

The Battle of Okinawa was the last major battle of World War II in the Pacific theater. Allied forces in the European theater were only weeks away from victory with Germany committing unconditional surrender. However, war in the Pacific theater was still raging. The USS Emmons was a part of the 5th Fleet, a group of ships designated to attack Okinawa. Geographically, Okinawa Island was a crucial operating point for mainland Japan. If the Allied forces could take the island, they would be able to launch air raids and have an advantage over mainland Japan. The USS Emmons was sent out prior to the scheduled attack as part of a minesweeping squad. Their mission was to clear the waters of explosive hazards enabling the other ships to strike Okinawa without much interference. After little Japanese contact over several days the USS Emmons was put on early alert/radar duty, however, their critical minesweeping role, putting both ship and crew in harm's way, ensured ultimate success for the ensuing battle.

The Battle of Okinawa itself was a critical victory for the Allied forces because it established a position of power over Japan. Okinawa provided the Allies a strategic foothold close to mainland Japan giving the Allies immediate access to troops and artillery directly in Japanese territory. It is sometimes argued that this battle was pointless because the atomic bomb was dropped very soon after, ending the war in the Pacific. I would disagree in that every battle has a purpose, win or lose. Each becomes a stepping stone to the next strategic action. Japan was prepared to fight to the very end – sacrificing thousands along the way. After seeing the loss of American lives in this battle, Truman realized that dropping the bomb would provide an immediate solution ending further American lives lost and would guarantee victory. Those lives previously lost would not be in vain. Japan's "last man standing" strategy was shut down and Japan learned the Allies

would go to great measures to avoid further casualties. Had this battle not happened, Truman may have never concluded the need to drop the atomic bomb on Japan. Most Americans, and myself personally, can take many actions that make sure the sacrifices of our military men and women are not in vain. Now more than ever patriotism is the biggest action that anyone can take because it means supporting the country that our brothers and sisters died for – and continue to die for every day. During these trying times, showing support towards the ideologies of this country and what it was founded on is the most important thing that can be done because that is what the sailors of the USS Emmons and the soldiers of WWII fought for, our right to freedom.