

These attacks, beginning in 1944, followed several very significant and critical military and strategic defeats for Japan, its decreasing capacity to wage war along with the loss of experienced pilots.

## The Kamikazes

On October 19, 1944, Japanese vice-admiral Takajiro Ohnishi asked 23 young navy pilots to volunteer for suicide missions against Allied warships; those who crashed into aircraft carriers would get posthumous double promotions. They all agreed, creating the first "special attack group" in time for the Battle of Leyte Gulf, which began the next day. Notes on Japan's kamikaze attacks:

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- Some suicide fliers were volunteers, others under orders. There were kamikaze boats and rafts.
- By October 25, the U.S. navy realized that suicide crash landings on its ships were not just being improvised. It clamped a news blackout on kamikaze fliers and began to figure out how to deal with their strategies (such as their habit of tailing a group of American aircraft back home to the carrier). One in every four kamikaze flights inflicted damage, and the navy was seriously concerned that Tokyo not find out the success of its tactical surprise.
- A hero during the indoctrination of the kamikaze pilots, sailors, and swimmers was naval warrant officer Magoshiche Sugino. Japanese believed that he had given his life in 1904, during the Russo-Japanese war, while sinking a ship to bottle up the Russian fleet at Port Arthur. In 1946, he was discovered living



According to some sources, on October 14, 1944, USS *Reno* was hit by a deliberately-crashed Japanese plane. However, there is no evidence that this was a deliberate attack.

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quietly in Manchuria. Mr. Sugino had been rescued by a Chinese boat and, upon learning he was a dead hero, decided to keep a low profile.