

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

INTERROGATION NO. 483

PLACE: Tokyo
DATE: 3 December 1945

Division of Origin: Military Analysis

Subject: Amplification of Answers to Questionnaires submitted to the War Ministry.

Personnel Interrogated: Lt Col TANAKA, Koji (for Background see Interrogation No. 388).

Where Interrogated: Meiji Building

Interrogator: Major McELWAIN, GSC

Interpreter: Lt Comdr NICHOLS, USNR

Allied Officer Present: Capt HASKINS, MI.

SUMMARY

- (1) This interrogation is supplementary to USBS # 388.
- (2) Lt Col TANAKA stated that since his last interrogation his only job has been to work for the Military Analysis Division Questionnaires and that accordingly the views he gives on subjects of which he has no personal knowledge are the views of officers whom he has consulted and who have personal knowledge.
- (3) Lt Col TANAKA has personal knowledge of the Rabaul - New Guinea operations because he was on the scene as Staff Officer in the 8th Area Army (Hq. Rabaul) from Sept 1942 to Sept 1943. Thereafter, having been assigned to the Operations Division of GHQ, he has a knowledge of operations in all theatres, as seen from TOKYO.
- (4) Col TANAKA'S knowledge of the Burma theatre during 1942 and 1943 is very weak. Since during that period he was in Rabaul. But he has a general knowledge of Burma from Sept 1943 to the end of the war. He stated that there was no one in Tokyo who knew much about Burma operations.
- (5) This interrogation covers a variety of problems which were left in doubt by the answers to the M.A.D. questionnaires, and should be read with the questionnaires.

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- Q. Referring to your answers to Military Analysis Questionnaire #1, I call your attention to the paragraphs dealing with the so-called "strategic reserve" in Manchuria. That was made up, according to the responses to the questionnaires, of several tactical units which remained there until moved to the Philippines in May of 1944. Were the pilots assigned to those units at the beginning of the war the pilots who moved to the Philippines in May of 1944, or had the pilots originally assigned to those units previously been moved out to combat units in active theaters?
- A. Pilots from the Manchurian units were often transferred to units in New Guinea as replacements. Many of them went to Japan, picked up planes, ferried them south and remained in the units to which they were assigned. The pilots who came to the Philippines in May with the 2nd Flying Division were for the most part inexperienced.
- Q. Were replacement pilots also sent from units in China to forward areas?
- A. Not normally. Pilots usually stayed with the China-based units until they were lost. By 1943 most of the original China pilots were casualties and China was being given the lowest priority in the matter of replacement pilots. As a result, the pilots sent to China were the worst in the entire Air Force. Even in 1943, some of the pilots had less than 150 hours when they were sent to China.
- Q. I take it that China and Burma had lower priority than New Guinea?
- A. That is correct.

T/O Strength at Beginning of War

- Q. Referring again to the answers to Questionnaire #1, it is stated in general terms that the "Army" was below T/O strength at the beginning of the war. Do you mean that it was under strength in pilots, in planes, or both?
- A. The Japanese Army Air Force was under T/O strength in both pilots and planes at the beginning of the war.
- Q. During the early morning of 8 December 1941 (Philippines time), radar equipment on the west coast of Luzon reported the presence of unidentified aircraft over the China Sea. Do you know of any flights of Japanese planes over the China Sea on that morning before the Japanese Army attack on Baguio and Tuguegarao about 0930?
- A. I know of no Japanese Army planes being over the China Sea before the attack on Tuguegarao. I am not familiar with the Japanese Navy operations.

Burma Campaign

- Q. Referring to Questionnaire #1, the answer states that the 8th, 50th and 14th Hikosentai left the Philippines for Burma about 2 January 1942. The answer nowhere states the number of planes involved in this move. Can you give us an estimate?
- A. These units were below strength at the time of the transfer because they had suffered losses and had not received replacements. Accordingly, I estimate the strength of these units as follows:

50th FR	25 fighters
8th FR	15 light bombers
14th FR	<u>12</u> medium bombers
	52 total

The 14th FR was moved to Burma by way of Hanoi. While at Hanoi it attacked Chinese installations near Mokieng (?), and lost about 5 planes.

Malayan Campaign

- Q. Referring to the answers to Military Analysis Division Questionnaire #2, it appears that 3,000 sorties were flown by the Japanese Army Air Force against Singapore during December. I wonder whether you could give me any further details.
- A. The 3,000 sorties includes fighter sorties in support of bomber missions. It covers the last half of December 1941.
- Q. Are you positive that many sorties were flown? Other officers have suggested that the figure may be high.
- A. I am quite positive.
- Q. Would you then say that the Japanese effort against Singapore was the largest and most sustained effort ever conducted by the Japanese Air Forces (excluding the suicide effort of the Okinawa campaign)?
- A. I believe that it was.

Repulse and Prince of Wales

- Q. What type planes sank the Repulse and Prince of Wales?
- A. Type 96 heavy bombers (Hell).
- Q. Did any Type 1 (Betty) Navy bombers participate?
- A. No, I don't think any were in the area.

Japanese Plans

- Q. According to the answers to Questionnaire #2, the Japanese high command estimated at the beginning of the war that they would be opposed by 650 Allied planes in the Malayan campaign. Nevertheless they committed only about 400 Army planes and 100 Navy planes to that campaign. Can you explain?
- A. The estimated 650 planes included all types, many of them obsolete. We believed that the quality of our pilots and planes was superior and that we therefore could win over weight of numbers. In fact, the Japanese recognized from the first that they would often be inferior in numbers of aircraft and counted primarily upon the quality of the individual aircraft and the experience of their pilots. We first realized that this concept was false when for the first time we met the real American Air Force at Guadalcanal.

Rabaul

- Q. You were at Rabaul during 1942 and 1943. Do you recall how many Navy planes were maintained there on an average?
- A. Between 200 and 300.
- Q. Referring to Military Analysis Division Questionnaire #3 and #5, can you explain the figures given with respect to the 1st and 11th Hikosentai?
- A. The 1st and 11th Hikosentai came to Truk from Soerabaya by carrier with about 100 planes, of which about 24 were treated as reserves. They were ferried from Truk to Rabaul and all but 2 were gradually lost during the next 5 months. Neither unit ever received any replacements, and when they returned to Japan, they left the 2 remaining planes behind them.

Q. How about the 45th and 208th Hikosentai?

A. These two units came to Truk from Japan by carrier with about 30 light bombers each. Mechanical difficulties at Truk and losses in ferrying the planes from Truk to Rabaul reduced their strength upon arrival at Rabaul to about 20 planes each.

Q. How did the 14th Hikosentai reach Rabaul?

A. Planes of the 14th Hikosentai were flown from Burma to Rabaul in January 1943.

Q. How about the 13th Hikosentai?

A. The 13th Hikosentai was the first unit to fly its planes south from Japan to Rabaul by way of the ferry route through the Philippines and along the north coast of New Guinea.

Q. When did the 13th Hikosentai arrive in Rabaul?

A. Sometime in May 1943.

Q. How did the 14th Hikodan (68th and 78th Hikosentai) reach Rabaul?

A. The 78th Hikosentai flew down the ferry route through the Philippines. The 68th Hikosentai came to Truk by carrier.

Q. What was the strength of the 68th Hikosentai when it reached Rabaul?

A. About 20 planes. About 16 had been lost in the ferry flight from Truk.

Q. How about ferry losses in the 78th Hikosentai?

A. That too lost about 16 planes out of 36 between Japan and Rabaul.

Q. What was the ferry route from the Philippines to Rabaul in 1943?

A. From Kyushu, planes flew to Taihoku on Formosa, either by way of Naha or Shanghai. They then flew to Heito, on Formosa, Manila, Davao (sometimes with a stop at Cebu), Galela (Halmahera), Babo, Hollandia and Wewak. Planes for use in the East Netherlands East Indies ordinarily flew to Manado (Celebes) and then to Namlea or Ambon. Manado was sometimes used as an alternate for Galela.

Q. What was the condition of the fields?

A. Babo and Namlea had concrete runways. All the rest were unaved.

Q. What were the repair facilities along the route?

A. At this time, nothing but the simplest repairs could be made at any of these fields. It was impossible to fix landing gear or change engines at any of them. As a consequence, any failure of the landing gear or any "internal" engine failure resulted in the junking of the plane. The fields themselves were so poor that landing gear failure was common. But the greatest cause of breakdowns at all times during the war was the poor workmanship and design of the planes coming out of Japan. In addition, the skill of the replacement pilots we were getting was poor, and as time went on it became worse and worse.

Wewak Strikes 17-18 August 1943

Q. Do you recall the Allied air attacks on the Wewak airfields on 17-18 August 1943?

A. I do.

Q. What were the reasons for the large Japanese losses?

A. Wewak was the end of the ferry route. It's fields accordingly were loaded with planes which had been delivered but which had not been assigned to any units. In addition, there were many unserviceable planes on the field which were awaiting repairs or could not be repaired. The fields at Wewak were too small at this time and there was no possibility of dispersal.

Q. Did you assemble these planes knowing that the fields were within range of Allied fighters?

A. No. We thought we were out of range.

Q. What damage was done by the attacks?

A. About 120 planes were destroyed.

Q. Photo reconnaissance indicated that substantially more planes were destroyed. Have you any comment?

A. The figure 120 includes serviceable planes only. In addition to these planes there may have been unserviceable aircraft which showed in your photo reconnaissance as destroyed in this attack but which actually already had been discarded.

Q. What effect did the attacks have on Japanese air capabilities in New Guinea?

Q. It reduced our operational strength to a handful of planes and seriously retarded all our plans.

Burma-China

Q. What was the purpose of the night attacks on Calcutta which took place in the winter of 1942-43?

A. I know almost nothing about operations in Burma since I was never in South-east Asia.

Q. Who does know about Burma and Southeast Asia?

A. Almost everyone who participated in that campaign after July 1942 is still in Singapore or Saigon. Almost no one in Tokyo knows anything about it.

Q. Can you give us the names of anyone in the Southern Area whom we might interrogate?

A. Almost any staff officer of the 3rd Kokugun. In particular, Lt Col KOJIMA, Kikuo. This officer knows all there is to know about the raids on Calcutta. In addition, he planned the attacks on Darwin which took place in June of 1943. I believe he is at Saigon.

Q. Well, do you know what was the primary mission of the Japanese Army Air Forces in Burma?

A. To interdict the air transport route from India to China.

Q. Why did you not make a greater effort?

A. The Rabaul-New Guinea operation was given so high a priority that we were never able to amass a sufficient force. For example, in October 1943 the 33rd and 77th Hikosentai moved into Burma from Manchuria for the purpose of intercepting transports flying the Hump, but they had only been there a short time when they were moved to New Guinea.

China

- Q. What was the mission of the Japanese Army Air Force in China in the first 6 months of 1942?
- A. First, we were to support the ground attack on Honakong. Thereafter, the units in China reverted largely to a training status.
- Q. What was the quality of planes and pilots assigned to the China theater after 1 July 1942?
- A. The worst planes and pilots went to China. At that time Ki 43 (Oscar) was gradually replacing Ki 27 (Nate) as the standard Japanese fighter, but Ki 43 reached China last.
- Q. Was Ki 45 (Nick) ever used in China at this time?
- A. No. Ki 45 was first used in New Guinea by the 13th Hikosentai in the summer of 1943. About the same time it was assigned to the 21st Hikosentai which was charged with the defense of Palembang.
- Q. Were the units in China up to T/O strength in 1942 and 1943?
- A. No, they were 20% below strength.
- Q. So that to get an average aircraft strength for China during this period we should assume that the units listed in the response to Questionnaire #14 were at 80% of T/O strength.
- A. That is correct.

Hollandia

- Q. Will you give an account of the Japanese losses at Hollandia in March and April 1944?
- A. Hollandia was then the end of the ferry route, just as Wewak had been the summer before. In addition, we had begun to build a depot at Hollandia. There were many planes at Hollandia which did not have crews - planes which had not been delivered to any unit and planes which were under repair. Through what seems to me the negligence of those in charge, these planes were never properly dispersed. It was not thought that Hollandia was within range of your fighters, but Wewak should have been a sufficient lesson. I do not know how many planes intercepted the first Allied attacks or how many were destroyed. When the landings actually came, we had only a handful of planes left and we sent them against the beach heads. Only 4 or 5 actually attacked.
- Q. After Hollandia, did the Navy move into New Guinea?
- A. The Navy expected an Allied attack on Palau. It did not have a sufficient number of fighter planes or recce planes to protect Palau, and accordingly in the spring of 1944, two Army recce regiments and one fighter regiment operated under Navy control from North New Guinea bases. In addition, the Navy brought land based planes from Singapore area to protect Palau.
- Q. After Hollandia, did the Japanese Air Force adopt a policy of conserving its aircraft strength?
- A. Yes. Although there was some dispute within the high command, it was finally decided that we did not have sufficient strength to oppose your advance along the New Guinea coast, and we decided to hold back and build up strength for the defense of the Philippines. We did plan, however, to use a small force to defend Morotai. But a false alarm about 1 September 1944 with respect to landings in the Philippines led us to withdraw all our air strength to the Philippines before the landings on Morotai took place.