

HEADQUARTERS
U. S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)
APO #234
C/O POSTMASTER, SAN FRANCISCO

R E S T R I C T E D

INTERROGATION NO. 515

PLACE: Tokyo
DATE: 10 Dec 1945

Division of Origin: Military Analysis

Subject: Japanese Navy Air Force in Malayan Campaign
Person Interrogated and Background:

Captain SONOKAWA, Xameo, IJN
(for background see USSBS Interrogation #387)

Where interviewed: Meiji Building

Interrogator: Major McELMAIN, GSC

Interpreter: Lt CAREY, USNR

Allied Officers Present: Captain FASKINS, MI

SUMMARY:

This interrogation is supplementary to USSBS #387 and amplifies the discussion of the Japanese Navy Air strikes on the Singapore area. The strikes against Port Darwin in April-June 1942 are also discussed.

MALAYAN CAMPAIGN

- Q. As I understand it, you were the commander of a group of Japanese Navy medium bombers which operated from Saipan at the beginning of the war. You have already told the Naval Analysis Division about how that group participated in the attack on the Repulse and the Prince of Wales. I should like to inquire about the attacks made on Singapore.
- A. Our operations against Singapore began on the 8th of December when we attacked with 72 type 96 medium bombers (NELL). We encountered bad weather, and about 36 planes pulled back to Saipan. Each plane carried 12 X 60 kilo bombs. That was our normal bomb load on these operations. The targets were the airfields at Singapore. One of the fields was near the Naval Base, and if we hit the Naval Base it was by accident. On 30 December, 1 January and 3 January, we made night attacks on the airfields, each attack involving about 36 planes. Beginning on 12 January and continuing to the end of the month, we scheduled daily daylight attacks with about 54 planes covered by about 18 fighters. The weather was bad on all but five or six days and we often cancelled the operation. The Army insisted that their fighters accompany us, but we tried to discourage that as much as possible. Army fighters in fact did escort us on a few of those strikes. In all, I should say we flew about 520 sorties, including about 75 fighter sorties and dropped perhaps 400 tons of bombs. The targets were always the airfields. I am reconstructing these figures from memory, and there may have been strikes which I do not recall.

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- Q. What opposition did you encounter?
- A. Once we met some SPITFIRES, HURRICANES and P-40s when our fighter escort had left us. We were very frightened, but actually the Allied pilots were very poor. We shot down some of them, but they got none of us despite the fact that we were flying type 96 bombers (NELLS). I think the best of the British and American Air Forces were then in Europe. No one told me what opposition to expect over Singapore, but it was generally thought that it would be weak.
- Q. How many planes did you lose?
- A. Only a very small number. I can only recall 2 losses.
- Q. How do the Singapore operations-- both Army and Navy-- compare with other operations you conducted?
- A. I suppose they were the largest regular bombing operations ever conducted by Japan. The suicide operations at Okinawa were larger.
- Q. In the report of your interrogation by the Naval Analysis Division it appears that the Repulse and Prince of Wales operation was carried out by type 1 bombers (BETTYS). Is that correct?
- A. No. Twenty seven of them were type 1 bombers (BETTYS). The rest were type 96 bombers (NELL).
- Q. What was the indicated air speed of your planes for the torpedo run on the Repulse and the Prince of Wales?
- A. 120-130 knots for the type 96; 150 knots for the type 1.
- Q. What did you consider to be the operational radius of your bombers at this time?
- A. About 700 nautical miles for both the type 97 and the type 1.

PORT DARWIN

- Q. I understand that you had some part in the attacks on Port Darwin in 1942 and 1943. Can you tell us about them?
- A. I was commander of the TAKAO Air Group which began to operate from Kendari against Port Darwin in April of 1942, and I have no personal knowledge of attacks made before 1 April 1942 or after 1 February 1943, when I went back to Japan. I have been told by Captain FUCHIDA (who is here with me) that the 19 Feb 42 carrier strike on PORT DARWIN was followed by an attack by about 30 medium bombers on the same day. The carriers hit shipping and air fields, but the land based planes only the air fields. As I recall it, after I took charge, the following strikes were run on PORT DARWIN:

| DATE | PLANES | TARGET |
|-------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 29 April 42 | 43 Fighters | Airfields |
| 29 April 42 | 45 Medium Bombers | Airfields |
| 30 April 42 | 20 Fighters 15 Bombers | Airfields Airfields |
| 13 June 42 | 27 Fighters 27 Bombers | Docks and Oil Tanks |
| 14 June 42 | 27 Fighters | Airfields |

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| DATE | PLANES | TARGET |
|------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| 15 June 42 | 27 Fighters 27 Bombers | Airfields |
| 16 June 42 | 27 Fighters 27 Bombers | Airfields |
| 15 July 42 | 27 Fighters 27 Bombers | Docks |

About this time, we sent half our strength to RABAUL, and thereafter we used to run raids with about 6 planes about 4 days a month. I believe the Army joined in these raids in June of 1943, after I left.

Q. What was the purpose of the raids on PORT DARWIN?

A. We thought PORT DARWIN an important submarine base. So far as I know, we did not expect a push from there through TIMOR and the CELEBES. We were not particularly concerned about air strikes from PORT DARWIN. I was not on the planning end and I really do not know why these operations were ordered.

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