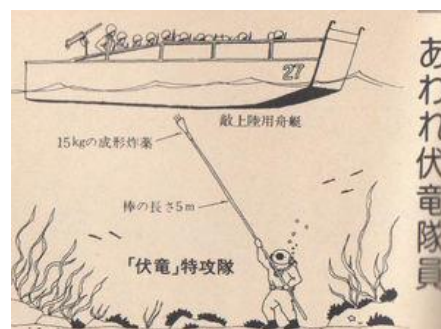


# SECRETS & SPIES RESEARCH DOSSIER

## *Fukuryu*: Suicide Divers for Attacking Enemy Ships

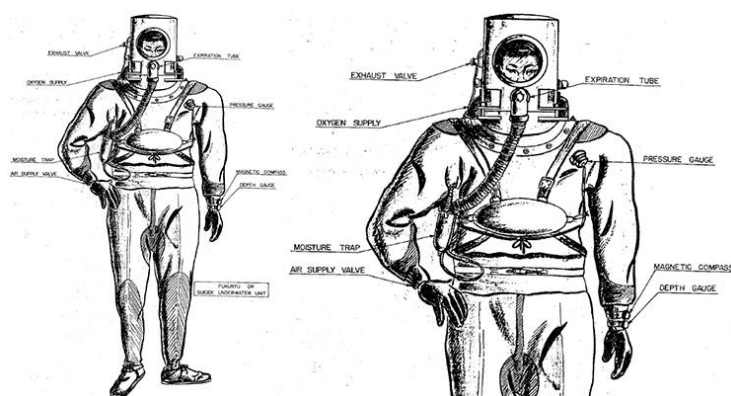
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*Fukuryu* was a strategy of the Japanese Imperial Navy to use suicide divers in diving suits in the sea, with bombs attached to the tips of long bamboo spears. *Fukuryu* means “hidden dragon” in Japanese. When an enemy ship approached, a hidden waiting diver would strike the bomb on the bottom of the ship to sink the enemy. This strategy was developed to slow down the anticipated sea invasion of the main Japanese islands by the Allied forces.



A *fukuryu* attack (Naver)

*Fukuryu* were not actually used in combat, but there were many victims in the training for missions due to many unsolved problems with breathing. There are three main causes for these problems. The first one involved faulty or incorrect breathing. The breathing mechanism of the diving suit involved filtering out exhaled breath by caustic soda while using breathable



Components of a *fukuryu* diving suit (Facts)

oxygen. So a diver must breathe in from the nose and exhale from the mouth. But if he mistook this process, he would lost his consciousness by breathing too much

carbon monoxide. However, to breathe following the process is more difficult than we think.

The *fukuryu* had to think about a lot of things related to moving their bodies underwater. So even if they trained a lot and lot, mastering the process was quite difficult. The second problem was damages from caustic soda, which mixed with sea water and boiled, and flowed back to the diver who swallowed it, causing burns. And third, a lack of oxygen, naturally caused problems.

We think *Fukuryu* was an impossible mission now because divers were not able to know how long they had to stay in the sea or where the enemy's ship would come. Also, they could not communicate well with signals from land. The diving equipment weighed about 68 kilograms, making movement very difficult. At the bottom of the sea floor, a diver's thoughts are dulled by the influence of atmospheric pressure. When diving to the sea floor a diver uses an exhaust valve, but if there is a lot of exhaust, it self-destructed when a diver descended suddenly.

An important consideration for recruiting *fukuryu* was whether a person could stand loneliness. In screening, many eldest sons were selected.

Diving as a *fukuryu* was a fight against loneliness, especially since it meant continuously waiting for enemy landing ships before a violent, self-inflicted death.



*Fukuryu* squad (Naver)

When a *fukuryu* diver was not able to make it, they were expected to swim behind the enemy in land and still carry out a suicide attack. Supposing this, the *fukuryu* focused on training of swimming technique, building up stamina, and training for mental strength. According to



Fukuryu diver (Naver)

one diver, who wrote about his experience as a *fukuryu*, the divers themselves had many doubts about their fate: “Since I have heard the rumor that the stick mine can destroy anything inside of a radius of 50, I feel scared of we are going to do suddenly. I’m a member of suicide attack unit, I had a firm resolve that I may die by my own mine. But I didn’t have a firm resolve that I may die by my companion’s mine. I have suffered from trouble that I don’t want to seem as recreant from others for a few days” (Kadona). According to the diver, the end of the war came during training of *fukuryu*. The person concerned said there were one to two “shipwrecked” people every day.

*Fukuryu* was a suicide diversion. It means that they had to throw away their lives for the state. We think it was not right. In that era, the government thought that the lives of young men should be used in any way they saw fit. Because of this thinking, there were many victims. Life cannot be replaced with anything and therefore should not be thrown away.

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