

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

INTERROGATION NO (USSBS NO. 255)
(NAV NO 61)

Place: Tokyo
Date: 31 October 45

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division

Subject: Battle of SAVO ISLAND 9 August 1942

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Rear Admiral M. MATSUYAMA, IJN., Retired. Employed in convoy escort to eastern NEW GUINEA, June to December 1942 and in re-supply of troops at ORMOC in November 1944. He was Commander Battle Corps, connected with convoy escort and routing, SOLOMON-NEW GUINEA Area. Guest passenger in TENRYU (CL) (F) of CRU-DIV 18, during the First Battle of SAVO ISLAND.

Where interviewed: Meiji Building

Interrogator: Captain C. Shands, USN

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

Allied Officers Present: None

SUMMARY

CruDiv 6 (4CA) and CruDiv 18 (2CL) plus YUBARI and 2 DDs departed KAVIENG and RABAU for GUADALCANAL, engaging U.S. cruiser force vicinity of SAVO ISLAND the night of 9 August 1942. Japanese cruisers received minor damage from shell fire. U.S. cruisers damaged by torpedoes but turned back raid on U.S. transport force during initial SOLOMONS landing on TULAGI and GUADALCANAL.

TRANSCRIPT

- Q. Describe the Battle of SAVO ISLAND, 9 August 1942.
- A. Cruiser Division 6 (4 CA-AOBA, FURUTAKA, KINUGASA, KAKO (?)) and Cruiser Division 18 (2CL - TENRYU and TATSUTA) and Des Ron 6 (YUBARI (CL) and 2 DDs), came from KAVIENG and RABAU and rendezvoused in the vicinity of GREEN ISLAND. We then went southwest and passed through BOUGAINVILLE STRAIT, continuing southwest between NEW GEORGIA and SANTA ISABEL ISLANDS, passing to the south of SAVO ISLAND. One destroyer remained outside of SAVO ISLAND.

Our mission was to attack the American transports unloading troops at TULAGI and GUADALACANAL. CruDiv 6 was to attack the transports at GUADALACANAL while CruDiv 18 was to attack the TULAGI transports. CruDiv 6 was leading the formation. We knew American cruisers were in the vicinity but did not know their exact position. We did not have radar, but we saw one destroyer north and one south of SAVO ISLAND. One of our destroyers left the formation and remained outside of SAVO. I think that it was assigned one of your destroyers as a target. As we passed SAVO ISLAND, we passed astern of one of your destroyers. At about the same time we received word from the flagship's plane that your cruisers were present. Also the position.

Soon after we turned around SAVO ISLAND, the force opened fire and split. It was the original plan for the FURUTAKA group to take the outer course, but they took the inner course. I do not know why. I was with the inner group on the TENRYU.

Both the inner and outer groups opened fire on your ships to the south of us. The signal was to open fire when the flagship opened fire. We used searchlights and torpedoes also.

After firing at the group of ships to the south, the FURUTAKA group attacked other ships to the north. We also fired but were too far away to fire torpedoes. We saw your ships by searchlights and by the silhouette of flares. We did not use starshells.

After the battle we returned to RABAU the same way that we went down. The light cruisers went through ST GEORGES CHANNEL to RABAU and the heavy cruisers to KAVIENG.

- Q. Were you attacked by aircraft during your retirement?
- A. We saw a few aircraft but we were not attacked.
- Q. Did you have any aircraft present at SAVO other than the flagship's plane?
- A. I think that other planes were to illuminate the transports with aircraft flares, but I do not know where they were from.
- Q. Did you have any submarines or motor torpedo boats in the vicinity?
- A. No, only cruisers and the two destroyers.
- Q. Did you employ special ammunition for bombardment?
- A. I do not know about the other ships, but the TENRYU was using a thin walled shell with high capacity gunpowder. It was not armor piercing. The heavy cruisers probably used different ammunition.

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERROGATION OF (Rear Admiral MATSUYAMA, IJN).

Q. Why did you retire instead of attacking the transports?

A. I do not know. Our orders were simply to pass around SAVO ISLAND and bombard your ships, then go home. It was explicit and that is what we did.

Q. Did you know how much damage was inflicted to the American ships?

A. We heard a great many stories but did not know which to believe. I saw one sink and three or four on fire.

Q. Were any of your ships damaged or sunk?

A. The FURUTAKA and, I think, the TATSUTA received minor damage from gun fire. None sunk.

NOTE: Rear Admiral MATSUYAMA was a guest passenger on the TENRYU (CL) during this battle. Although he referred to a diary, it appeared that a portion of his information was obtained from discussion with other officers after the battle. Most of it was from personal observation. He had not had access to the battle plans prior to this engagement.