

SHEET A: Kuribayashi's mission and decision

“I am almost 99% sure that I can't come back home. I have the responsibility to stop the US forces here. This is a very important mission for me.”

These words were written by Lieutenant General Tadamichi Kuribayashi, who led the Japanese at the battle of Iwoto. He described in a letter that he couldn't make it out alive from the island.

After he graduated from the Army War College, Kuribayashi studied abroad in the US. While he was studying hard there, he traveled a lot and experienced many things. Seeing the US military strength and economic strength, he knew that it was impossible for Japan to beat America. Even though he thought so, his family lived in the mainland of Japan. Moreover, he was aware there were unarmed citizens there. He said in the letter,

“If the US defeats us in Iwoto, the Japanese mainland will be destroyed in the air raids every night. So our mission is important.”

The number of American soldiers was about three times more than that of Japan and it was expected that Japan would lose within 5 days. Therefore, he made his mission to delay US attacks on the Japanese mainland for as long as possible. For this reason, he decided to fight a guerrilla war against the US forces. Kuribayashi and his soldiers dug underground shelters so that they could be protected from massive bomb attacks from the US. Under these harsh condition, Kuribayashi made the Courageous Battle Promise for his soldiers which meant that every Japanese soldier had to defeat as many American soldiers as they could. He shared vegetables and tobacco that he could get with the other soldiers and slept and worked with them all the time. Even though he could have moved to a safer island and take charge of the battle there, he never did that. This is because he decided to end his life on Iwoto with his soldiers and wanted to prolong the war and delay Japan's defeat on Iwoto for his family and Japanese citizens.

TASK:

✚ What was Kuribayashi's mission?

✚ What was his decision about the mission on Iwoto?