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Nav. No. 29

PLACE: TOKYO  
DATE: 10 October 1945.

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: PEARL HARBOR - Battle of PHILIPPINE SEA - Battle for LEYTE  
GULF.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Captain FUCHIDA, Mitsuo I.J.N.

Captain FUCHIDA has been a Naval Aviator since 1928. In August 1941 he went to the AKAGI as Air Group Commander, and subsequently led the attacks on PEARL HARBOR, DARWIN, and CEYLON. After duty as an instructor in the Naval Staff College, he became Senior Staff Officer of the First Air Fleet, in which capacity he was in the MARIANAS from September 1943. In April 1944 he became Air Staff Officer to CinC Combined Fleet and held that post for the duration of the war.

Where interviewed: MELJI Building.

Interrogator: Lieut. Comdr. James A. FIELD, Jr., USNR.

Interpreter: Lieut. Comdr. D. BARTLETT, USNR.

Allied Officers Present: Commander T.H. MOORER, USN.

SUMMARY:

Captain FUCHIDA discusses the attack on PEARL HARBOR, the planning for the defense of the MARIANAS in the spring of 1944, the planning for the defense of the PHILIPPINES in the summer of that year, and the reasons for the Japanese failure in these operations.

TRANSCRIPT

- Q. Captain FUCHIDA, how long have you been in aviation?  
A. My first duty as an aircraft pilot was at KASUMIGAURA in 1928 where I was a pilot under instruction. I was an attack bomber pilot on KAGA back in 1931, and from August 1941 I was on AKAGI as Air Group Commander.
- Q. Did you participate in the attack on PEARL HARBOR?  
A. Yes, I was in that attack. I was in a 97 Type horizontal-bomber as observer. I was senior officer of the Attack Group.
- Q. Were you with the horizontal-bombers that attacked the ARIZONA?  
A. The last ship in line? Yes, I led that flight.
- Q. Describe the approach to PEARL HARBOR?  
A. The carriers were in two columns of three with 10 kilometers between ships. There were about four cruisers, two battleships, and about 17 destroyers screening outside the entire formation.
- Q. What route did the planes take that attacked PEARL HARBOR? Did they all cross over the island or did some come around?  
A. (See Annex A)
- Q. Were there the same number of planes in the two waves?  
A. First one about 220, second wave about 180.
- Q. How were the 400 planes divided, as between types?  
A. In the first attack, 40 torpedo planes, 60 horizontal bombers, and 80 fighters; in the second attack, 40 horizontal bombers, 60 dive bombers, and 80 fighters.
- Q. Were targets assigned by location or by the type of ship?  
A. We did not know exactly where specific ships were when we came in. First in importance were aircraft carriers, second battleships; but we did not know their exact location. We knew they were in FORD ISLAND Passage, but did not know where. There was a priority on targets. I knew that there would be planes, but did not know they would be as closely packed as at WHEELER.
- Q. Did you have any special torpedoes for this operation?  
A. Nothing special but vanes in the torpedoes to cut the depth of original sounding.
- Q. How many planes did you lose total?  
A. 30.
- Q. How many did you expect to lose?  
A. About half, and thought we would lose half our ships. In order to keep down these losses a principal object was to destroy your planes.
- Q. Why, if it was so successful, didn't they repeat the attack?  
A. We did not realize we had destroyed planes to such an extent. We knew we had done in four battleships, but did not know the extent of damage to AMERICAN planes, and of course the carriers were not there. We figured if we could sink four battleships, then it was a success. About three days afterwards when the intelligence was gathered, it was realized what had been done; but we thought that you would be re-supplied with planes from the other islands in the HAWAIIAN Group, so it wouldn't pay to return.

Q. Did you have a specially built plane just for photographing?

A. We used a training plane for that.

Q. What did you do after PEARL HARBOR?

A. In February or March, I went to RAUVAL on the AKAGI and went on the attack on PORT DARWIN, after that CEYLON and TRINCOMALEE, after that the MIDWAY action.

Q. What was the size of the force that attacked DARWIN?

A. The same force and formation as at MIDWAY, except that only four carriers were present.

Q. How many strikes did you make on DARWIN?

A. One.

Q. What was the total number of planes used, about 200?

A. 290.

Q. Did you encounter any patrol planes between ships and DARWIN?

A. Yes.

Q. When were you told they were going to attack PEARL HARBOR?

A. We left on the 26th of November from CHISHIMA. I expected that we would be going to SINGAPORE; some thought we were going home at first. On the 3rd we were told certainly that we were to bomb PEARL HARBOR but did not know the date. The plan was to return from PEARL south of MIDWAY on the way, but that plan was changed. Two carriers went down to WAKE and 4 of them went back to the EMPIRE. If the weather had been good, we would have attacked MIDWAY. One plan was to go back to the MARSHALLS.

Q. Why didn't you go to the MARSHALLS?

A. That was the original plan but it was changed. There were three alternative plans. First plan to hit MIDWAY, second plan to hit WAKE, third plan to retire to the MARSHALLS. (See Annex B)

Q. Were the midget submarines of any assistance to supplying intelligence to the force?

A. Not worth a damn.

Q. You were at the Battle of MIDWAY. Were you still flying at MIDWAY?

A. I got appendicitis on the way to MIDWAY and was thus prevented from flying. I was in the sick bay aboard ship at MIDWAY. The AKAGI received damage and went down. Then I went back to YOKOSUKA and entered the hospital there. I was in the hospital at YOKOSUKA 4 months until September.

Q. What was your next active duty?

A. In the Staff of the First Air Fleet (May 1943), and then in September of 1943, I went to TINIAN and SAIPAN, I was on the staff. I was Flight Officer.

Q. How long were you in the MARIANAS?

A. Until the end of April. At PALAU at that time the Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet died; in fact at that time, the entire staff of the Combined Fleet perished. Therefore I went as Air Staff Officer to the Combined Fleet Staff.

Q. When was the Combined Fleet Staff assembled?

A. After the staff was killed on the 31st of March, the new staff was organized about the 20th of April.

Transcript on (Captain Mitsua FUCHIDA, IJN) -----

Q. Admiral TOYODA was the new Cinc Combined Fleet?

A. Yes.

Q. Where were his Headquarters?

A. In TOKYO BAY, at YOKOSUKA; the cruiser OYODO was his flagship but in September of last year (1944) he moved to the Staff College at HIYOSHI and thereafter remained ashore.

Q. We would like to talk about planning in the spring and summer of 1944. Was it expected in April or May when you first joined the Staff of the Combined Fleet that the next UNITED STATES move would be the MARIANAS?

A. We thought that you were going into the MARIANAS.

Q. Had you planned to commit the Fleet to the defense of the MARIANAS?

A. Yes, if your Task Force approached PALAU, our Fleet being at SINGAPORE intended to sortie through the PHILIPPINES to meet you. Our land-based Air Force was in the MARIANAS and we intended that our land-based MARIANAS Air Force should also intercept your Task Force as it moved West. If you approached the MARIANAS, our first plan had been to move the Combined Fleet from OKINAWA on to the MARIANAS to prevent the operation of your fleet in the MARIANAS, and at that time to use our land-based planes in conjunction with the Combined Fleet from OKINAWA to prevent a landing in the MARIANAS. There were two obstacles to that plan; one was the threat of attack from CHINA-based planes, the other was an insufficiency of fuel supply in OKINAWA to mount the MARIANAS Operation.

Q. You are speaking of the fleet of ships, not the Air Fleet?

A. That is the Combined Fleet.

Q. At the time of our attack on the MARIANAS was the Combined Fleet based at LINGGA?

A. Originally it was at LINGGA, however we did not have sufficient intelligence on your operation. Having insufficient intelligence of your operations they went from LINGGA to TAWI TAWI to be near enough to operate close to the scene of your operations.

Q. Did you expect an attack in the South Pacific around NEW GUINEA at this time?

A. We had an idea you were going to attack WEWAK. We got intelligence from RABAU to that effect, and because of this intelligence we moved to TAWI TAWI.

Q. Do you remember if the intelligence from RABAU was based on radio interceptions or ship sightings, or what?

A. It came from radio intelligence and from observation of UNITED STATES planes, so we assumed when you did not land at WEWAK that there would be direct engagement south of PALAU or northwest of PALAU.

Q. When you knew we were committed to the MARIANAS, what force did you think we had present?

A. We thought you had four groups. We didn't know names or classes but figured you had four groups.

Q. Approximately how many carriers to a group?

A. Five to a group. We thought you had about 15.

Q. How many carriers did you have in that operation?

A. About 8.

Q. When we landed in the MARIANAS, were your carriers all in the southern regions at SINGAPORE or TAWI TAWI?

A. They were at TAWI TAWI at that time.

Q. Had a plan of fleet action been drawn up in advance in the event we landed in the MARIANAS to counter our operation?

Was a specific Operation Plan ready for this contingency?

A. There was a specific plan for the attack.

Q. Was it drawn up by Admiral TOYODA?

A. That was Admiral TOYODA'S responsibility. There were different commanders. You see, Admiral OZAWA had command of the Carrier Forces and Vice Admiral KAKUTA, at TINIAN, commanded the land-based planes. There were no Army planes involved.

Q. Admiral TOYODA'S plan covered the coordination of both land and fleet based planes, is that right?

A. Yes, the coordination was Admiral TOYODA'S.

Q. Was Admiral OZAWA consulted regarding this operation plan?

A. Yes, that is, the staffs had a conference at TINIAN, all three of them, from the 8th to the 11th of May.

Q. Did the plan envisage a fleet carrier action between the two fleets; in other words were they prepared to take on our fleet with their fleet?

A. Yes, the second plan, which was put into action, was that they should destroy your Task Force. They weren't to bother with the MARIANAS, just destroy the Fleet.

Q. What was the state of training of the carrier air groups at that time?

A. It was my task to take care of the training of the land-based group up to April before I went back to the TOKYO area. There were about 800 planes. They had been training about ten months in the EMPIRE and two months in the MARIANAS area. There was insufficient time for adequate training for the carrier-based planes, they had only about a month after they got intelligence from RABAU.

Q. Were the carrier pilots able to land aboard?

A. They could not at night. They could land and take off all right by day, but beyond that it was not what I would call adequate training.

Q. Was it part of the original plan of the second operation to fly the carrier pilots to the fields in the MARIANAS after attacking?

A. The original plan was to return to the ships within 300 mile radius, but as the radius became 400 miles they shifted to the plan of landing at bases in the MARIANAS.

Q. Why didn't they close to less than 400 miles from our fleet?

A. They lost time because they were under your submarine attack. That was an improvisation caused by the submarine attack.

Q. Was that a decision of Admiral OZAWA?

A. It was; that was Admiral OZAWA'S mistake that the submarines were allowed to delay the operation.

Q. Did they have adequate destroyers to screen their heavy ships?

A. They had thirty.

Q. Do you think that was enough?

A. Three groups, I think it is a little short of what they

should have had.

Q. What damage did you think you had inflicted on our fleet?

A. We thought that two of your carriers had received some small damage.

Q. How many carrier planes did you lose?

A. 280

Q. How long did you expect it to take to replace those 280?

A. About five months.

Q. Where did your fleet retire after the MARIANAS?

A. All the carriers and other ships that had received damage went back to the EMPIRE, the rest all went to LINGGA, and following these two retirements, the able ships and the repaired ships which had gone to the EMPIRE were obliged to proceed to LINGGA for fueling. All, that is, except the carriers who remained because pilots needed training in the EMPIRE.

Q. Was there a serious fuel shortage in the EMPIRE?

A. Yes.

Q. Why did you not fight when we invaded PALAU? Was it because of the loss of the Carrier Air Corps?

A. We abandoned the PALAUS because we did not have carrier air strength and planned to make the PHILIPPINES the next defensive point. The situation forced us to abandon both PALAU and HALMAHERA and areas of past operations for the defense of the PHILIPPINES.

Q. Had we attacked PALAU before we attacked the MARIANAS, however, would you have fought for it?

A. Yes we would have.

Q. Now returning to the plan for the defense of the PHILIPPINES, were you also prepared to fight for FORMOSA, OKINAWA and IWO JIMA?

A. The first plan was for the defense of the PHILIPPINES. We did not include from OKINAWA to IWO JIMA in this defense.

Q. However, had we attacked IWO before the PHILIPPINES would you have defended IWO JIMA?

A. Four plans were made for the defense: first of the PHILIPPINES, second for FORMOSA and the NANSEI SHOTO, third of HONSHU-KYUSHU and the BONINS, and fourth of HOKKAIDO. Now the numbering of these plans was not necessarily in order of expected events - they were either alternative or successive operations, but we rather thought that the order of events would follow the numbering of these plans.

Q. Therefore you expected our next move to be against the PHILIPPINES?

A. We thought you were going to land on the PHILIPPINES. If your Task Force attacked the mainland or FORMOSA we would come out and do battle; but we assumed there was to be a landing in the PHILIPPINES; therefore, that must be the main effort. The task of attacking your Task Force from either the EMPIRE or FORMOSA was assigned to both land-based Army and Navy planes. The Combined Fleet was assigned to prevent landing in the PHILIPPINES.

Q. This plan was made up by Admiral TOYOLA?

A. Yes.

Q. Was Admiral OZAWA consulted this time?

Transcript on (Captain Mitsuo FUCHIDA, I.J.N.) -----

A. The plan was made by the Combined General Staff; Admiral OZAWA was not in on the consultation.

Q. Is this what was known as the "SHO" Operation?

A. Yes.

Q. I would like to get a picture of the command set-up in this operation.

A. (See Annex C)

Q. What was the date of the combination of the 1st and 2nd Air Fleets in the PHILIPPINES?

A. The beginning of October.

Q. Was the Combined Air Fleet directly under Admiral TOYODA?

A. That is right.

Q. OZAWA had no control over it?

A. No, Admiral OZAWA was in charge of the Third Fleet which was the attack group; under him Admiral KURITA commanded the Second Fleet which was the support force of battleships and cruisers.

Q. Did Admiral KURITA control both the forces that came through SAN BERNARDINO STRAIT and the forces that came through SURIGAO STRAIT?

A. Both were under Admiral KURITA. Rear Admiral NISHIMURA was OTC of the Southern Force.

Q. How was the Army land-based air controlled?

A. This part of the defense of the PHILIPPINES was from General Headquarters in the EMPIRE through General TERAUCHI at SAIGON, through YAMASHITA, Commanding General in the PHILIPPINES, to the Army Air Chief in the PHILIPPINES.

Q. If Admiral KURITA wanted air cover, how did he request it?

A. If Vice Admiral KURITA required air cover he requested it of the Navy Air Chief in charge of Second and First Air Fleet.

Q. In other words, he could request it directly without going up and down the chain of commands?

A. There were orders from TOYODA to the land-based Navy Air Chief to give cover to KURITA, but if necessary Vice Admiral KURITA could communicate and make request directly of the land-based Naval Air Force. Admiral TOYODA and General TERAUCHI had arranged for Army air cover for KURITA where necessary, but KURITA could also directly request of the Army Air Chief if need arose.

Q. Did our carrier raids of early October on the RYUKYUS, FORMOSA and LUZON affect the plans for the defense of the PHILIPPINES?

A. No.

Q. The losses that we inflicted were not serious?

A. No, we were able gradually to re-supply enough to keep our original plan.

Q. Do you know roughly how many planes we destroyed in LUZON and FORMOSA?

A. Navy 300, Army 200, total 500.

Q. What damage did you estimate you had inflicted on our fleet off FORMOSA on 12 - 14 of October?

A. We thought we sank one aircraft carrier, and inflicted minor damage on two.

- Q. But the loss of 500 planes was overcome without too much trouble?  
A. Yes, we were gradually able to build up again by re-supply.
- Q. And 500 was in fact the total number destroyed?  
A. It is pretty close to the figure.
- Q. When was the fleet alerted or ordered out from these bases to defend the PHILIPPINES?  
A. I don't remember the date of either the alerting or the ordering out.
- Q. Do you know what information they acted upon? What intelligence?  
A. It was the landing on LEYTE which was sufficient reason to cause the action. There was a small island in the approach to LEYTE and there were watchers and from them the intelligence came on the landing.
- Q. You had no report from aircraft of our approaching forces?  
A. Two days before we did have airplane intelligence from DAVAO planes.
- Q. Had you expected our landing to be on LEYTE, MINDANAO or where?  
A. We thought originally it would be MINDANAO, then when we got that information from LEYTE we knew for the first time where it was to be.
- Q. Did you know who was in command of our Invasion Force?  
A. We did not know who was in charge. We thought Admiral HALSEY would be in charge of the fleet; we didn't know who would be in charge of the invasion.
- Q. Did you believe that Admiral HALSEY was under General MACARTHUR?  
A. We didn't think so. We thought there was an equal liaison between NIMITZ and MAC ARTHUR. We thought that HALSEY was not in charge of the attack force, just that he was in charge of the Naval Task Force; but we did not think that the landing operation was under HALSEY.
- Q. Under whom was the landing operation?  
A. We did know then but I don't remember.
- Q. Do you think it was under NIMITZ section or MAC ARTHUR'S section?  
A. We thought the landing operation was under NIMITZ.
- Q. What was the mission of the carrier force that you sent down from the EMPIRE?  
A. To attack the Task Force under HALSEY.
- Q. Were the carrier pilots sufficiently trained by this time?  
A. No, they were not. They were pilots of about 80 hours flight experience.
- Q. Was it planned to have the pilots land ashore after the attack?  
A. They were to land on the shore fields of LUZON.
- Q. And later return to the carriers the next day perhaps?  
A. No, they never intended to come back to the carriers.



Q. Once the carriers had launched their planes, what were they supposed to do, retire?

A. No. If the planes failed in their attack, they would land ashore and then join the land-based planes in carrying out suicide attacks. They could not have landed back aboard. The carriers were to remain and help to direct the land-based air attacks on the Task Force. Knowing they were defenseless, they were to stay and assist the attack on the Task Force by land-based planes.

Q. Specifically, how were they to help?

A. The carriers were to stay there as a decoy. They were to draw off HALSEY'S Task Force to the north even though defenseless under attack so that our own land-based planes could attack HALSEY, and also to draw him into range of FORMOSA land-based planes.

Q. What was the mission of Admiral KURITA'S Force?

A. It was to attack your transports.

Q. And the same for Admiral NISHIMURA?

A. Yes, we had also considered planning attack upon the Task Force, but they did not have that duty. Their mission was to attack only the transports. The Task Force was to be brought under attack by Admiral OZAWA and the land-based planes.

Q. Did Admiral OZAWA'S planes deliver an attack on the 24th?

A. Yes, they did deliver one on the Task Force on the 24th.

Q. Are you familiar with the details of the battle.

A. I don't know very much about the Central and Southern Forces. Admiral OZAWA'S Force came out from the INLAND SEA, sortied through BUNGO SUIDO, I think on the 21st, and went fairly directly down to the east of FORMOSA, made the attack and was sunk the next night or the next day.

Q. Was Admiral OZAWA sunk?

A. No.

Q. Was he in a carrier?

A. I think Admiral OZAWA was in ZUIKAKU, in any event he was in a carrier and was picked up by a destroyer when it was sunk.

Q. In your opinion where did the operation as a whole break down? How far did it progress satisfactorily?

A. When we lost land airplanes in the Task Force attack on FORMOSA. Somewhere around the 13th when so many land-based planes were lost in the action around FORMOSA, I think now that the whole plan was doomed then.

Q. That wasn't what you said awhile ago. You said the loss wasn't serious.

A. This action off FORMOSA ten days before is the action which cost the main action. It was lost when so many planes were lost in the FORMOSA action previously. It had originally been thought in the original plans that OZAWA and KURITA could take care of the Task Force and defeat it but had to change plans because of the loss of so many planes the ten days previous.

Q. How many planes did they lose?

A. 500

Q. You feel then, that the battle of the 24th and 25th was a vain effort from the start?

A. That is correct. I think the general action in the

Transcript on (Captain Mitsuo FUCHIDA, IJN.)

PHILIPPINES was doomed by the loss of 500 land-based planes ten days before. The reason for the OZAWA-KURITA sortie from their bases was that, should the PHILIPPINES be lost, the SINGAPORE area would be no longer tenable or useful; so knowing that the action was unreasonable, it was still undertaken.

Q. Were ISE and HYUGA with Admiral OZAWA'S Force?

A. No, they didn't come. The HYUGA and ISE with an escort of three destroyers left the EMPIRE and came south to BAKO with the intention of joining the PHILIPPINE action; but they were so short of fuel it was necessary to refuel at sea from tankers. Oil from tankers being insufficient they were unable to join the action. After the general action they proceeded to SINGAPORE where they fueled and went home again.

Q. Did you say the ISE and HYUGA were not part of the OZAWA Force?

A. No, they were not, and they came down through the PESCADORES. They were supposed to support the operation off FORMOSA, and they rounded the coast of FORMOSA and went to BAKO.

Q. Where they damaged in the action?

A. No.

Q. This supplying assignment, do you mean they were with the carriers, or a long way back?

A. 200 miles back. They could do about 18 knots and were about 200 miles behind.

Q. Was 200 miles the closest they were during the battle?

A. I am not certain what they did, I only know the plan. I can give more detail on that after talking with the right people.

Q. Once the Fleets had started out on this operation who coordinated their movements?

A. It was OZAWA'S duty to coordinate the three.

Q. Did Admiral KURITA'S Force receive instructions by radio from OZAWA?

A. At the start before OZAWA left the BUNGO SUILO everything was under his charge. Once he had sortied it was Admiral TOYODA, and OZAWA had nothing more to do with it. KURITA'S retreat was on orders from TOYODA.

Q. After the LEYTE Battle what plans did you have for further defense of the PHILIPPINES, particularly LUZON?

A. We abandoned the SHO Plans; after that it was TEN Operations; and OKINAWA, IWO JIMA and FORMOSA were the basis of defense. We thought you would come first to OKINAWA, second to South CHINA.

Q. Then the defense of LUZON in November and December was not a very serious matter?

A. The defense of LUZON in November and December of 1944 was no longer a great moment. We had no power.

Q. Did you attempt to reinforce the LUZON land-based aircraft, or didn't you bother?

A. Hardly any. We were waiting in OKINAWA and the EMPIRE did hardly any reinforcing of LUZON aircraft. In the meantime the IWO JIMA action had absorbed our interest. One group only went to IWO JIMA.

Q. Then it is your opinion that the loss of the PHILIPPINES was due to the destruction of aircraft at FORMOSA?

A. In the main that is my opinion.

Q. Did you feel that the decrease of their air power was caused by attacks from our planes or due to a shortage of fuel?

A. Mainly it was Task Force attacks, the fuel problem principally affected training but the air power was diminished mostly by your Carrier Task Force attacks.

Q. Did the Carrier Task Force destroy planes faster than they could build them?

A. It was about equal, plane for plane, the production and destruction; but they couldn't keep ahead, it was just about plane for plane.

Q. You felt that the Carrier Task Forces were the main agency rather than land-based air?

A. Production was most affected later on by land-based planes, but the actual destruction of combat planes was accomplished by carrier-based planes.

Q. Was the critical problem the shortage of planes, or the shortage of pilots?

A. Fuel was the worst. We had plenty of pilots but couldn't train them because of lack of fuel.

Q. Were you familiar with planning for TEN Operations?

A. Yes.

( Q. We would like to have you come back another day to talk about it.)

Q. Did you expect a long war?

A. I thought it would be a long war, about three years. I didn't think we had Naval power enough for more than two years either.

Q. As the course of the war went along when did you realize that you could not win?

A. I thought this after the MARSHALL Campaign, and there were others who thought the same when we gave up defending RABAU.

Q. There is a difference between when you thought you could not win a decision and when you knew you would be completely defeated?

A. I think that the loss of the PHILIPPINES was the time when we knew we had lost.