

HEADQUARTERS
U.S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(Pacific)
APO 234

INTERROGATION NO. 287

PLACE: Tokyo

DIVISION OF ORIGIN: Oil and Chemicals.

DATE : 7 Nov 1945

SUBJECT: Importance of Oil in Japanese War Effort.

PERSONNEL INTERROGATED AND BACKGROUND OF EACH:

Lt Gen WAKAMATSU, Tadakazu. In 1935 was member of General Staff. In 1936 was member of Military Affairs Bureau of War Department. Member of the Japanese Legation in Austria in 1937. In 1938 was transferred to Hungary in the same capacity. In 1939 was promoted to Major General and became commander of the infantry corps. Participated in the China Incident.

Became C/S of the 22nd Army in China in 1940. From 1941-43 was head of the Transportation and Communications Department of the General Staff Office. In 1943 became commander of the 46th Division. In 1944 was vice chief of the General Staff of the Southern General Army. In 1945 he became C/S at Hiroshima of the Second General Army. Appointed Vice Minister of the War Ministry on 17 July 1945. The war terminated when he had served only four weeks.

Col DESHIMA, Haruo.

Mr. MAKI, Itsu. Interpreter: liaison officer for the Army and Navy.

WHERE INTERVIEWED: Room 340, Meiji Building.

INTERVIEWER: Lt Comdr G. M. WILLIAMS.

INTERPRETER: Mr. Ric (Civ.).

ALLIED OFFICERS PRESENT: Capt F. KAUFMAN, Comdr G. NEELEY, Mr. E. W. GARD (Civ.), and Mr. BAYLES (Civ.).

SUMMARY:

1. Tanker convoys and air protection from Singapore north to the home islands.
2. Principal problems facing Army in July 1945:
 - a. Food
 - b. Aircraft
 - c. Oil
 - d. Munitions
3. Oil the immediate cause of war between the United States and Japan.
4. Advantages and disadvantages of Three-Party pact made in 1940.

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~~RESTRICTED~~

Q: What preparations were made in 1935 when you were on the General Staff in the way of oil stocks?

A: I had nothing to do with oil in 1935.

Q: When did you first have something to do with oil?

A: I had nothing to do with oil thereafter either.

Q: What were your duties in 1940?

A: Chief duty was to help the Chief of Staff and I also was connected with the work of transportation and communications.

Q: What problems in transporting oil to Japan and other places were prevalent?

A: I had difficulty in carrying out my duty of sending oil to other parts, notably the work of protecting the transport ships to be sent to Indo-China.

Q: What was the cause of these difficulties?

A: All transportation from Singapore to Japan had to come through the South China Sea. We had to establish a huge China Air Fleet to protect our ships on this route.

Q: What type of opposition did they encounter?

A: Submarine and air attacks.

Q: Which of these was the most potent?

A: Both were equally severe but from January of this year we began to encounter our greatest menace, the carrier task forces. On one occasion they sunk 24 tankers. Thereafter, shipping became critical. The time they sunk 24 of our tankers, it was the first time the carriers had ventured into the South China Sea.

Q: What was the tonnage lost for this one action?

A: Three convoys were lost. After this they hurriedly prepared three zones of air protection in which individual tankers and ships could pass through at high speed with light shipping loads. This plan did not do much good either.

Q: What was the date the last tanker was sent from Singapore to Japan?

A: March 1945 was the last time I remember. At the beginning of April I was transferred to another office.

Q: Who was in charge of oil shipping routes in Singapore?

A: This would fall under the Southern Fuel Depot. The Army commander at Singapore I think was responsible for shipping. When a ship is to be sent to Japan, orders come from Japan as to what should be loaded.

Q: Who in the Southern Fuel Depot was in charge of oil shipments to Japan?

A: I do not remember the details. All those who were concerned with this matter are still in Singapore.

Q: Are these records and the officer in charge in Singapore today?

A: I think the records are perhaps burned.

Q: How were they burned?

A: It is customary to destroy such records.

Q: What do you mean it is customary?

A: Any papers which we feel the enemy may get we will destroy.

Q: Who gives this order?

A: Unless an order to stop this is given, this procedure is always carried out. There may be some papers left at Singapore.

Q: What post did you assume in April 1945?

A: I came to Hiroshima with the Second General Army.

Q: And you had nothing to do with oil there?

A: No.

Q: When you became Vice Minister did you ever sit on the Joint Army-Navy Oil Committee?

A: I had no experience of that sort.

Q: Had the allocation of oil been made for the second quarter when you took office in 1945?

A: The allocation had already been finished at that time I believe.

Q: Don't you know? You were joint chairman of the Committee.

A: I was in the office for four weeks and in name only. I did no actual work during this time.

Q: Who was your predecessor in office?

A: Lt Gen SHIBAYAMA. I took the position from him because he was ill.

Q: Is he still ill?

A: Yes.

Q: Who was in office before that?

A: Lt Gen TOMINAGA and before him it was Gen KIMURA.

Q: Where is Gen KIMURA now?

A: In Burma.

Q: Were there any others persons serving in this position during the war?

A: The late Gen ANAMI.

Q: What was the state of preparation in the Army Air Force for the invasion of Japan. How many planes and how much gasoline were on hand?

A: There was very little fuel and the number of planes is difficult to remember.

Q: How much fuel did you have on hand?

A: That matter has already been reported to you I think. I do not know anything else.

Q: You mean that you don't know anything about the supply of fuel you had on hand for the invasion?

A: I do not know anything about it. Please ask those whose business it is.

Q: As Vice Minister didn't you know what was going on?

A: I do not have the exact figure.

Q: Don't you know how many planes you had ready to fly against invasionary forces. How much gasoline did you have for these planes. Give us anything along this line. We want to know your state of readiness to meet the invasion.

A: We had about 30,000 kl on hand I believe. Accurate figures about the planes and how many times each could fly can be obtained from the Air Force headquarters. I might know in general what they were.

Q: In the capacity of Vice Minister you must have had a general picture in July 1945 when you took office.

A: There were about 2,000 to 3,000 planes with one flight each.

Q: What was your biggest worry at that time?

A: Concerning the aviation or the fuel oil?

Q: The whole invasion.

A: The food problem.

Q: What created the food problem? Was it lack of transportation or poor crops or just what was it?

A: Japan expected to repel only the first wave of the invasion. They had no hopes of repelling the second and third waves but planned to retreat to the mountainous section. This plan, however, brought up the food problem.

Q: How many weeks food supply did you have for the country?

A: As far as rice and wheat, they expected this to last a year but other things not that long.

Q: Getting back to the 30,000 kl, what did this include?

A: Aviation gasoline is what this was.

Q: How about fuel for tanks and other motorized vehicles?

A: The preparations for these things were very trifling and only a secondary effort was made along these lines.

Q: Who made more preparations for the invasion, that is in regard to stocks, the Army or the Navy?

- A: The Army had more planes but in preparation the allocation of fuel was 50-50.
- Q: If food was the most critical item, why were sweet potatoes converted into ethyl alcohol?
- A: It was a last resort anyway. After squeezing the alcohol out, they thought they could use the pulp for another food product.
- Q: Was the sugar supply in Japan used up?
- A: Yes. Mostly the alcoholization of sugar was done in the southern areas like Formosa. That done here was from grain from Manchuria.
- Q: How did they expect the people to live the rest of the winter and next spring if they used up food supplies for war materials?
- A: They didn't have any definite plan about this as far as the Army was concerned. I was not concerned with the civilians at that time because I was doing other work.
- Q: How long did they expect the airplanes to last in the war?
- A: They didn't expect them to last long at all. Maybe about one time in combat was the most that could be expected. As far as the Army was concerned, if they could get food they were going to retreat in the mountains and not surrender. But as they found no way of solving the food problem, they decided to surrender.
- Q: Next to food, what was your most important problem?
- A: The four biggest problems were (1) food, (2) airplanes, (3) oil, and (4) munitions.
- Q: Did you have any particular program worked out for your second problem, that of plane production?
- A: What kind of problems do you mean in regard to plane production?
- Q: Were you trying to build faster, disperse, or what was your general program in regard to aircraft. Did you have a special program, or were you just letting things take their course?
- A: We tried our best to meet the problems but oil was a big factor in the aircraft problem. Besides having a lack of oil for regular flying, this shortage extended into the pilot training program where we lacked the gasoline to train new pilots. The general plan was to attack once with the aircraft against invasionary forces, abandon them, and retreat into the mountains. But then the food problem came up. We had little hope for getting into effect a plan for the replacement of aircraft.
- Q: You were in China when the war began in 1941. Can you give us a picture of the supply situation in Japan at that time?
- A: I think the supply of oil was the cause of war as far as Japan was concerned. They began to feel that the supply from their sources in the south would be cut off. They thought they should make war even though they had oil on hand in case their supply ran out and this source was cut off. I believe that war with America was inevitable.

The most suffered part of the supply problem was the oil supply. Japan tried to stop war with China but the events in the interim didn't come to a conclusion. Japan was much worried about all the oil it was spending in China. They had one year's supply on hand. When the inevitable war came with Russia or the United States, they would use this one year's supply to wage war and meanwhile would capture southern oil areas.

Q: What war did you mean?

A: The possibility of war with America or Russia.

Q: You were in Europe in 1938 when the Three-Party pact was signed. Did you have anything to do with that?

A: That was signed in 1940 and I was in Japan then. I did have a little to do with it because I was in General Headquarters then.

Q: Did the Axis function in the Japanese War? Was their any notable contribution by Germany or Italy to Japan?

A: During the war the help we received from the Axis powers was merely technical.

Q: Could you be more specific?

A: The most help we received from the Axis powers was from Germany in the field of aircraft production and radar. I know that about the latter because I was in the Communications field then. Scientific study and technical aids were highly stimulated by Germany.

Q: What service did Japan render to Germany?

A: Mostly raw materials produced in the southern areas, for instance rubber.

Q: Did you ever try to send any oil from the southern areas to Germany?

A: Occasionally German boats and submarines used fuel at the spot.

Q: Was the alliance with Germany and Italy satisfactory from Japan's point of view?

A: From the German point of view I know it was satisfactory. However, Japan entered the war at the time of German declination and her help couldn't aid Japan. If Japan had fought Russia with Germany, the story today might have been different.

Q: Why didn't Japan attack Russia instead of the United States?

A: I don't understand myself. I believe it would have been better for Japan to have attacked Russia.

Q: Let's change the subject to the 1945 Saigon action when the United States Third Fleet attacked there. What was the convoy system at the first of January 1945?

A: I am not sure in detail the Navy's convoy system. In general they usually took strong convoy measures for tankers with escorting cruisers or lighter craft.

Q: Where did the convoys form?

A: That was quite secret. I believe they were formed at Singapore. It was very secret and held by the Navy. Even the highest commands didn't know, not even the Army.

Q: The Army had tankers they had to send, are you sure they didn't know?

A: All convoy duties were carried exclusively by the Navy.

Q: After an Army captain on a tanker reached his destination, wasn't he questioned by the Army as to how the trip fared, etc.?

A: The Second General Army doesn't know any details. In the Navy they had General Convoy Groups. They did know about this. The Army's General Staff Officer stationed there with them did know.

Q: Wasn't the Army interested in the tankers they were sending to see whether they had sufficient protection for the convoy trip?

A: The Army did not have any detailed report as to how many protecting war ships were convoying their tankers. The Southern General Army had air groups in each of their divisional areas. Singapore notified these bases when a convoy would pass.

Q: Did this aerial protection go all the way to Japan?

A: The Southern General Army headquarters took responsibility from Singapore to Hainan. From Hainan to the homeland protection was given by air bases in their respective areas.

Q: What kind of protection did they fly? Were they scout planes or fighter planes?

A: Mainly the protection consisted of fighter planes which came down from Burma specially to protect these convoys and they divided between Kunming and the Philippine Islands.

Q: What bases did you have from which the fighter planes took off for this convoy protection?

A: As far as the Southern General Army is concerned, they had several bases at Singapore, Saigon, Tourane and Hainan. After that the China-stationed army took care of this protection.

Q: Were there supposed to be one or more planes over the convoy constantly?

A: Yes.

Q: About how many planes were devoted to this type of duty?

A: As far as I know, the Southern General Army planes concerned with this protection numbered about forty on constant patrol. The total number of assigned planes was about three times this amount. Two-thirds were kept on the ground for repair, refueling, emergency measures, etc. In Thailand and Okinawa they had more planes but I am not sure of the number. Under the Southern General Army they had three fighter divisions.

Q: When was this system instituted?

A: It was in effect from January 1945 to March 1945.

Q: Did this protection start before or after the attacks by the Third Fleet?

A: They were attacked while they planned this. There was much damage because of the surprise of the attack.

Q: What caused the instigation of the plan?

A: A lack of planes.

Q: What was the previous system for convoys?

A: They took protection mostly against submarines before this new system was introduced.

Q: What form of protection did they take?

A: The convoys mostly all took their own measures. As far as planes were concerned, the Navy aircraft fought them off.

Q: What kind of planes did the Navy use?

A: They used sea planes. Until January 1945 the Navy took the duty of protecting convoys on the sea and in the air. After January the air attacks became very strong and so the Southern General Army took over this duty. More details about this convoy system can be obtained from the Navy.

Q: Did the Army fighter planes carry a depth charge?

A: I am not sure but I don't think they did. They were used primarily to combat enemy air attacks.

Q: Did the Southern General Army have direct control over the air groups which sent up the fighter planes or was there some air army down there?

A: They were under the control of the Southern General Army. The Southern General Army set up air groups under itself.

Q: Did the Army and Navy have controversy over the amount of protection the Navy was supplying for the convoys of oil?

A: I have not heard anything about this. I believe everything was carried out right.

Q: Why did the Army take over this air protection?

A: Because of the lack of planes by the Navy.

Q: What happened to the Navy planes?

A: There was just a lack of planes and there was also the necessity of reinforcing between the Army and the Navy.