

HEADQUARTERS
U.S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
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INTERROGATION NO: (USSBS NO. 100)
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PLACE: TOKYO
DATE: 9 Oct 1945
TIME: 1330-1700

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

SUBJECT: Japanese Flying Boat Operations in the Aleutians.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Captain Sukemitsu ITO, I.J.N., is a regular Naval Aviator with about 3000 hours in the air. He has had twenty-six years service in the Japanese Navy. At present he is a staff officer attached to the Naval Air Headquarters.

From December 1941 to Jan. 1942 he was a staff officer at the First Air Technical Arsenal, YOKOSUKA. From February 1942 to March 1943 he was Commanding Officer of the TOKO Seaplane Squadron at YOKOHAMA. From April 1943 to June 1945 he was a Staff Officer in the Navy Air Headquarters, TOKYO. From July 1945 to September 1945, when he was sent to his present assignment, he was Commanding Officer of #724 Air Squadron, MISAWA, HONSHU.

Where interviewed: Room 618, MEIJI Building, TOKYO.

Interrogator: J. S. RUSSELL, Captain, USN.

Interpreter: H. L. McMINISTERS, Lieutenant, USN; Kazumi OMOTO, Civilian.

Allied Officers Present: None other than above.

SUMMARY

Captain ITO, as Commanding Officer of a six-plane detachment of TOKO KOKUTAI, a KAWANISHI Type 97 Flying Boat (MAVIS) Squadron, flew to KISKI from PARAMUSHIRO, landing at KISKI on 7 June, the day after the initial occupation. His unit remained at KISKI until 17 August 1942. He stated that from the latter part of May to the first part of June 1942, a 300 to 400 mile search was made in the direction of KISKI from PARAMUSHIRO by naval land-based attack planes (BETTIES). The fuel, provisions and supplies for use by his six-plane unit were brought to KISKI on board the KAMITSU MARU. This ship carried 500 two hundred liter drums of gasoline. Captain ITO's group moved ashore in a camp on the northwest shore of KISKI HARBOR and were supported by repeated trips of the KAMITSU MARU between KISKI and PARAMUSHIRO. The gasoline drums were dispersed behind the seaplane beach and in the surrounding hills. The six plane unit immediately engaged in reconnaissance flights searching to the east and southeast to a distance of 250 to 300 nautical miles. Captain ITO stated that the reconnaissance was very poor due to the prevalence of fog. Beginning on about 10 June U.S. Navy Flying Boats attacked KISKI. These attacks continued for two or three days and then stopped, he believed, due to fog. In his opinion, these U.S. Flying Boats came from DUTCH HARBOR.

When Captain ITO's unit arrived in KISKI the Japanese Cruiser KISO and four or five miscellaneous ships, including a few destroyers, were present.

The first large attack against KISKA occurred, to the best of Captain ITO's memory, on 10 June. This was made by a formation of six LIBERATORS. They came through the pass to the west of KISKA HARBOR under an overcast which was at about 1500 feet. The leading plane of this attack was struck by anti-aircraft fire from the ships in the harbor and disintegrated in the air. The wreckage fell in the mountains just to the north of the pass. This attack came as a surprise and worried the Japanese considerably. No particular damage was done.

Captain ITO stated that the cruiser KISO, which was present at KISKA on his arrival, was undamaged.

Captain ITO did not remember when his flying boats first bombed NAZAN Bay, but thought it was about the middle of July. Their mission was to bomb a seaplane tender, but she was absent and the village was bombed instead. Clouds interfered with the observation of the result of this bombing. On one bombing of NAZAN Bay, U.S. fighters, of an unidentified type, attacked the Japanese flying boats. No damage was done to the Jap planes except for a 50 caliber bullet hole in the tail surfaces of one plane. The Jap plane under attack escaped into the clouds. Three planes of Captain ITO's unit bombed a U.S. seaplane tender in KULUK BAY, ADAK, about 20 July. One plane, of three outbound on daily search, sighted this tender. When each had finished his sector search, all concentrated on KULUK BAY, joined in section formation and bombed. Each plane carried two 250 kg. bombs. Planes were not sure but thought no damage was done to the tender. One plane had one small shrapnel hole in its tail surfaces as a result of AA fire. The section leader of this flight was later killed at RABAUL.

While Captain ITO was based at KISKA the Japanese seaplane tender KMIKAMI brought in some float seaplanes.

The total losses to Captain ITO's six-plane MAVIS unit were: (a) two operationally, and (b) three as a result of U.S. surface gunfire on about 8 August. Of the two planes lost operationally, one disappeared in the fog between OMINATO and PARAMUSHIRO; the other was weathered out after a reconnaissance flight to the eastward of KISKA. The latter plane eventually landed in the open sea off ATTU, and, although the plane sank, the crew were rescued by the Japanese Army forces on ATTU. Replacements were received for the two planes lost operationally. Of the three planes lost due to enemy action, i.e., bombardment on 8 August, one plane sank and the other two were damaged beyond repair and were left in KISKA. Captain ITO departed from KISKA on 17 August and returned to Japan with the three remaining planes.

Captain ITO considered seaplane operations from KISKA very difficult due to weather. Their searches were greatly reduced in radius, 250 - 300 nautical miles, due to the extreme uncertainty of weather at their base. Searches over the sea were flown "contact", those along the island chain were flown "on top". The ocean swell which set into KISKA HARBOR from the northeast caused them considerable trouble, but, in spite of many close calls, no damage was caused to his planes due to rough landings in the swells. He stated that the four U.S. seaplane moorings found in the lee of North Head were of excellent quality. During reconnaissance missions Captain ITO's planes navigated by dead-reckoning and celestial navigation. Although they had radio direction finders in their planes, and radio beacons were in operation on KISKA and ATTU, reliance was not placed in radio bearings. Japanese forces were on only four islands: KISKA, ATTU, LITTLE KISKA and AGATTU. Commander ITO's flying boat unit operated under orders of Commander FIFTH Fleet whose headquarters were at OMINATO or PARAMUSHIRO. The officer in command ashore at KISKA was the Commanding Officer of No. 3 Special Naval Landing Force, Lieutenant Commander MUKAI.

J. S. RUSSELL,
Captain, USN.