

# YONTAN SUICIDE RAID

THE DEADLY BATTLE FOR OKINAWA UNLEASHED THE KAMAKAZE ON AMERICAN FORCES. TAKING THIS CONCEPT A STEP FURTHER, THE JAPANESE DECIDED TO UNDERTAKE A ONE-WAY MISSION ON AN IMPORTANT AIRFIELD  
BY BLAKE CARLTON

“What the hell!” exclaimed 1st Lt. Maynard Kelly from his position in the control tower at Yontan airfield on the death-infested island of Okinawa. Although the sky was pitch-black, a full moon had lit the entire area like a set from a Hollywood movie. What had caught the young Marine’s full attention from his duty post in the control tower was the shape of a fast-approaching low-flying twin-engine bomber. Kelly knew his aircraft and he immediately realized this was no friendly as the plane, with no landing or recognition lights, hit the airstrip gear-up and slid across the sandy surface and came to a stop about 250 feet in front of the tower. “It’s a Jap Sally bomber,” yelled Kelly to the other two Marines in the tower. Tossing his cigarette aside and unholstering his Colt .45-caliber automatic, Kelly stood up from his desk and began to sound the alarm as all hell broke loose.

Literally leaping down the stairs from the control tower and jumping into a jeep, Kelly speed across to the short distance only



Yontan was a vital airfield and immediately after capture, Americans went to work to expand and improve the facility.



Numerous Japanese aircraft were at Yontan and Marines examine the wreckage of a Ki 48. Note the other wrecked Japanese aircraft in the background.



The first American aircraft to land at Yontan were Stinson OY-1s. These planes were launched from the escort carriers and flown to the field where they were used as spotters and for general reconnaissance.

The only Mitsubishi Ki 21 to make it through to Yontan was aircraft 546. After a hard belly landing, the pilots and commandos rushed out of the aircraft and began attacking American assets. This enemy commando apparently killed himself with a grenade after being wounded by defending Marines.