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THE SUICIDE MANUAL

Early in 1945 an 88-page manual that minutely prepared Kamikaze pilots for their suicide mission was compiled by the Shimoshizu Air Unit in Chiba Prefecture, near Tokyo. The manual, dated May 1945, bears the name of the unit commander, Major Hayashino. It gives precise information on how to cause maximum damage to an enemy ship, what to do and think as the target looms closer with only seconds remaining before impact, even telling the pilot – no doubt enhancing the probability – that he will see his mother’s face (‘neither smiling nor crying’) during the final milliseconds of consciousness. The manual tells the pilots – who have heard it said many times that after the crash they will become gods (*kami*) – that they will meet their friends and joke with them in their god-like state.¹

Is there anything a pilot can do if he is nervous before a mission or approaching a target? Yes, says the manual in one word: piss. At the moment of impact the pilot is advised to shout at the top of his lungs to increase his self-confidence. If a pilot can’t find a target, he should return to base and not waste his life lightly. If it comes to this, says the manual, the pilot should be ‘jovial’ and ‘without remorse’.

Written in concise, vivid language, the manual is officially entitled ‘Basic Instructions for To-Go Flyers’ (To-Go is a codename for Special Attack Corps) and was given to pilots to take along in the cockpit for consultation. Some of the information appearing in the manual has a

mystic quality. For instance, to lift up his spirits, the pilot is told that at the termination of a successful mission (the impact with the target), there will occur at that precise moment at the Shinto grand military shrine in Tokyo – Yasukuni Jinja – a spontaneous outpouring of joy. It is, the pilot is told, a personal recognition of the pilot's success. Some of the pages reopen memories of the September 11, 2001 terror.

The following are highlights from the manual:

PAGE 3:

The Mission of To-Go Units

Transcend life and death. When you eliminate all thoughts about life and death, you will be able to totally disregard your earthly life. This will also enable you to concentrate your attention on eradicating the enemy with unwavering determination, meanwhile reinforcing your excellence in flight skills.

Exert the best in yourself.

Strike an enemy vessel that is either moored or at sea.

Sink the enemy and thus pave the road for our people's victory.

PAGE 12:

Take a Walk Around the Airfield

When you take this walk, be aware of your surroundings. This airstrip is the key to the success or failure of your mission. Devote all your attention to it.

Look at the terrain. What are the characteristics of the ground?

What are the length and width of the airstrip?

In case you are taking off from a road or a field, what is the correct direction of your flight? At what point do you consider taking off?

In case you will take off at dusk, or early morning, or after sundown, what are the obstacles to be remembered: an electric pole, a tree, a house, a hill?

PAGE 13:

How to Pilot a Fully Dressed Up [heavily equipped] Aircraft That You Dearly Love

Before taking off. [After taxiing the plane from the camouflaged emplacement to the airstrip.] You can envision your target firmly in your mind as you bring your plane to a standstill.

Breathe deeply three times. Say in your mind: ‘*Yab*’ [field], ‘*Kyu*’ [ball], ‘*Job*’ [all right] as you breathe deeply.

Proceed straight ahead on the airstrip. Otherwise you may damage the landing gear.

Circle above the airstrip right after takeoff. Do so at the minimum height of 200 metres. Circle at an angle within 5 degrees and keep your nose pointed downwards.

PAGE 15:

Principles You Should Know

Keep your health in the very best condition.

If you are not in top physical condition, you will not be able to achieve an ideal hit by *tai-atari* [body-crashing].

Just as you cannot fight well on an empty stomach, you cannot deftly manipulate the control stick if you are suffering from diarrhoea, and cannot exert calm judgement if you are tormented by fever.

Be always pure-hearted and cheerful.

A loyal fighting man is a pure-hearted and filial son.

Attain a high level of spiritual training.

In order that you can exert the highest possible capability, you must prepare well your inner self. Some people say that spirit must come first before skill, but they are wrong. Spirit and skill are one. The two elements must be mastered together. Spirit supports skill and skill supports spirit.

PAGE 21:

Aborting Your Mission and Returning to Base

In the event of poor weather conditions when you cannot locate the target, or under other adverse circumstances, you may decide to return to base. Don’t be discouraged. Do not waste your life lightly. You should not be possessed by petty emotions. Think how you can best defend the motherland. Remember what the Wing Commander has told you. You should return to the base jovially and without remorse.

PAGE 22:

When Turning Back and Landing at the Base

Discard the bomb at the area designated by the commanding officer.

Fly in circles over the airfield.
Observe conditions of the airstrip carefully.
If you feel nervous, piss.
Next, ascertain the direction of the wind and wind speed.
Do you see any holes in the runway?
Take three deep breaths.

PAGE 23:

The Attack

Single-plane attack. Upon sighting a target, remove the [bomb's] safety pin.
Go full speed ahead towards the target. Dive!
Surprise the enemy.
Don't let the enemy take time to counter your attack. Charge!
Remember: the enemy may change course but be prepared for the enemy's evasive action.
Be alert and avoid enemy fighters and flak fire.

PAGE 33:

Dive Attack

This varies depending on the type of the aircraft.
If you are approaching the enemy from a height of 6,000 metres, adjust your speed twice; or from a lower height of 4,000 metres, adjust speed once.
When you begin your dive, you must harmonize the height at which you commence the final attack with your speed.
Beware of over-speeding and a too-steep angle of dive that will make the controls harder to respond to your touch.
But an angle of dive that is too small will result in reduced speed and not enough impact on crashing.

PAGE 37:

Where to Crash (the Enemy's Fatal Spots)

Where should you aim?
When diving and crashing onto a ship, aim for a point between the bridge tower and the smoke stack(s).
Entering the stack is also effective.
Avoid hitting the bridge tower or a gun turret.
In the case of an aircraft carrier, aim at the elevators.
Or if that is difficult, hit the flight deck at the ship's stern.

For a low altitude horizontal attack, aim at the middle of the vessel, slightly higher than the waterline.

If that is difficult, in the case of an aircraft carrier, aim at the entrance to the airplane hanger, or the bottom of the stack.

For other vessels, aim close to the aft engine room.

PAGE 38:

Just Before the Crash

Your speed is at the maximum.

The plane tends to lift. But you can prevent this by pushing the elevator control forward sufficiently to allow for the increase in speed.

Do your best. Push forward with all your might.

You have lived for 20 years or more. You must exert your full might for the last time in your life. Exert supernatural strength.

At the very moment of impact:

Do your best. Every deity and the spirits of your dead comrades are watching you intently.

Just before the collision it is essential that you do not shut your eyes for a moment so as not to miss the target.

Many have crashed into the targets with wide-open eyes.

They will tell you what fun they had.

PAGE 39:

You Are Now 30 Metres From the Target

You will sense that your speed has suddenly and abruptly increased. You feel that the speed has increased by a few thousand-fold. It is like a long shot in a movie suddenly turning into a close-up and the scene expands in your face.

The Moment of the Crash

You are two or three metres from the target. You can see clearly the muzzles of the enemy's guns.

You feel that you are suddenly floating in the air. At that moment, you see your mother's face. She is not smiling or crying. It is her usual face.

PAGE 40:

All the Happy Memories

You won't precisely remember them but they are like a dream or a fantasy. You are relaxed and a smile creases your face. The sweet atmosphere of your boyhood days returns.

You view all that you experienced in your 20-odd years of life in rapid succession. But these things are not very clear.

In any event, only delightful memories come back to you.

You cannot see your own face at that moment. But because of a succession of pleasant memories flashing through your mind, you feel that you smiled at the last moment.

You may nod then, or wonder what happened. You may even hear a final sound like the breaking of crystal.

Then you are no more. [Emphasis added]

PAGE 43:

Points to Remember When Making Your Last Dive

Crashing bodily into a target is not easy. It causes the enemy great damage. Therefore the enemy will exert every means to avoid a hit.

Suddenly you may become confused. You are liable to make an error. But hold onto the unshakeable conviction to the last moment that you will sink the enemy ship.

Remember when diving into the enemy to shout at the top of your lungs: ‘*Hissatsu!*’ [‘Sink without fail!’]

At that moment, all the cherry blossoms at Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo will smile brightly at you.

PAGE 44:

How to Carry Out Your Last Sortie

The last assault should be carried out in the following manner: in commencing it, observe carefully the positions of the other friendly planes and the movement of the targets. Don’t let the enemy ships outwit you.

Your target may evade you. But always remain calm. Try again. Don’t give up trying.

When attacking enemy vessels that are moored, observe their positions and the terrain around them well.

Mind the enemy’s smokescreens.

Observe anti-aircraft positions.

PAGE 48:

Types of US Planes and Performances

[The manual gives maximum speed and range for each type, their bomb loads, armament, and maximum height each plane is

able to climb. There is no mention about which types excel in manoeuvring or are inferior.]

PAGE 78:

Diagram: Sunshine and Moonshine

[The diagram deals with times for sunrise/moonrise and sunset/moonset.]

PAGE 87:

How to Fly Through the Enemy's Radar Screen

When you lower your altitude to within the 'dead angle' of the enemy's radar, you must confuse the enemy detection system. It is possible to conceal your approach. [Charts are provided on recommended altitude changes.]

Here are the main entries in the *Table of Contents*:

The Mission of a To-Go Unit
 How to Decide on the Method of the Last Dive
 Principles Everyone Should Know
 Commencing the Attack
 Ultra-Low Altitude Attack
 The Best Place to Crash Into a Ship
 Types of American Planes (Identification)
 . . . and Their Performances
 Taking Advantage of Clouds
 Sunshine and Moonshine
 How to Fly Through the Enemy's Radar Screen

NOTE

¹ The extraordinary manual in its entirety has not been published in the West and has received little or no mention in the literature on the Pacific War.