

U.S. GOVERNMENT IGNORES TELEGRAM FROM JAPANESE GOVERNMENT PROTESTING ATOMIC BOMB ATTACK

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On August 6, 1945, American aircraft dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. After reviewing Truman's statement and determining the nature and extent of casualties and damage, the Japanese government drafted a protest in the strongest language. The protest was wired to the U.S. government via neutral Switzerland on August 10, and received on the following day. Caught in a vulnerable position, the U.S. government allowed the telegram to languish. Consequently, when the secretaries of state, the Army and the Navy met on September 24, they decided to issue no response whatever to the telegram.

Here is the text of the protest in its entirety.

Protest against the Attack of a New-Type Bomb by American Airplane

On the 6th of this month, an airplane of the United States dropped a new-type bomb on the urban district of the city of Hiroshima, and it killed and wounded a large number of the citizens and destroyed the bulk of the city. The city of Hiroshima is an ordinary local city which is not provided with any military defensive preparations or establishments, and the whole city has not a character of a military objective. In the statement on the aerial bombardment in this case, the United States President "Truman" asserts that they will destroy docks, factories and transport facilities.

However, since the bomb in this case, dropped by a parachute, explodes in the air and extends the destructive effect to quite a wide sphere, it is clear to be quite impossible in technique to limit the effect of attack thereby to such specific objectives as mentioned above; and the above efficiency of the bomb in this case is already known to the United States. In the light of the actual state of damage, the damaged district covers a wide area, and those who were in the district were all killed indiscriminately by bomb-shell blast and radiant heat without distinction of combatant or non-combatant or of age or sex. The damaged sphere is general and immense, and judging from the individual state of injury, the bomb in this case should be said to be the most cruel one that ever existed.

It is a fundamental principle of international law in time of war that a belligerent has not an unlimited right in choosing the means of injuring the enemy, and should not use such weapons, projectiles, and other material as cause unnecessary pain; and these are each expressly stipulated in the annex of the Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and articles 22 and 23(e) of the Regulations respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land. Since the beginning of the present World War, the Government of the United States has declared repeatedly that the use of poison or other inhumane methods of warfare has been regarded as illegal by the public opinion in civilized countries, and that the United States would not use these methods of warfare unless the other countries used these first.

However, the bomb in this case, which the United States used this time, exceeds by far the

indiscriminate and cruel character of efficiency, the poison and other weapons the use of which has been prohibited hitherto because of such an efficiency. Disregarding a fundamental principle of international law and humanity, the United States has already made indiscriminate aerial bombardments on cities of the Empire in very wide areas, and it has already killed and injured a large number of old people, children, and women and collapsed or burned down shrines, temples, schools, hospital and ordinary private houses.

Also, the United States has used the new bomb in this case which has indiscriminate and cruel character beyond comparison with all weapons and projectile of the past. This is a new offence against the civilization of mankind. The Imperial Government impeaches the Government of the United States in its own name and the name of all mankind and of civilization, and demands strongly that the Government of the United States give up the use of such an inhumane weapon instantly.

The arguments presented here are sound and brook no opposition. The U.S. government had no choice but to ignore the protest.

Some argue that although atomic bombs are indeed weapons of the utmost cruelty, such weapons brought the war to an early end and saved a great many American lives (as many as a million such lives, according to one of the more ridiculous estimates). However, the protest itself shatters this type of "reasoning." When weapons of the utmost cruelty, like poison gas, are used, the purpose is always to end a conflict quickly and to minimize casualties on the side of the user. But international law prohibits the use of such weapons, and the desire to end a war expeditiously does not justify the violation of international law.

Obviously unfamiliar with the principles of international law, former Defense Minister Kyuma Fumio once stated that the U.S. was forced to drop the atomic bombs, a comment that was singularly inappropriate. In the first place, international law sets the standards for actions taken by nations to defend themselves in wartime. A just defense is not possible without a thorough understanding of international law. Second, we find it shameful that a minister of state entrusted with the defense of our nation was ignorant of an exceedingly important historical fact, namely that the Japanese government issued a formal protest to the U.S. about atomic bombs. Third, the Vatican criticized the new weapon as inhumane in the August 7, 1945 edition of *Osservatore Romano*, calling it an "instrument of destruction." We must remember that the atomic bomb attacks were criticized immediately after the attacks, and from every corner of the globe. There is no justification for the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nor will there ever be.