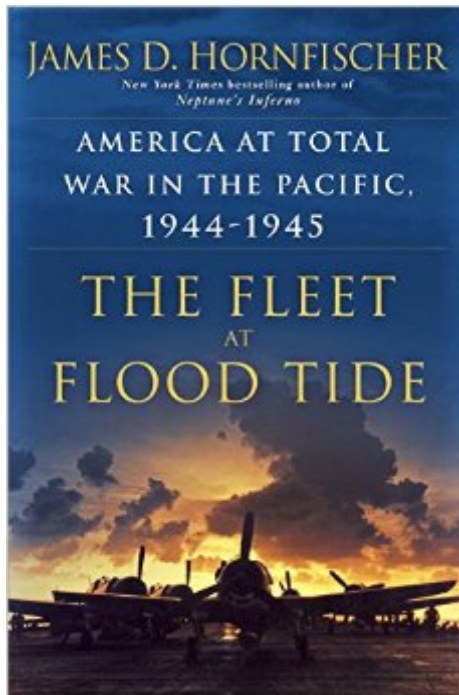


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# The Fleet At Flood Tide: America At Total War In The Pacific, 1944-1945



## Synopsis

Timed to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, here is an unprecedented account of the extraordinary World War II air, land, and sea campaign that brought the U.S. Navy to the apex of its strength and marked the rise of the United States as a global superpower. Drawing on new primary sources and personal accounts by Americans and Japanese alike, *The Fleet at Flood Tide* is a thrilling narrative of the climactic end stage of the Pacific War, focusing on the U.S. invasion of the Mariana Islands in June 1944 and the momentous events that it produced. With its thunderous assault into Japan's inner defensive perimeter, America crossed the threshold of total war. From the seaborne invasion of Saipan to the stunning aerial battles of the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot, from the largest banzai attack of the war to the first mass suicides of Japanese civilians to the strategic bombing effort that culminated at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Marianas became the fulcrum of the drive to compel Tokyo to surrender--with consequences that forever changed modern war. These unprecedented operations saw the first large-scale use of Navy underwater demolition teams; a revolution in the fleet's ability to sustain cross-hemispheric expeditionary warfare; the struggle of American troops facing not only a suicidal enemy garrison, but desperate Japanese civilians; and the rise of the U.S. Navy as the greatest of grand fleets. From the Marianas, B-29 Superfortresses would finally unleash nuclear fire on an enemy resolved to fight to the end. Hornfischer casts this clash of nations and cultures with cinematic scope and penetrating insight. Focusing closely on people who rose to challenging events, he shows us Raymond Spruance, the brilliant, coolly calculating commander of the Fifth Fleet; Kelly Turner, whose amphibious forces delivered Marine General "Howlin' Mad" Smith's troops to the beaches of Saipan and Tinian; Draper Kauffman, founder of the Navy unit that predated today's SEALs; Paul Tibbets, the creator of history's first atomic striking force, who flew the *Enola Gay* to Hiroshima; and Japanese warriors and civilians who saw the specter of defeat as the ultimate test of the spirit. From the seas of the Central Pacific to the shores of Japan itself, *The Fleet at Flood Tide* is a stirring and deeply humane account of World War II's world-changing finale.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

When this book first arrived last week, I was somewhat dismayed to learn that, while telling the tale of the final days of the Pacific Theatre in World War II, the three leaders it chose to focus on more deeply in this work were different from the ones I expected. He chose on Raymond Spruance, commander of the Fifth Fleet, Kelly Turner, commander of the transports that landed the amphibious forces (Marines and Army), and Paul Tibbets, who flew the history-changing first atomic bombing mission. While these seemed disjointed choices at first, they proved to be quite smart. These are major players in the campaigns to capture Saipan and the Marianas, and with his intense examination of the Japanese will to resist, one is left with the obvious conclusion that an invasion of Japan proper would have been bloody beyond measure. Hornfischer does not proselytize, but lays out the facts of this critical period concisely and clearly. He does so with his usual engaging and readable narrative. Like his previous works, Hornfischer does not disappoint in this production that deals with the final throes of the Japanese attempt to rule the Pacific. Once again, I am reminded how grateful we all must be to the warriors of World War II.

Mr. Hornfischer has written another excellent book about the US Navy in the Pacific during World War II. His previous books that I have read have been good, and this one is no exception. The Fleet at Flood Tide refers to the period of 1944-1945 when the Allies were engaging in total war as the subtitle of the book puts it. This was the most important campaign of the war in the Pacific, one that finally opened the door to carrying the fight all the way to the Japanese homeland. Mr. Hornfischer does an excellent job of describing the emergence of the US forces and how they were utilized in the march through the Pacific islands. The Marianas, Saipan, Guam, several others - they are all in here and are covered in great detail. The battles are described, and the commanders are made alive to the readers. If you are a military history buff, then The Fleet at Flood Tide is one you don't want to miss.

The decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima may have been the single most momentous and complex decision made in the history of American warfare. As thousands of scientists and engineers worked in secrecy to overcome the incredible difficulties involved in constructing the super weapon, they were racing against the clock. The assumption was that excellent German scientists and engineers - who after all, were the first to split the atom - were working with equal diligence to overcome the same difficulties. It was Germany that was the intended target of the Manhattan Project: at least for most of the allied scientists it was. However, when Germany surrendered and it was obvious that their atomic program had never really jelled, many of the Project's scientists felt that without their intended target, the program no longer had a purpose. America's military and political leaders had a different agenda. The war in the Pacific in that final year of 1944-45 was fought with hellish violence, with many American and Japanese casualties. With Japanese soldiers willing to use suicidal methods of attack and civilians to utilize suicidal defensive measures, military and political decision-makers felt that an island by island assault on the Japanese homeland, culminating in a massive, final year-long armageddon involving millions of invading American soldiers simply was indefensible. If it ever came out that America possessed a super weapon capable of ending the war in days while a theoretical invasion might cost as many as a million American lives, the parents and loved-ones of those soldiers would have swarmed Washington and hung the decision-makers. This opinion was voiced by President Truman and seconded by his military advisers and even by great scientists still working in secret like John Archibald Wheeler. Wheeler's brother Joe, fighting in Italy, sent him a postcard with a simple message: "Hurry up". But it was already too late: Joe was killed in October 1944. The decision to drop the bomb was not without some controversy but events in that fateful final year of the war made it nearly inevitable. *The Fleet at Flood Tide: America at Total War in the Pacific, 1944-1945* tells this riveting, wrenching story brilliantly. Author James D. Hornfischer writes simple, graceful prose that outlines these great events and the major players involved. These include Paul Tibbets, who flew the Enola Gay to Hiroshima; Raymond Spruance, the brilliant, determined commander of the Fifth Fleet; Kelly Turner, whose amphibious forces delivered colorful Marine General "Howlin' Mad" Smith's troops to the crucial Mariana Islands of Saipan and Tinian and Draper Kauffman, founder of the unit that predated today's Navy SEALs. The confluence of the greatest engineering feat in human history - the building of the atomic bomb - with the culmination of the greatest war in human history were events of truly epic magnitude. Hornfischer is restrained in language but prolific in the amount of information he conveys to the reader. He tells the story with clarity and implicit

compassion for American forces and Japanese soldiers and civilians. This is a superbly written account of what is perhaps the single most important year in American history after 1776 and 1861. Strongly recommended for those who wish to know the full story of the events that created the modern world.

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