carriers, which generally had an exceedingly high target priority among suicide pilots, the plan was to aim at the forward elevator from astern. Such an approach, according to Captain Inoguchi, diminished the efficiency of the target’s evasive action. In the event of an American invasion of Japan proper, the suicide planes were to hold back until the very last moment. In this manner, the Japanese believed, they would be prepared to attack at the precise time that the American forces were dispersed as little as possible, and they would thus inflict maximum damage upon the invading forces. Primarily, however, Kamikaze attacks were to be made either at twilight or on bright moonlight nights.”
- Their primary targets were loaded transports and aircraft carriers.
- Ian Kikuchi: "The Allies had a number of defenses against the kamikaze.

- “Away from the ships themselves, the key defense was combat air patrol by naval aircraft, trying to intercept incoming Japanese aircraft before they reached Allied ships. Naval aircraft were also used to attempt to suppress Japanese airfields, attacking kamikaze as they took off, bombing runways, and attacking aircraft on the ground.
- “The Allies also used destroyers as radar pickets; these were small warships fitted with radar. Positioned twenty miles out from the main fleet, these ships provided early warning of incoming air raids. Unfortunately for their crews, these ships were very exposed, and were often subjected to attacks by multiple kamikaze.
- “Aboard ship, the key defense was provided by anti-aircraft guns. A large fleet aircraft carrier like the USS Bunker Hill would carry a dozen 5-inch anti-aircraft guns, as well as dozens of smaller 40mm and 20mm guns. New technology, such as proximity fuses and radar gun-laying, made anti-aircraft fire more effective.
- “Finally, there was damage control. By 1944 the Allied navies had sophisticated and well-trained damage control procedures. It was rare for a kamikaze strike to sink a vessel outright, and so a critical factor in a vessel’s survival was the efficiency with which a ship’s crew could extinguish fires, repair structural damage, and restore a ship’s systems.”
- “Voice over: “In October 1944, a special attack Squadron was formed specifically to fly the Ohka into battle, **the Japanese 721st Naval Air Squadron, known as the Jinrai Butai, which translates as Divine Thunderbolt Corps, or the Thunder Gods.**”
- “In the event of an invasion of Japan proper, of course, the Japanese were determined to employ suicide tactics on a grand scale. **Captain Fuchida’s understanding was that the Japanese Army and Navy were prepared to expend 5,000 Kamikaze aircraft between them to defend the homeland, and he believed that approximately two-ninths of that number would have found their targets.** It was Captain Inoguchi’s opinion, however, that inexperienced pilots and the lack of defense against American fighter planes would have precluded a higher proportion of hits than one-ninth or one-tenth.”
- “At the end of the war, the Japanese themselves compiled a recapitulation of the record of the “Kamikaze Special Attack Corps.” They recorded that, of the 2,314 planes dispatched (including escorts), 1,086 returned. For the 1,228 planes “expended,” they claimed 81 ships sunk and 195 damaged, for a total of 276 ships.”
  - “Postwar records indicate that the correct figures are 34 ships sunk, including three light carriers and 13 destroyers. Of the 195 ships the Japanese claimed as damaged, they had actually damaged 288 ships, including 16 fleet aircraft carriers, three light carriers, and 17 escort carriers. It should be noted that several ships, like the HMAS Australia and USS Laffey, were hit repeatedly but not sunk. So, the Japanese claim of a total of 276 enemy ships sunk or damaged by Kamikazes is understated. In fact, they hit 322 allied ships, sinking 34.”
  - Ian Kikuchi: “Around 350 vessels were hit by kamikaze. 47 were sunk and the rest were damaged. Of the ships sunk, none were strategically important, and all could be replaced. Among the damaged ships were thirty-one aircraft carriers of

different types. In some cases, for instance to USS Bunker Hill, the damage was severe enough to put the ship out of action for months. But the kamikaze could never inflict enough damage to derail Allied naval operations.

- “Nonetheless, their human toll was appalling. The Japanese expended 2600 aircraft in kamikaze attacks, and with them the lives of 4000 airmen. The attacks killed more than 7000 Allied naval personnel, and wounded many more. The kamikaze failed for a variety of reasons. I think a big one is faulty assumptions.”
- Why it failed: “The Japanese overestimated how many kamikaze would be able to evade Allied fighters and anti-aircraft guns. They overestimated the likelihood of direct hits against enemy ships, and overestimated how much damage a crashing aircraft could do to a large warship. The Japanese also overestimated how much impact the kamikaze would have on Allied strategic decision-making; they thought the psychological effect of their attacks would be so demoralizing that it would reduce the Americans’ will to fight the war to the bitter end. They were wrong.”