



Taken in 1945, this is a photo of some of the men of the USAF's elite 509th Composite Group. They had been trained for a secret mission that few would

understand until it was completed. Their objective:

**To end the Second World War!**

SECRET

COMGENUSASTAF GUAM

INFO: COMGENUSASTAF (REAR) WASH (URGENT) ATTN: GENERAL NORSTAD

AIMCR 5482 SUBJECT: FINAL REPORT, SOUTH SBM 6, STRIKE

CENTERBOARD, LOW 19 AUGUST

# THE SECRET STORY OF **THE LAST BOMB**



1. TARGET ATTACKED: NAGASAKI

2. TIME TAKE OFF: FIRST: 081749Z LAST: 081751Z

3. NUMBER A/C AIRBORNE: 3

# THE SECRET STORY OF *THE LAST BOMB*

In the early morning hours of August 9, 1945, three B-29 Superfortresses departed North Field, Tinian, headed for the already smoldering Japanese Empire. Eight hours later, the unsuspecting city of Nagasaki lay in ruin following the second and last atomic attack of World War II.

Three days earlier, Colonel Paul Tibbets had flown the B-29 “Enola Gay” into the history books when he successfully delivered the first atomic weapon used in warfare on Hiroshima, Japan. The top-secret mission had been a complete success. Everything went perfectly. Tibbets and his crew returned to Tinian and received a heroes’ welcome.



History has shed little light on the details of the second atomic mission which was fraught with mishaps that began before the takeoff of the lead plane, “Bock’s Car”. As fate would have it, the culmination of these difficulties would ultimately spare their original target from destruction and forever doom the second.

Upon returning to Tinian, the commander of Bock’s Car, Major, Charles Sweeney, was reprimanded and threatened with courts-martial for his role in the nearly botched attack. The mission specialist, Naval Commander, Frederick Ashworth would later say, “we had gotten ourselves into a mess ... things went so wrong!”

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On August 15, 1945, Japan “unconditionally surrendered” to the allies, thus ending the largest conflict in history. With the war now over, there was

little to be gained by prosecuting the participants of the Nagasaki mission and their story has become a footnote in the dawning of the atomic age, until now...

More than 70 years have passed since the two atomic missions helped bring the second world war to a close. All of the major participants are now gone and their stories have been recorded for posterity. Many of the details remain classified to this day.

We propose to tell the untold story of the bomb that ended the war using both HD archival film footage, original photographs and most importantly, contemporary interviews with scholars and military historians’ familiar with the mission details. In so doing, we hope to create a comprehensive film that future historians will look to when studying the story of “The Last Atomic Bomb.”

**Mark Natola**  
*Historian / Producer*



CENTERBOARD, FLOWN

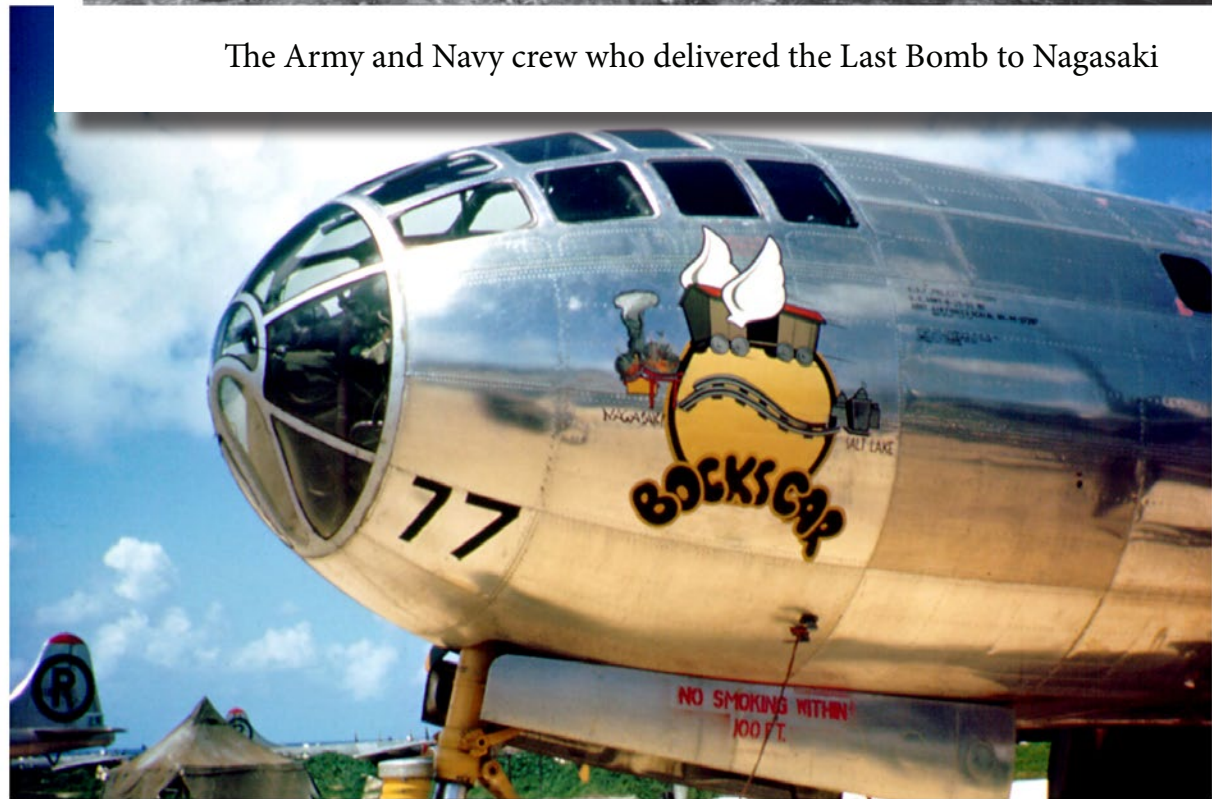
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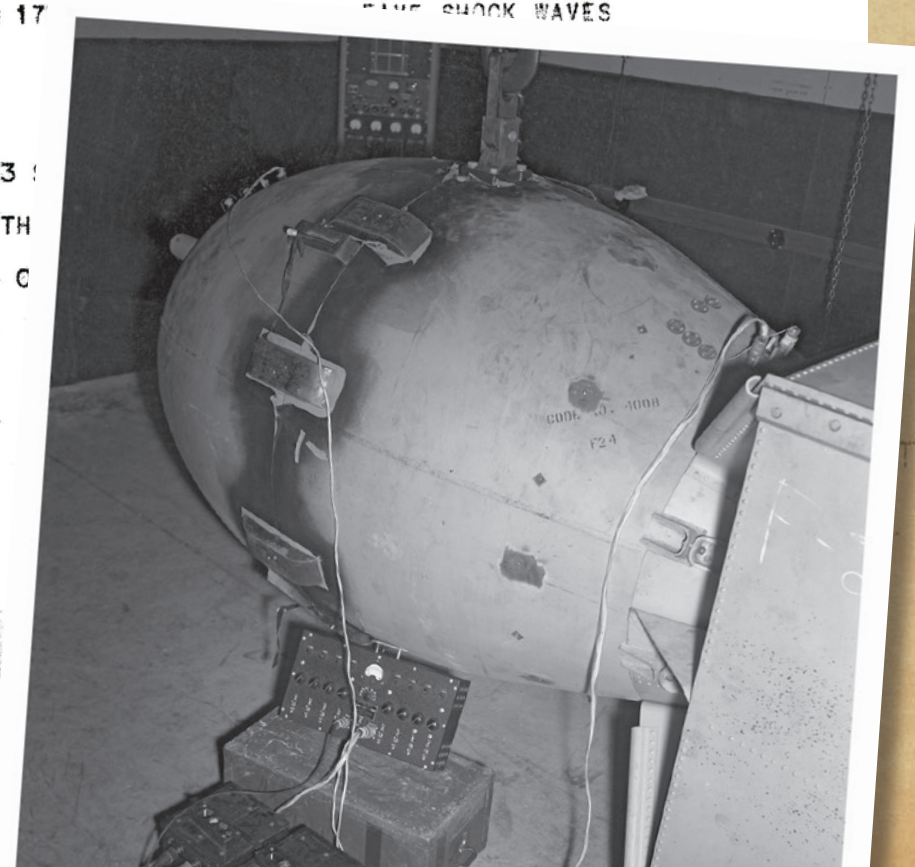


The Army and Navy crew who delivered the Last Bomb to Nagasaki



TOP SECRET

- 11. OBSERVATIONS: 1 LARGE SHIP IN HARBOR AREA AT NAGASAKI, NUMEROUS SMALLER VESSELS IN SAME AREA. 4 UNIDENTIFIED SINGLE ENGINE AT 33/15 N 132/00 E, LOW, CIRCLING. 13 UNIDENTIFIED S/E AT 30/25 N 130/38 E, 12 SILVER IN COLOR, 1 OFF COLOR, 2 MILES EAST AT 12-15,000 FEET. NEAR SENDAI, SE COAST OF KYUSHU SMOKE WAS SEEN, VERY MUCH LIKE THAT OBSERVED WHEN SPECIAL BOMB EXPLODES, INTENSITY MAINTAINED TILL OUT OF SIGHT.
  - 12. BOMBING RESULTS: FAIR TO GOOD.
  - 13. TIME OF LANDING: FIRST: 091306Z LAST: 091339Z.
  - 14. OTHER SIGNIFICANT INFORMATION: 90 PERCENT OF RUN WAS RADAR, BOMBARDIER TOOK OVER AND MADE VISUAL CORRECTIONS IN LAST 10 PERCENT. BOMB HIT APPROXIMATELY 500 FEET SOUTH OF MITSUBISHI PLANT. COMPANION SHIP OBSERVED. AFTER EXPLOSION LARGE WHITE SMOKE RING FORMED, RED BALL OF FIRE COVERING 1/2 OF AREA. THEN COLUMN OF SMOKE FORMED 1/2 MILE WIDE, FUNNELING UPWARD, BOTTOM DARK BROWN IN COLOR, CENTER AMBER COLOR, TOP WHITE. COLUMN ROSE TO 50,000 FEET, RISING TO 30,000 FEET IN ONE AND ONE HALF TO TWO MINUTES. MANY SMALL BRIGHT FIRES OBSERVED. CONSIDERABLE SMOKE OBSERVED 17 MILES SHOCK WAVES FELT.
  - 15. MISSION EFFECTIVE.
  - 16. REMARKS: A/C VICTOR 83 : NOT CALLED UPON, RETURNING TH 90 LANDED OKINAWA 090400Z - C 090706Z.
- END...



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## Questions Still Unanswered, 70 Years Later

- Why did Bock's Car not drop the second atomic bomb on the original, designated target?
- How was Major Sweeney, the aircraft commander, considered the most qualified pilot to lead the second atomic mission?
- How did it happen that a Naval Commander, Frederick Ashworth, was responsible for the atomic weapon while Major Sweeney was responsible for the aircraft? Did this decision lead to a conflict in the cockpit?
- Why did the complete crews of the B-29 "Bock's Car" and "The Great Artiste" switch planes immediately before the mission?
- Why was the 509 th Group Operations Officer, Major James Hopkins, chosen to fly the third plane responsible for photographing the atomic explosion?
- What prompted an angry exchange between Major's Sweeney and Hopkins prior to the mission, and how did it affect the subsequent operation?
- Why was the flight engineer of Bock's Car unable to access more than 640 gallons of gasoline from the reserve tank and how did that ultimately affect the mission?
- For what reason did General Curtis LeMay attempt to prevent two representatives of the British government from flying aboard the photographic plane during the atomic missions?
- Why was the only man capable of operating the camera removed from the observation plane prior to take off?
- For what purpose did the strike aircraft fly individually to the rendezvous during a severe storm, rather than as a group?
- What happened at the rendezvous that severely jeopardized the second mission?
- Why were the explicit orders given by General Hap Arnold as to how the atomic bomb was to be dropped disobeyed at Nagasaki?

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# THE SECRET STORY OF *THE LAST BOMB*



Mark Natola with Capt. Frederick Bock and 2d Lt. Fred Olivi

## About The Producer

### Mark Natola, Producer and Aviation Historian

Mark has worked as a Producer on several B-29 themed television productions, including the A&E Network Cable Ace Award nominee, "The Rain of Ruin" and the History Channel feature, "Unsung Heroes, - the B-29ers." In addition, Mark has served as the Historian for the B-47 Stratojet Association and is the author of, "The B-47 Stratojet, True Stories of the Cold War in the Air." Mark's work has been cited in the books, "Flags of Our Fathers" by James Bradley, "The Story of World War II" by Donald Miller and "Atom Bombs" by John Coster-Mullen.

Mark is retired and lives in New Hampshire with his wife, Wendy.

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