



# **Kamikazes, Corsairs, and Picket Ships: Okinawa, 1945**

*Robin L. Rielly*

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“To any who want to learn more about the age of the Kamikaze at Okinawa, this book is to be desired. For the serious historian who wants a “blow by blow” coverage of the US defense against the Japanese airpower portion of the battle for Okinawa, it is a must. And for the casual reader...you’ll gain insight even if you just peruse this book.” —Airborne Quarterly

“. . . crisp, engrossing narrative . . . puts the reader right onto the blazing decks and into the cockpits of the attackers and defenders during one of the most hard-fought engagements of the entire war.”—World War II History

This is the previously untold story of one of the most ferocious and prolonged air/naval battles in history: the battle at the radar picket stations during the American assault on Okinawa in the spring of 1945. The US fleet and its accompanying airpower that took station off Okinawa was of gigantic proportions, such that the Japanese could only rely on suicide attacks to inflict critical damage. While losses in the main fleet, including damage to ships such as the Enterprise and Intrepid, have been well covered, less known is the terrific battle waged on the radar picket line, the fleet’s outer defense against Japanese marauders. Of the 206 ships that served on radar picket duty, nearly 30 percent were sunk or damaged by Japanese air attacks, making theirs the most hazardous naval surface duty in World War II. The great losses were largely due to the relentless nature of the kamikaze attacks, but also the improper use of support gunboats, failure to establish land-based radar at the earliest possible time, the assignment of ships ill-equipped for picket duty, and, as time went on, crew fatigue. The nature of the US air cover is also described in full, as squadrons dashed from their carriers and land bases to intercept the Japanese swarms, resulting in constant melees over the fleet. Toward the end of the battle, the radar picket ships became the prime kamikaze targets as Japanese pilots despaired of getting through the “big blue blanket” of American fighter planes to reach larger prey. Robin L. Rielly has written an engrossing narrative of air/naval combat, combining firsthand action with astute tactical and strategic analysis.

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