

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

INTERROGATION NO. (USBS NO. 75)
NAV NO. 16

Place: Tokyo
Date: 12 Oct. 1945

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: Battle of EASTERN SOLOMONS, 23-25 August 1942
Battle of SANTA CRUZ, 26 October 1942
SOLOMONS CAMPAIGN, 1942 - 1943

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Commander OKUMIYA, Masatake, I.J.N., Class 1927, I.J.N.A. On Air Staff and Commander RABAU Air Group 1942 - 1943. Served at RABAU, TRUK and OKINAWA. At present on I.J. Naval Staff as Operations under Captain OHMAE. (Appeared smart and well informed.)

Where interviewed: MEIJI Building.

Interrogator: Captain C. (n) Shands, USN.

Interpreter: Lieut. Comdr. D. (n) Bartlett, USNR.

Allied Officers Present: Commander T. H. Moorer, USN.

SUMMARY

SANTA CRUZ: Composition of Japanese 2nd and 3rd Fleets, which were operating just north of the SOLOMONS to (1) support Japanese landing on GUADALCANAL, 13-23 October 1942, and (2) to intercept U. S. troop convoys to GUADALCANAL and U. S. Carrier Task Force. In carrier duel on 26 October, SHOKAKU, ZUIHO and CHIKUMA were damaged. Heavy Japanese air losses contributed to weakening defense of SOLOMONS.

SOLOMONS: GUADALCANAL an intermediate step in southern movement. Main action in SOLOMON CAMPAIGN considered (1) GUADALCANAL (2) MUNDA (3) VELLA LAVELLA (4) EMPRESS AUGUSTA BAY. Inability to hold SOLOMONS attributed to U.S. Navy sea and air action in SOLOMON Area and lack of landing barges. Heavy bomber raid on airfield more effective than carrier raid. Carrier raid most effective on aircraft and shipping. RABAU and TRUK neutralized due to inability to supply. Employment of submarines to supply isolated garrisons considered poor policy. Mining of RABAU a deterrent to submarine supply operation. Aircraft pilot reports of damage inflicted on enemy always optimistic and only used for newspaper publicity. Staff planning used pessimistic estimate.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Commander OKUMIYA, Masatake, IJN) - - - - -

TRANSCRIPT

- Q. Are you familiar with the CORAL SEA Battle on 7 and 8 May 1942.
- A. I was home in JAPAN during the CORAL SEA Battle. A different person knows about that.
- Q. Do you know any one who is familiar with it?
- A. Captain YOMOKA, M., was Chief of Staff of the operation and is now in TOKYO. The Commanding Officer, Vice Admiral HARA, of that battle is now at TRUK.
- Q. Are you familiar with the Battle of the EASTERN SOLOMONS, 23-25 August 1942?
- A. I know a little about it.
- Q. Do you know when the RUIJO was sunk?
- A. About 25 August, I was in JAPAN at the time.
- Q. Do you know how it was sunk?
- A. It was carrier dive bomber and torpedo planes. The SHOKOKU, ZUIKAKU and RUIJO were in the SOLOMONS at that time. About the 24th, the carrier RUIJO, the heavy cruiser TONE, and 3 DDs were attacked near GUADALCANAL. They didn't know the source of the dive bombers and torpedo planes but they were carrier type and came from the direction of GUADALCANAL.
- Q. Were any other ships lost at that time?
- A. Maybe one DD and the RUIJO was all. Somebody who knows more about it should be asked.
- Q. Are you familiar with the Battle of SANTA CRUZ, 25-26 October 1942?
- A. I was there and am familiar with it.
- Q. What was your capacity?
- A. I was on the Air Staff of the Second Flying Squadron.
- Q. What ships were involved?
- A. Composition of Japanese Fleet at SANTA CRUZ, 25-26 Oct. 1942
- 2nd Fleet Vice Admiral KONDO, N., Commander in Chief
- | | | |
|----------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 (CV) | JUNYO | 2nd Flying Squadron |
| 2 (BB) | KONCO, HARUNA | 3rd Flying Squadron |
| 4 (CA) | ABAGO, TAKAO, CHOKAI, MAYA | 4th Flying Squadron |
| 2 (CA) | MYAKO, HAGURO | |
| 1 (CL) | JINTSU (?) | |
| 12 (DDs) | | |
- 3rd Fleet Vice Admiral NAGUMO, C., Commander in Chief
- | | | |
|----------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| 3 (CVs) | SHOKAKU (F), ZUIKAKU, ZUIKO | 1st Flying Squadron |
| 2 (BBs) | HIEI, KIRISHIMA | 11th Squadron |
| 2 (CAs) | SUZUYA, KUMANO | 7th Squadron |
| 2 (CAs) | TONE, CHIKUMA | 8th Squadron |
| 1 (CL) | | |
| 12 (DDs) | | |
- Some tankers in addition.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Commander OKUMIYA, Masatake, IJN) - - - - -

Q. Was the HIYO in the battle?

A. No. HIYO had engine trouble at TRUK. The JUNYO was alone in 2nd Fleet, but I don't believe it was near enough to get in any action.

Q. Did any of the pilots and planes that survived the battle of MIDWAY come down into the SOLOMONS?

A. In the MIDWAY Battle there were a great many survivors. Because our pilots were in the air when carrier sank, they were rescued by destroyers. Most of the MIDWAY flyers were put on the carriers SHOKAKU, ZUIKAKU and RUIJO. The pilots left from MIDWAY were familiar with carrier operations so put them on these carriers.

Q. Who was the Admiral in charge of the force?

A. Vice Admiral NAGUMO, C., he was killed at SAIPAN in command of the 3rd Fleet.

Q. How are personnel transports and oilers classified? For instance we have a list of auxiliary ships which were hit and sunk. How are they identified by type?

A. By name.

Q. What was the mission of the Task Force that was operating in that area?

A. It was a support for the landing operations on GUADALCANAL.

Q. What day did they plan on making the landing?

A. I think between 1st and 23rd, October. I am not too certain of the exact dates.

Q. Did the action of the SANTA CRUZ Battle have any affect upon the landing date?

A. I heard landing was completed on the 25th but that the results were not as successful as expected.

Q. Did that action have any effect on the 14 November night battle?

A. No. The Task Force went back to TRUK on 30 October after SANTA CRUZ Battle, reorganized, then came the 14 November action. Do not know if it affected the plans. Only the Second Flying Squadron's planes engaged at SANTA CRUZ, so they had planes during the time of the November action.

Q. What carriers were damaged at SANTA CRUZ?

A. SHOKAKU received 4 bomb hits on port side amidships and two at the after elevator. The HIHO received one bomb hit near the after elevator. The cruiser CHIKUMA got five bomb hits. The destroyer TERUTSUKI got a near miss by a UNITED STATES flying boat about midnight after the battle. When TERUTSUKI was bombed, the Japanese knew American planes were near the fleet so the Japanese carriers continued to retire northward. Some cruisers and battleships stayed near scene of battle and saw your carrier burning and I saw it from the air.

Q. Did they return the next day?

A. No, they did not come back the next day. They proceeded to TRUK.

Q. Do you know how long after sunrise the first hits were made?

A. The ZUIKAKU was hit about two hours after daylight, about 0830. The SHOKAKU was hit later, about 40 minutes after the raid of Japanese airplanes had departed.

Q. Were any airplanes aboard the carrier when hit?

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Commander OKUMIYA, Masatake, IJN) _ _ _ _

A. No, all off in Attack Group except about 10 planes in the fighter cover.

Q. Did those planes come back to the SHOKAKU later?

A. No, they couldn't land on board. They went to the ZUIKAKU and ZUIHO.

Q. How many planes did the aircraft carrier normally carry?

A.	SHOKAKU	ZUIKAKU	ZUIHO	JUNYO
VF	27	27	21	18
VB	27	18		18
VT	<u>18</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>9</u>
	72	63	27	45

About 2/3 were lost. Total lost about 100.

Q. Were any of your carriers sunk there?

A. No.

Q. How many planes were involved in the operation from the carriers?

A. About 175. There were three waves. They all went out in the first wave; fewer planes in the second raid, about 50; then in the third wave about 30.

Q. Was the MYOKA hit by bombs?

A. I think not, but there were near misses. I am not certain. An awful lot of torpedoes came but no hits.

Q. Was the TONE hit?

A. There were near misses, but no hits. In my opinion, it was a heavy attack.

Q. Were any horizontal bombers involved in this attack?

A. About ten B-24s, but the Japanese fighters drove them away so were not attacked. Late at night we received a torpedo attack from possibly a B-24 but we were able to avoid it by evasive action.

Q. Where did the damaged ships go?

A. All went to TRUK. Then the SHOKAKU, ZUIHO and CHIKUMA returned to JAPAN for repair. It took about 3-4 months to repair the SHOKAKU.

Q. Were any battleships of the KONGO class there?

A. The HARUNA was there on the west side.

Q. Was it hit?

A. I did not hear of it being hit.

Q. Were any other cruisers or battleships hit?

A. I didn't hear that they were.

Q. When did you receive first information of our Carrier Task Force?

A. When south of the GILBERTS, north of HEBRIDES. The Japanese headquarters at TRUK knew of a convoy of transports and battleships approaching GUADALCANAL from the southeast about the middle of October. They believed UNITED STATES Navy convoy would be (about lat. 14°S 161°E on chart) south of GUADALCANAL. The Japanese Carrier Force didn't think so since they knew our search planes from GILBERTS had sighted an American Carrier approaching from the east. Japanese Carrier Force was supposed to attack

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Commander OKUMIYA, Masatake, IJN)

south convoy but hesitated to do so. Because of radio silence this information was not sent to TRUK, communication difficulties. TRUK did not know of American carriers. So the 2nd and 3rd Fleets waited north of GUADALCANAL while your carriers approached. Our carriers were familiar with position of your carrier force the entire time although TRUK did not have the information regarding position of our carrier force. Our force hesitated about how far south to go. The thing that decided it was your approach. One of our scout planes, scouting on bearing 098°T, saw your carrier force in the morning of the 26th. He was supposed to scout 250 miles southeast and 100 miles north.

Q. Did you have submarines in the vicinity?

A. I think they were farther south.

Q. Do you know if any of your submarines torpedoed any of our ships?

A. I never heard.

Q. Did you have any report that your planes had damaged our carriers?

A. There was a report from the planes that an ENTERPRISE class carrier was hit, maybe two. The reports did not come in clearly.

Q. Do you know if any American carriers were sunk?

A. We were sure that one was sunk because we saw it, but we didn't get complete reports on the second carrier. Became less certain while waiting for reports that did not come in.

Q. Were any of your pilots instructed to carry out suicide attacks on our carriers?

A. No orders were given, but two of them on their own initiative did so. The commander of one wing was one of those that made a suicide dive-bombing attack.

Q. You say a large formation of bombers attacked in the afternoon of the 25th, but no hits were made, is that correct?

A. The statement is correct.

Q. Did the 2nd and 3rd Flying Fleets come down the night of the 26th to pursue our ships?

A. Some of our fast ships approached scene of battle but turned back when your burning carrier was sighted.

Q. What were the plans for establishing bases in the SOLOMONS? Where were your principal bases to be located?

A. RABAUL.

Q. What were the plans of employment of GUADALCANAL?

A. It was an intermediate step for going south.

Q. What interrupted the completion of that plan?

A. I think that Sea Force and Air Force of the UNITED STATES Navy. The fact that Americans landed and were able to hold at GUADALCANAL.

Q. While the Americans held GUADALCANAL were Japanese Naval Pilots or Army Air Force Pilots employed in the raids at GUADALCANAL?

A. Almost entirely Naval. Few scout planes of the Army. Attacking was done by Navy Planes. Navy personnel came first and were land based. After the sinking of the RUIJO, they added more Navy to them. They also came to BUKA in September.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Commander OKUMIYA, Masatake, IJN) _ _ _ _ _

- Q. Why were the reenforcements of GUADALCANAL sent down in small units instead of one mass attack?
- A. Didn't have enough landing barges to make a landing. The main point of difficulty in our landing operations was the lack of landing barges. Boats and destroyers were used for landings. But we didn't have enough barges to begin with. Had plenty of big ships but not enough landing craft. Damage from American planes made it worse.
- Q. What battles did you consider the principal action in that SOLOMONS Campaign?
- A. We considered it all the same thing but most important was GUADALCANAL, MUNDA, VELLA LAVELLA, EMPRESS AUGUSTA BAY.
- Q. Did the bombing of the SOLOMONS airfield affect operations?
- A. They got our field completely at MUNDA. We had about 20 planes there which did a very good job in the first battle, but when they landed one day to refuel they were done in by American fighters. Because of bombing and strafing we couldn't repair or develop the field afterwards. We had only one site at MUNDA. We could only use KOLUMBANGARA for communication. I was at BUIN the toughest part of the time. At BUIN, at the beginning, the Americans used too small bombs. Even at the worst we were still able in the early days to continue to use the field because the bombs used were too small.
- Q. What type planes dropped the bombs?
- A. B-24, B-25, B-17, and dive bombers. From August 1943 the big bombers came over from RUSSEL ISLAND. Some times we received five attacks in one day. Because of the damage of BUIN at the end of August 1943, we alternated between BALLALE and BUKA; and by September despite building of an auxiliary field at BUIN, the BOUGAINVILLE area became impractical for air operations. All planes and personnel retired to RABAUL. After the fighter planes had left BUIN all resupply was practically impossible.
- Q. Did the ground troops remain on BOUGAINVILLE?
- A. Yes, the troops brought from GUADALCANAL went up to BOUGAINVILLE ISLAND from all the SOLOMON ISLANDS. Remaining infantry troops gathered at BUIN.
- Q. How did they travel between the islands?
- A. January 1943 by destroyer. They evacuated GUADALCANAL with 20 destroyers. MUNDA, RENDOVA and VELLA LAVELLA troops were also evacuated by destroyer. The closer islands were evacuated by submarine and very small boats.
- Q. Do you know about any losses of any ships, for instance KINUGASA and KIRUSHIMA.?
- A. In November the HYEI (BB) received a PT boat torpedo, damaged rudder and after completing circumnavigation of SAVO ISLAND, was bombarded by an American destroyer or cruiser. A Japanese destroyer contributed to sinking the HYEI. Also she received damage from American destroyer and cruiser bombardment and by bombing from American planes. KIRUSHIMA also sunk.
- Q. Did the HYEI go on to GUADALCANAL to continue bombardment even though damaged?
- A. Before she sank she was still shooting. The KIRUSHIMA was sunk due west of SAVO ISLAND. Due to no air support the cruiser YURA was also sunk about 25 October. It was near RABAUL, I think.
- Q. Do you know anything about the early action around TULAGI in May 1942?
- A. No.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Commander OKUMIYA, Masatake, IJN)

Q. Following the loss of the SOLOMONS chain what were your new plans?

A. After the loss of the SOLOMON ISLANDS, the Americans were able to attack RABAUL with all types of planes. Because we had difficulty in supplying RABAUL we took all the planes out of RABAUL to TRUK about 21 February 1944. Following the first Carrier Task Force attack upon TRUK, about 17 February 1944 by the Americans, the airplane losses were heavy, so we flew all but six planes to TRUK for reinforcements. Later about June or July, five or six planes at a time were flown from TRUK to KAVIENG and the ADMIRALTY ISLANDS. In August and September 1943, I was engaged in flight training near SINGAPORE, therefore I did not know what happened in the SOLOMONS at that time. I am not sure of any other plans but I think we were looking for some other area in which to make a defense.

Q. What happened to ground personnel at RABAUL and TRUK?

A. A good many had to stay. As many as possible were taken out by planes, flying boats and submarines to PALAU and DAVAO. A lot of them were killed by American bombing operations at RABAUL. Many aircraft maintenance personnel killed from that reason. Later operations were hampered because too many skilled personnel stuck at RABAUL unable to get out.

Q. What type of bombing do you consider the most effective?

A. B-24s were most effective on land bases. Because our fields were few, it was the size of bombs that did the harm. Little ones didn't do much harm. The number of crashes attempting to land on damaged fields was very great after B-24 raids. In a place like RABAUL where there were many fields, big bombs were not such a determining factor because we could land on an auxiliary field. Bombing effectiveness depends upon the target. The main thing that bothered us in operation was having several fields hit at the same time, leaving nothing to be used as auxiliary. Carrier planes on a small island with small targets or against ships were most dangerous. In an isolated place like TRUK with its many fields, carrier planes were most feared due to accuracy and repeated attacks, whereas the heavy bombers could only come one flight a day. Carrier planes would keep coming all day for several days. Carrier planes always destroyed many of our planes and shipping which could not be easily replaced, whereas heavy bombers mostly damaged airfields which were repairable. Also some supplies.

Q. Was the shipping in RABAUL Harbor damaged by bombing?

A. The big bombers did very little damage but the dive bombers did whatever damage was done to the shipping. There were many ships sunk in the harbor by dive bombers.

Q. Were we wise in attacking the RABAUL airfields?

A. Most distressing thing for us in a place like RABAUL was to have the shipping bombed. However, that depends on the target. The worst was attacking the shipping approaching RABAUL full of supplies.

Q. Were the American night bombing attacks effective on your shore bases?

A. The men became fatigued. Cut down fighting power. Didn't hit much.

Q. Were you present at any ports where American planes mined the harbors?

A. I was at RABAUL when that was done. At first they were not much of a nuisance and damage was minor. Later they were serious because they interfered with the supply submarines coming in.

Q. Do you know why submarines were used to supply instead of attack?

A. The use of submarines was not well done. Due to the loss of air control and shipping, the great length of supply lines committed our submarines to a policy of supply. The point is that there was no area fully consolidated enough to take care of itself. None of the points were self de-

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Commander OKUMIYA, Masatake, IJN) _ _ _ _ _

pendent. The use of submarines came from high authority but I think the Army insisted upon their use.

Q. Do you know if airplanes were scouting for submarines which sank the WASP in September 1942?

A. I don't know much about that. I was on my way home, but plans were for that. In practice, communication between them was very bad.

Q. In early March 1943 our Air Forces pressed an attack on a large Japanese convoy in the BISMARCK SEA. Do you know what losses the Japanese sustained?

A. It is being made up on FEAF report. If you will excuse me I would rather not talk about it until later.

Q. In the two battles of KULA GULF, 6 and 13 July 1943, what were the losses?

A. Four destroyers were sunk, but I was at RABOUL. Didn't hear full details. The main thing that showed up for us was our bad radar.

Q. When was the radar first used on the airplanes?

A. First on planes at the beginning of 1943. After MIDWAY first on ships.

Q. When was the first on shore?

A. Little before July 1942. They were experimenting with it before the war.

Q. Do you know anything about aerial mining at KAHILI about June, July 1943?

A. No.

Q. Did you have any plans to go back to BOUGAINVILLE after withdrawing?

A. No, we couldn't supply it.

Q. What were your duties in September - October 1945?

A. Came back to the Navy General Staff on 20 August last year.

Q. Were you on action reports, current operations?

A. Yes.

Q. Could you say what damage they thought they inflicted on the UNITED STATES Third Fleet off FORMOSA on the 14, 15 October?

A. Not very accurate reports. Most of the reports were from flight personnel who couldn't see very well. They said they thought they had caused damage to or sunk ten carriers. We thought back in the office that they probably had done serious damage to only four. Pilots report optimistically. We put that stuff in the paper. We thought in the office, and made plans accordingly, that the damage inflicted was less and that they had only seriously damaged four or five carriers.

Q. Did you feel that you had seriously affected American strength?

A. We took the pessimistic view when making plans, but made public the optimistic reports.

Q. Did you receive any information about American damage through radio despatches?

A. Yes. During operations some of the ships we thought had been sunk began sending out radio signals, so we knew they were not sunk.

Q. Was this done by traffic analysis, breakdown of code signs, or breakdown of the message?

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Commander OIUMIYA, Masatake, IJN)-----

A. We figured that certain very valuable ships have a particular wave length and therefore we learned what the wave lengths were. When communicating with your own planes, we figured out what carrier it was.

Q. Were you able to recognize our code signals?

A. No.

Q. We want to get your higher echelon planning organization, their method of employment of plans, execution of plans and details of specific plans throughout the entire campaign through this area. Also an overall breakdown so this analysis can be presented as the plans changed. This analysis should include where the changes occurred and the effects of our operations on your planning.

A. I will speak to a certain Captain and Admiral and arrange to have this prepared for you.

Q. Do you want a list of specific questions from me for them to prepare answers?

A. If I had that, it would help.

Q. In addition to these questions, I would like certain personalities to interrogate to get additional details of the subject matter presented to us.

A. That will be submitted.

Chairman's Office

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HEADQUARTERS
U. S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY

Washington, D.C.
January 1946

Interrogation No. USSBS 75 Sup
(Nav No. 16)

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division

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Battle of SANTA CRUZ, 26 October 1942
SOLOMONS Campaign, 1942 - 1943

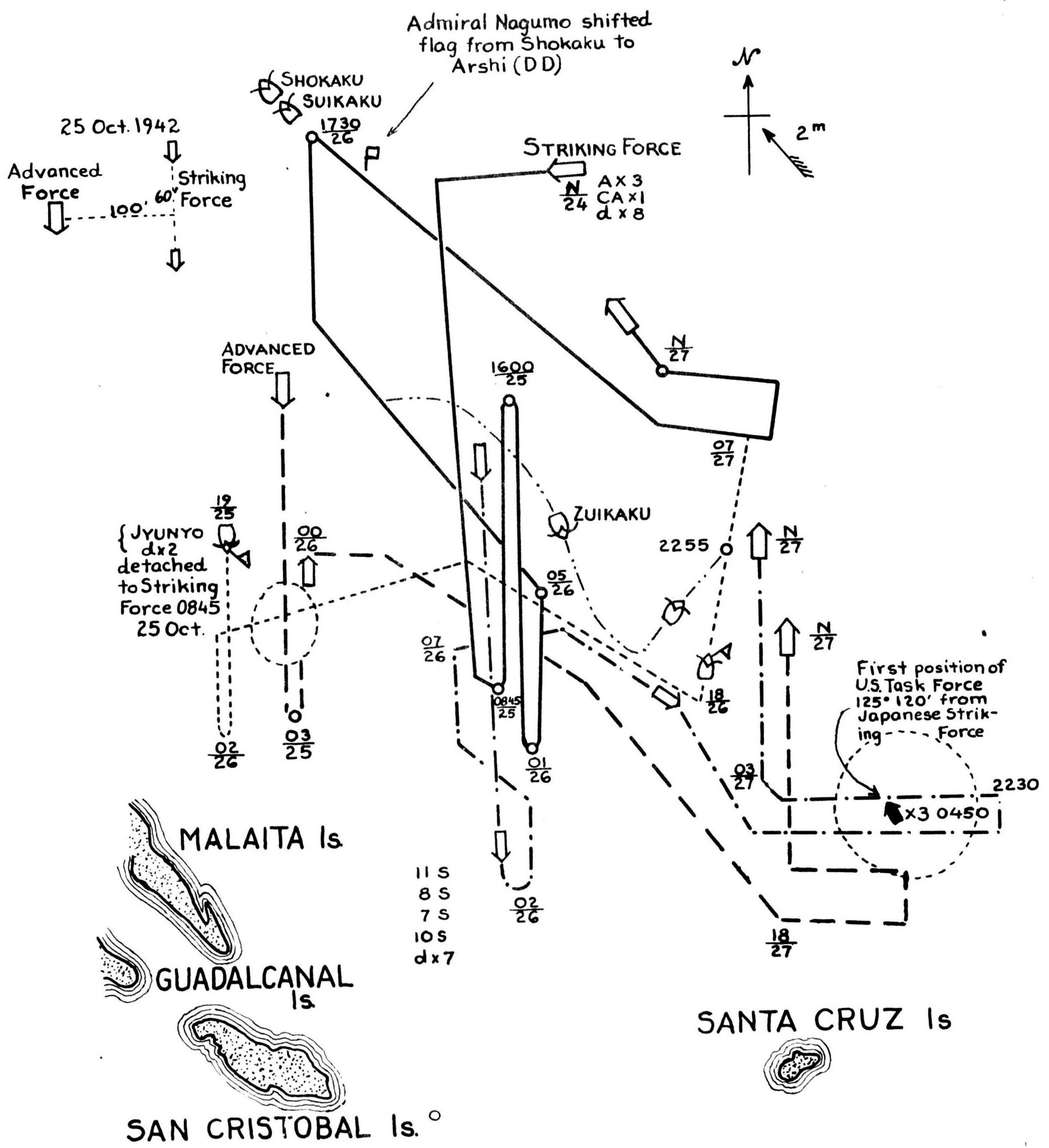
Interrogation of: Commander OKUNIYA, Masatake, I.J.N.

Interrogated by: Captain C. Shands, U.S.N.

The attached chart supplements Interrogation No.
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Enclosure: Annex A



TRACK CHART JAPANESE FORCES
 BATTLE OF SANTA CRUZ, 25-26 OCT. 1942
 Submitted by I. J. Naval Staff College

INTERRO. USSBS No. 75
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ANNEX A