

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



INTERROGATION NO 437  
(Jap Intel No 47)

PLACE: TOKYO  
DATE: 24 Nov 1945

Division of Origin: Japanese Intelligence Section, G-2, USSBS.

Subject: Operational Intelligence in the Second Fleet.

Person Interrogated and Background:

Comdr. OTANI, Tonosuke, IJN, a naval officer of 18 years experience, was Staff Operations Officer, 2nd Fleet, from August 1943 to December 1944, at which time he became one of the three Secretaries to the Navy Minister, a post which he held until the end of hostilities.

1928: Graduated from the Naval Academy.

1942: Naval War College.

May 1943 to August 1943: Staff Officer 12th Air Flot.

August 1943 to December 1944: Staff Officer (Operations)  
2nd Fleet.

1 May 1944: promoted to Commander.

21 December 1944: Secretary to Navy Minister (one of three).

NOTE: It was desired in this interrogation to interview the Intelligence Officer assigned to Second Fleet Headquarters., but that officer, Lt. Comdr. OZAWA, was killed on OKINAWA, and Comdr. OTANI, the Operations Officer of the Second Fleet, volunteered that he was thoroughly familiar with OZAWA's assignment and duties and offered to provide such information.

Where Interviewed: Meiji Building, Room 748.

Interrogator: Lt. Comdr. WILLIAM H. BOTZER, USNR.

Interpreter: Lt.(jg) S. HALPERN, USNR.

Allied Officers Present: None.

Interrogation of Comdr. OTANI, T., IJN.  
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SUMMARY:

Although each Fleet has an intelligence officer assigned to the staff, lower echelons normally do not and the communications officer in any lower echelon does intelligence work as additional duty.

The duties of intelligence officers on the Fleet level are purely tactical or operational with all strategic or background information coming from higher echelons of command.

There was no special training of intelligence officers for this duty.

Specific duties of the Fleet Intelligence Officer included:

1. Communications plans
2. Intelligence evaluation
3. Code officer for the Fleet

Specific sources of intelligence or information in the surface Fleets were such things as the following:

1. Radar
2. Monitoring of enemy transmissions
3. Aircraft reports
4. Submarine reports

The information sent down to the Fleets from Combined Fleet Headquarters included such material as:

1. Changes in frequencies used by enemy radio and radar
2. Suspected changes in codes
3. Estimates of enemy intentions, changes in organization and location, etc.

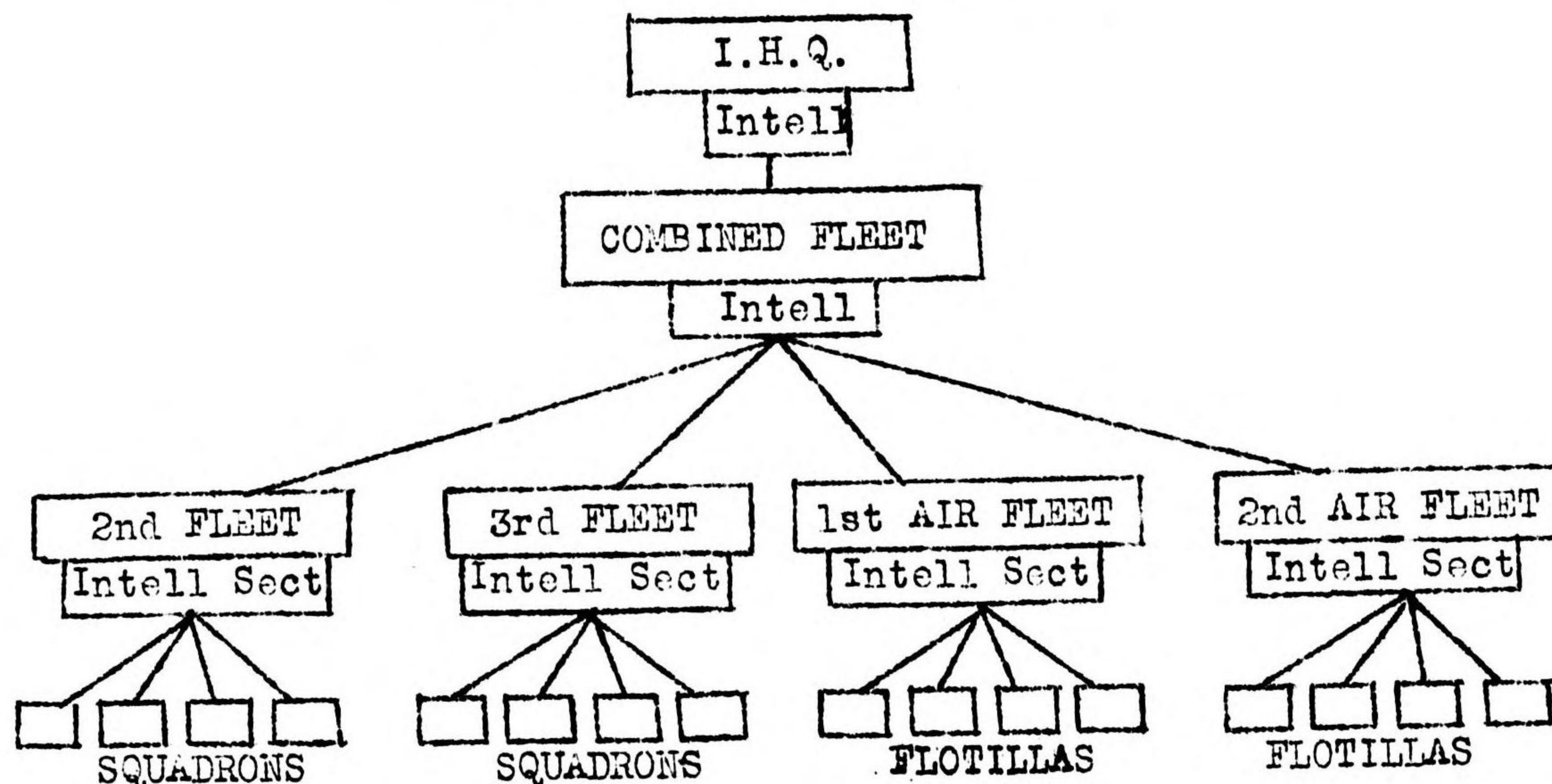
Comdr. OTANI then speaks at some length and in considerable detail of the Second Fleet in the Battle of LEYTE GULF or the Battle of LEYTE-SAMAR ( Second Battle of the PHILIPPINES SEA, 25 October 1944).

Interrogation of Comdr. OTANI, T., IJN. (contd).

Q.1. What was the organization of intelligence or information officers in surface Fleets?

A. Each Fleet has an intelligence section attached to the Staff. As a rule the Communications Officer doubles as Intelligence Officer. Under him there is generally one officer who is a Lt. or Lt. Comdr. charged directly with intelligence. He has two or three assistants of the rank normally of Lt.(jg) or Ensign. Then there will be 16 or 17 petty officers included in the section. Squadrons under the Fleet do not ordinarily have their own intelligence section.

INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION CHART



Fleet Intelligence Sections

Chief: Staff Communications Officer  
 Collateral Duty: Staff Intelligence Officer  
 1st Lt. or Lt. Comdr.  
 2-3 Lt.(jg) or Ensigns  
 16-17 Petty Officers

Q.2. What were the duties of Intelligence Officers?

A. All duties of Fleet Intelligence are purely tactical (Operational) and all strategic information comes from higher echelons. Results of Fleet Headquarters intelligence work is passed down to subordinate units. Specifically, the duties of the Fleet Staff Intelligence Officer include (a) communications plans, (b) Intelligence evaluation and (c) code officer for the Fleet. This, by-the-way, refers only to our own codes. We could listen to enemy coded broadcasts but would send these to higher echelons for attempted decoding. The subordinates I mentioned did the gathering of information and passed it along to the Fleet Intelligence Officer for his evaluation.

Q.3. Were these Intelligence Officers specially trained for intelligence duties?

A. No, there was no special intelligence training in the Japanese Navy. The only specialized courses in intelligence training I can think of might be the course in the Navy Communications School where they have a "Special Communications Section" (TOKUSHIN HAN). During the war this course was possibly six months in length. Not all communications officers took it, but some of them did, and this was the only specialized intelligence training we ever had.

Q.4. Did surface units (BB, CA, CL and DD) have Intelligence Officers?

Interrogation of Comdr. OTANI, T., IJN, (contd).  
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A. No, but sometimes men from the Fleet Headquarters who were in the intelligence section there might be attached to Squadron Flags for a limited time. Individual ships, however, did not have intelligence officers.

Q.5. Would you say that in individual surface units the Commanding Officer acted as his own intelligence Officer?

A. No, I would say that each Commanding Officer received his operational information from the Fleet Headquarters. The intelligence work was done there.

Q.6. How effective would you say you were in your work in operational intelligence?

A. We were never able to get any specific information. It was mostly general. For example, preceding the LEYTE Operation, we knew the enemy would attack the PHILIPPINES, but we did not know where the attack would come. It might be DAVAO, LINGAYEN or any one of a number of other places. So we could lay out only the most general plans and we would have to change them as occasion demanded on the spot.

Q.7. Could you tell the time of attacks very accurately beforehand?

A. Yes, we did fairly well on that, I believe. We could estimate fairly well -- within the month, say, when a major landing would take place.

Q.8. Tell me what type of information was sent from Combined Fleet Headquarters down to the various Fleets.

A. This information was more of the general or background type. Included, in more specific information from them however, were such things as: (a) changes in frequencies used by enemy radio and radar (b) suspected changes in codes and (c) estimates of enemy intentions, changes in organization, location, etc. These latter estimates were based for the most part on traffic analysis done by Imperial Headquarters, the Naval General Staff, and Combined Fleet Headquarters.

Q.9. Explain the operation of your intelligence work in preparation for that 2nd Battle of the Philippines Sea when the 2nd Fleet came through San Bernadino Straits on 24-25 October 1944.

A. In general, intelligence data was used only in estimating the time that the enemy would start the operation and also what enemy fleet units would probably be present and brought to bear. We knew, of course, from repeated air strikes, primarily, from TAIWAN on down through the PHILIPPINES. Our overall strategy was prescribed in Combined Fleet Headquarters and our objectives and dates and times of attack were set for us by them. I myself planned the operational aspects for the 2nd Fleet. We sortied LINGA on 18 October.

Q.10. Did you then know the location and strength of the U.S. forces?

A. No, we did not have any such detailed information, but from the fact that you were launching repeated air attacks -- and their location -- we could estimate fairly accurately the approximate forces and their positions, and we could determine that something would happen somewhere in the PHILIPPINES in 4 or 5 days.

Q.11. Where did you go after you sortied LINGA?

A. We went to BRUNEI BAY, arriving there on 20 October. We departed BRUNEI on 22 October.

Q.12. What was the composition of your force?

Interrogation of Comdr. OTANI, Tonosuke, IJN, (contd)

A. At BRUNEI we had the following:

BATDIV 1 - YAMATO  
MUSHASHI  
NEGATO

BATDIV 2 - KONGO  
HARUNA

CRUDIV 4 - ATAGO  
TAKAO  
CHOKAI  
MAYA

CRUDIV 5 - MYOKO  
HAGURO

CRUDIV 7 - KUMANO  
SUZUYA  
TONE  
CHIKUMA

DESRON 2 - NOSHIRO (CL) F  
10 DD

DESRON 10 - YAHAGI (CL) F  
8 DD

Q.13. How many of these came out of San Bernardino Straits on the morning of 25 October?

A. The following:

YAMATO  
NEGATO  
KONGO  
HARUNA

CHOKAI  
MYOKO  
HAGURO  
KUMANO  
SUZUYA  
TONE  
CHIKUMA

NOSHIRO plus 7 or 8 DD

YAHAGI with 8 DD.

Q.14. What time did you sortie San Bernadino Straits?

A. We were scheduled at 1800 24 October but did not actually make it until 2300 to 2400 24 October.

Q.15. At that time did you know the location and strength of U.S. forces?

A. We had no communications intelligence on this. We had some plane reports. In general, we knew there were 3 striking forces off Northern LUZON. And we knew there was a BB group covering the landing. We got Army reports that there were 150 to 200 ships in the Bay, but we thought maybe 100 or less. Army reports were always much exaggerated and they could not identify ships correctly. We also knew there was a CVE force covering the landing, didn't know how many, probably 3 or 4.

Q.16. How did you get this information?

Interrogation of Comdr. OTANI, Tonosuke, IJN., (contd).  
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A. Our most effective means was air reconnaissance but this was cut down because of bad weather. Also we made estimates from your continued air strikes from FORMOSA on down.

Q.17. Did you have many reconnaissance planes out of fields in the PHILIPPINES?

A. I do not recall accurately, seems we had some reconnaissance out of MOROTAI and we did get some reports from MANILA but I believe those were estimates rather than direct sighting reports.

Q.18. Did you have photographic reconnaissance?

A. No - I think it was all visual - and there were many mistakes.

Q.19. What were the 2nd Fleet objectives?

A. To get into LEYTE GULF and sink any shipping there: Our target priorities were:

(1) Carriers, (2) transports, (3) combatant surface units. We didn't figure we'd get any carriers actually in LEYTE GULF so our primary objective **really** was transports. We were also prepared for shore bombardment. This was because the Army was most insistent in this; so we were set up for 2 or 3 hours - but we could not carry it on, so we would not have been very effective in this. To have done shore bombardment adequately would have required several days. We were prepared only for several hours, and this only because the Army was so excited about it.

Q.20. What was your first contact?

A. 25 October 0640.

Q.21. How?

A. Visual. From the lookout in the crow's nest of the YAMATO.

Q.22. What did you see?

A. A petty officer made the first sighting. There followed some discussion as to whether it might be our own SURIGAO forces. We ordered the Staff Gunnery Officer to gunnery control, then we saw planes on the flight decks and knew they were enemy.

Q.23. How many ships did you see?

A. I went up myself. First, I saw two carriers. The ship's Gunnery Officer reported 4 to 6 carriers. We saw no surface units at this time. We later saw also 1 cruiser and 2-3 DD. This was when they started laying smoke. We had not seen them before they started doing that. I gave orders on the assumption there was a surface TF with the carriers.

Q.24. What was your first estimate of this enemy force?

A. I thought this was a replenishing force bringing in replacement airplanes. I estimated also, 1 Car Div and 8 to 12 DD. Our Gunnery Officer's 3rd report or so, reported what he said was one BB also in the enemy force.

Q.25. When did you open fire?

A. Our first sighting was at 30,000 metres at 0640. 5 to 10 minutes after this first sighting, YAMATO opened up. This was at 0645 or 0650 at a range of 28,000 metres.

Interrogation of Comdr. OTAWI, Tonosuke, IJN., (contd).

Q.26. Had you seen any planes before your sighting?

A. The Chief Staff said he did; I did not. I was very surprised to be running into this force. He said they were enemy, but did not estimate whether they were carrier or land based. He thought you might be using Tacloban airstrip by this time.

Q.27. Was your intention at that time to go around this force on into LEYTE GULF?

A. Since this force was there, we decided to go after that then go on into LEYTE GULF.

Q.28. Did you think you could eliminate this force fairly easily?

A. We didn't think we'd have much trouble. We were very powerful.

Q.29. What went wrong?

A. The main troubles were weather (squalls) and the smoke screen put down by your cruisers and destroyers.

Q.30. When did you break off the engagement?

A. At 0915 we ordered our forces to reassemble because of the scarcity of targets. About 1000 we were reassembled. We discussed whether to proceed on into LEYTE GULF but decided not to.

Q.31. Why did you decide not to go on into the GULF?

A. Our reasons were these:

- (1) We had already accomplished considerable results.
- (2) We were very much delayed in our schedule.
- (3) We thought if we went in we would be subject to land-based air attack.
- (4) We would face surface attack in the Bay.
- (5) We thought a reinforcement force was expected. We had intercepted 7th Fleet message in plain language calling for air strike support.
- (6) We thought by this time most of the transports would have gotten out of the Gulf anyway.
- (7) We were low on fuel. This was not critical, but we were low.

Q.32. What was your estimate then of damage to the enemy force?

A. Our summary to Imperial Headquarters was this:

Sunk: 4 Carriers

q.a. What kind?

A. We had silhouettes of your ships, but could not identify these particular ships. I thought the ones I saw were "regular" carriers - about 17,000 to 18,000 tons.

2 - 3 cruisers sunk.

q.a. What Kind of cruisers? A. Heavies.

2 - 3 DD sunk.

Also, more damage to other cruisers and carriers.

Q.33. What was your damage?

Interrogation of Comdr. OTANI, Tonosuke, IJN., (contd).

A. We received practically no damage from surface fire. Later, planes came over. There were a fairly large number of shell splashes. One hit on the YAMATO.

q.a. What size?

A. 20 cm which was discovered when we returned to BRUNEI.

Q.34. What was your damage from enemy planes?

A. From 1300 to 1530 we had our heaviest air attacks. CHIKUMA sunk, I don't know whether by bomb or torpedo. CHOKAI, hit by a torpedo, went dead in the water, we torpedoed her with one of our own destroyers. SUZUYA, something happened; torpedo stopped her dead in water and we had to sink her. All of our ships received some damage. 4 DD were still afloat but inoperative.

Q.35. Was your damage primarily from bombs or torpedos?

A. Most (60% - 70%) from bombs.

Q.36. What size?

A. 250 Kilo.

Q.37. How many on YAMATO?

A. 2 hit on bow, one torpedo on port bow.

Q.38. Was there much strafing by enemy fighters?

A. Yes, a great deal, the worst damage from this was on the NAGATO, where we lost many AA personnel.

Q.39. How many enemy aircraft did you shoot down?

A. About 10%.

Q.40. How many planes did you estimate were in the attacking force?

A. On the 24th - 1,000. On the 25th - 800 to 900.

Q.41. And you shot down 10% of all of these?

A. Yes.

Q.42. What did you estimate as the speed of the enemy Task Force?

A. Around 30 knots - 28 to 30. Our own top speed was 28 and we weren't closing very fast. We were fighting on the "external lines" and hence had difficulty closing.

Q.43. What was the closest range of any of your forces?

A. For the YAMATO it was 28,000 metres, the range at our first sighting. During your torpedo attacks, when YAMATO was maneuvering to avoid torpedoes, we lost ground; some of our cruisers may have been under 15,000 metres.

Q.44. Did the YAMATO have radar fire control?

A. Yes. It was the first time we had used it.

Q.45. How did it work?



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Interrogation of Comdr. OTANI, Tonosuke, IJN., (contd).

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A. The Gunnery Officer felt that for using it the first time, though many things were wrong, still it worked well. He was most favorably impressed and felt that with practice and development it would become excellent.

Q.46. How many rounds did YAMATO fire?

A. We did not use more than 1/3 of our ammunition. I don't remember how many rounds we carried. We were well stocked on ammunition, though. That was not at all critical.

Q.47. Did you as operations officer for the Staff, 2nd Fleet, normally have adequate information? What is your evaluation of your Naval Intelligence?

A. As far as overall strategical considerations are concerned, intelligence was greatly lacking always. But that is always true. Tactically, I felt that our intelligence work was quite good.

NOTE: 2nd Fleet was in ATAGO on BRUNEI sortie. Transferred to YAMATO at approximately 1700 on 23 October 1944.

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