**World War II and the Atomic Bomb**

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Even before World War II began, scientists fleeing from Nazi Germany had warned U.S. officials the Germans were working on developing a huge new bomb that would be triggered through an atomic reaction. The U.S. government then began pouring what would amount to more than $2 billion into what would be called the “Manhattan Project.” It was name as such because it started in New York.

Work continued at top-secret bases in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and Los Alamos, New Mexico, under the direction of physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer. The project was so hush-hush that Vice President Harry Truman wasn’t told of it until he assumed the presidency after FDR’s death. On July 16, 1945, the world’s first atomic bomb was detonated at a testing ground in New Mexico.

On July 26, 1945, Allied leaders delivered a surrender ultimatum to Japan, but it was rejected by that country’s military leaders. Then on August 6, 1945, a single B-29 bomber nicknamed “Enola Gay” dropped an atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima. The bomb killed 75,000 people and injured another 100,000 in the city of 340,000. Thousands more eventually died from the radiation.

Debate has raged ever since as to whether Japan would have surrendered if the bomb had not been dropped. But at the time, there was little hesitation about its use on the part of the man who made the decision, President Truman. “I regarded the bomb as a military weapon,” he said later, “and never had any doubt that it should be used.”

Japan was stunned by the destruction of the Hiroshima bomb, but its leaders hesitated in surrendering. Three days later, another A-bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. The next day, Japan surrendered. The final ceremony took place on September 2, aboard the *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.

World War II, the bloodiest and most devastating war in human history, was over.

About 30 million civilians and military personnel around the world had been killed. American losses, compared to the other major combatant countries, had been light: About 300,000 were killed and another 750,000 were injured or wounded.

But while the war was over, a new age, that included the threat of even more horrible wars, was just beginning. The dropping of the Atomic bomb forever changed how warfare would be conducted.

**Questions:**

1. What was the nuclear development project called?
2. Why would nuclear development be “hush-hush”?
3. What two cities were bombed? Why?
4. How does nuclear technology change warfare? What’s MAD?
5. In America, who controls their nuclear weapons?