

# Japan honors kamikazes



CHIRAN, Japan (AP) — A final cup of sake still warm in his belly, Yoshio Nagai climbed into a cockpit and headed south with just enough fuel for a one-way trip to Okinawa.

His mission: crash his plane and its single-bomb payload into an enemy ship.

"I'm going to be scattered beautifully," the 20-year-old kamikaze pilot wrote in a goodbye letter to his family, comparing his final, explosive flight to a cascade of blossoms blown from a cherry tree.

Nearly 50 years later, the runway where Nagai took off is covered with gravel and lined with urns. His letter is in a glass case under his photograph, preserved with hundreds of others at the Peace Museum for Kamikaze Pilots.

While much of the world remembers the thousands of kamikazes sent against U.S. and other Allied ships in the closing months of World War II as suicidal fanatics, many Japanese see them as innocent, young victims of a senseless war.

"To protect this country, 20-year-old boys threw their lives away," said photographer Toshifumi Fukumura as a group of Japanese, some wiping tears from their cheeks, bowed before a bronze statue of a pilot in front of the museum.

Named after a legendary typhoon that foiled Khublai Khan's attempt to invade Japan in 1281, the kamikaze, or "divine wind," attack force was a desperate attempt to stave off an American invasion of the Japanese home islands.

The first "Special Attack" missions were flown in defense of Japanese positions in the Philippines in 1944. The number of flights increased dramatically when American forces invaded Okinawa the following year.

Historians put the total number of kamikaze pilots near 4,000. The suicide planes took a heavy toll in Allied ships and lives: a single attack by kamikazes on the aircraft carrier USS Franklin in March 1945 killed 800 sailors.

Nagai was one of 436 kamikaze pilots who took off from the military base in Chiran, on the southern tip of the southernmost of Japan's main four islands, about 630 miles southwest of Tokyo.

Like memorials at the atomic bomb sites in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the central lesson of the kamikaze museum is pacifism. Several stone tablets around the museum grounds remind visitors of the

great losses suffered in war, and a visitors' log is filled with handwritten calls for peace.

"We're thankful for the peace we have now, and we realize that peace is important by coming here," said Fukumura, who takes group photographs in front of the museum.

Side by side with the pacifist theme, however, is a celebration of the kamikazes' bravery and sacrifice. Visitors are greeted in the museum lobby by a mural of a goddess rescuing the spirit of a pilot from a burning plane.

Uniforms, medals and rising sun flags line the walls, and at the center of the hall is a World War II-era plane with saluting statues around it. There are photographs of young women waving flowers at departing planes.

An audio tape provided to visitors tells how two Japanese pilots brought down a big American B-29 bomber by ramming it in flight. Televisions show footage of kamikazes in action.

The museum also tugs hard at Japanese heartstrings, showing the pilots as cheerful young men, who would rather have been at home with loving families and friends instead of training for a fiery death.

Hundreds of goodbye letters are on display. In the lobby is a piano that belonged to a pilot, and photographs on the walls show smiling aviators joking with each other or petting puppies.

Items left behind by the pilots — goggles, books, hand-made dolls — fill display cases. Outside is a statue of a Japanese mother, her hands folded and her face looking sadly toward the pilot's statue. A plaque below her urges the world to live in peace.

The museum grew out of the maternal sentiments of Tome Torihama, a local innkeeper who housed, fed and bathed some of the pilots in their final months. She set up a small shrine for the kamikazes right after the war. A larger shrine was established in 1955, and the museum opened in 1975. About 600,000 people visit a year, and memorial services for the pilots are held every May 3.

The most gripping aspect of the museum are the pilots own words, and visitors crowd the display cases to read their "final statements."

Perhaps aware military government officials would read the letters, the young men were surprisingly poetic and accepting of their fate. Many said they gladly gave their lives for their country, though one pilot told his parents that he was on his way "to hell."

# Iranian critic dies in prison Sunday

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — A dissident Iranian writer arrested last March for criticizing Iran's theocratic government and its censorship policies has died in prison.

The state-run Islamic Republic News Agency said Ali Akbar Saidi Sirjani, 63, died of a heart attack Sunday.

The brief dispatch, monitored in Cyprus, quoted an unidentified official source as saying "Sirjani's general conditions deteriorated in the early hours of Sunday but despite physicians' efforts he died of a heart attack."

International Pen, a London-based group that campaigns for writers' freedom of expression, said it was not aware that Sirjani had a heart problem.

Following his arrest, Sirjani

was charged with homosexuality, gambling, smoking opium, having CIA connections and drinking alcohol, which is prohibited in Islamic Iran. The charges were later expanded to include activities against the Islamic Republic.

In May, the government said he had confessed to the charges.

Sirjani was held incommunicado. Under Iranian law, he could have received the death sentence.

Today, the Paris-based Organization for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms for Iran expressed sorrow for "the tragic death of a brave and popular Iranian novelist and writer in the hands of the executioners of the theocratic regime in Tehran."

# Serb control of Bihac shows U.N. failure

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — Rebel Serbs pounded the outskirts of a U.N. safe haven in northwest Bosnia, proving on the ground what a U.S. official has conceded: NATO is unable to stop the assault.

Defense Secretary William Perry even suggested Sunday that the Bosnian government has lost the 31-month war.

The commander of U.N. forces in Bosnia, Gen. Sir Michael Rose, said the 24,000 peacekeepers there may withdraw if fighting escalates further. "If the scene gets much worse militarily, then I suspect the peacekeeping mission would find it very difficult to continue," he said.

The Muslim-led Bosnian government said it would accept a U.N. proposal for a Bihac cease-fire, demilitarization of the "safe area" and withdrawal of forces, said Michael Williams, spokesman for Yasushi Akashi, the chief U.N. envoy in former Yugoslavia.

But Bosnian Serbs are demanding a cease-fire nationwide, which would effectively seal their dominion over the 70 percent of Bosnia they now control. Serb fighters from Bosnia and neighboring Croatia hold 30 to 40 percent of the U.N.-designated safe area at Bihac, the last Muslim stronghold in northwest Bosnia. The Serbs were torching most villages captured south of Bihac, said a confidential U.N. report obtained by The Associated Press.

"There is a feeling of deep fear," said Monique Tuffelli, a U.N. aid worker who visited Bihac on Sunday.

The capture of Bihac would be the strongest indication yet that the United Nations cannot stop the war with peacekeeping troops or even NATO airstrikes on the Serbs.

"The airstrikes cannot determine the outcome of the ground combat," Perry said Sunday.

"The Serbs have ... occupied 70 percent of the country," he said. "There's no prospect, as I see it, of the Muslims winning that back."

On Saturday, the U.N. Security Council ignored Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic's appeal for airstrikes to stop the Serb assault on Bihac, calling instead for a cease-fire.

Western military officials said NATO plans for air action Saturday were vetoed by U.N. officials who feared chances of a negotiated settlement would be sunk.

The U.N. officials were also concerned about reprisals against peacekeepers. Bangladeshi peacekeepers in the Bihac region came under sniper fire, and Serbs fired as many as 10 missiles Sunday at Canadian peacekeepers near Sarajevo.

Elsewhere, Serbs apparently took 102 Dutch and 62 British U.N. soldiers hostage Sunday in eastern and central Bosnia, bringing the number of peacekeepers under their control to 400.

# Airline staff walks off job in Spain

MADRID, Spain (AP) — In a strike that paralyzed Spanish airports, workers of the national carrier Iberia walked off the job today to protest the company's plan to cut wages and sell assets.

The strike grounded all outgoing Iberia and international flights and seriously delayed incoming flights from abroad.

The stoppage, called by the country's main unions to protest the airline's plans to slash 5,200 of 24,000 jobs and sell its most profitable assets, was not authorized by labor authorities.

Hundreds of passengers were reported to have turned up for flights at both Madrid's and Barcelona's international airports. Dozens of police units patrolled terminals at both airports, but no unrest was reported.

After a profitable period between 1986 and 1989, Iberia has slumped into enormous debt since the beginning of the 1990s. It lost \$530 million last year and is expected to lose more than \$300 million this year.

Company chairman Javier Salas said the airline would be technically bankrupt by March 1995.

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