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



INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS 311)
NAV NO. 67

Place: Tokyo
Date: 12 November 1945

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: Operations of the Japanese Twelfth Air Fleet in the
KURILES and NORTH PACIFIC.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Commander SHIMADA, Koichi, IJN, an aviation observer, served as Air Officer on the Staff of the Combined Fleet, flagship MUSASHI, from May 1943 until March 1944 when he became Air Officer on the Staff of the North East Area Fleet, based ashore at KATAOKA, SHIMUSHU, in the KURILES and at CHITOSE on HOKKAIDO. Commander SHIMADA is a regular officer with 18 years service.

Where interviewed: Room 618, MEIJI Building

Interrogator: J. S. Russell, Captain, USN

Interpreter: R. P. Brown, Lt.(jg), USNR

Other Allied Officers Present: None.

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Narrative of Interrogation (Commander SHIMADA, Koichi, IJN)

NARRATIVE

As of March, 1944, the NORTHEAST AREA FLEET was made up of a surface force, - the FIFTH FLEET, comprised of one cruiser division and a destroyer squadron, - and an air force, - the TWELFTH AIR FLEET.

The 12th Air Fleet organization was as follows:
12th Air Fleet, Vice Admiral Michitaro TOTSUKA.

- 27th Air Flotilla, Vice Admiral Teiichi MATSUNAGA.
- | | |
|--|------------|
| 36 land based attack planes - type 1 | (BETTY 22) |
| 36 fighters - type zero | (ZEKE) |
| 36 carrier based attack planes - type 97 | (KATE) |
| 12 reconnaissance float planes, 3-seat | (JAKE) |
| 12 flying boats - type 2 | (EMILY) |
- 51st Air Flotilla, Rear Admiral Sadayoshi YAMADA.
- | | |
|--|------------|
| 72 fighters - type zero | (ZEKE) |
| 9 night fighters - Gekko | (IRVING) |
| 36 land based attack planes - type 1 | (BETTY 22) |
| 36 carrier based attack planes - type 97 | (KATE) |
| 72 Carrier based bombers - type 99 | (VAL 22) |
| 9 transports -DC-3 | (TABBY) |

The 12th Air Fleet had available to it in the KURILES the following air bases:

KATAOKA, SHIMUSHU

- A regular land plane base with ample runways and a permanent detail of about 150 aviation personnel.
- A seaplane base, ice-free in summer only, on Lake BETTOBI. Here there were buoys, but no runways, and water revements dug into the shore line.

PARAMUSHIRO

- KAKUMABETSU - A secondary land and sea plane base with a single 1200 meter (4,000 ft.) runway.
- SURIBACHI - Landplane base with 2 1200 meter runways.
- MUSASHI - Landplane base with 2 or 3 1200 meter runways.

MATSUWA

A landplane base with 1-1200 meter (4,000 ft.), and 1-1,000 meter (3,280 ft.) runway. No seaplane facilities ashore.

ETOROFU

- TENNEI - A landplane base with 1-1200 meter and 1-1,000 meter runway.
- TOSHIMOYE LAKE - A seaplane base, ice-free in the summer.

The mission of the North East Area Fleet was to provide general escort and defensive cover for shipping between CHISHIMA BETTO (KURILES) and HONSHU.

The 27th Air Flotilla in March 1944 was based at TATEYAME at the end of CHIBA peninsula, TOKYO area, and at TOYOHASHI in the NAGOYA area. In April, 36 fighters went to MISAWA, at the northern end of HONSHU, and were to continue moving north, as weather improved, to three airfields on HOKKAIDO in the vicinity of SHIBETSU. However the HOKKAIDO airfields were not ready in June, 1944, when the SAIPAN operation took place most of the fighters were ordered to IWO JIMA. From IWO this detachment went to the KANTO PLAIN (TOKYO area). The remainder of the 27th Air Flotilla joined the Combined Fleet in June, 1944.

The 51st Air Flotilla in March, 1944, was in the main islands of Japan at TSUIKI and OITA on KYUSHU; at TOYOHASHI near NAGOYA, and MOBARA in the TOKYO area. In late April and early May the Flotilla moved to HOKKAIDO, thence deployed into the KURILES to provide air cover for convoys.

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In August the Flotilla returned to HOKKAIDO, leaving 12 carrier based attack planes at KATAOKA. Of these 6 returned in November and the other 6 stayed all winter. From HOKKAIDO the remainder of the 51st Flotilla returned to the KANTO PLAIN area and to KYUSHU, because of the KEYTE operations. 3 or 4 transports stayed in the north. Later some of the Flotilla went to FORMOSA and some to the PHILIPPINES.

Commander North East Area Fleet maintained his headquarters at CHITOSE on HOKKAIDO, but moved north by air transport to base at KATAOKA during the period 20 April to 10 August 1944.

The deployment of units of the 12th Air Fleet is shown in the table of appendix (A).

During the summer there were almost daily American air attacks against Japanese bases and shipping in the NORTH KURILES. There was severe damage to a picket boat line which was maintained on a 200 mile radius from KATAOKA, - 5 or 6 boats were sunk. Some damage was done ashore, with 2 or 3 planes destroyed on the ground at MUSASHI.

Between June and September there were four bombardments by surface ships. Two against MUSASHI destroyed 12 or 13 planes, damaged some buildings, and caused light personnel casualties. Two against MATSUWA damaged buildings and installations. No ship above 500 tons was sunk by air or surface action, however there were many sunk by submarine, - about 20.

During Commander SHIMADA's duty on the Staff of Commander North East Area Fleet, the sinking of 2 United States submarines was claimed by Japanese aircraft. In April 1944 a carrier type bomber dove from 500-600 meters (1,640-1,970 ft.) on a United States submarine which was cruising at periscope depth off ETOROFU. The plane released one 250 kilogram bomb fuzed with a time fuze to detonate at a fixed depth. A direct hit was made and one end of the submarine lifted out of water as the submarine sank. There were no survivors, and no identification of the submarine was made. In August, 1944, off PARAMUSHIRO, a twin float reconnaissance plane made a diving attack on a United States submarine. After the underwater explosion of a 250 kilogram bomb the submarine made a 180 degree submerged turn trailing oil and was presumed to sink immediately thereafter because the oil slick ended in a concentrated patch of oil which persisted for 4 days.

Japanese plane losses during the period were:
In combat - 1 night fighter, GEKKO (IRVING)
Operational - 50-60 total of all types
Bombing - 5-6 planes total
Naval bombardment - 12-13 planes total

Operational losses were particularly high in the 51st Air Flotilla because of inexperienced pilots operating from icy runways. The heaviest losses were in fighter planes. 2 or more planes ran into mountains in snow storms, 5 or 6 were lost in fog. There was much trouble due to icing of wings, control surfaces, and windshield. Fog was a great hazard and frequently flights were weathered out of their own fields and had to land in fields on the lee side of mountains. Radio beacons were installed at all principal air bases and radio direction finders were used in planes, - but not too successfully.

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The loss of two American planes were considered confirmed by Commander SHIMADA. In June or July, 1944, a B-25 or Ventura was shot down over the sea off SHIMUSHU by Japanese fighters, and was seen to crash in the water. In August or September a B-25 strafing and bombing a picket boat collided with the mast of the craft and crashed in the sea. 3 survivors were picked up. In about 10 other instances Japanese fighters reported that planes smoked, but descended into the fog so that destruction could not be ascertained. American plane types identified in air attacks against the NORTH KURILES were the B-25, B-24, and the Ventura. The last, he said was a difficult target for fighters because of its high speed and good maneuverability.

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| Type & Strength | March | April | May | June | July | Aug. | Sept. | Oct. | Nov. |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|------|-------|------|------|
|-----------------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|------|-------|------|------|

-----27th Air Flotilla-----

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|--------|---------|------------|-------|-------|-------|---------|-------|
| F ^o 36 | TATEYAMA | MISAMA | -----) | IWO | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Fo 36 | TATEYAMA | MISAMA | -----)) | TATEYAMA | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Flo 36 | TATEYAMA | MISAMA | -----)) | KISARAZU | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| Fsr 12 | TATEYAMA | MISAMA | -----) | ETOROFU -6 | ----- | ----- | ----- | FORMOSA | ----- |
| | | | | SHIMUSHU-6 | ----- | ----- | ----- | FORMOSA | ----- |
| Fd 12 | YOKAHAMA | MISAMA | ETOROFU | ETOROFU -6 | ----- | ----- | ----- | FORMOSA | ----- |
| | | | | SHIMUSHU-6 | ----- | ----- | ----- | FORMOSA | ----- |

-----51st Air Flotilla-----

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|-------|------------|----------------|----------------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|------------|
| Fc 72 | ----- | CHITOSE | SHIMUSHU 36 | ----- | ----- | ----- | BIHORO 72 | ----- | ----- |
| | | | CHITOSE 36 | ----- | | | | | |
| Fo 36 | ----- | SHIMUSHU 6 | -----9 | ----- | ----- | ----- | SHIMUSHU 12 | ----- | SHIMUSHU 6 |
| | | BIHORO 30 | -----27 | ----- | | | BIHORO 24 | ----- | |
| Fb 72 | ----- | ETOROFU 6 | ----- | MATSUWA 6 | ----- | ----- | CHITOSE 75 | ----- | CHITOSE 90 |
| | | MATSUWA 6 | ----- | PARAMUSHIRO 12 | ----- | ----- | | ----- | |
| | | BIHORO 80 | ----- | BIHORO 75 | ----- | ----- | | ----- | |
| Flo 36 | ----- | CHITOSE | PARAMUSHIRO 18 | ----- | ----- | ----- | BIHORO 36 | ----- | ----- |
| | | | CHITOSE 30 | ----- | | | | ----- | |
| Fnc 9 | ----- | ----- | ----- | SHIMUSHU 4 | ----- | ----- | CHITOSE 9 | ----- | ----- |
| | | | | CHITOSE 6 | ----- | ----- | | ----- | |

Fc - Fighter
 Fo - Carrier attack
 Fb - Carrier bomber
 Flo - Land attack
 Fsr - Float reconnaissance
 Fd - Flying boat
 Fnc - Night fighter

The figures given are for normal plane complement. Additionally an immediate reserve of one-third of complement was kept on hand.

Appendix (A)

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