

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

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS 229)
NAV NO. 57

Place: Tokyo
Date: 31 Oct. 1945

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: Escort and Defense of Shipping.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Rear Admiral MATSUYAMA, Mitsuharu, IJN (Retired) Employed in
convoy escort in eastern New GUINEA, June to December 1942
and in resupply of troops at ORMOY in November 1944.

Where interviewed: Room 748, MEIJI Building.

Interrogator: Captain Steadman Teller, USN.

Interpreter: Lieut. Comdr. D. Bartlett, USNR

Allied Officers Present: Captain C. Shands, USN, Lieut. Comdr. J.A.
Field, jr., USNR.

SUMMARY

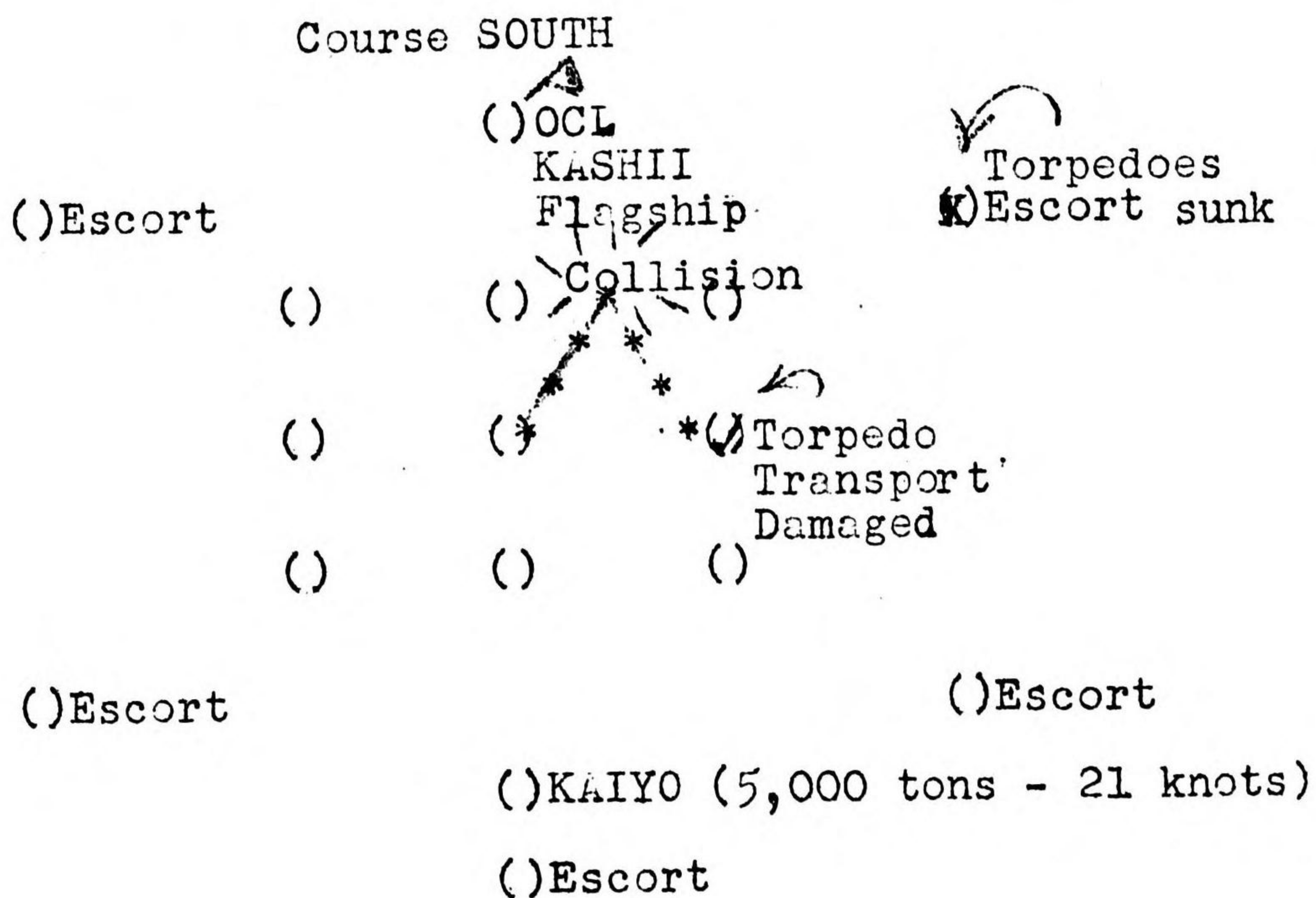
Rear Admiral MATSUYAMA, had experience in escorting shipping
in the BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO in the latter half of 1942, between the
Japanese EMPIRE and NEI in the summer of 1944 and between MANILA
and ORMOY BAY in November 1944. Three successful submarine attacks
on Japanese convoys are described and the air attacks against two
reinforcing convoys to ORMOY are told in some detail.

TRANSCRIPT

Transcript of Interrogation (Rear Admiral MATSUYAMA, Mitsuharu, IJN)

- Q. Describe the organization of the Seventh Escort Group while under your command.
- A. I commanded this group between April and December, 1944. The Seventh Escort Group was a tactical command whose mission was to escort and protect important convoys over long and dangerous routes. The group received its assignment to specific tasks and also general instructions from Grand Escort Fleet Headquarters, TOKYO. While carrying out an assignment the group was under the direct command of one of the eight Escort Groups Headquarters or under the command of the Area Fleet Commander. For example, while conveying between MANILA and ORMOC my group acted under orders of the commander Southwestern Area Fleet whose headquarters were in MANILA. There was no permanent assignment of ships to my command. Escort vessels were assigned to the group for specific convoy trips according to requirements of the occasion and availability of escorts.
- Q. On what routes did you escort convoys?
- A. In April and May 1944 I made one round trip to SAIPAN. This was the first convoy to SAIPAN for several months which had not received damage. During May and June I escorted two convoys from the EMPIRE to SINGAPORE. During August I made two trips between the EMPIRE and MANILA. After your landings on LEYTE my duties were to convoy between MANILA and ORMOC BAY.
- Q. Describe the submarine attacks which were made on convoys under your escort.
- A. At the end of May or the first of June 1944 I commanded a convoy proceeding south near FORMOSA. It was my desire to pass west of FORMOSA because I thought there were more submarines on the east. However, I was ordered by the First Convoy Escort Squadron (later First Escort Fleet) to pass east of FORMOSA. As the convoy passed south between FORMOSA and the island of KASHIO a submarine attack was made from the west, or FORMOSA side.

DIAGRAM NO. 1



Transcript of Interrogation (Rear Admiral MATSUYAMA, Mitsuharu, IJN)

I was uncertain as to the location of the submarines reported and whether or not it was friendly or enemy.

Q. What was your experience in NEW GUINEA between June 1942 and January 1943?

A. My experience was in convoying and our principal trouble was with airplanes. The convoys were principally from RABAUL carrying Army transports to BUNA, WEWAK and MADANG and carrying special Navy landing force parties to MILNE BAY.

Q. What was the most effective form of air attacks against your convoys in the BISMARCK SEA area?

A. B-17's were the worst. At BUNA on the first day of the landing one transport was sunk at anchor in the evening by 4 or 5 B-17's attacking at low level. However, I was some distance away and cannot be sure. In September 1942 the YAYOI was sunk east of MAMBY ISLAND late in the afternoon. She was underway and I think one B-17 sank her. I was not present, and know nothing of altitude from which attack was delivered. Most of the bombers that I saw were B-17's. No twin engine planes were seen in this area but later B-24s were seen. I know of one other sinking, a destroyer in September, 1942 off LAE SALUMAUUA area. After September the use of transports to eastern NEW GUINEA area was suspended, principally because the transports were slow and thus were unduly exposed to air attack. Submarine attacks south of NEW BRITAIN were not an important factor.

Q. Did you receive many air attacks west of the BISMARCKS?

A. On the route from RABAUL via the ADMIRALTIES to MADANG we received frequent light attacks and one transport was hit but with no great damage. At that time no air attacks were being received at WEWAK. When I left the BISMARCK AREA in January 1943 air attacks had still not become very serious west of the BISMARCKS and submarine attacks also were light.

Q. How many convoys did you accompany into ORMOC BAY?

A. Two, the first of which left MANILA about 29 October. This convoy took the First Army Division into ORMOC. I believe that before that date some troops had been sent from MINDANAO into ORMOC BAY.

Q. What were the losses in your first convoy?

A. The first convoy which I accompanied to ORMOC BAY approached ORMOC on the 1st of November, I believe it was first sighted off northwest tip of LEYTE and was later attacked near ORMOC. At this time we had Japanese fighters for cover and an air battle resulted. There was little damage to our formation at this time. Our convoy was composed of four transports and four coast defense ships, all of which were under my command. Also assisting in escort were 6 or 8 destroyers of DesRon ONE. In this operation the Commander of DesRon ONE was in command of the entire formation. The transports all started to unload the evening of the first and except for one sunk finished by the evening of the 2nd. At about 1300 in the afternoon of the 2nd while the ships were engaged in unloading close to ORMOC pier about 26 B-24's and a similar number of P-38's attacked. The B-24's hit the most westward anchored ship (NOTO an Army transport of 6,700 tons) from an altitude of about 5,000 meters damaging ship so that it capsized and sank. No other serious damage was incurred in this attack. The convoy left ORMOC the evening of the 2nd and returned to MANILA without further serious incident.

Q. What was your experience in your second trip to ORMOC?

Transcript of Interrogation (Rear Admiral MATSUYAMA, Mitsuharu, IJN)

A. My next convoy left MANILA about 7 November with part of the 26th Infantry Division consisting of about 10,000 troops divided among the three remaining ships of the previous convoy. This convoy was composed of the three transports some coast defense ships and about 6 or 8 perhaps 9 destroyers. Three or four armed transports (APD) joined the convoy enroute and entered ORMOC BAY in company. This trip was uneventful except for a possible submarine sighting off MANILA BAY and was sighted off northwest LEYTE by a P-38. The convoy arrived late on the day of the 9th in ORMOC BAY. As the convoy passed north of the CAMOTES ISLANDS to enter ORMOC BAY we received an attack by B-25's which did considerable damage to the upper works including unloading tackle. Due to the damage to the unloading gear only a part of the equipment could be unloaded. Unloading was further hampered by failure of landing craft to appear as originally planned and coast defense ships were used in lieu of landing craft to unload personnel. On the morning of the 10th, P-38's attacked while unloading was in progress but defense smoke pots were lit and damage was very light. The convoy less the four armed transports sailed at 1000 on November having unloaded only light baggage and personnel. While passing north of the CAMOTES ISLANDS in column formation we were attacked from the north by about 70 B-25's and P-38's. Coastal Defense Ship No. 11 was hit, beached and burned. The 2nd and 3rd ships in column the KASHII MARU and KOZOMA MARU were hit by low level bombing and sank. One of them, believed to be the KOZOMA MARU sank immediately the other (KASHII MARU) remained afloat long enough to remove personnel. Although the remaining ships of the convoy were under continuous attack by P-38's until reaching northern tip of LEYTE the only serious damage was done to a destroyer which appeared down by the bow. The next convoy under the command of Admiral HAYAKAWA was proceeding south on the night of 10/11 November passed my convoy about BURIAS PASSAGE. That convoy was attacked by carrier based planes in the latter part of the 11th near ORMOC and before reaching that port. I believe that all the transport vessels (small transports) in this convoy were destroyed and that only one of the six destroyers forming the escort survived. This convoy was loaded with freight rather than personnel.

Q. Do you know of any convoys entering ORMOC BAY between your first convoy on 1 November and your second convoy on 9 November?

A. No. However, there may have been some individual ships such as small armed transports.