

RESTRICTED

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

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS 441)  
NAV NO. 95

Place: Tokyo  
Date: 25 November 1945  
Time: 0950 - 1100

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: Japanese Naval Operations in NEW GUINEA Area.

Personnel interrogated and Background of each:

Captain OHMAE, Toshikazu, IJN, is a naval officer of 25 years service. In June 1942 he was transferred from the Bureau of Military Affairs to the Staff of the Southeast Area Fleet, in which capacity he planned and directed the First Battle of SAVO ISLAND. From December 1943 he was on the Staff of the First Mobile Fleet and took part in the planning and execution of the operations for the defense of the MARIANAS and of the PHILIPPINES as Chief of Staff to Vice Admiral OZAWA, Commander in Chief First Mobile Fleet and Third Fleet. From January 1945 he has been attached to the Naval General Staff.

Where interviewed: Naval War College.

Interrogator: Commander T. H. Moorer, USN.

Interpreter: Lieut. Commander S. Millstein, USNS.

Allied Officers Present: None.

SUMMARY

Captain OHMAE furnishes information relative to activities of Ninth Fleet in NEW GUINEA Area and discusses the effect of the NEW GUINEA Operations on Japanese general planning during the course of the war.

RESTRICTED



RESTRICTED

TRANSCRIPT

Transcript of Interrogation of (Captain OHMAE, Toshikazu, IJN.)  
-----

- Q. At the time when the SHOHO was sunk on 4 May 1942, you intended to capture PORT MORSEBY. After that sinking, did you ever plan to attempt another invasion of PORT MORSEBY?
- A. On 4 May, Japanese forces were enroute to PORT MORSEBY to occupy that area. After the naval engagement further plans were made to complete this operation and the Eighth Fleet was established at RABAU. However, forces originally intended to be used in the second attempt were expended in activities in the SOLOMONS; and at the same time, the Japanese Army introduced the plan of advancing on PORT MORSEBY across the OWEN STANLEY Mountains. Consequently, a second attempt to invade PORT MORSEBY was never made.
- Q. When did you activate the Ninth Fleet in WEWAK?
- A. 15 October 1943. It was deactivated on the 10 July 1944.
- Q. Do you recall what ships were in the Ninth Fleet?
- A. Very small; two or three minesweepers, one or two destroyers and one coastal defense ship.
- Q. Was there a geographical division of responsibility between the Eighth and Ninth Fleets?
- A. Yes, the Ninth Fleet was merely a base force and operated along the NEW GUINEA Coast. The mission of the Ninth Fleet was mainly administrative in order to effect communications with the Japanese Army in NEW GUINEA and learn how the war was going there.
- Q. Why was not the Ninth Fleet reinforced in order that landings along the NEW GUINEA Coast could be opposed by surface vessels?
- A. At first we were very busy with SOLOMONS invasion; also had no more forces in NEW GUINEA Area. We thought that protection of the SOLOMONS and drawing your naval strength there was more important than NEW GUINEA, because we thought from the SOLOMONS you could go right up to TRUK. After your capture of SALAMAU and LAE, conditions in NEW GUINEA were found to be very serious and in order that proper liaison would be maintained between the Army in NEW GUINEA and the Navy in RABAU the Ninth Fleet was activated. It was not the intention to build up a large force.
- Q. When did you commence the high speed destroyer transport system down to NEW GUINEA?
- A. On 27 June 1942 we sent an Army force to BUIN. We tested the destroyer transport system maybe August 1942. On 4 or 5 January 1943 we sent Army force to LAE and five out of six regular transports succeeded in landing supplies. Next time, on 3 March, we lost six transports and four escorting destroyers, so we realized it was very serious and we could send only by destroyer to FINSCHAFEN. From there Army forces could move supplies up along NEW GUINEA Coast by road. As a result of the failure of 3 March (Battle of Bismark Sea) Army decided to send their forces from WEWAK and MADANG to make road to LAE; but it took long time, and in fact they did not send forces in time. When U. S. Army forces come to FINSCHAFEN about 22 September 1943, two or three battalions had arrived by road; but road was very incomplete so our Army didn't carry heavy guns. They walked through the mountains with only rifles, so could not fight as well as possible.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

Transcript of Interrogation of (Captain OHMAE, Toshikazu, IJN.)  
-----

- Q. What do you think was the most important factor which led to the abandonment of RABAU?L?
- A. That occurred after I left, but I believe that the loss and serious damage to the Japanese Air Force in the SOLOMONS caused the decision to withdraw forces from RABAU. Area.
- Q. After the ADMIRALTY ISLANDS were captured did you anticipate a move back through NEW GUINEA or through the Central PACIFIC?
- A. We expected both, but mainly we thought you were very anxious to attack PALAU directly. At that time there were two opinions, one to SAIPAN and one from ADMIRALTIES to go to PALAU. Commander in Chief, Grand Fleet warned that American Forces would come to PALAU directly before you attacked SAIPAN and TINIAN on June 1944, so before that time we made plans only for protection of PALAU. We have no idea to protect GUAM and SAIPAN at that time; in fact, we thought you would go to PALAU before the MARIANAS, so the operation plan of AGO was mainly for protection of PALAU. The plan was later modified to protect the MARIANAS. It was first thought that the American Forces would proceed from ADMIRALTIES to PALAU and plans were made to fight major engagement between PHILIPPINES and PALAU. When it was evident that your fleet was going to the MARIANAS, it was planned to fight off the MARIANAS.
- Q. During the U. S. advance through HOLLANDIA, BIAK, etc. was there any serious consideration to opposing the invasions with large naval surface forces?
- A. No, because Americans were very strong in Northwest NEW GUINEA and BIAK and we were weak.
- Q. When you executed the AGO Plan, did you abandoned the KON Plan altogether?
- A. Yes, AGO is main operational plan. When you came to BIAK we made tentative plan for sending fleet to transport troop reinforcements. The KON Plan which involved use of the YAMATO, MUSASHI, two heavy cruisers and six destroyers was made for that purpose.
- Q. At that time, these ships were based in the PHILIPPINES?
- A. Yes, at TAWITAWIN. Military forces were prepared at ZAMBOANGA where they boarded the ships. The original KON Plan involved use of two light cruisers and destroyers, but due to the presence of American Task Force north of BIAK, force was increased to include YAMATO, MUSASHI, two heavy cruisers and six destroyers. However, on 11 June we executed AGO Plan because of your move on SAIPAN.
- Q. At that time you moved all naval aircraft from NEW GUINEA to PALAU, abandoned KON Plan and rendezvoused your fleet. Does that mean that the Japanese Navy made the decision to abandon NEW GUINEA?
- A. Yes, the situation at SAIPAN and GUAM was more serious, so we abandoned NEW GUINEA and left responsibility of NEW GUINEA Area to the Army.
- Q. Were the MARIANAS considered more important because their capture would introduce a threat to the homeland or to the PHILIPPINES?
- A. Both, at that time we had a reserve of fuel and tankers and were in a position to destroy the American Fleet. The AGO Plan designed to bring it to action and destroy it at a position clear of land-based air protection and within reach of our land-based air.

RESTRICTED

Transcript of Interrogation of (Captain OHMAE, Toshikazu, IJN.)  
-----

- Q. After the American landings in the PHILIPPINES, what directives were issued relative to defense of the area south of the PHILIPPINES including BORNEO and CELEBES?
- A. The decision was made to withdraw all forces from the BORNEO, CELEBES, JAVA Area to SUMATRA and MALAYA and leave only Army forces to protect anchorages and important oil centers.
- Q. Were you successful in withdrawing your forces?
- A. The above plan was very difficult to execute due to American attacks on Japanese shipping and transportation facilities. However, the Japanese were successful in moving two Army divisions from the CELEBES - BORNEO Area to MALAYA. At the time of the American attack on MOROTAI, BALIKPAPAN and TARAKAN, Japanese forces were very small and only harbors and oil centers were manned with troops. There was no plan to reinforce CELEBES - BORNEO Area but rather to evacuate it. After February or March 1945 the Southern Army was in operational control of all naval forces in the SINGAPORE Area. This change in control took place immediately after the ISE, HYUGA and main part of the Japanese Fleet left for JAPAN in February 1945. All naval forces in the SINGAPORE Area were then left under operational control of the Japanese Army.
- Q. During the entire war when you were very closely connected with planning, were your decisions affected at any time by the Allied mining effort? Did it have any effect on your plans for military operations?
- A. Very little, only place where mines interfered with military operations or plans was at KAVIENG beginning August 1943. At that time KAVIENG was very important because it was used as a supply base and after mine attacks it was necessary to take ships directly from TRUK to RABAU where they were then subjected to air attack.
- Q. How about SINGAPORE? Did the mining interfere with the use of SINGAPORE by your fleet?
- A. Didn't effect use of harbor much, I have heard one cruiser had trouble with the mining, but generally speaking SINGAPORE was quite all right. Mining did not interfere with the use of SINGAPORE Harbor. Most of the Japanese Navy in SINGAPORE returned to the Inland Sea in February 1945.
- Q. Then KAVIENG was the only place where mining affected your plans?
- A. No effect in any other place, I think.
- Q. Do you recall how many ships were sunk by mines there?
- A. One cruiser damaged, two or three destroyers damaged, 5 or 6 transports sunk or damaged. The number is not sure.