

Arguments for Dropping the Bomb

Historians have attempted to reconstruct the various arguments used by President Truman and his advisors in the months leading up to the dropping of bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Below is a summary of the main points.

Argument	Major Points
<i>War's momentum</i>	Destruction of German and Japanese cities had already been adopted and acceptable Allied policy. The use of a more destructive weapon, the atomic bomb, seemed an extension of the fire-bombing of cities like Dresden and Tokyo rather than the beginning of a new era of mass destruction.
<i>Military necessity</i>	An invasion of Japan planned for later 1945 and 1946 might result in as many as one million American casualties. Japanese defenders were expected to put up the type of suicidal resistance that had resulted in mass killings on both sides at Okinawa (12,520 American and 110,000 Japanese deaths) and led to kamikaze plane attacks. Some historians discount this reasoning, contending that the Japanese military had lost its hold on the Japanese population and that resistance would have been much lighter than feared.
<i>Congressional politics</i>	Pres. Roosevelt had authorized the expense of billions of dollars on the Manhattan Project without notifying Congress. Supporters may have felt that using the weapons successfully would prove to be the only acceptable defense when the secret was exposed.
<i>Atomic diplomacy</i>	Viewing the Soviet Union as the ultimate audience for the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has long been proposed as a rationale for Truman's decision. Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe and Asia was certainly a worry for the American leadership and the horrific impact of the bomb might slow Soviet aggression.