HEADQUARTERS
U. S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
APO 234 c/o PM San Francisco

INTERROGATION NO. 276

Place: Tokyo, Japan
Date: 2 November 1945

Division of Origin: Military Analysis (see Note)

SUBJECT: Plans for Employment of Japanese Air Forces

Personnel Interrogated and Background:

Rear Admiral TAKATA, Toshitanea, Imperial Japanese Navy

WHERE INTERVIEWED: MEIJI Building, Room 722

SPECIAL NOTE:

This was a JOINT INTERROGATION conducted by Col POTTS reprsenting USSBS, and by MR SEVERSKY representing the SECRETARY OF WAR

Iterrogators: (see note)
Colonel Ramsey D POTTS, AC
Mr Alexander P .de SEVERSKY, former Major, AC

Interpreter:
Lt. Cmdr NICHOLS, USNR

Allied Officers Present:
Captain HEDDING, USN
Colonel TERRILL, AC
Colonel BURCHINAL, AC
Major LANE, AC
Major McELWAIN, GSC

SUMMARY:

Admiral TAKATA discussed the tactical employment of NAVY aircraft as opposed to ARMY aircraft and the reasons why certain types of bombs were developed for each. He explains the theory behond the commitment of the battle fleet to action in the Philippines, citing the fact that the Japanese had learned a lesson from the experiences of the Germans in the last war and the Italians in this war. towards the end of the war, the fleet units in KURE HARBOR had been de-manned and were being used only as anti-aircraft units.

The one hope of the Japanese Military, he deemed, was that it could defeat the invasion of the homeland by destroying the invasion fleet with KAMIKAZE attacks. The loss of SAIPAN forced the Command to realize that Japan proper would now be within range of land-based bombers.

Admiral TAKATA questioned that American military planners realized before the war the extent to which air power could be developed during the war and the extent of destruction that could be achieved by bombing.

(The early part of the interview was not recorded stenographically. Substance of the first questions may be summarized as follows:)

Q. In 1940 did the Japanese Navy change its policy with respect to new constructions?

A. Yes, it did.

Q. Was their overall strategy governed by a shortage of material?

A. No, they realized that stress should be put on the carrier, so they converted their heavy ships to carriers. They ralized that carriers had become more important than battleships, and accordingly placed more imphasis upon carriers and aircraft than upon naval ordnace and submarines as the war developed.

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Q. What was the division of aircraft manufacturing facilities between the Japanese AAF and Naval Air Forces?

A. They were divided equally. (Balanced from steno notes)

Q. In other wards the build-up of air power was not a part of the common strategic plan?

A. Army and Navy had each their own independent plan for development of air power.

Q. They didn't have a joint Chief of Staff as we had?

A. On the overall policy we had no joint Chiefs of Staff. The Navy Staff and Army staff would have conference Daihonei but the decisions as to equipment, and materials that were to be used remained with the Navy and Army individually; only on overall strategy they had conferences, but there was no joint staff at all.

Q. At the start of the war it was found that the Army did not use any bomb heavier than 1000 lb or 500-Kg, and the Army developed only a few 2000 lb bombs. The Navy concentrated on the 800-lb bomb. How does it happen that they didn't try to develop bigger Bombs? Was it because of the improvement we had made in our ships? That (size bomb) would not be sufficient to sink the ships but would only be enough to do serious damage at best; and would not seriously cripple the big carriers and battleships.

A. Originally we had only 500-kilo, bombs, but we realized that, in order to sink certain ships er would have to have at least 800-kilo. bombs. These were on the way, and obviouly the 800-Kilo bomb would not be enough to seriously damage these later models.

Q. The rason we developed not heavier bombs is that we had no planes capable of carrying them; that is why we didn't increase the weight. We realized that torpedo attack was more effective then bombing; therefore we put our emphasis on torpedo attacks.

Q. The Japanese Army also often attacked our ships; now their bombs were even smaller. In their joint conference actions did the Navy in any way influence the Army so that they would have to increase the size of their bombs, or did they have no way of influencing the land-based airforce of the Army to increase their bombing power?

A. Originally the Army had no intention of using their planes for attacks on surface craft, and it wasn't until late in the war that the Army decided that they would have to help Naval craft. They intended originally to destroy communications and bomb land targets, but after the Philippines campaign it became obvious that they would have to use Army planes to attack Naval craft, so from that time on the Army was using bombs of insufficient caliber. The Navy, from the Philippines campaign on, turned over to the Army a certain percentage of their bombs and the latter were using them from then on; but up to that time the Army had not intended to use bombs for that purpose.

Q. You said the Army did not intend (to do so): Is it because the Army didn't want to or was it an arbitary decision that the Army should not do such, that the Navy should take care of it and the Army wouldn't do anything about it?

A. I don't really know; I don't think there was much decision made jointly about such a thing. I do know the Army was loath to attack surface craft because they were trained primarily in bombing of stationary targets and flying over land. They weren't trained in navigation and had no experience in bombing fast-moving targets. I don't know specifically what their policy was, but do know there was no liaison about it. You had better ask an Army man.

Q. In your opinion, id the ability of our aircraft to strike the fleet in their home waters affect the tradition that the nation must maintain a fleet in being?

A. By the time you had taken Saipan and had begun to land on Leyte, we realized fully that it would be impssible for us to maintain a battle fleet in Japanese waters, subjected to bombing, and when the American fleet did come in close to Japan that we would be unable to oppose it with a full fleet of any strength. Therefore, realizing that, we decided to commit our entir fleet to the Leyte campaign and sent every available ship down there, into that campaign with the knowledge that we would lose most of it; but it was worth it if we could prevent conquest of the Philippines because we knew then we would be subject to bombing and prevented them from forming any organized resistance; so we sent the full battle fleet to oppose the invasion.

Q. I think you did better than the Italians did. The Italians were trying to keep their idea of a fleet in being: they kept it all together, always afraid to send it out, and finally lost it in harbor. At least you put some of it to some use.

A. At the time the Combined Fleet CincPac (note, the latter term was employed by the interpreter to describe the Japanese Grand Fleet commander--prototype of the US Commander-in-Chief of Pacific operations) made the decision to use his complete force it was based on what had happened to the Italian fleet in this war and the German fleet in the last war. Having seen those examples, he decided to use his operational strength wherever he could.

Q. He was willing to expend it?

A. He realized in the Philippines Campaign that he would lose most of it, but it was worth the price if he could slow up or prevent the occupation of the Philippines.

Q. And the battleships and destroyers that came down through the Bunge-Suide straits and were cut off by Naval air, was that the last effective sortie of the home fleet?

A. Thas was the very last possible sortie we could have made from a viewpoint of fuel, personnel; and on that was our last gasp.

Q. Did you man the guns on your fleet, while Kure, against air attack?

A. Yes, we had gun crews manning their anti-aircraft. Also, on some of the ships, we had gun crews with the larger caliber guns aboard just in case the American landing took place in the vicinity--they could operate those guns to at least try to shoot up the transports--not all of them, just some of them.

Q. When we began to bomb and destroy your industrial capacity with B-29s-did you realize right away that it was only a question of time until you would be defeated, or did you realize it before that, or only when they really began to feel the pinch of industrial shortages?

A. We realized at the time you took Saipan that you were taking it for the primary purpose of bombing Japan out of the War. We realized at the time, once you had taken Saipan from now on the war is going to be pretty tough.

Q. Did you think you had lost the war by that time?

A. We realized, with the destruction of our industrial capacity, our production would naturally drop to practically zero; but our one hope was that, if we could destroy the invasion fleet when it came to actually land in Japan--although Japan could not win the war--it could held out indefinitely for any number of years, if we could muster the defense at the time of invasion of the home-land to destroy the invasion fleet.

Q. Did you realize that before we invaded that we would assemble quite an armada of airpower--to destroy all your communications, all your dams, all your industrial areas and completely bring to a standstill all the country's planes? In other words, the only way you could fight after you had expended your munitions on hand would be by swords and fists. We could isolate you, you have already stated you couldn't even move because you had not enough gasoline. You did not appreciate the significance of the fact that we were able to destroy your industry and blockade Japan completely by air power; Therefore it was only a question of time before you would have to give up?

A. I realized it, but it would not be determined until we really fought. When we lost Saipan we tried to evacuate all facilities to the inland to hide in the inner places, but the evacuation process did not go so smoothly.

Q. When you were planning the war before this time, did you ever consider the possibility that we would be able to destroy your industrial power without first defeating its Army and Navy, or did you feel absolutely secure that nothing could touch them as long as the Navy and the Army remained in being?

A. I personnally think--I can't speak for my comrade but I personally think that although you could produce agreat number of planes, you had never visualized the extent to which you could hve destroyed for example, Tokyo; I never believed that your air power could become so powerful that it could wreak this much destruction in the cities of Japan.

Q. I think you had the wisdon to quit on time because this was only the beginning; this was only one vanguard of our air force, and even if you had had Saipan and Tinian we probobly would have started to bomb from Alaska eventually, and if we had been given time we could have wreaked almost indescribable destruction.

A. May I ask you one question? I want to know myself if you in the States at the beginning of the war thought that you could ever produce the air power that you did--that is, originally, at the time of Pearl Harbor, did the Americans even visualized the power that they could reach in the air?

Q. The airmen did, that I can vouch for the airman could visualize and had been planning for that years before the war, but we were young, and we didn't have very much to say about that in the beginning.

A. Japan was the same way.

Q. In America, public opinion and the imagination of the people came to our rescue right away, and we were able to produce the necessary air power.

A. May I ask you on what basis did you form your opinion?

Q. I will send you personally a copy of a back which I wrote several years ago and which will answer your question and demonstrate the theories our airmen held.

(The above interrogation was by Mr DeSeversky. A general discussion followed during which the question was raised about cooperation between the Japanese Army & Naval forces. Admiral Takata suggested a joint interview between the USA and two men of rank in the Imperial forces: a Capt Miyo, Navy "because he was from the very beginning of the war on the Staff;" He suggested no Army man but suggested someone from Kokuhombu be assigned, through General Arisue, Liaison Officer.)