

HEADQUARTERS
U.S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)
C/O POSTMASTER, SAN FRANCISCO

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS NO. 65) Place: Tokyo
NAV NO. 13, Date: 15 October 1945; 0930-1215

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: PEARL HARBOR - MIDWAY - SOLOMONS.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Captain WATANABE, Y., IJN, Gunnery Officer on Admiral YAMAMOTO's Staff, Commander in Chief 2nd Fleet at MIDWAY Battle June 1942. Member of Military Affairs and Naval Headquarters Staff 1945. Very good command of English language.

Where interviewed: MELJI Building.

Interrogator: Captain C. (n) Shands, USN.

Interpreter: Lieutenant Paul Brown, USNR.

SUMMARY

PEARL HARBOR: Training commenced about August 1943, with special shallow water torpedoes for attack upon PEARL HARBOR. Photo intelligence used at PEARL HARBOR to assess damage.

MIDWAY: Occupation of MIDWAY planned subsequent to the Doolittle raid on TOKYO. Necessary to eliminate that point as a base for an attack upon JAPAN. Four carriers, one heavy cruiser and 4500 personnel lost, resulting in retirement of occupation force. Loss of battle blamed on Jap cruiser force, which did not maintain sufficient caution and search of area. Some lack of caution resulted in CORAL SEA loss and failure to occupy PORT MORESBY.

GENERAL: Some feeling evident against Japanese Air Force and Army. Think Army too much in politics, not enough in fighting. Loss of war due to decline of air force and supporting fuel supply. Opinion JAPAN would have been forced to quit due to lack of fuel and food in 1946, whether cities bombed or not. No territorial aspiration other than CHINA and that part of the world to the west of a line between SINGAPORE, EAST INDIES, SOLOMONS & KISKA. This was to be a protective wall for ASIA.

TRANSCRIPT

Q. Are you familiar with and plans for PEARL HARBOR?

A. Yes, I know a little about them.

Q. Were you at PEARL HARBOR?

A. No, I didn't go there, but know a little about the plans for the attack.

Q. Can you tell us the main forces participating at PEARL HARBOR, the composition of each carrier force, etc?

A. I do not know but I will try to get the information in writing.

Q. Do you know if this operation at PEARL HARBOR had a number or name? How was the operation designated?

A. I am not quite sure, but believe it wasn't named.

Q. Do you know the track of the approach to PEARL HARBOR?

A. The start was from SAEKI, the training harbor about 17 November 1941, then north and across the PACIFIC, just south of the ALUTSIANS, then south for PEARL HARBOR. We had studied the weather on this route for a long time. Upon returning we suffered from heavy seas and strong winds. Several men were killed by the storm on the way back.

Q. Any ships lost?

A. No, but some received storm damage.

Q. When the JAPANESE FLEET left PEARL HARBOR, do you remember if they had two or three plans of retreat?

A. No, just the shortest route.

Q. Do you know about how many planes were in the attack?

A. About 450 planes. Half of them were defensive and half of them offensive.

Q. How many planes were lost?

A. The loss was not so great. Not over 30 to 40.

Q. What was the objective of the attack upon PEARL HARBOR?

A. In Japanese tactics, we are told when we have two enemies, one in front and one in the back, first we must cut in front by sword. Only cut and not kill but make it hard. Then we attack the back enemy and kill him. Then we come back to the front enemy and kill him. This time we took that tactic, having no aim to capture PEARL HARBOR but just to cripple it. We might have returned to capture later.

Q. What were your designated targets?

A. The first aim was at aircraft carriers, but they were out at sea, so we attacked other ships.

Q. Did you have any special equipment such as shallow water torpedoes?

A. Yes, we had studied and trained to attack in shallow water with torpedoes. They were special torpedoes to run shallow. I do not know the details.

Q. How long had you been training?

A. Four months, since August 1941.

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- Q. Where was this training conducted?
- A. SAEKI.
- Q. Was the purpose of this training to attack PEARL HARBOR or other areas?
- A. Only PEARL HARBOR.
- Q. Were your midget submarines at PEARL HARBOR considered of any value?
- A. It was a morale factor. Young naval officers very much admire bravery of Italian officers in torpedo boats and small submarines. Because of their admiration of Italian officers, they also want to show bravery in submarines.
- Q. Did you know the damage that had been done to the American Fleet at PEARL HARBOR?
- A. Yes, we knew by photographs. About three weeks after the squadron came back to JAPAN, the fleet received photographs taken during the attack.

MIDWAY BATTLE

- Q. Were you present in the Battle of MIDWAY, 4 June 1942?
- A. Yes, I was Gunnery Officer on Admiral YAMAMOTO's Staff on the battleship YAMATO.
- Q. What were the main forces involved?
- A. See chart.
- Q. What was the disposition of your fleet relative to MIDWAY?
- A. During the approach the transports were to the southwest, carrier forces to the northwest; main body, battleships, cruisers, to the west. One force in ALEUTIAN ISLANDS.
- Q. Who was in command of the entire operation?
- A. Admiral YAMAMOTO, who was killed in a plane crash in SOUTH PACIFIC.
- Q. Who was in command of occupation forces?
- A. Admiral YAMAMOTO.
- Q. Who was in command of the carrier forces?
- A. Admiral NAGANO.
- Q. How did the force retire after the battle?
- A. The main body went west, carrier group ordered to join main body to return to JAPAN, some to SINGAPORE. The Cruiser Division Seven broke off from the transport group and continued on toward MIDWAY. During the night the MOGAMI and MIKUMA collided. MOGAMI received great damage from the collision. Due to the damage to this cruiser, the cruiser Division also retired. The MIKUMA was sunk by dive bombers the next day.
- Q. What were the plans leading up to the attack? Did you intend to occupy MIDWAY?
- A. We intended to capture MIDWAY because on 18 April we were attacked in TOKYO for the first time. We thought the planes came from MIDWAY.
- Q. Did you believe that by taking MIDWAY there would be no more raids on TOKYO?
- A. Yes.

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Q. Did you intend to go beyond MIDWAY?

A. If we could, we wanted to go to PEARL HARBOR, but it was not authorized because it was too far. We intended to capture small islands between MIDWAY and PEARL HARBOR. If we captured these islands, the land based planes could attack PEARL HARBOR. We wanted to capture PEARL HARBOR later.

Q. What was your plan of employment of MIDWAY after capture?

A. We planned to use it as a base for long range search planes and for submarines. The attack on the ALEUTIAN ISLANDS was part of the same plan. We planned only air raids, but we wanted to capture KISKA a little later.

Q. Did you plan to hold KISKA and DUTCH HARBOR and then move down to the UNITED STATES?

A. Not that far. Only to protect JAPAN from air raids.

Q. How much military force was in the convoy at MIDWAY?

A. Not quite sure, but we have one marine regiment, about 1500; and one military regiment, about 1000. We expected to land 6 June.

Q. Can you tell me what ships were lost at MIDWAY?

A. Five ships sunk: AKAGI, KAGA, SORYU, HIRYU, MIKUMA. I think all sunk by dive bomber action.

Q. Did this operation have any number or name?

A. MI, which stood for MIDWAY ISLAND action.

Q. Do you know how many personnel were lost in the MIDWAY Battle?

A. I think 700 on each of the carriers went down and about 1000 on the MIKUMA, a few others may have been lost. The total lost was about 4,500. Admiral YAMAGUCHI was killed. If Admiral YAMAGUCHI had been saved, he would have eventually been made Commander of the Grand Fleet.

Q. How was the operation order to attack given to the fleet?

A. In early May we gathered at the Naval Station HASHIRAJIMA, a port near KURE, and were told in a conference. Afterwards the transports went to SAIPAN. They then received sailing orders by letter, carried by plane. Beginning to sail, orders went by wireless but after sailing they used no wireless.

Q. How long did you expect to be able to hold MIDWAY?

A. We expected to be able to hold MIDWAY about three months without reinforcements.

Q. Did you lack any special equipment for the landing force?

A. There was sufficient forces to capture and hold MIDWAY with adequate equipment, but due to lack of precaution on the part of the Air Force, it was lost. The people of JAPAN are not trained to keep secrets and the important information of the cabinet was spread by the members. JAPAN was successful in the early part of the war because its moves were secret. Before the war started, members of the Air Forces and members of Naval Officers aboard ship sometimes quarreled about ships against airplanes. During the early time of the war, the Air Force attacked the battleships REPULSE and PRINCE OF WALES and sunk them off SINGAPORE. After attacking PEARL HARBOR, the Air Force believed the aircraft carriers were very strong and could inflict a great deal of damage on enemy surface ships. This attitude continued up to the Battle of MIDWAY. The failure of the Air Force to maintain an adequate search for American Carrier Fleet at MIDWAY, plus the fact that the JAPANESE submarine line running north and south between 165° and 170W, was too far east to locate the American Fleet, are the reasons given for the loss of the Battle of MIDWAY.

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- Q. At what point was the decision made to discontinue the campaign?
- A. After carriers were sunk the order to retire was sent out at ten o'clock in the night. At that time only the remaining ships of the Air Force and transports turned around. Cruisers and main body went ahead.
- Q. What was the plan of employment of this main body and cruisers?
- A. The cruisers were going to proceed and shell MIDWAY and the main body was to proceed towards carrier forces to give protection and rescue survivors. The main body advanced to within the range of American long range planes and then joined up with destroyers and cruisers from carrier forces.
- Q. What factor determined the cancellation of the plan to bombard MIDWAY?
- A. The collision of the two heavy cruisers during the night.
- Q. Were any battleships sunk or damaged?
- A. May have been damaged slightly by bombs, not sure.
- Q. Do you know if HARUNA was damaged at MANILA on 8 December or at MIDWAY?
- A. She did not receive damage at either place. No damage to battleships or cruisers at MANILA.
- Q. Was any transport damaged at MIDWAY?
- A. They turned back before attacked. One may have been damaged by torpedo but not sunk. I am not sure of damage.
- Q. When was first contact made with American bombers?
- A. About three hours after sunrise on 4 June.
- Q. Did you receive any reports of our long range bombers over your main body?
- A. Next day your long range bombers came, but no damage. That was on 5 June.
- Q. During the afternoon of 3 June, was your formation attacked by long range bombers?
- A. Yes, but there was no damage to battleships or cruisers. The same afternoon long range bombers also attacked transports to southwest, possibly inflicting slight damage to one transport. I heard that about midnight before the main battle the force was attacked by seaplanes with torpedoes. One transport hit but not seriously. Damaged the bottom.
- Q. Was your formation or transport formation attacked early the next morning on 4 June?
- A. No, neither main body nor transports were attacked.
- Q. On 5 June were you attacked by long range bombers?
- A. No, transports perhaps, but we received no report of having been attacked or damaged.
- Q. How near did your main body approach MIDWAY before returning?
- A. About 500 miles. The remaining ships from the carrier force were scheduled to join the main body of ships after sunrise on 5 June. Upon completion of the rendezvous all ships retired.
- Q. Were the MOGAMI and MIKUMA attacked by long range bombers on the 5th June?
- A. Yes, very high but no hits. I think it was morning.

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Q. When was the MIKUMA sunk?

A. I think the MIKUMA sank in the afternoon. But was damaged in the morning by dive bombers, couldn't navigate very well. The MOGAMI damaged at the same time but not too badly.

Q. Just before sunset on the 5th, were those cruisers attacked by long range bombers?

A. I don't think so. It was not reported.

Q. Were any other ships attacked by long range bombers?

A. Some were attacked but no hits. One destroyer damaged by carrier planes in the afternoon. The KUMA was damaged and I think the KINUGASA. I don't know what type of planes.

Q. On the 6th of June during the retreat, did our carrier planes attack battle-ships of the main body?

A. No bombers seen by the main body during retirement.

Q. When the main body retired, did your submarines also retire?

A. Yes, but couldn't find any American ships. They fired on MIDWAY while passing.

Q. What effect did the loss of the carriers have on your later plans?

A. Many planes and a number of pilots were lost in the action which weakened the Navy Air Force requiring training to replace them. The Army refused to take their pilots from MANCHURIA and CHINA during the SOLOMONS CAMPAIGN, therefore the Navy was required to furnish pilots in that area. Some went to ZUIKAKU and SHOKAKU.

Q. Did the Army provide pilots in the SOLOMONS also?

A. Yes, second class Army pilots were put ashore in SOLOMONS.

Q. Did the Japanese Navy then plan to operate within range of the shore base planes?

A. Yes, until they got more carriers. In the movement of the squadrons, the pilots flew from island to island. Only Navy pilots took part. The Army pilots remained on a single base due to lack of navigational training.

Q. Did you have radar installed on your ships at the Battle of MIDWAY?

A. No, about August 1942 it was installed.

Q. What was the flag ship at MIDWAY?

A. YAMATO.

SOLOMONS

Q. At the Battle of the BISMARCK SEA, March 1943, do you know what damage was inflicted on your convoy?

A. Am not quite sure, but think that a few transports and two escorts were sunk.

Q. What was the plan for your Task Forces in the CORAL SEA in May 1942.

A. In the battle of the CORAL SEA, the SHOHO had started down with a small task group to attack PORT MORESBY from sea. In passing through the CORAL SEA, the Air Force on the SHOHO failed to maintain proper precaution and were attacked by the American Air Force and sunk. The ZUIKAKU and the SHOKAKU were sent down at the same time to support the SHOHO force and

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intercept the American carrier. Later the SHOKAKU was very badly damaged, the ZUIKAKU received minor damages and many people killed. The SHOKAKU nearly capsized. Admiral YAMAMOTO sent me to investigate damage of SHOKAKU.

Q. How long was it required to repair the SHOKAKU?

A. About three months. About one month for ZUIKAKU.

Q. Did that damage to those carriers effect your plans in the SOLOMONS?

A. It delayed our plans to capture GUADALCANAL and occupy the SOLOMONS.

Q. Why were the troops and ships that were sent down to the SOLOMONS ISLAND sent down in small numbers instead of large numbers?

A. The original plan didn't call for capturing GUADALCANAL. However a local commander from TULAGI went over to GUADALCANAL for pleasure and then decided to make an airfield. We had only about 1,000 men, mostly laborers for building airfields. We received information that only about 800 to 1,000 American troops had landed so we sent down about 1000 to assist our troops then on shore, to drive out the Americans. They were defeated. This was the first time that the Japanese Army had been defeated and then we sent 5,000 down but they weren't strong enough to drive out the Americans and recapture the island. Then we tried to send more, but we lost both ships and men. The Army had been used to fighting the Chinese Army.

GENERAL

Q. Was the Navy prepared to conduct a long war?

A. Two or three years. It is the opinion of most Navy Officers that the tide was turning with the loss of SAIPAN. It was pretty definite that the war was lost following the loss of LEYTE and OKINAWA, but we were not sure.

Q. About how long did you think the war would last?

A. About three years. When MARSHALL ISLANDS, RABAU and KISKA were occupied, I felt that that should be the extent of our operation and it should be made a line of defense in order to preserve that territory for the defense of the Empire.

Q. Why wasn't the Japanese submarine used for more offensive work?

A. Since we did not have air or sea control, owing to the Army's eager request for supplies, we had to supply them by submarines. It then became a habit to supply them in that manner. Poor tactics.

Q. Do you know what caused the decrease in Japanese air power? Was it the loss of planes, loss of pilots, lack of fuel to train pilots or due to the results in the SOLOMONS?

A. The reason this war was a failure was due to the decrease of our Air Force. After you captured LEYTE, the fuel became less and less. Then we endeavored to produce fuel from sugar. The sugar was obtained from FORMOSA, but this was not enough.

Q. What caused your greatest loss in shipping?

A. In the case of shipping, the cause was by submarines in the area and later it was principally mines. Along the CHINA COAST it was airplanes.

Q. Along the southern islands of JAPAN were many ships sunk by our planes?

A. Many fishing boats. Near the end of the war, the number of ships sunk by aircraft was about the same as those sunk by submarines.

Q. Do you feel that the attack on shipping was sufficient to bring about the close of the war?

A. Yes, I think if you didn't bomb the cities your attacks on shipping would have brought the same results by next Spring (1946).

Q. What would have been the cause of the close of the war?

A. The great cause for the close of the war would have been lack of fuel and food which is shipped in.

Q. Did you plan to occupy AUSTRALIA?

A. We didn't want to go to AUSTRALIA. The Navy was very rich with ships so we only planned to set up a protective wall extending from SINGAPORE through EAST INDIES, SOLOMONS, and the MARSHALL Group to KISKA. The Japanese Army was supposed to capture CHINA, but CHINA was so big that they were unable to completely do so. We didn't think that the Japanese Army did very well. We think that the Japanese Navy did better.

Q. Was the Navy ready for this war or did the Army force the Navy into it?

A. After the Army captured MANCHURIA, they had great power in politics. The officers instead of studying war began to study politics. In the SOLOMONS they should have studied war instead of politics. That is my experience in this war.

Q. Could you give me a diagram showing me the chain of commands in the Battle of MIDWAY? Also a list of the ships, including transports, that were damaged and the date of damage?

A. Yes, I will bring it back.