

WAR DEPARTMENT

File # 84

Exhibit # 55

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Transcript of original notes taken
by Capt J. J. Robinson U.S.N.R. in the
interrogation of vice Admiral
Sentaro OMORI, I.J.N.

INTERROGATION OF
VICE ADMIRAL SENTARO OMORI, IJN

DATE AND TIME: 26 November 1945, 1015-1200 hrs.

PLACE : Room 304, NYK Building, Tokyo, Japan

PRESENT : Captain J. J. Robinson, USNR, Interrogator
Douglas T. Wada, Interpreter

NAME : Vice Admiral Sentaro OMORI

ADDRESS : Tokyo Shi, Setagaya-Ku, Tamagawa, Oyama-cho 131 Banchi

Q. What was your command at the time of the outbreak of the war?

A. I was in command of the 1st Torpedo Boat Squadron of the 1st Fleet that took part in the attack.

Q. How long did you hold this command?

A. November 1940 to November 1942.

Q. What command did you next hold?

A. I became commander of the 5th Cruiser Squadron in November, 1942, and relinquished its command in November 1943.

Q. What was your next duty?

A. I was appointed head of the Navy Torpedo Boat School at Yokosuka in November 1943, and was replaced in August 1945.

Q. What were your duties after that?

A. I was in command of the 7th Fleet from 20 August 1945, to September 15, 1945.

Q. When did you first learn of the plan to attack Pearl Harbor?

A. It was in early September when I was informed that I was to command the guard force.

Q. By whom were you informed? Where?

A. By the Chief of Staff of the Combined Fleet when we held a "skull practice" on the map at the Staff College in Maguro, Tokyo, in September 1941.

Q. Can you recall the name of the chief of staff?

A. No.

Q. What was the next development of this plan?

A. We put in at Kure in mid November for preparations, which took about a week.

Q. When did you leave Kure?

A. We left Kure at midnight on or about 20 November and put in at Hitokappu Bay on Etorofu Island at about 0600 on 23 November 1941.

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Q. What was your next move?

A. On the 26th of November, we weighed anchor after sunrise and sailed on a bearing 90 degrees East and as we reached a point north of the Hawaiian Islands on 6 December, we sailed southward after refueling, stopping at a point about 150 miles off Oahu, from where we launched our attack.

Q. What was your flagship and how many ships were there under your command?

A. My flagship was the Cruiser ABUKUMA and my squadron consisted of one cruiser and nine destroyers.

Q. Can you name the destroyers that were under your command?

A. My guard force was made up of the 17th and 18th squadrons with the addition of Kagero. They were KAGERO, KASUMI, SHIRANUHI, ARARE, IZOKAZE, TANIKAZE, HAMAKAZE, I can't recall the last.

Q. Wasn't it the URAKAZE?

A. Yes.

Q. What was the strength of the attack force?

A. Six carriers, 2 battleships, 2 heavy cruisers, about 4 submarines, about 6 supply ships and my squadron.

Q. What did you do after arriving at a point 150 miles north of Oahu?

A. My squadron closed in along side the carriers to protect them. As I recall it, they were in this formation. *(Diagram)*

Q. At what time did you launch the attack?

A. The first wave left at about 0330 of 8 December, followed by the 2d wave at about 0430. It took about 3 hours for one wave to attack and return.

Q. When did you start on your homeward journey?

A. In the afternoon. I can't recall the exact time.

Q. Did you take the same route?

A. No, we headed northwestward, then west, then southward, then westward and then northwestward to Kure. (He plotted this course on the map.) At this point, two carriers broke off to attack Midway.

Q. Why did you turn south and then west at these points?

A. We thought that American submarines were waiting for us at these points. At this point, (pointed to a position north of Midway), we attacked something we believe were American submarines, although we are not sure.

Q. What were your precautions for a surprise attack, as you sailed toward Hawaii? Did you maintain radio silence?

A. At the rendezvous point off Saeki, we were instructed to avoid all ships, even friendly, to maintain a course that would avoid American patrol planes, (showed how they avoided the patrol planes sent out

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from the Dutch Harbor area and Midway) to maintain radio silence and to send out no scout planes.

Q. How were orders received from your commander in chief and who was he?

A. My commander in chief was Nagumo aboard the AKAGI and orders were issued by blinker.

Q. When did you first see the definite plan to attack Pearl Harbor?

A. About the middle of November at the rendezvous point off Saeki.

Q. Did you receive a copy of it? If so, where is the plan?

A. Yes, but it was taken up by the Chief of Staff and destroyed after the attack, since it was a military secret.

Q. What was your impression or understanding in regard to the declaration of war?

A. We were told that war would be declared before we attacked, and if not, we would be called back, but when we began launching planes at a point 150 miles off Oahu, we believed that war had been declared.

Q. Didn't you know whether war had been declared or not? Did you hear any discussion in regard to that matter?

A. No. Since my task was to guard the attack fleet, I was worried about it and particularly about the fuel problem. So on the way to Etorofu from Saeki, we held daily fueling. It was also decided that if we couldn't solve the fueling problem, we were to send the destroyers back. Hence, that was my greatest worry. Besides, I was afraid that we might meet the American fleet coming to attack Tokyo.

Q. What is your idea in regard to declaration of war?

A. War should first be declared before an attack is executed.

Q. Then, to gain the element of surprise, would you execute the attack a minute after war has been declared?

A. No, about an hour or two afterwards.

Q. When did you first hear about questions being raised whether war had been declared before or after the Pearl Harbor attack?

A. Only recently through the newspapers. As I understand it, there seemed to have been some kind of difficulties in the transmission of the declaration.

Q. What was your reaction when you first learned of the plan to attack Pearl Harbor?

A. It was during the maneuvers in September that we were told that we might have to go to war against America and I was really surprised to hear that.

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I, Douglas T. Wada, Senior Translator, 14th Naval District, hereby certify that I acted as interpreter at the interview set out above, that I truly interpreted and translated the English questions into Japanese and the replies thereto from Japanese into English, and that the English translation of the answers set out above are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Douglas T. Wada

Douglas T. Wada
Senior Translator
14th Naval District

Witness:

J. J. Robinson
J. J. Robinson
Captain, U.S.N.R.

Omori -

Appraisal: Small, dark, irregular features, teeth protruding (slightly), cooperative manner, forthright and frank.