

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

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS 138)
NAV NO. 33

Place: Tokyo
Date: 25 October 1945

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: Battle of GUADALCANAL, 12-14 November 1942.
Battle of MIDWAY, 4-5 June, 1942.
Battle of VILLA STANMORE, 6 March, 1943.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

TOKUNO, Hiroshi, Lt. Comdr., IJN, was Assistant Gunnery Officer on the Battleship KIRISHIMA from the beginning of the war until it was sunk at GUADALCANAL, 14 November, 1942. Subsequently he was Gunnery Officer on the (DD) MINEGUMO which was sunk off VILLA in night action on 6 March 1943. Later he was Executive Officer of the MILLE Garrison.

Where interviewed: MEIJI Building. Room 749.

Interrogator: Captain C. Shands, USN.

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

Allied Officers Present: None.

SUMMARY

The HIEI (F) and the KIRISHIMA (BBs) with destroyers departed TRUK to bombard the U.S. Airfield on GUADALCANAL on 13-14 November, 1942 as support for the landing operations. Just before reaching the firing position, U.S. Cruisers opened fire on the HIEI, badly damaging it. Course was reversed and the Jap Task Force less HIEI retired. HIEI remained in the general area and sank the next night. On the night of 14 November the KIRISHIMA returned to GUADALCANAL Area. During the approach it engaged the SOUTH DAKOTA but was in turn engaged by the WASHINGTON which damaged the steering gear, causing the KIRISHIMA to turn in circles while being subjected to U.S. fire. About two hours after the battle commenced, the KIRISHIMA was scuttled and sank. The successful destruction of the heavy bombardment group prevented the night bombardment of HENDERSON Field which permitted the U.S. aircraft the next day to attack and disperse the Transport Force destined for the recapture of GUADALCANAL.

No bomb hits on KIRISHIMA or HARUNA at MIDWAY, 6 June 1942. The DD's MINEGUJO and MURASAME sunk in night action near KOLOMBANGARA 6 March 1943.

TRANSCRIPT
(BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL)

Transcript of Interrogation (Lieut. Comdr. TOKUNO, Hiroshi, IJN)

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- Q. Where you present at the Battle of GUADALCANAL, 12-14 November 1942?
- A. Yes, I was the Assistant Gunnery Officer of the KIRISHIMA (BB). I was in charge of anti-aircraft weapons and small guns. My station was in the mast.
- Q. What ships were present?
- A. 2 (BB), KIRISHIMA and HIEI from the 11th Squadron.
1 (CL), NATORI class
11(DD), Class unknown.
- Q. What ships were sunk?
- A. The HIEI was badly damaged on the night of the 13th and sank the next day. The KIRUGASA (CA) and the AYANAMI (DD) from another force were also sunk. The KIRISHIMA (BB) was lost the night of the 14th.
- Q. What was the mission of your force?
- A. We had planned to bombard the airfield on GUADALCANAL while transports unloaded military personnel.
- Q. Did you know that a small portion of the American Fleet was in that area?
- A. Yes, we knew it, but did not think that it was strong enough to fight us.
- Q. How did you approach the battle area?
- A. We approached GUADALCANAL from the north, then went southwest past the tip of SANTA ISABEL ISLAND to SAVO ISLAND, passing to the south of SAVO towards GUADALCANAL. The HIEI was leading with the KIRISHIMA 1500 meters astern in column.
- Q. Give me a description of the action during the first night battle on the 12th.
- A. It was our plan to steam southwest to a firing position on the airfield, then reverse course and retire. While steaming southwest, the battle commenced. The HIEI and KIRISHIMA both turned to the left to reverse course. The HIEI in the lead, was being hit and did not turn as fast as the KIRISHIMA. Although they were supposed to be in column, the KIRISHIMA was on the port quarter of the HIEI, then later ahead of it. I do not know how many times the HIEI was hit, but the KIRISHIMA was hit only once all night. That was by a 15cm shell. There were many salvos and many near misses around both battleships. About 450 men were lost on the HIEI.
- Q. Did you have radar at that time?
- A. We did not have radar fire control. Fire control was visual only, unless we received aid from airplanes. I think that one cruiser had radar search control, but it was not very reliable.
- Q. Do you know if the HIEI bombarded the airfield before it sank?
- A. I do not think so. It was very badly damaged and could not steer. I heard that it sank the next night after air attack during the day.
- Q. During your approach were you attacked by airplanes?
- A. No. The HIEI sighted two planes but they were so far away that we could not see them.
- Q. While you retired on the day after the HIEI was sunk, were you attacked by airplanes?
- A. No, we were never attacked by airplanes during the entire time we were near GUADALCANAL.

Transcript of Interrogation (Lieut. Comdr. TOKUNO, Hiroshi, IJN)

Q. Give me a description of the battle the night of the 14th.

A. The KIRISHIMA was again proceeding towards GUADALCANAL to support the transport landing by shelling the airfield. Our speed was about 28-30 knots. One of our destroyers turned its search light on the SOUTH DAKOTA and we opened fire. We think we hit the SOUTH DAKOTA many times, inflicting much damage. We received about 9 - 16" hits and about 40 - 5" hits. We didn't think that the SOUTH DAKOTA hit us at any time. However a second battleship was firing upon us. We couldn't see it because of the glare from the destroyers searchlights. Because we were hitting the SOUTH DAKOTA and couldn't see the second battle ship, we did not shift fire. Two heavy cruisers were with us and were hit but not damaged badly. They were of the TAKAO class.

Q. Did the KIRISHIMA sink as a result of the gunfire?

A. No. Shortly after the American ships opened fire the steering gear of the KIRISHIMA was so badly damaged that we were unable to steer or repair it. We kept turning in a circle but couldn't get away. We slowed down to try to steer with the engines but it was no use. Our engines were not badly damaged, but we were receiving many hits from the WASHINGTON. Then the Captain decided that since we couldn't steer and the engines were damaged that it would be better to scuttle the ship. He then gave the order to open the Kingston Valves.

Q. How long did the ship remain afloat after receiving the first hit?

A. It took about two and one-half hours to sink. Destroyers came alongside and took off about one-quarter of the men. The rest of the men jumped over the side and were later picked up by destroyers. We had about 1400 men on board and lost about 250. I stepped from the KIRISHIMA to a destroyer and did not even get wet.

Q. Was the KIRISHIMA ever hit by torpedos?

A. No.

Q. How do you know that the ship was not sunk by shell fire?

A. I heard the Captain give the order to scuttle the ship. Later, on the destroyer, one of the engineers told me that they had opened the Kingston Valves. The Captain was also informed that the valves had been opened before he transferred to a destroyer.

Q. While you were retiring on the destroyers, were you attacked by airplanes?

A. While we were on the way back to TRUK one destroyer was attacked by two dive bombers, but did not receive any damage.

Q. Was any damage inflicted upon the Transport Force?

A. I do not know. We were operating in separate forces.

Q. Do you know if you damaged any of the American ships?

A. We thought that we had badly damaged or sunk the SOUTH DAKOTA.

Q. Did the loss of your ships in this action effect the plans for your SOLOMON Campaign.

A. It effected it to a certain extent, but not too much. It was decided not to try to recapture GUADALCANAL. About a month later it was decided to use destroyers to take Japanese troops out of GUADALCANAL.

BATTLE OF MIDWAY 4-5 June 1942

Transcript of Interrogation (Lieut. Comdr. TOKUNO, Hiroshi, IJN)

Q. Were you present at the Battle of MIDWAY, 4-5 June 1942?

A. Yes, I was Assistant Gunnery Officer on the Battleship KIRISHIMA. I was stationed in the mast in charge of all anti-aircraft weapons and small guns. The HARUNA (BB) was with us in formation. Also four aircraft carriers and some destroyers.

Q. Was the KIRISHIMA damaged in that battle?

A. No, no hits on either the KIRISHIMA or HARUNA. One dive bomber attacked the KIRISHIMA and splashed water on the stern, but no damage. High horizontal bombers dropped bombs about 100 meters from HARUNA, but no damage. We were in formation. Dive bombers attacked carriers and inflicted much damage.

Q. Were you attacked by torpedo planes?

A. Torpedo planes attacked carriers in the morning, but not us. The planes did not get very close. We did not like dive bombers. Because they came in such high angle, they were very hard to fire at. We could dodge torpedoes and horizontal bombers.

VILLA-STANMORE 6 March 1943

Q. Were you on the destroyer MINEGUMO at KOLOMBANGARA on 6 March 1943?

A. Yes I was Gunnery Officer when it was sunk there. The MURASAME (DD) was also sunk at the same time.

Q. What was the mission?

A. We had left BUIW in the late afternoon, passed between VELLA LAVELLA and KOLOMBANGARA ISLANDS up to VILLA where we unloaded supplies, no troops.

Q. How were you sunk?

A. After leaving VILLA, it was very dark. We were steaming to the north when about eight American ships commenced firing at us. We thought that they were cruisers. We had not seen them before they commenced firing. We were hit so quickly that we were only able to fire a few shots. I do not think we hit. Both the MINEGUMO and the MURASAME sank very quickly. Only 49 people saved. It took us seven hours to swim ashore.