# General Information

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# Description

This Universal Newsreel reports the preparations made for the historic Atom bomb tests in the Pacific Ocean.

# Keywords


# Citation

MLA

Atom Bomb Testing Begins on Bikini Atoll

ED HERLIHY: The atomic bomb fleet rendezvous for A-Day. Aboard the flagship Mount McKinley, Commander of Joint Army-Navy Task Force One, Admiral William H. Blandy, plans final details. The decks of the 73 test ships anchored in Bikini Lagoon are scenes of feverish activity, as scientist plot experimental programs designed to furnish data on radioactive rays, flash burns and blast effects of the mighty atom bomb. Animals of many kinds are shipped aboard the target vessels to serve as proxies for human crews in man’s endeavor to discover measures to counteract the deadly results of nuclear fission. A sheep looses his fleecy coat in the interest of science. Special ointments are applied to determine their protective qualities. Other parts of the exposed area are being left bare to the atom blast. Hundreds of samples of pigments, metals and fabrics are placed aboard the test ships to reveal to the evaluation board and Manhattan district engineers the extent of atomic destruction.

All types of materials undergo the smashing blow of the deadly plutonium weapon. Engineers make a trial run with instruments to record the terrific heat spawned by the blast. Thousands of specially designed scientific instruments are installed to record the historic explosion, and weather data is carefully compiled and eagerly studied for the coming-up A-Day. The crews of the target vessels abandon ship with their gear. The men are checked and double-checked to make sure that no one remains aboard. Originally there were 35,000 crewmembers on all the ships. It’s the end of months of preparation on the Atoll fleet. The last man to leave is captain L.H. Bibby who remains to make sure every man is off before leaving himself. As he does the striped all clear signal flies at the yardarm. The Bikini fleet is ready for the hour of sacrifice. On Kwajalein, ground crews put the finishing touches on the air armada that will take part in the tests to come. The lethal A-bomb is wheeled, carefully screened toward the B-29 that is to carry it to Bikini.

With highest precautions and secrecy it is loaded aboard, hidden from all but a select few. Armed guards prevent any approach to the plane. Majors Wood and Swancutt, bombardier and pilot respectively, talk over the history-making mission of ‘Dave’s Dream’. As the moment of take-off approaches, the handpicked crews don chutes. Operation Crossroads has begun; Secretary Forrestal tensely watches the
atom plane’s approach to Bikini and the fateful seventy million dollar test. On this bombardier rests, in large degree, success or failure. Crewmembers are tense; signals start; every eye in the observation fleet is trained on ‘Dave’s Dream’. The bombardier’s supreme test is at hand as the bomb bay doors open. To protect their eyes against the flash, which blotted out the morning sun, men are adequately prepared as H-hour approaches. Even with these goggles they saw a stab of light as brilliant as lightning, while those without goggles turned their backs and shielded their eyes with their arms.

The bomb is away; it’s falling; the seconds tick away. Up, up seven miles into the sky the awe-inspiring cloud billows and surges, blotting out the destruction below. There is no earthquake, no tidal wave or other catastrophe to justify the fears of some. And while some observers felt that the bikini bomb was less powerful than its predecessors, many feel that the lessons learned here today will mean a reshuffling of man’s strategy of national defense. The final verdict remains shrouded in military secrecy. Whatever the verdict, Operation Crossroads is the motion picture spectacle of all time. And now the salvage fleet steams towards Bikini Lagoon, and every precaution is taken to safeguard men on board against dangerous radioactive forces. Of the 73-ship flotilla, five were sunk. The carrier Independence, closest to the blast center, was badly damaged. Many other target-vessels were severely damaged, and from the destruction above decks few men could have withstood the blast.