



NAVY MEDICINE *FAST FACTS*

April 2025

80th Anniversary

BATTLE OF OKINAWA

April 1 - June 22, 1945



- The **Battle of Okinawa** (Operation Iceberg) was the largest amphibious assault in the Pacific War and one of the deadliest battles of World War II.
- The **Tenth Army** was the primary ground force used to take the island. It was comprised of **U.S. Army XXIV Corps** (responsible for the southern part of the island) and **U.S. Marine Corps III Amphibious Corps** (responsible for the northern part of the island).
- Japanese forces mounted a fierce resistance to the Allied effort, notably employing **fortified defenses** and deadly **kamikaze attacks**.

WHERE WAS NAVY MEDICINE AT THE BATTLE OF OKINAWA?



- Aboard **580+ warships of the Fifth Fleet** that pounded Japanese fortifications, cleared the way for landings and transported the 10th Army to the fight.



- Embedded with the 1st, 2nd, 6th Marine Divisions with the **Marine Corps III Amphibious Corps**. This included the 1st and 6th Marine Division hospitals, and two evacuation hospitals.



- Aboard over **25+ medical ships** designated for evacuation and hospital care / treatment including **15** hospital ships, **8** landing ship tank, hospitals (LST(H)s), and **2** evacuation transports.



- Serving with **Naval Air Transport Service (NATS) aircraft** as air evacuation nurses and hospital corpsmen.

180,000+

U.S. personnel supporting Okinawa operations

12,500+

U.S. service personnel killed at Okinawa. Including **15** Navy physicians, **1** dentist and **162** hospital corpsmen attached to Marine Divisions, and ships offshore.

MEDICAL EVACUATION



47%

by hospital ship

47%

by transport plane

6%

by surface ship

The Navy evacuated more than **24,900+** casualties from Okinawa during the **82-day** battle





“Kamikaze Attack” by Richard M. Gibney
National Museum of the Marine Corps

KAMIKAZE ATTACKS

- Ships of the Fifth Fleet were subject to almost unrelenting attacks from kamikazes (suicide pilots of the Japanese Special Attack Corps). By the end of the battle, **112+ Navy ships were subject to kamikaze attacks and 12 were sunk.**
- Chief wounds encountered from the kamikaze attacks were **flash burns and shrapnel wounds.**
- The kamikaze attacks led to shortages of medical personnel in the fleet. **Casualties among medical officers and corpsmen required frequent replacements from medical staff aboard transports.**
- On April 28, the hospital ship **USS Comfort** and evacuation transport **USS Pinkney** received direct hits from kamikaze planes — **29** people were killed aboard Comfort and **22** aboard Pinkney.

MEDICAL HEROES

- Navy medical personnel at Okinawa were awarded **3 Medals of Honor (MoH), 9 Navy Crosses, and 48 Silver Stars.**
- PhM1c **William Halyburton (1924-1945).** Fought back an enemy charge and continued to attend to casualties while administering aid under heavy enemy fire, until succumbing to mortal wounds. **MoH recipient (posthumous).**
- HA1c **Fred Lester (1926-1945).** Despite being repeatedly wounded, Lester crawled under heavy enemy fire to rescue a fallen Marine, and then selflessly instructed others in his treatment. Realizing his own wounds were fatal, he refused aid and directed the care of two more wounded Marines before succumbing to his injuries. **MoH recipient (posthumous).**
- HA2c **Robert Bush (1926-2005).** Bush repeatedly braved danger to treat wounded Marines, including defending a wounded officer with his pistol and a carbine after being critically wounded himself. He refused medical treatment until his patient was evacuated, ultimately collapsing from his injuries after his heroic actions. **MoH recipient.**



HA2c Bush receiving the Medal of Honor from President Truman, Oct. 5, 1945