

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



INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS 407)  
NAV NO. 83

Place: Tokyo  
Date: 13-14 November 1945

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: SAVO Island-MIDWAY-SOLOMONS-LEYTE Gulf.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Rear Admiral SOJI, Akira, IJN. Commanding Officer, MOGAMI (CA) at MIDWAY.

Captain KATO, Kenkichi, IJN. Executive Officer, CHOKAI (CA) at MIDWAY and SAVO Island. Also Executive Officer, MUSASHI (BB) when sunk at LEYTE Gulf.

Captain UKITA, Nobuyasu, IJN. Gunnery Officer, KONGO (BB) at MIDWAY, 13 October 1942. bombardment GUADALCANAL and SANTA CRUZ, October 1942.

Where interviewed: MEIJI Building.

Interrogator: Captain C. Shands, USN.

Interpreter: Lt.(jg) R.P. Brown, USNR.

Allied Officers Present: Lieut. Comdr. J.A. Field, Jr., USNR.

SUMMARY

SAVO Island: CruDiv 6 and CruDiv 18 intended to attack UNITED STATES transports unloading troops and supplies at GUADALCANAL and TULAGI during the initial landing operations 7-9 August 1942. Engaged UNITED STATES Cruiser Screening Force at close range then retired. CHOKAI (CA) received minor damage from shell fire. KAKO (CA) sunk by UNITED STATES submarine while entering harbor at KAVIENG following the battle.

MIDWAY: KONGO (BB) and CHOKAI (CA) in Screening Force protecting transports. No attacks received during the battle. MOGAMI (CA) and MIKUMA (CA) collided while taking evasive action from submarine contact. Received bombing attacks severely damaging MOGAMI and sinking the MIKUMA. ARASHIO (DD) also damaged by bombs killing many MIKUMA survivors. One other destroyer received minor bomb damage but not sunk.

LEYTE Gulf: MUSASHI (BB) capsized to port after receiving about 30 bombs and 26 torpedo hits. About 1100 men lost. Colored bursts used in anti-aircraft shells to facilitate fire identification.

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Transcript of Interrogation (Rear Admiral SOJI, Akira, Captain KATO, Kenkichi and Captain UKITA, Nobuye, IJN)  
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Following the battle we retired to the west of SAVO Island. At that time opinion was divided as to whether we should turn back and attack the transports. I thought that since we had so badly damage the cruiser screen that we could successfully return and destroy the transports. However, the Admiral did not want to engage in another night action with your cruisers, and further felt that he should not be within range of your aircraft at daylight; so decided to retire to RABAUL and KAVIENG.

As we entered the harbor of KAVIENG, the KAKO (CA) was torpedoed and sunk at the harbor entrance. This was 9 August 1942.

LEYTE GULF

Q. In what engagements did you participate while you were Executive Officer of the MUSASHI?

A. I joined the MUSASHI in the INLAND SEA while it was fitting out in November, 1943. In January 1943 we proceeded to KURE and then to TRUK where we served as flagship to the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet. In April we returned to YOKOSUKA. In May we returned to TRUK with a load of ammunition. In February 1944 we returned to TOKYO and after taking Admiral KOGA to PALAU, proceeded to TRUK again. On 28 March we left TRUK because of our fear of carrier attacks in that area. As we sortied from the west entrance, the MUSASHI was hit on the port bow by one of three torpedoes fired by a submarine. We returned to KURE for repair in April, then proceeded to TAWTAWI in May.

On 24 October 1944 while passing through the SIBUYAN SEA we were attacked by American aircraft. In the first attack, about 1030, the MUSASHI was hit on the starboard side by three torpedoes. The second attack came about 15-20 minutes later. We received five torpedo hits on the port side from this attack. From about 1300 we gradually fell astern of the main disposition and by 1430 were well separated from the other ships. We were accompanied only by the TONE. About 1530 the heaviest attack of the day was made against this ship. The total number of the hits received was about 30 bombs and 26 torpedoes. At about 1700 the rest of the fleet departed to the east. About 1830 the TONE was relieved by two destroyers. We attempted to beach the MUSASHI on the north coast of SIBUYAN Island, but about 1930 it capsized to port and sank. It sank because two torpedo attacks hit in the same place on the port side abreast of No. 4 engine room. The first attack penetrated the outer hull, and the second attack penetrated the inner hull flooding No. 4 engine room. Pumping was hindered due to the cumulative bomb damage above, so it was impossible to check the flooding. About 50% of the 2200 men on board were lost.

Q. Did you use colored bursts in your anti-aircraft shells?

A. Yes, each ship in the division had a different color. Red, blue, white or conventional black bursting charges were used to identify ships fire. I am uncertain when this colored ammunition first reached the fleet, but I think that it was first used in the MARIANAS engagements.

Q. Did you receive any air attacks during this period?

A. No air attacks were received during this battle, either going down to SAVO Island or during the return. We received some air attacks on the night of 14 October 1942, when the CHOKAI and MAYA shelled the airfield on GUADALCANAL, but we were not damaged.

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Transcript of Interrogation (Rear Admiral SOJI, Akira, Captain KATO, Kenkichi and Captain UKITA, Nobue, IJN)

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We were attacked once again, I think that it was November 1942, southwest of GUADALCANAL. It was a heavy dive-bombing attack. The CHOKAI was not damaged but some of the other ships in Cruiser Division 7 (MOGAMI, AOBA, SUZUYA, KUMANO) were damaged and I think that the KINUGASA was sunk at that time. I do not know the details.

MIDWAY

- Q. Were you on the CHOKAI at MIDWAY?
- A. Yes, we were with the Second Fleet. We left JAPAN to act as a screening force for the transports from SAIPAN. I can't tell you much about the battle because we never saw an enemy plane or ship during the entire battle. About 0930 the day after the battle, Battleship Division 3 (KONGO, HIEI) and Cruiser Division 4 (ATAGO, TAKAO, MAYA, CHOKAI) left Cruiser Division 7 (MIKUMA, MOGAMI, KUMANO, SUZUYA) and went northeast, then northwest and joined up with the Main Body early the morning of the 6th. We proceeded west about 0900 the 7th when we were joined by the KUMANO and SUZUYA and turned south to act as a screening force for the Main Body which turned south a little later. We were also to protect the MOGAMI and escort it to the Main Body. After we joined the Main Body, the cruiser force split up. Cruiser Division 7 went to TRUK, but we returned to JAPAN. We were never attacked either during the approach or retirement.

Interrogation of Rear Admiral SOJI, Akira, IJN.

- Q. Give a description of your action at MIDWAY.
- A. I was commanding officer of the MOGAMI at MIDWAY. It was the fourth ship in column in Cruiser Division Seven which consisted of the KUMANO, SUZUYA, MIKUMA and MOGAMI. After the carrier battle on the 5th we were headed towards MIDWAY to bombard. We had not been attacked by either airplanes or surface vessels at that time, although we saw a formation of planes in the distance the afternoon before. We later heard that the transport group which was astern of us had been attacked.

About 2300 5 June (-9) a submarine was sighted on the starboard bow of the flagship. All ships made an emergency turn to the left but I was late in receiving the order. The MIKUMA had turn to the left 60 degrees, but I had only turned about 45 degrees when we collided with the port quarter of the MIKUMA. The bow of the MOGAMI was bent to port, some of it was missing. A few plates were extended into the water which reduced our speed. We were using power for 24 knots but only making 16. When we received the order to retire about an hour later, we were already on a westerly course due to the damage. All ships stayed together that night but the next morning, due to a difference in speed, the KUMANO and SUZUYA gradually drew ahead of us. We had two destroyers with us also.

Early the next morning the day after our carriers were damaged, about 0500 6 June (-9) we received a bombing attack from both dive-bombers and horizontal-bombers. The MIKUMA was on our port bow. The attacks occurred about the same time that the dive-bombers dove out of the sun astern of us and were difficult to shoot at. The MOGAMI was not hit in this attack but one bomb from a dive-bomber landed about 10 meters away. There were about 6 near misses. The metal made many holes in the bridge and the stack. We maneuvered and fired all guns, and I think may have hit some planes.

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About the same time two or three groups of bombs fell about 2-300 meters astern of the MOGAMI and MIKUMA. About 10 or 12 horizontal-bombers had dropped them. None of our ships was hit. The planes were 4-5000 meters high. We did not see them until after the bombs had landed. We fired at them but I do not think that we hit them.

The MIKUMA was not hit by bombs in this attack but I saw a dive-bomber dive into the last turret and start fires. He was very brave.

There may have been one more attack that afternoon but I am not sure. I faintly remember bombs but no ship was damaged by bombs until the next morning.

On 7 June we received three big dive-bombing attacks. There were no horizontal-bombing attacks or surface action. The attacks started about 0700 7 June (-9). The MOGAMI received two hits in this attack. The first bomb landed on top of number 5 turret, penetrated the armor and killed every one in the turret. The second bomb hit amidships. Damaged torpedo tubes. Started fires below decks but they were put out. One destroyer was also hit at this time, I think, but it was navigable and returned with us. As I remember the MIKUMA received two or maybe three hits at the same time.

Two or three hours later we received another attack. Because of our maneuvers the MOGAMI was ahead of the MIKUMA in this attack. We received one hit amidships and one forward of the bridge, which started fires. The MIKUMA was hit many times and was burning. A destroyer, the ARASHIO tried to go along side to rescue personnel but the fires were too bad, so they put boats in the water and picked up the men. Due to our fires amidships we had slowed down, but were still ahead of the MIKUMA.

Another dive-bombing attack came soon after this one in which the MOGAMI received another bomb hit amidships. It went through the deck and killed all the men that were fighting the fire and also damaged the doors to the engine room so the personnel there could not escape the fire. About 93 men were killed in this attack. The MIKUMA was hit several more times and the ARASHIO was hit in the stern but was navigable and returned with us. Almost all of the survivors of the MIKUMA who were on deck of the ARASHIO were killed by this bomb. We did not receive any more attacks.

I do not know when the MIKUMA sank, but it was badly damaged. Some time during the late afternoon or night, I think. We expected to be engaged by cruisers or battleships because during the day we saw one or two of your float type observation planes and thought your ships were near. The next morning, the 8th, we joined the FURUTAKA, SUZUYA and several other ships, refueled and went to TRUK for temporary repairs.

Interrogation of Captain UKITA, Nobue, IJN.

Q. What ships were in your force at MIDWAY?

A. BatDiv 3 - HIEI and KONGO, Vice Admiral MIKAWA, Gunichi.  
CruDiv 4 - ATAGO (F), CHOKAI, TAKAO, MAYA - Rear Admiral KONDO.  
2 Destroyers.

CruDiv 4 and Destroyer Squadron 2 (JINTSU and 12 destroyers joined this group about 27°N, 176°E.

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Q. Did you receive any attacks at MIDWAY?

A. We did not receive any attacks in our formation. We received information the transports received one air attack in the afternoon of the day before the main carrier battle, but I do not know the details. On the 5th before reaching our destination we saw one PBV but it did not attack. It remained out of range of our guns, then finally went away.

At about 0800 5 June (-9) we heard that the AKAGI and KAGA were badly hit and sunk. About 0900 the same day we received a report from a Japanese reconnaissance plane that the American force ahead of us consisted of one aircraft carrier, five cruisers and five destroyers. A little later it was reported to be three carriers, five cruisers and twenty two destroyers. That night we received orders to cancel the attack on MIDWAY. I don't know which direction we went during the night but in the morning we were on course 270 degrees. The ATAGO and CHOKAI were with us all of the time. About the 8th or 9th we joined the Main Body. After we refueled we left the Main Body and went up towards the ALEUTIANS as a screening force although we did not see anything. One carrier joined us up there. I think that it was the ZUIHO or ZUIKAKU. About six or eight destroyers and the KAMIKAWA MARU, a seaplane tender, also went to the ALEUTIANS with us. We stayed up there until about the 21st then went to OMINATO.

SOLOMONS

Q. Were you on the KONGO in the SOLOMONS?

A. I was there until October 1942.

Q. Did you participated in any actions in that area?

A. About the middle of October 1942 we bombarded the airfield on GUADALCANAL during the night. The HARUNA and several destroyers were with us. We came in fast around SAVO Island, ran down past the field, then turned around and went past the field again. We fired for about an hour. Our object was to destroy aircraft which might be used against our ships bringing in troops. Our greatest fear was of running aground. I think we were attacked by motor torpedo boats at that time, but we could see the tracks of the torpedoes so avoided them. We did not receive any air attack either during the approach or the retirement.

We were also present at the Battle of SANTA CRUZ, 26 October 1942 but did not see much action. We received one air attack but no hits were made. It was during the day. There were seventy or eighty planes in the air at the time. Mostly B-17's They were 3-4000 meters high.

None of our ships were hit. The dive-bombers concentrated on the ZUIHO and SHOKAKU which received some hits. That night we turned towards the enemy fleet and saw one of your carriers burning then we retired.

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