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

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS NO. 469)  
Nav. No. 111

Place: Tokyo  
Date: 20 November 1945

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subjects: Escort of Shipping.

Personnel interrogated:

Commander MIZUTANI, Ketzuji, IJN (Reserve) was commissioned in the Navy after civilian experience as chief officer and master of NYK ships. His entire duty during World War II was spent in command of naval escort vessels.

Where interviewed: Meiji Building.

Interrogator: Captain Steadman Teller, U.S.N.

Interpreter: Lt(jg) R. P. Brown, U.S.N.R.

Allied Officers Present: None.

SUMMARY

Commander MIZUTANI while commanding an escort vessel in convoy experienced two day long carrier aircraft attacks on convoys at sea. One occurred west of SAIPAN on 12 June, 1944 and the other northwest of CHICHI JIMA in August, 1944. He also was present at INOWASE during the sustained carrier air attack on that HONSHU port 27 July, 1945.

A successful midnight submarine attack on an important convoy off PALAU on 1 May 1944 is described in detail. Commander MIZUTANI claims to have sunk one American submarine after it made a successful attack on a small convoy. He had good recollection of details and appeared to be very careful in answering questions accurately. He speaks fair English.

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TRANSCRIPT

Transcript of Interrogation of (Commander MIZUTANI, Katsuji, IJN Reserve)

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- Q. What experience did you have with aircraft or submarine attacks while in command of coastal destroyer #4 between April 1944 and February 1945.
- A. On 11 June 1944, the day before your preliminary bombing and bombardment of SAIPAN began, a convoy of 12 ships and 10 escorts left TANOPAG harbor for JAPAN. The convoy consisted of small freighters and one large one of 7,000 tons. The escorts were all small except for the torpedo boat CHIDORI, whose captain commanded the convoy, and my coastal destroyer #4. After sailing from SAIPAN we received word that an air attack from a carrier Task Force was expected and consequently headed west. On 12 June about 0930 (Tokyo Time) the first wave of carrier planes began attacks which were to last practically all day. This first wave consisted of about 35 planes and concentrated on the merchant ships. Seven of the twelve were damaged and left burning. The second attack wave followed about two and one half hours later and concentrated on the escorts, strafing heavily. The CHIDORI was sunk and coastal destroyer #4 was severely damaged by the strafing. One hundred men, about half my crew, were either killed or wounded. One other escort vessel was heavily damaged by strafing and all escort vessels suffered some damage. At each attack the convoy took individual evasive action and consequently dispersed over the area. The third and last wave struck us about 1500 and again concentrated on the merchant ships. All these ships except one were stopped as result of previous damage or the third wave. After this attack the weather became squally and the convoy separated further. I headed first for OKINAWA then north. Next morning #4 coastal destroyer was alone and the weather was still bad so I returned to the area to search for survivors. During the next 3 days I looked for other ships of convoy and then returned to JAPAN. I learned from other officers and reports on my return that all the remaining naval ships reached JAPAN but only two or three of the original 12 merchant ships reached port. They must have sunk in the rough weather due to damage received in the attacks.

I had another experience with carrier plane attacks at the time cruisers and destroyers bombarded CHICHI JIMA and IWO JIMA in August 1944. A convoy of 5 small merchant ships, about 2,000 tons each and escort had just arrived at CHICHI JIMA carrying reenforcement troops for both islands. We were anchored in FUTAMI harbor unloading troops when word came by CHICHI JIMA radio that American fleet units were closing IWO JIMA. We wanted to sail that day but it was decided to unload all the troops so we sailed the next morning at 0530 (Tokyo Time). A total of 6 merchant ships were escorted by the destroyers MATSU (Vice Admiral TAKAHASHI commanding the escort and convoy), HATAKAZE, coastal destroyers No. 4 and No. 12 and subchaser #51 of the SCS 51 class. We steered northwestward in a compact formation. Vice Admiral TAKAHASHI always insisted on a close

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Transcript of Interrogation of (Commander MIZUTANI, Katsuji, IJN,  
Reserve)

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formation when air attack was expected and would not permit individual maneuvers to scatter the convoy as other commanders had done. The total number of 25mm guns in the convoy was about 140 so we had good close in defense.

At about 0930 the first wave of 50 carrier planes arrived. The convoy was closed up and upon approach of planes changed course to the west. Attack was concentrated on the merchant ships, the MATSU and HATAKAZE. The only serious damage was the HATAKAZE'S rudder being put out of commission. There were a few casualties and only near misses from bombs. I estimate we shot down 2 or 3 planes. The second attack occurred at 1100. I observed only one direct bomb hit on a merchant ship and this did not slow her. Strafing caused heavy casualties on MATSU, HATAKAZE and #12 coastal destroyer. The third wave attack arrived at 1400 and consisted mostly of torpedo attacks on the merchantmen. All of these were hit, 5 being sunk immediately with an average of 1 or 2 hits each and the sixth sustaining damage and caught fire. No bomb hits were seen although a few were dropped. The torpedo attack came from all directions and I believe 2 or 3 planes were shot down. (Refer to plate - 1.)

The weather became worse about 1800 and Vice Admiral TAKAHASHI ordered rescue operations. My ship, #4 coastal destroyer, was ordered to standby the one surviving merchantman and we proceeded westward slowly. Numbers 12 and 51 escorts evidently misunderstood signals in the bad weather and stood away to the northward, eventually reaching port safely. At about 1930 or 2000 I received a radio message from the MATSU that she was being attacked by 4 cruisers and 6 destroyers. She was on a southerly course at this time. The HATAKAZE had lagged behind, perhaps on account of her damaged rudder. I learned later from one of her officers that they could see the gunfire of the fight between the MATSU and American ships but were out of gun range. Shortly afterward the last merchantman sank about 2100 due to damage received and the rough sea. About 2300 MATSU sent another radio message saying that she was again being attacked. This message was broken off before completion and the destroyer was not heard from again. There were no survivors. The destroyer HATAKAZE was still separated from MATSU at this time and turned north, reaching JAPAN safely.

I had one other experience with carrier aircraft attack, this time in the southern HONSHU port of INOWASE. The attack occurred on 27 July, 1945 beginning about 0600 and lasting all day. Dive bombing, rockets and strafing were employed. I know of the following damage to ships:

KOMAHASHI - old merchant ships converted to submarine tender aground after being damaged forward by rockets.  
No. 45 coast escort vessel - heavy damage just forward of bridge where 4 or 5 rocket and bomb hits nearly severed the hull. Aground

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Transcript of Interrogation of (Commander MIZUTANI, Katsuji,  
IJN, Reserve)

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No. 14 coast escort vessel -- near miss by rockets near bow,  
many holes in hull. Aground

No. 18 BANSHU MARU -- (old ship) sunk

There probably was other damage to tankers and small  
craft but many escaped by being hidden under trees close  
to shore.

- Q. From your experience with rockets and dive bombing which  
do you consider most effective against shipping?
- A. From the little I saw of rockets I would say they are more  
effective. They appear to be more accurate and even the misses  
are not far from the target so they also do damage. The  
fiery effect of the rockets also disturbs the gunners aim.  
On the other hand a plane delivering rockets in a shallow  
dive is easier for anti-aircraft machine guns to hit than  
a dive bomber.

- Q. Were your convoys attacked by multi-engined aircraft or  
by any aircraft at night?
- A. During November and December 1944 I made several convoy  
trips between TATEYAMA and CHICHI JIMA, arriving off the  
northern island KITANO JIMA about 2300 (Tokyo Time) and at  
CHICHI JIMA at sunrise. We would remain at the latter place  
unloading during the day and leave for JAPAN at sunset.  
While in the harbor my convoys were attacked on four occasions  
by four-engine bombers in formation of 5 to 10 planes. They  
bombed from about 1500 meters in salvo but made no hits. The  
ships were instructed not to fire at them. We relied on  
the shore based anti-aircraft batteries for protection at  
CHICHI JIMA.

In the vicinity of KITANO JIMA I was attacked twice at  
night by a single rocket plane with no hits or damage.

- Q. Do you remember details of any submarine attack on your  
convoy?
- A. Yes, On 1 May, 1944 a convoy of four large ships and four  
escort vessels was leaving PALAU after the ships had un-  
loaded troops and supplies. The convoy was 35 miles north-  
west of PALAU on course 090° when about midnight a submarine  
torpedo attack damaged the two ships in the port column.  
The leading ship MIIKE MARU, an ex N.Y.K. liner of 12,000  
tons, was hit in engine room and stopped. The ASOZAN MARU,  
ex-MITSUI liner 9,000 tons, was hit on port bow and also  
stopped (refer to Plate - 2). The destroyer HATAKAZE with  
the two undamaged ships returned to PALAU and ordered the  
coast defense vessels #4, MANJU and KASADO to remain with  
the two damaged ships. In spite of this protection about two  
hours later a second torpedo attack was made and the MIIKE  
MARU was hit on the starboard bow near the gun. The ammunition  
for the gun caught fire and the resulting fire burned for  
two or three days until she sank. The ASOZAN MARU made re-  
pairs in about four hours and, accompanied by #4 coast de-  
fense vessel, reached KOSSOL Roads where she made further re-  
pairs before returning to JAPAN.

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Transcript of Interrogation of (Commander MIZUTANI, Katsuji,  
IJN, Reserve)

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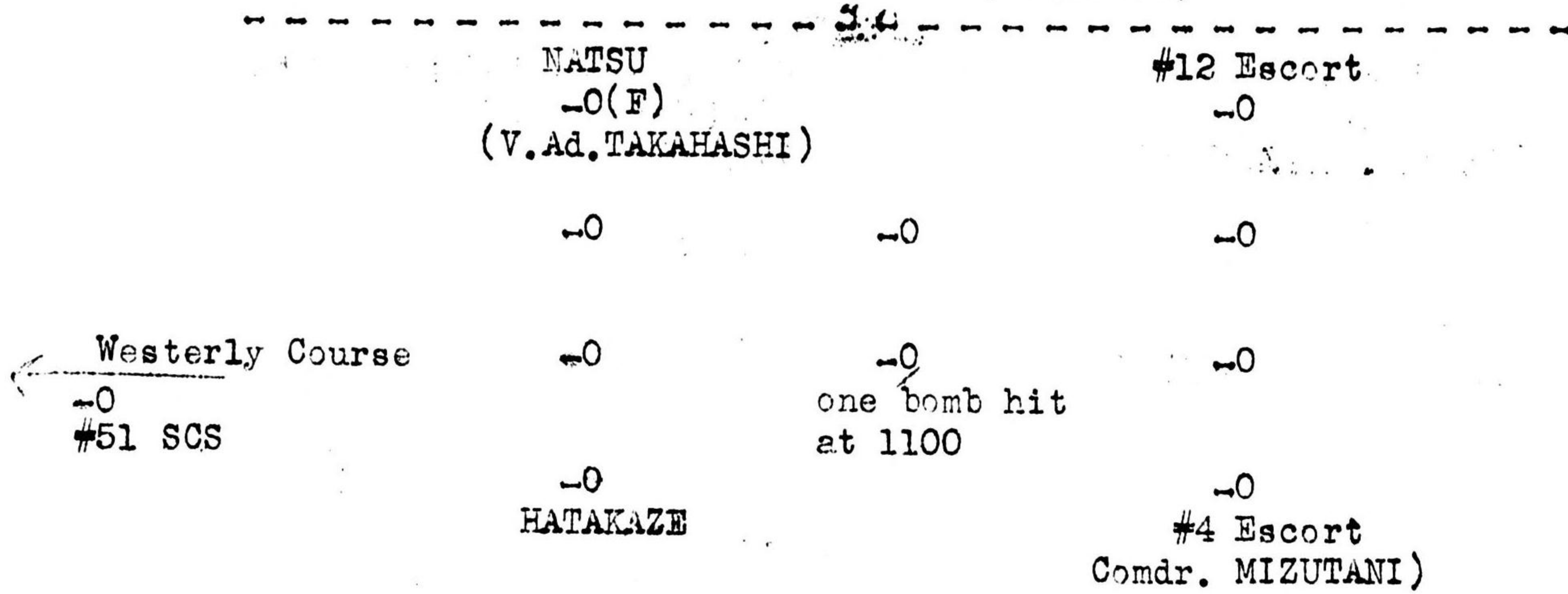
Q. Did you sink any American submarines during your escort duty?

A. I consider only one attack successful. In January 1945, about 8 miles northeast of an island located at approximately Latitude 30° North, Longitude 140° 30' East I was convoying three small ships (Refer to Plate - 3) a submarine made an attack from the starboard beam of the convoy and sank the last ship. I turned to port and attacked the submarine with depth charges bringing up much oil which I watched for 6 hours. Then a subchaser relieved me and observed much oil continue to come up from the same spot for 24 hours. I believe the submarine was sunk.

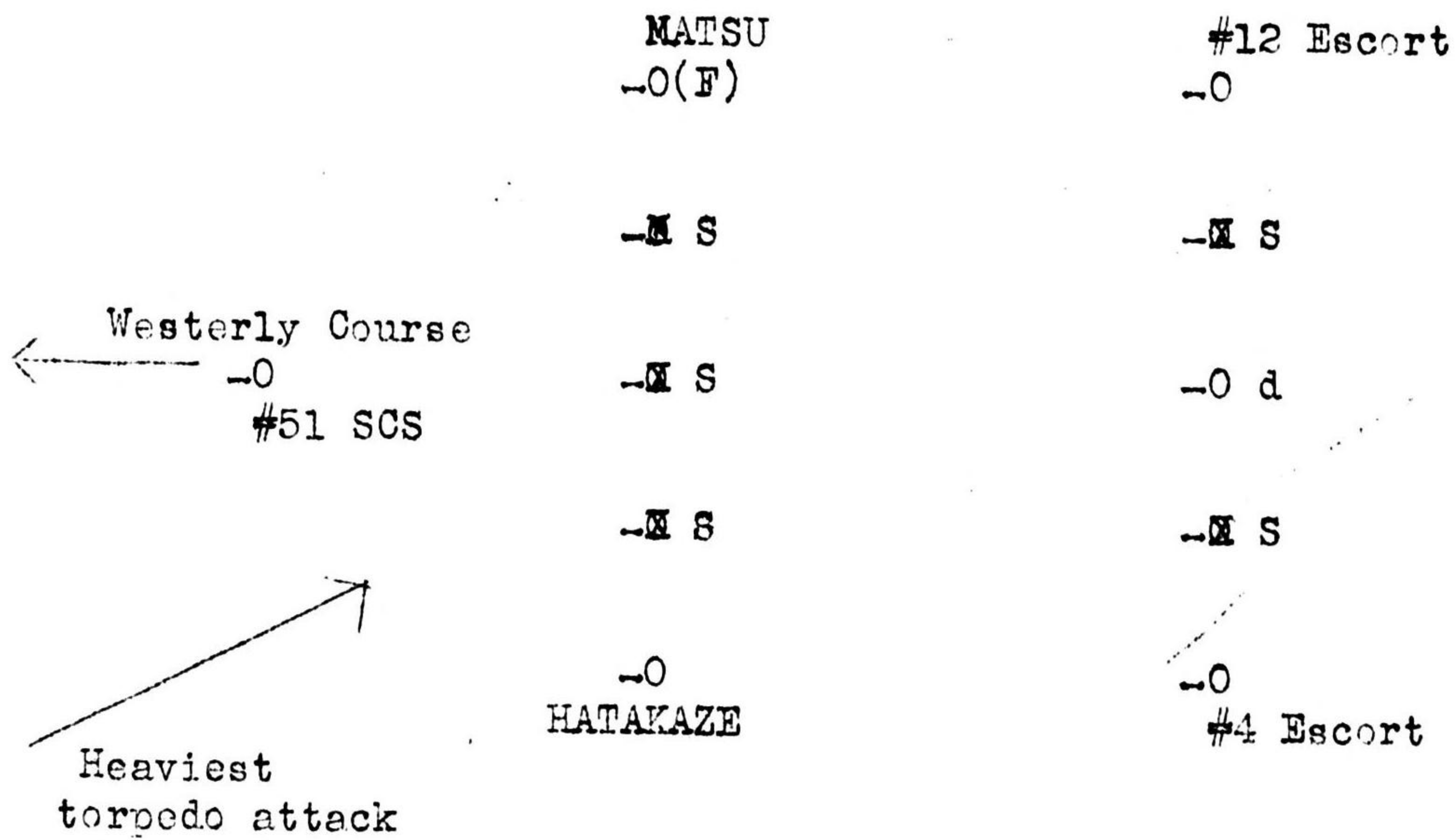
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Transcript of Interrogation of (Commander MIZUTANI, Katsuji,  
IJN, Reserve)



Convoy formation during carrier air attacks at 0930 and 1100  
in August 1944 Northwest of CHICHI JIMA.



Convoy formation during carrier aircraft torpedo and bombing  
attack at 1400 the same day

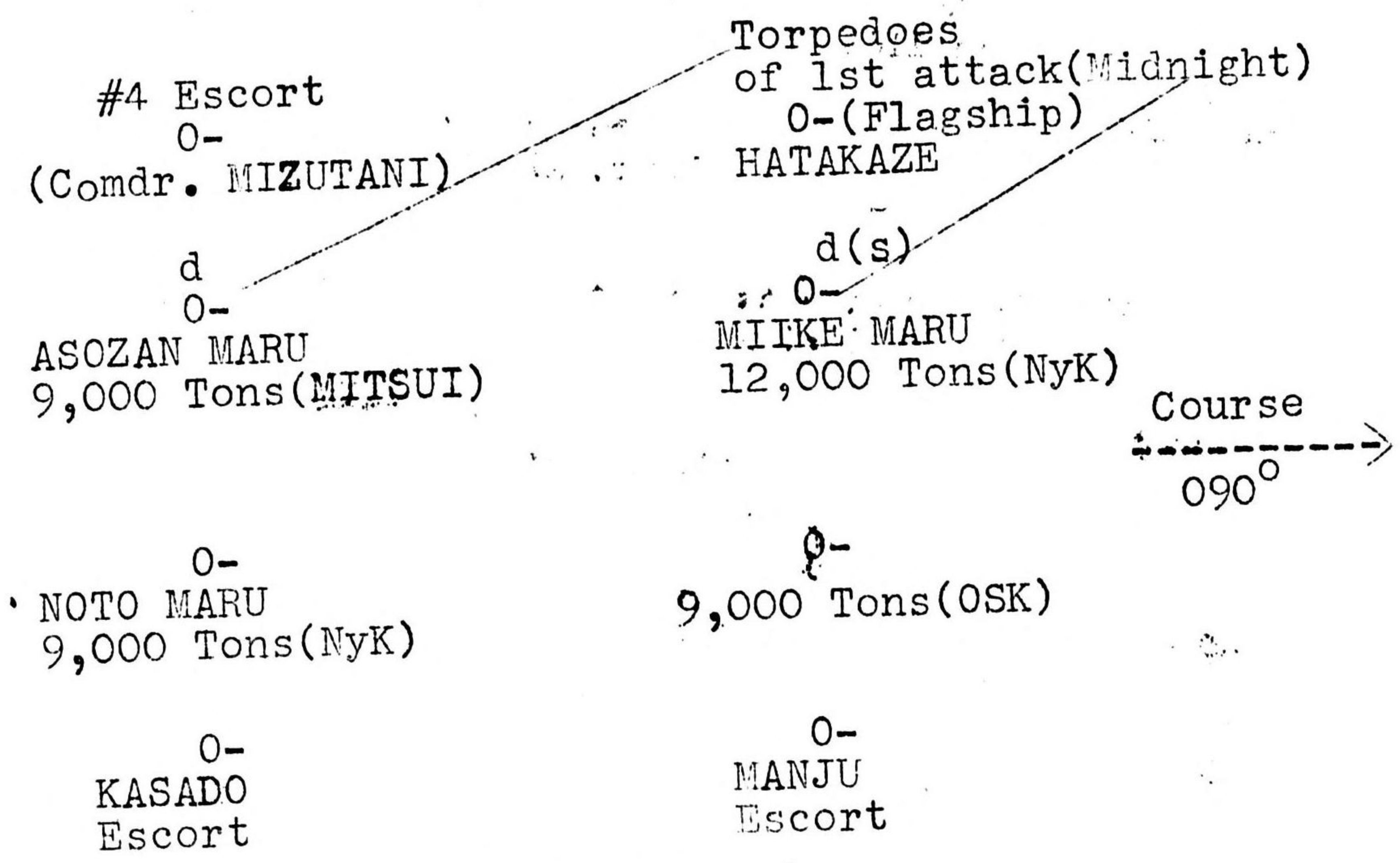
- S - vessel sunk by torpedoes
- d - vessel damage by torpedoes

Plate - 1

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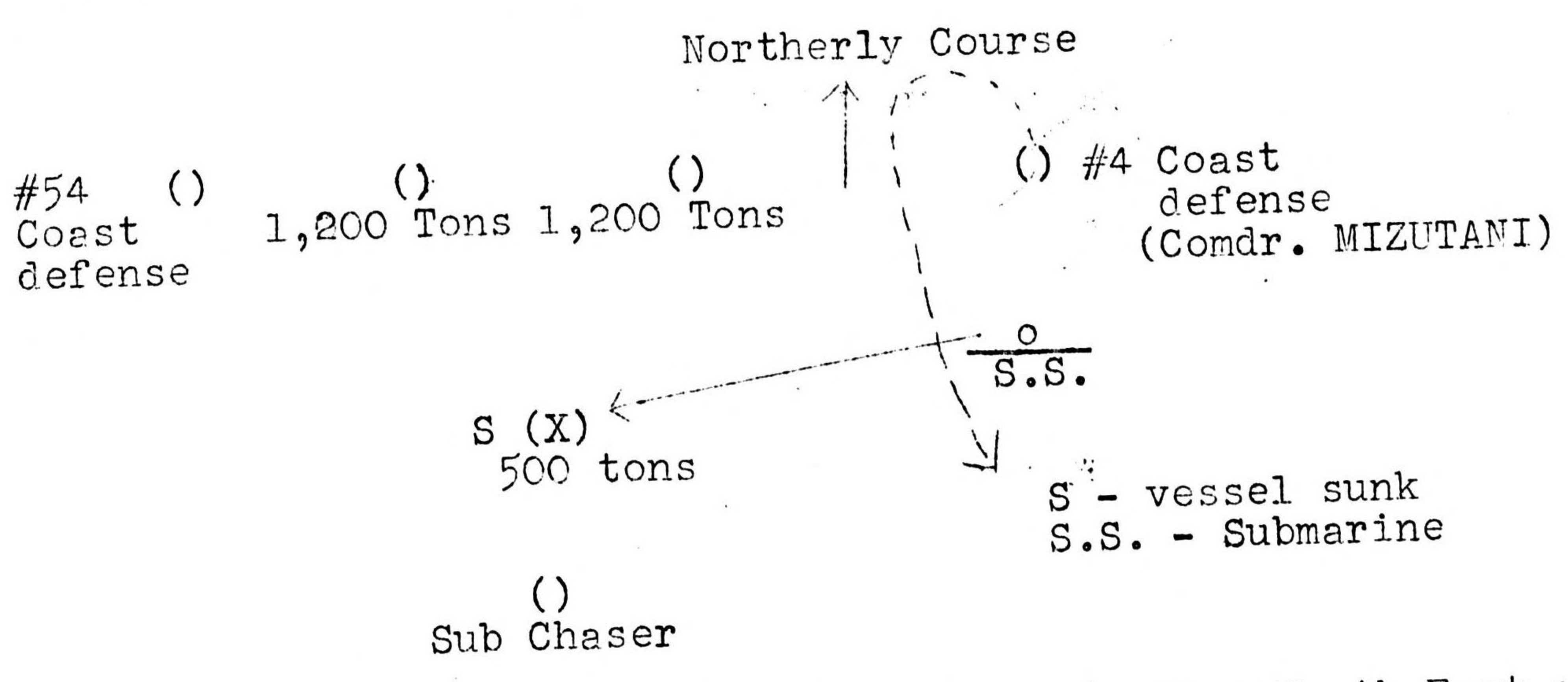
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TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Commander MIZUTANI, Katesuji, I.J.N.).



d(s) - vessel damaged, eventually sunk.  
d - vessel damaged

Submarine torpedo attack about midnight 1 - 2 May 1944 in position 35 miles northeast of PALAU.



UNITED STATES submarine attack a convoy 8 miles North East of island in approximate position 30° N, 140° - 30 E in January 1945. Submarine believed to have been sunk by #4 coast defense vessel.

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R-E-S-T-R-I-C-T-E-D

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U. S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY

Washington, D. C.  
January 1946

Interrogation No. USSBS 469 - Sup.  
(Nav No. 111)

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

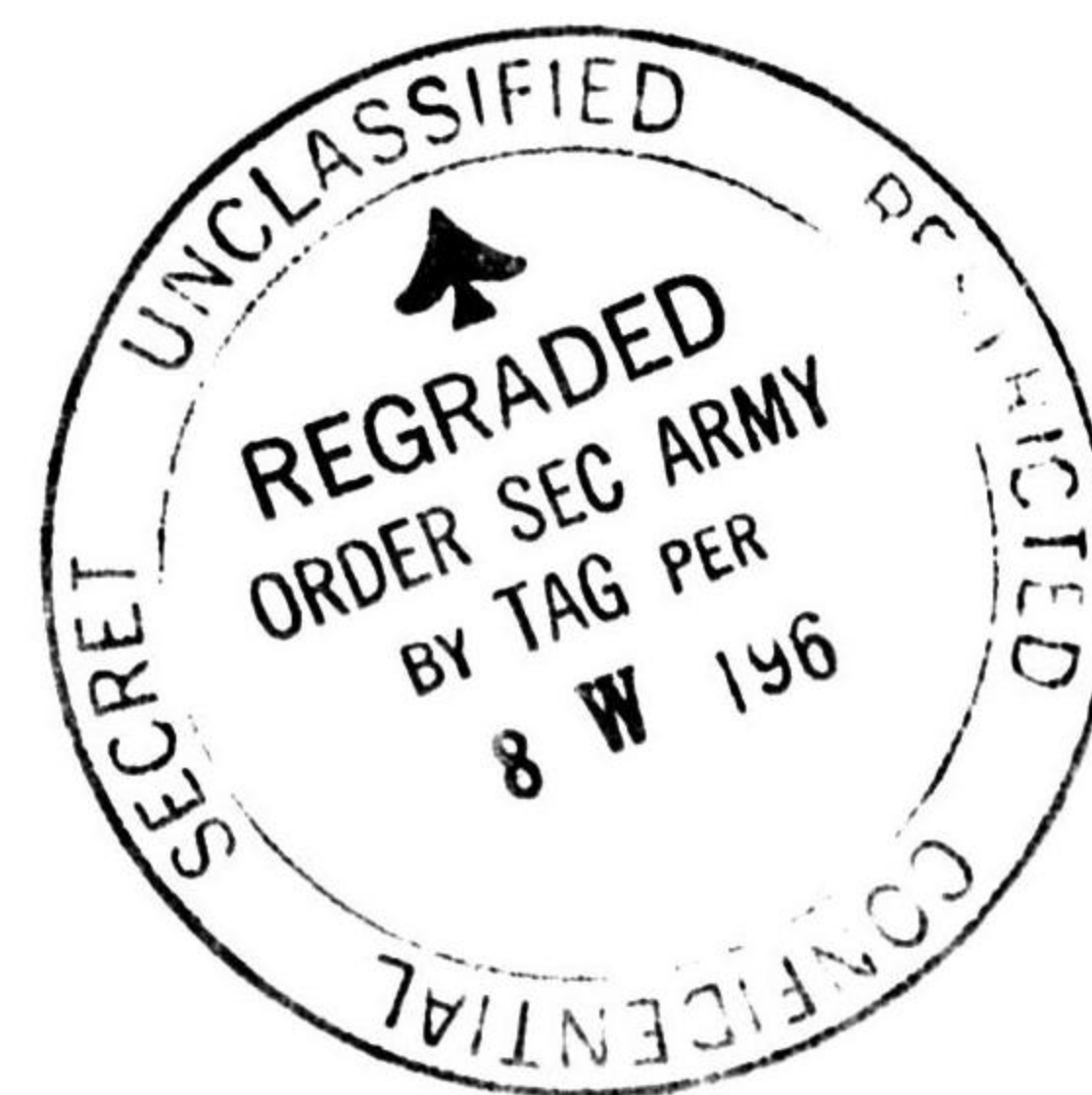
Subject: Escort of Shipping.

Interrogation of: Commander MIZUTANI, Katzuji, I.J.N.

Interrogation by: Captain Steadman Teller, U.S.N.

The attached chart(s) supplement Interrogation No.  
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Enclosure: Annex "A", "B", & "C".





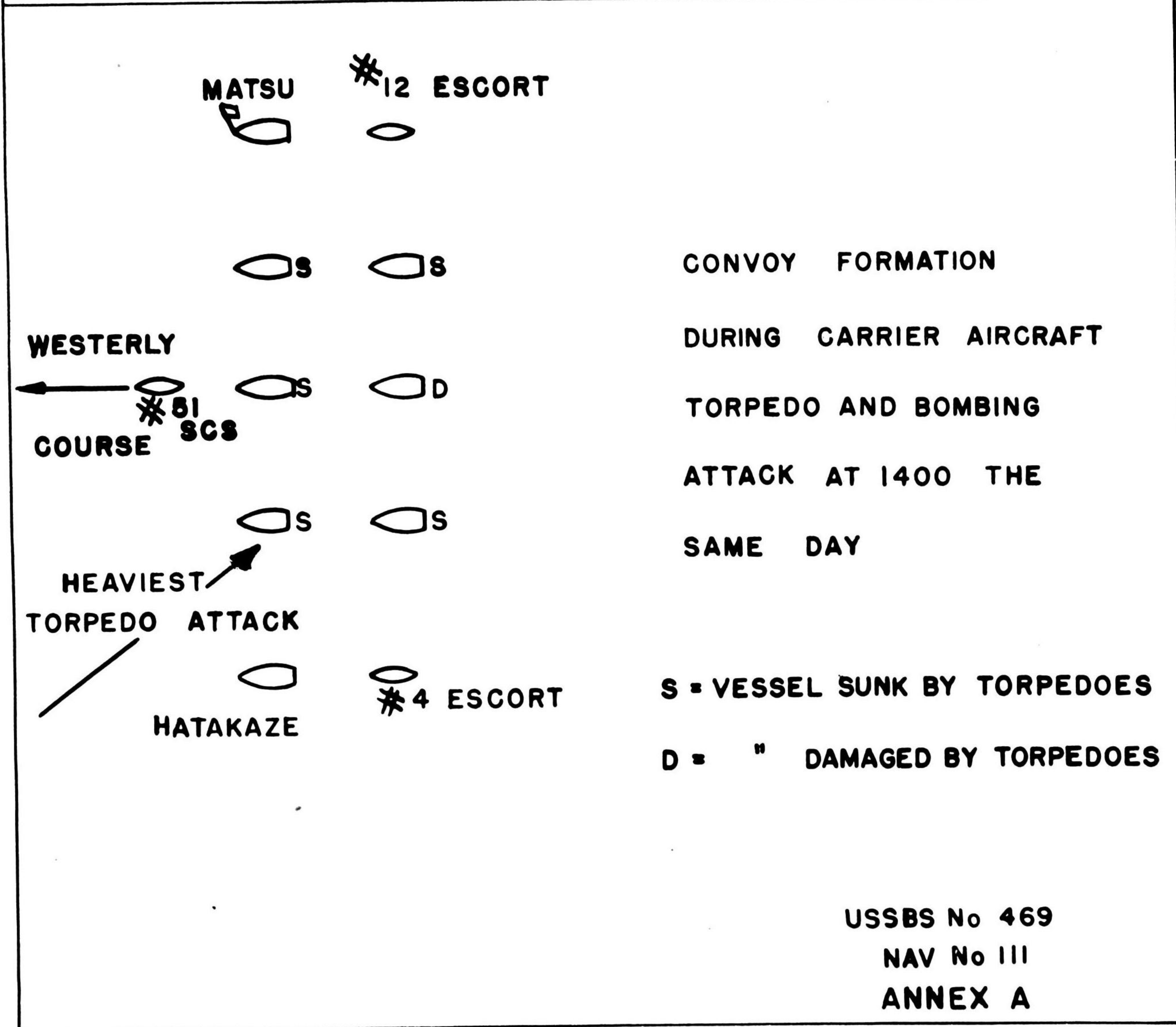
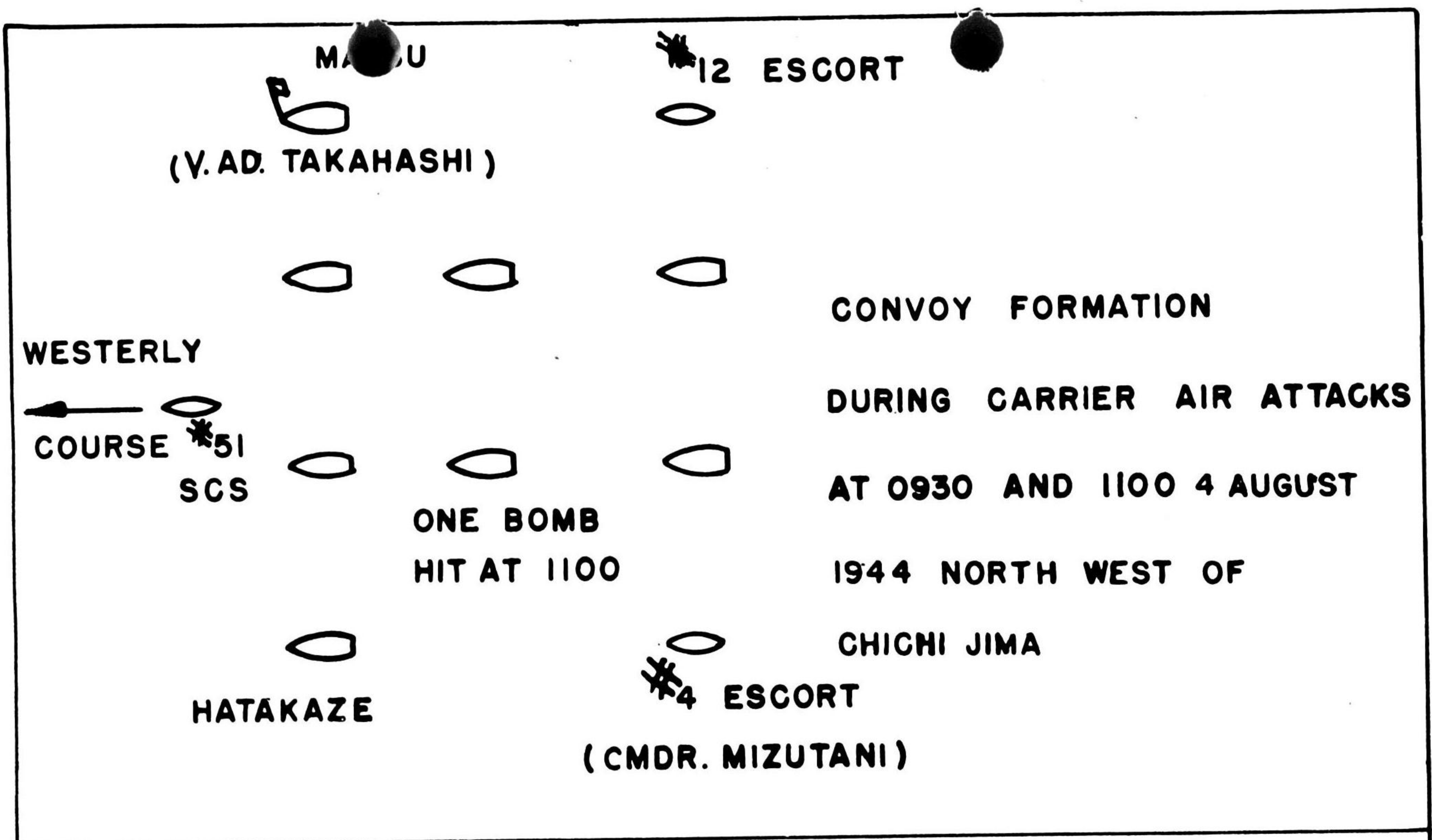
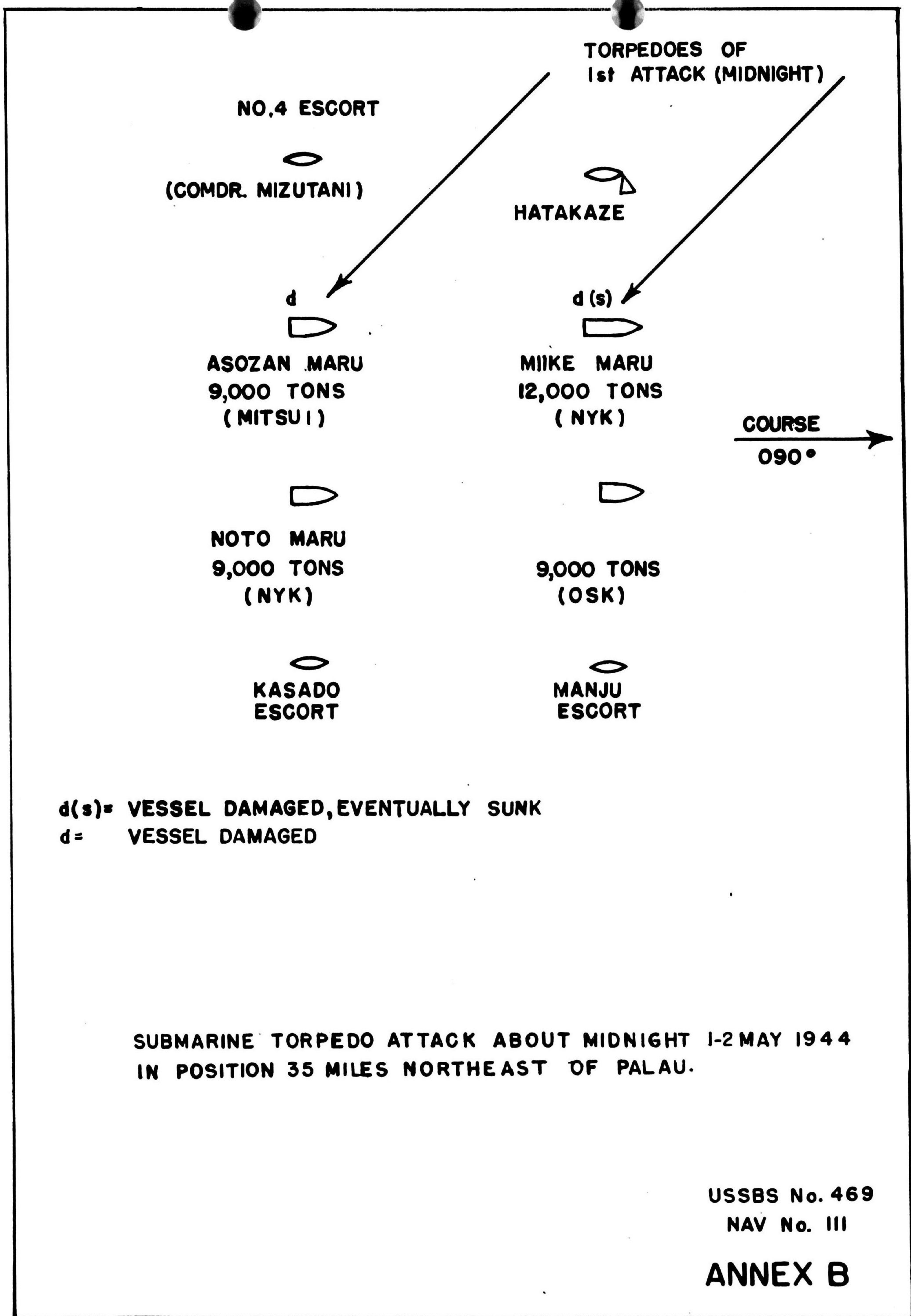
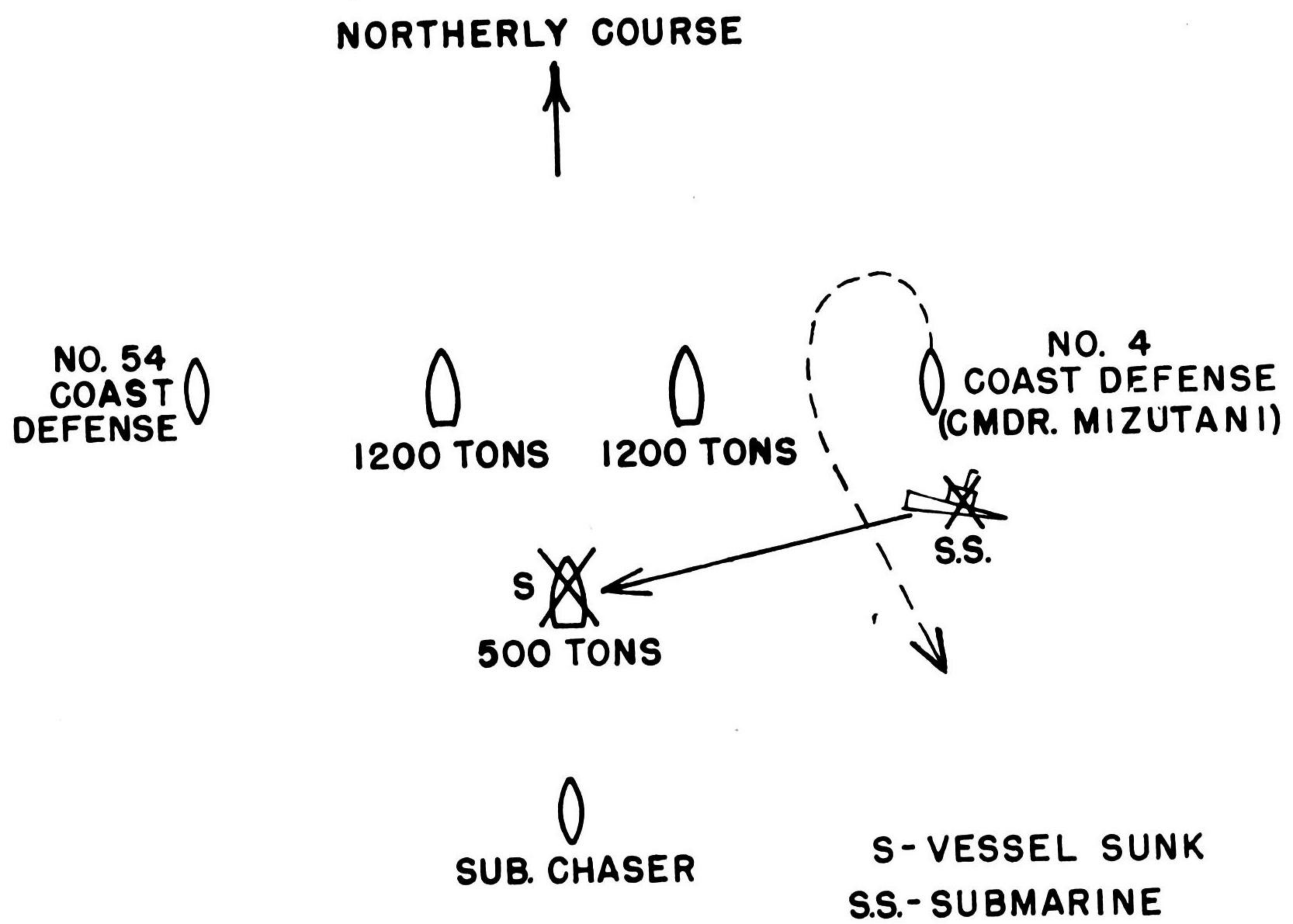


PLATE III-1





U.S. SUBMARINE ATTACK ON CONVOY 8 MILES NORTH EAST OF ISLAND  
IN APPROXIMATE POSITION 30° N., 140°-30' E. IN JANUARY 1945.  
SUBMARINE BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN SUNK BY NO. 4 COAST DEFENSE  
VESSEL.

USSBS No 469  
NAV No III  
ANNEX C

PLATE III-3