

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

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS NO. 32)
NAV - 3

Place: Tokyo
Date: 16 Oct. 1945; 0900-1200

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: The Battle of the Philippine Sea, 19-20 June 1944.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Vice Admiral T. OZAWA, IJN, Commander in Chief of the Japanese Task Force in subject battle. Service Career of Vice Admiral T. OZAWA, past 10 years: In 1945 Vice Admiral OZAWA, then Professor at the Naval Academy, went to command of the heavy cruiser MAYA. The next year he took command of the battleship HARUNA. In 1937 he became Chief of Staff of the Combined Fleet, and the next year became Commander of a cruiser squadron. In 1939 he became Principal of the Torpedo School. Next year he commanded the First Air Squadron. In 1941 he was Commander Battle Squadron, and in September of that year he became Principal of the Naval War College. In October he became Commander of the Dispatched Fleet to the South (Expeditionary Fleet), going to SAIGON, INDO CHINA. In December the war started. July of the following year he came back to TOKYO and was appointed to the Staff attached to the Navy General Headquarters. In November 1942 he became Commander in Chief of the Third Fleet, and in March 1944 Commander in Chief of the Task Force, formed for the first time, which was composed with the Third Fleet as the Main Body. In November of the same year he became Vice Chief of the Navy General Headquarters, and in May of 1945 he became Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet.

Where interviewed: MEIJI Building.

Interrogator: Rear Admiral R. A. Ofstie, USN.

Interpreter: Lieut. Comdr. D. Bartlett, USNR.

Allied Officers Present: Captain T. J. Hedding, USN; Captain D. J. McCallum, USN; Lieut. Comdr. J. A. Field, jr., USNR.

SUMMARY

The Battle of the PHILIPPINE SEA occurred on 19-20 June 1944 in the sea area west of the MARIANAS, and during the U.S. landing operations on SAIPAN. Major units of the opposing Fleets were engaged. On the first day, Japanese carrier aircraft, coordinated with shore based Naval aircraft, carried out a large scale attack on U.S. Task Force 58. Approximately 400 enemy aircraft were shot down, with only moderated U.S. air losses and minor damage to our surface vessels. U.S. submarines sank two Japanese aircraft carriers on this day. On 20 June, at about sunset, U.S. carrier aircraft attacked the Japanese Fleet, sinking one carrier, seriously damaging a second, and damaging two or three accompanying tankers.

Admiral OZAWA, who commanded the Japanese Fleet in this action, discusses Naval planning for this operation and movement of forces to the battle area, and gives details of the engagement on both days and subsequent retirement to home waters. He touches briefly on later planning, and offers miscellaneous comment and opinion on various features of the war.

TRANSCRIPT

Plans And Early Movements

- Q. Admiral Ozawa, today we propose to discuss the First Battle of the Philippine Sea, 19-20 June 1944. At the beginning of this operation, say about the 16th of June, where were you based, and when did you start on the ensuing operation?
- A. The entire fleet was at TAWI TAWI. Left there on or about 10th June (not sure of exact date), fueled in GUIMARAS STRAIT, and then south of MASBATE on to SAN BERNARDINO STRAIT, then due east refueling at sea at about Long. 130°. After refueling started battle here (referring to chart) at about Long. 135°. Details are uncertain and approximate.
- Q. Why was TAWI TAWI your base?
- A. Because the original plan was to go out south of MINDANAO to approach either the Western CAROLINES or the MARIANAS. If this was impossible or inadvisable we meant to go through SURIGAO STRAIT. TAWI TAWI was the best location to meet these arrangements.
- Q. What was the information on which this plan was based; why did the Task Force leave on the 10th of June?
- A. The first possibility was that the American Fleet would come up from NEW GUINEA to attack PALAU; the second possibility was that the Fleet would come to the MARIANAS. A radio from SAIPAN stated that your force was coming to the MARIANAS, so the Task Force left TAWI TAWI on receipt of that information.
- Q. At that time were SAN BERNARDINO and SURIGAO STRAITS mined?
- A. There were Japanese mines in both passages in certain places.
- Q. What was the status of training of the Air Groups when you left TAWI TAWI; do you feel they were well trained, completely trained, or what was your view?
- A. The training was very insufficient because the airfield at TAWI TAWI was still under construction.
- Q. Had the Air Groups done some training at SINGAPORE previous to that?
- A. The First Squadron only had trained at SINGAPORE; the 2nd and 3rd Squadrons were trained in JAPAN.
- Q. All pilots, however, could land on board in the daytime?
- A. Yes, they were capable, but not at night.
- Q. What were the basic plans for defense against American landings in the MARIANAS, and by whom were they prepared?
- A. There were land-based planes at PALAU, YAP and GUAM. They were here under direct command of the Combined Fleet, and not under Admiral OZAWA. These air forces, coordinating and cooperating with the Task Force, were to conduct operations against the American Task Force. This was the original plan of the Combined Fleet Headquarters.
- Q. This was the AGO Plan, issued by Admiral Toyoda?
- A. Yes, and Toyoda made the plan.
- Q. Did you have a conference with Admiral Toyoda, before the operation, regarding this plan?

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Vice Admiral T. OZAWA, IJN) - - - - -

A. The two Admirals had had no conference; Admiral Toyoda was in JAPAN, Admiral OZAWA was in SINGAPORE when the plan was originally received. It was an order from Admiral Toyoda.

Q. About when did the order come out?

A. Perhaps the end of April or beginning of May.

Q. You mentioned that the shore-based air force was under C-in-C Combined Fleet. Were they all Navy, or Army and Navy?

A. All Navy planes.

Q. There were no Army planes in the Islands?

A. There were no Army planes.

Q. What was Admiral OZAWA'S command status relative to these planes; could he give direct orders to them himself or did he have to go back to Admiral Toyoda?

A. They were under command of Admiral Toyoda.

Q. What was the means of arranging coordinated action once the operation started? Did Admiral OZAWA have to go to Admiral TOYODA to direct them?

A. The command was issued by Admiral TOYODA, and Admiral OZAWA was trying to work along the line of that command. As to the details of how the cooperation was done, I do not remember.

Q. What I meant was, could Admiral OZAWA make decisions effecting shore-based air without reference to Admiral TOYODA?

A. That was done. The First Fleet Headquarters was at TINIAN, and the C-in-C of the First Air Fleet had the direction of the Air Force of all land-based planes.

Q. What was the approximate strength of the aircraft of the First Air Fleet in all those islands?

A. Altogether the land-based planes totalled about 500 but reference is made to Captain OHMAE for details.

Q. Was that part of the AGO Plan?

A. Yes.

Q. Admiral, will you outline your initial plan; how you intended to strike at the beginning, and what you intended to accomplish here?

A. The first purpose was to attack the American Task Force in cooperation with land-based planes. The second consideration was to attack the landing force with the Second Fleet.

Q. What information did you have as to the strength of the American Task Force?

A. I received information that one Task Force was around here, about 200 miles south, and another Task Force was northwest of SAIPAN. These were reports from land-based scout planes.

Q. To go back; when you sortied from TAWI TAWI what did you think the total American strength was?

A. I did not receive any detailed information of the American Task Force but was inclined to think that the whole American Task Force was coming, complete, with about 12 or 13 carriers.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Vice Admiral T. OZAWA, IJN) - - - - -

First Day, 19 June 1944.

Q. What losses did you have on the first day and when did they occur relative to the time of initiating your attack?

A. Two carriers were sunk that day, the TAIHO and SHIKOKU.

Q. Give me details about the sinking of the SHIKOKU.

A. She was sunk by a submarine at one o'clock in the afternoon (not quite sure of details; was far from the scene). The first wave of planes had left the ship, and the submarine attack occurred before the second wave was launched. The first wave had not yet returned. I received a report that the carrier was afloat 2 or 3 hours after the hit.

Q. As for the TAIHO, what happened there?

A. It was a submarine torpedo at 0900 on the 19th. All the gasoline spread around in the hangar deck, exploded, and because of this explosion the TAIHO sunk at perhaps 1100.

Q. Before launching the first wave?

A. After the first wave left and before the second wave was launched.

Q. The Admiral then transferred to what ship?

A. He transferred to the ZUIKAKU by means of a destroyer.

Q. During this period when ships were lost and the 1st and 2nd waves of planes were sent out for the attacks, was the whole disposition fairly close together, say within 50 miles?

A. Within a range of 100 miles, the entire formation.

Q. What were the first reports you had of the results of the air attack on the American Task Force; when did you get the report and what were they?

A. I did not know until this operation ended and the planes returned. In other words, during the action I received no report of American damage, and never did receive full information.

Q. About how many planes did you send out; how many waves and how many planes?

A. The 1st wave was 300 planes altogether (not quite sure); the 2nd wave a very few planes on account of the two carriers being sunk, perhaps about 100.

Q. The other planes sank with the carriers?

A. Yes.

Q. About what total of planes did you have in all the ships before you came up there?

A. We brought altogether about 400 or 450 planes.

Q. And of those planes how many returned from the 1st and 2nd waves?

A. I do not recollect; but very few returned.

Q. Did you know whether a considerable number had gone in and landed at GUAM? Did you get reports from GUAM?

A. I received a report to that effect. I think they landed at GUAM and TINIAN.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Vice Admiral T. OZAWA, IJN) - - - - -

- Q. How were plans changed as a result of first days action?
- A. The plan was changed to such an extent that the next day the ships were to go back west to refuel and then try to attack again. There were no changes in basic plan but a necessitated change in Japanese movements.
- Q. Did you receive any new directive or intelligence from Admiral TOYODA as a result of the first day?
- A. I received no report from Admiral TOYODA directly as a result of the first days action.
- Q. When the 1st and 2nd waves were sent out, what were the flight commanders orders; what were they to attack, first priority, - what was the plan?
- A. The main order was to attack the carriers in conjunction with land-based planes; only to attack the carriers. Also the land-based planes were to attack carriers.
- Q. This is the point, if attacks from all the planes were to be coordinated, was an effort made to strike at the same time?
- A. The planes made formation (rendezvous) in individual squadrons, and every squadron was to take its individual target.

Second Day, 20 June 1944

- Q. The next day you had very few planes; about how many left?
- A. Perhaps a little less than 60, perhaps about 40 planes left on the ZUIKAKU of the entire First Air Squadron. About the same number of planes left in the 1st and 3rd Squadrons.
- Q. What was your plan to employ those planes on the 20th?
- A. The day of the 20th was occupied by refueling, and keeping watch against submarines. Next attack was intended to be made on the 21st.
- Q. During the day of the 20th while refueling, etc, and until late in the day, what information did you have on movements of the U.S. Task Force?
- A. American scout planes interfered with the fueling operations, and the force had to go still further west. Fueling never was accomplished, and about evening the American bombing attack was received and resulted in the loss of one carrier in the 2nd Air Squadron.
- Q. That was the HIYO?
- A. Yes, and the JUNYO received serious damage. By result of that attack we had to change the refueling and attacking plan altogether. We abandoned original plans and retired to OKINAWA, and at the same time I received a dispatch from Admiral TOYODA that we should abandon the attack and return.
- Q. That night you received the dispatch?
- A. In the evening of the 20th I received orders to similar effect from Admiral TOYODA.
- Q. With respect to the HIYO, can you tell me the details of the damage; did you sink her or did she sink from torpedo or bombing attack?
- A. She sank on account of the damage, mostly by bombing.
- Q. How soon did she sink?
- A. Perhaps 1- $\frac{1}{2}$ hours; she had very insufficient defense equipment because it was a converted carrier and had insufficient compartmentation and protection.

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- Q. Now with regard to the JUNYO. How much damage was done to her, and did you tow her or could she get away herself?
- A. She received a bomb to right of the bridge aft. She received another bomb in some part, but even though damaged it did not affect the speed of movement or affect maneuvering. On account of the damage on the flight deck she could not use the airplanes.
- Q. Were there any other ships damaged in that attack, that you know of?
- A. I am certain there was no other damage on the other ships.
- Q. That applies only to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Air Squadrons; or does it include the Support Force?
- A. I remember clearly there was no other damage.
- Q. Did you have reports on the tankers, which were near you then? Any damage to them?
- A. Yes, I received a report on the tankers; 2 or 3 tankers were damaged.
- Q. The entire Fleet moved then to OKINAWA?
- A. Yes, all the Fleet retired to OKINAWA.
- Miscellaneous Battle Comment.
- Q. What was the first time you thought you knew that the American Fleet had you located?
- A. After 5 or 6 hours after we left SAN BERNARDINO STRAIT, I thought we were found by an American submarine or shore watchers.
- Q. You had radar in all your ships then?
- A. All ships were equipped with radar, but I was very doubtful whether or not our men had mastered the use of radar.
- Q. In other words you had no reports by your own radars of any of our aircraft coming over and picking you up?
- A. We got it not from radar but from interception of dispatches.
- Q. That was the day before?
- A. Five hours out of SAN BERNARDINO.
- Q. About midnight of the 18th - 19th, the night before the engagement, one of our patrol planes picked up your force. Did you know that?
- A. No, I did not know that.
- Q. Did you observe radio silence from the time you sortied until the time the action was initiated on the 19th?
- A. Yes, but rather think I did send out some radio message on the night of the 18th.
- Q. For what reason did you break radio silence; was there an important message to be sent?
- A. We sent a radio to instruct the land-based airplanes where to attack the American Task Force.

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- Q. Asking them where, or telling them the location of our Task Force?
- A. Telling them mainly the place. It was already understood that the attack would be made in early morning. These instructions were sent to coordinate the action of land-based planes.

Later Plans, Movements, and General Comments

- Q. After retirement to OKINAWA, what steps were then taken to make new plans as a result of this action?
- A. The Force refueled at OKINAWA and received order from Admiral TOYODA to return to the INLAND SEA.
- Q. Did you then have a conference with Admiral TOYODA, or what was done to prepare new plans as a result of the MARIANAS battle?
- A. I reported verbally to Admiral TOYODA.
- Q. And Admiral TOYODA then issued new plans?
- A. Admiral TOYODA issued a new order. I didn't have any conference with him on this plan, and had no voice in framing the new plan.
- Q. When you first approached the MARIANAS the night of the 18th - 19th with your plan of attacking by air and then bringing the Fleet in during the final approach, was the intention to come in straight toward SAIPAN, or to come from the south or from the north in a flanking attack? In other words, were you going to go in straight, or come from the side to get the transports?
- A. The plan was to go direct. It would take too much fuel to take the longer route, which had been considered, but we planned to go in straight and we did not change that plan during the approach. Perhaps a little southerly sag in the line of approach for the sake of air cover, but in the main plans agreed to were straight approach.
- Q. What date did you get back to the INLAND SEA from OKINAWA?
- A. We reached OKINAWA the 22nd or 23rd, immediately refueled and departed either that night or the next morning for the INLAND SEA.
- Q. That is the Third Fleet, or the Third and Second Fleets?
- A. Both.
- Q. How long did the Fleets stay there in the INLAND SEA?
- A. About 10 days for the 2nd Fleet; the 3rd Fleet carriers stayed there.
- Q. The 2nd Fleet then went where?
- A. The 2nd Fleet and 3rd Fleet, excepting the carriers, stayed there about ten days and then all the able ships except the carriers of the 3rd Fleet joined the 2nd Fleet and departed for SINGAPORE.
- Q. The 2nd Fleet stayed in SINGAPORE until about time for the sortie for the Philippine landings?
- A. They stayed in SINGAPORE and LINGGA and BRUNEI BAY.
- Q. How long did the Fleet stay at SINGAPORE?
- A. The Fleet went to the SINGAPORE area where damage was repaired for the ships requiring it, and training was undertaken at LINGGA by the balance of the Fleet.
- Q. The new plan put out by C-in-C Combined Fleet - Admiral TOYODA; what was the substance of that plan?

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- A. There was a new plan, dependent on the location of American operations. I think the plan was divided into three possibilities: An attack on the PHILIPPINES at LEYTE or around MINDANAO, FORMOSA, or OKINAWA.
- Q. That was the "SHO" plan of operations?
- A. It was the "SHO GO" operation.
- Q. Will you express briefly what, in your opinion, was the effect of the Battle of the CORAL SEA in May 1942? What was the effect on planning; did it cause JAPAN to go on the defensive?
- A. I was in SINGAPORE at the time so I do not know exactly what kind of effect that battle had on the plans. I do not think that the Battle of the CORAL SEA affected future main planning.
- Q. Now the same thing with respect to the Battle of MIDWAY in which the four carriers were lost; how do you feel about that?
- A. I think that on account of the result of the MIDWAY battle the planning for future operations was very difficult on the side of JAPAN.
- Q. Do you mean that at that point it had changed to the defensive?
- A. Thereafter it became necessary to consider the naval operations as mainly defensive on account of loss of 4 carriers.
- Q. Down in the South Pacific in the SOLOMONS, in the RABAU - GUADALCANAL area, there was a long period of fighting night actions in which we lost many ships and JAPAN lost many ships. Did that long period of attrition have some predominant effect on operations?
- A. JAPAN lost quite a few ships, also damaged air force which made future planning more difficult.
- Q. What is your personal opinion as to the relative importance to the whole war of the loss of Japanese naval strength in ships, the loss of naval air strength, loss of merchant shipping, and loss of oil?
- A. First is the air force - the damage to air force means damage to all the rest. The other three are all dependent on damage to the air force.
- Q. Now again down in the SOLOMONS, in the RABAU - GUADALCANAL area; you had heavy air losses there and for that reason that was an important campaign, is that correct?
- A. Due to the damage of airforces they could not very well replace air force. They could not replace the planes therefore they could not replace anything else successfully to keep up the strength of RABAU.
- Q. Aircraft or pilots?
- A. Same thing with pilots.
- Q. Throughout the PACIFIC side of the operations, excluding CHINA; what was the approximate percentage of Japanese Naval aviation as against Japanese Army aviation that was employed?
- A. If you include CHINA, then the forces of Army and Navy are about equal: But if CHINA is excluded I do not know.
- Q. Wasn't there a predominance of Naval aircraft in the TRUK - RABAU area?
- A. After MIDWAY there were very few carrier pilots who were assigned land bases in the SOLOMONS area; nearly all of them were reserved for other carrier duty. Excluding CHINA but including BURMA, JAVA and MALAYA the

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Navy and Army were about equal. But if you mean the Pacific Ocean area without the MALAY ARCHIPELAGO, it was almost exclusively Navy. There was some Army air strength in the NEW GUINEA area, toward the end of the SOLOMONS operations.

Q. After the occupation of the MARIANAS did you feel there was any reasonable chance of defeating our Fleet, or of destroying our air forces?

A. I did not know much about the replacement of the airplanes, but I thought if the land-based airplanes were prepared to such an extent that they could counter American attack, then I thought there was a fair chance of defeating the American forces.

Q. To go further then. After the 2nd Philippines operation in October 1944, when you had lost four carriers, then you had no strength to defeat our Fleet except with shore-based aircraft. That was the plan then, to use shore-based aircraft?

A. That was then the only way to attack the American force, with shore-based planes.

Q. In your personal opinion was there any particular outstanding weakness or strength, one way or the other, in the American Fast Carrier Forces? In other words, what were the weakest and the strongest features of the American fast carriers?

A. The particular strength of your Task Force is the use of radar, interception of radio messages, and intercepting by radar of Japanese air attacks which they can catch and destroy ("eat up") whenever they want to. That is the strength. The weakness we noticed in the beginning of the campaign was the slowness, the lack of maneuverability in case of torpedo attack. Towards the end maneuvering ability improved and we could not successfully deliver a torpedo attack in strength enough to sink anything.

Q. When was construction work on new Japanese carriers discontinued?

A. I do not know the exact date of the discontinuance of building new carriers but think that up to the very end of the war a very high priority was given to this construction.

Q. When did the Naval Air Force shift from the carriers to shore bases; at approximately what time?

A. Right after the second Philippines campaign they shifted to a defensive plan, with carrier planes shore based.

(Note. Interrogation of Admiral T. OZAWA to be continued on Tuesday, 30 October 1945, at 0930)