

Japan's secret navy bunker gives glimpse of war's final days

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

YOKOHAMA, Japan — On a hillside overlooking an athletic field where high school students play volleyball, an inconspicuous entrance leads down a dusty, slippery slope — and seemingly back in time — to Japan's secret Imperial Navy headquarters in the final months of World War II.

Here, leaders of Japan's combined fleet command made plans for the fiercest battles, including those of Leyte Gulf, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa from late 1944 to the war's end in August 1945. They knew when kamikaze pilots crashed to their deaths when signals from their planes stopped. They cried when they monitored cables from officers aboard the famed battleship *Yamato* as it came under heavy U.S. fire and sank off southern Japan.

Today, the barren, concrete tunnels sit quietly underneath a high school and university campus, largely untouched and unknown, occasionally visited by guided tours for the students. The school opened them to the media for the first time in June to raise public awareness of the site and the tragic history it represents, in the 70th anniversary year of the end of World War II.

"It's a negative heritage that humans made. It's the perpetrators' legacy," said Takeshi Akuzawa, assistant headmaster of Keio Senior High School, who escorted the media tour. "Just imagine the massive number of people who had to die in the final year of the war because of their operations."

The inverted U-shaped tunnels are a silent reminder of a time when students and many others were sent to war, many to their deaths, under orders that emanated from this bunker under a school.

Experts say the significance of such war remains is increasing, especially as that era fades from memory, and amid a growing reluctance among some Japanese to look at the negative side of the history.

Japan aims to resume Antarctic whaling later this year

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in the Antarctic this winter season.

"We have not changed any policies and our goal," Joji Morishita, Japan's representative to the IWC, told reporters. He said Japan will respond sincerely to "scientifically backed comments" in the report, but criticized it as lacking consensus.

Reflecting the sharp divide among the nearly 90 member nations of the international body, the report laid out both sides of the argument.

Under Tokyo's revised proposal for the upcoming whaling season, it plans to catch 333 minke whales each year between 2015 and 2027, about one-third of what it used to target.

Japan's actual catch has fallen in recent years in part because of declining domestic demand for whale meat. Protests by the anti-whaling group Sea Shepherd also contributed to the lower catch. The government has spent large amounts of tax money to sustain whaling operations.

Associated Press video journalist Ken Aragaki contributed to this report.



DEVOTED TO SERVICE. Nuns and others walk beside the garlanded coffin of sister Nirmala Joshi during her funeral procession in Kolkata, India. The Indian nun who replaced Mother Teresa as head of the Missionaries of Charity died June 23, the organization said. She was 81 years old. (AP Photo/Bikas Das)

Nun who took on Mother Teresa's India charity mission dies

KOLKATA, India (AP) — The Indian nun who replaced Mother Teresa as head of the Missionaries of Charity has died, according to the organization. Sister Nirmala Joshi was 81 years old.

Her health had been declining in recent days, the charity said. It did not give more details about the cause of her death.

She was selected to lead the Roman Catholic charity six months before the death of its founder, Mother Teresa, in 1997. She remained its leader, or superior general, until stepping down in 2009. That year, she also received India's second-highest civilian award, the Padma Vibhushan, in honor of her service to the nation.

She was born to Hindu parents in 1934 in the northern Indian city of Ranchi, now the capital of the state of Jharkhand, before India gained independence from the British Empire. She reportedly converted to Roman Catholicism after being educated by Christian missionaries and learning of Mother Teresa's work.

Indian politicians including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and opposition congress party leader Sonia Gandhi praised her work for the poor in the eastern city of Kolkata, where the charity is based.

"Sister Nirmala's life was devoted to service, caring for the poor and underprivileged," Modi said in a statement, adding that he was "saddened by her demise. May her soul rest in peace."

West Bengal's highest elected official, chief minister Mamata Banerjee, said in a Twitter message that "Kolkata and the world will miss her."

The Vatican newspaper, *l'Osservatore Romano*, paid homage to Nirmala in a long obituary, noting that she was elected superior of the order even though she had an incurable form of malaria that gave her constant fevers.

A funeral took place late last month at the charity's Kolkata headquarters, called the Mother House.

Mother Teresa received the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize for her charity work and is considered a candidate for Catholic sainthood.



HIDDEN HISTORY. Journalists walk in underground tunnels (top photo) that Japan's Imperial Navy once used as secret headquarters underneath the Hiyoshi Campus of Keio University in Yokohama, south of Tokyo. Today, the concrete tunnels sit quietly under the high school and university campus, largely untouched and unknown, occasionally visited by guided tours for the students. The school recently opened the tour to the media for the first time to raise public awareness of the site and the tragic history it represents, in the 70th anniversary year of the end of World War II. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

One of the top Japanese universities, Keio, leased the site to the navy in 1944 under an Education Ministry order, after thousands of teachers, staff, and students were drafted and sent to the battlefield, leaving the campus virtually empty. Above ground, the navy commanded from a dormitory, rushing to the underground command center whenever U.S. B-29 bombers flew over.

Keio's Hiyoshi campus, south of Tokyo in Yokohama, was chosen apparently because of its relative proximity to both Yokosuka naval base and command headquarters in Tokyo. The hilltop campus also was suitable for an underground facility.

Construction of the underground tunnels began in July 1944, mobilizing troops and Korean forced laborers. A room for the chief commander, Adm. Soemu Toyota, and key departments were up and running in a few months.

Only in the chief commander's room, cement on the walls was smoothed out, the floor was covered with *tatami* mats, and there was a door. He climbed up and down 126 stairs between the two command centers — above and below ground. His room was slightly elevated so that the floor remained dry, and there was even a flush toilet.

The tunnel command center also had ventilation ducts, a battery room, and food storage with ample stock of saké, in addition to deciphering and cable and communications departments. Marks on the ceiling remain from where overhead lights hung. The tunnels housing the command center and its facilities under the campus are 100 feet underground and stretch about 1.6 miles in length.

The conditions for those leading the war contrasted with those of ordinary people, who hid in small mud shelters

as firebombs rained down from the sky, Akuzawa said.

Hisanao Oshima, who was there from February to May 1945 as a communications crew monitoring Morse code, still cannot forget the moments when he lost signals from kamikaze fighters. "The sound stops, and that means he crashed. I just cannot get that out of my head," he said in an interview with public broadcaster NHK.

This site must be preserved "so that we can say it's the proof why we should not wage war ever again," Oshima said.

Japan also built the Matsushiro Imperial Underground Headquarters in central Japan for then-Emperor Hirohito and Imperial Army and key government officials, as they prepared for a possible ground war with the Americans, though that one was never used.

Hundreds of hangers, tunnels, and other wartime remains still exist in Japan, but many have been abandoned as interest has waned. A growing sentiment among some conservatives favors the removal of such remains if they are seen portraying the negative history.

Sections of the navy tunnels at Keio were damaged in a development project a few years ago, prompting experts and volunteers to call for more support from the city to preserve the site.

Akuzawa said what struck him the most as a teacher was the fact that the university was used as a war command center to send students to the battlefield. A Keio University graduate himself, he did not know about the tunnels until he started teaching at the high school.

"I feel emotionally shaken when I think of those students sent to war were just like these boys," he said.

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