

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

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS 133)
NAV NO. 32

Place: Tokyo
Date: 25 October 1945; 1300-1600

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division

Subject: The YAMATO Group which was Attacked by American Carrier Planes on
7 April 1945.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Commander MIYAMOTO, T. has served 18 years in the I. J. N. Commander MIYAMOTO served as Officer in Charge of the cruiser KINUGASA, December 1941 to June 1942; served as Staff Officer of 2nd Air Flotilla, June 1942 to June 1943; served as Student at Naval Staff College, June 1943 to March 1944; served as Staff Officer 2nd Fleet, March 1944 to April 1945; served as Member of Educational Bureau, Navy Department, April 1945 and is still engaged in that activity.

Where interviewed: MEIJI Building, Room 340

Interrogator: Captain T. J. Hedding, U.S.N.

Interpreter: Lieut. Comdr. Donald (n) Bartlett, U.S.N.R.

Allied Officers Present: None.

SUMMARY

Comdr. MIYAMOTO was a Staff Officer on the Staff of Rear Admiral ITO, the OTC of the YAMATO Group, during the abortive attempt of this group to attack American Forces at OKINAWA during the OKINAWA Operation. Commander MIYAMOTO was an eye witness to this engagement.

The YAMATO Group consisted of the YAMATO (BB), the YAHAGI (CL), and eight destroyers. This group sortied from TOKUYAMA, in the INLAND SEA, on 6 April 1945, proceeded through the BUNGO SUIDO then south of KYUSHU with the intention of approaching OKINAWA from the northwest and attacking at dawn, the 8th of April.

The group was located and trailed and starting about noon of the 7th was subjected to carrier-based air attack, during which the YAMATO, the YAHAGI and four destroyers were sunk. The remnants of this group retired to SASEBO.

Enclosures: (A) Bomb and Torpedo Hits on the YAMATO.
(B) Track Chart of YAMATO.

TRANSCRIPT

Q. What duties were you performing during this action of the YAMATO Group?
A. I was a Staff Gunnery Officer in the Second Fleet.

Q. Were you present during the actions to which I referred?
A. I was present.

Q. What ship were you aboard?
A. On the YAMATO.

Q. Who commanded the YAMATO Group?
A. Rear Admiral ITO, Seichi.

Q. Was he lost in this battle?
A. Yes.

Q. What was the composition (Task Organization) of the YAMATO Group?

A. Flagship YAMATO
DesDiv - YAHAGI
41st Destroyer Squadron - FUYUZUKI
SUZUZUKI
17th Destroyer Division - ISO-KAZE
HAMA-KAZE
YUKI-KAZE
21st Destroyer Division - ASA SHIMO
HATSU SHIMO
KASUMI

Ring formation. The relative position of screen changed according to the course. One kilometer to 1 1/2 kilometer radius.

Q. What Operation Orders were issued to this group?

A. On the 6th, to withstand attack in the BUNGO SUIDO; on the morning of the 7th and on the morning of the 8th, to attack American Forces in the vicinity of OKINAWA. Sortied from TOKUYAMA at 1500 on the 6th.

Q. Referring to the track chart, approximately what time did you sight the patrol plane?

A. 1000 on the 7th.

Q. And that initial air attacks occurred about noon?

A. About noon.

Q. What was your estimate of the number of attacking planes?

A. Between 1200 and 1430 when she sank, four or five attacks by forty or fifty planes each.

Q. Tell me in your own words your description of the attack on the YAMATO.

A. The YAMATO Group proceeded on various courses as indicated on chart. About 1015 we sighted what I took to be an American scout plane crossing our course from port to starboard ahead; and their number increased until about 1100, and from 1100 onward 10 to 15 of these scout planes circled the formation at a range of approximately 20 to 30,000 meters until about noon. Until 1000 there were many squalls and the cloud formation was low; but the ceiling lifted and the weather was clearer by noon. By noon there were spaces of clear sky. At approximately noon, to the east an attack formation of forty to fifty American planes was discovered at 30 to 40,000 meters. I am not certain whether this was by radar or by visual means, because at that time there was opinion that visual recognition of attacking planes was quicker. The American formation circled the formation at about 30,000 meters; while circling, increasing their height. The Japanese formation was speeded up to full speed (26 knots). I believe there was a three to five meter wind from the west. The formation turned into the wind to starboard in order to make evasive action from bombing easier. During the circling of the American air formation, it is my impression that another group joined the formation of originally 40 to 50 planes, coming from the

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south. It is my estimate that 15 or 20 minutes after noon the entire American formation attacked the YAMATO with dive bombers. The second American formation shortly thereafter attacked with a mixture of dive bombers and torpedo planes with no appreciable interval between the two attacks. During this initial double attack, one destroyer, HAMA-KAZE, either from bombs or torpedoes, sank by the stern, and the light cruiser, YAHAGI, either from bombs or torpedoes, was issuing smoke and stopped. As a result of the first and second attacks there were 3 bomb hits immediately forward of No. 3 main turret, and three torpedo hits along the port side - one forward, one midships and one aft. (See chart of hits)

After the initial two attacks, at an interval of 30 to 40 minutes, a third group of planes attacked. In the third attack which followed the first pair by 30 to 40 minutes again, it was a mixture of dive bombers and torpedo planes, and my impression was that the torpedo planes were the greater in number. In this attack the YAMATO received no bomb hits, but four to five torpedo hits - two by the stern on the port side, one forward on the starboard and one or two slightly forward of amidships on starboard side (See chart). From then on I didn't notice too much of what went on in other ships. At that time the Japanese formation was scattered and the YAHAGI was left behind with two destroyers, and the formation closed and proceeded on the same course. In approximately thirty minutes, the fourth attack was received. I am doubtful of the number of attacking planes but estimate it was the same as before. As the attacks progressed there seemed to be a greater proportion of torpedoes. By the end of the fourth attack the YAMATO had received the original three bombs; and on the port side 6 to 8 torpedoes, and on the starboard side 2 to 3 torpedoes; and there remained in the formation only the YAMATO and 2 or 3 destroyers of the original formation. The YAMATO was listing heavily to port and speed was reduced to 20 knots. As I was on the anti-aircraft guns I don't know much of what happened then, but with the reduction in speed and heavy list to port, and damage to screening destroyers, it was apparently concluded not to try to continue on course and course was reversed. It is my opinion that the reason for reversed course was they could not fulfill their mission at OKINAWA. There was a possibility of shifting the command to the burning YAHAGI, the flagship of the second in command. Although the YAHAGI was stopped, she had not received serious visible damage and there was at least consideration of the possibility of her being able to resume operations.

I think that in the fourth attack there was not more than one torpedo entering from starboard and I am less sure on the port side, but certainly no more than 2 or 3 and these were the last hits before she sank. No more bomb hits. My memory of the action is that the fourth attack was the last, but think possibly there might have been a fifth and sixth wave. With the turn to starboard, the port list increased greatly and she did not come back and was 10 to 15 minutes on the reversed course. With the increasing list, there were efforts to right the ship which proved unavailing. It was extremely difficult to attempt any gunfire. Sometime between 1400 and 1430, the YAMATO listed heavily to port and sank. When the ship sank I was sucked below the surface and as I came up the first time there was great disturbance in the water which may have been fragments from explosions. I don't remember for several minutes after that because I was hit on the back of the head. I was picked up by the destroyer FUKUZUKI and from what I heard afterward on the FUKUZUKI, I learned that the YAMATO had turned or listed 120 degrees to port in the process of sinking and that there had been explosions coming out of the starboard side. From that time on I don't remember the course of the battle.

Q. To your knowledge, were there any other ships sunk besides the YAMATO and HAMA-KAZE?

A. The destroyer HAMA-KAZE, the battleship YAMATO, the cruiser YAHAGI were sunk in the action. The ISO-KAZE and the destroyer KASUMI were out of control, unable to navigate and were later sunk by Japanese. Of the ASA SHIMO I am not certain, but I think it sank. The remaining four destroyers were able to return to SASEBO for repairs.

Q. Was there any air cover provided for the YAMATO group at any time?

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- A. There had been air cover up to 1000 from KYUSHU (Land-based planes), 3 to 5 fighters.
- Q. What reliance was placed on radar to pick up planes?
A. If it was a group, radar was expected to pick it up at 50 to 70,000 meters.
- Q. What effect did the three bomb hits have on the anti-aircraft defense of the YAMATO?
A. About four high angle guns were destroyed and ten to fifteen of the battery of machine guns on the after port deckhouse were rendered unserviceable; in fact, every anti-aircraft gun abaft the beam on the port side for one reason or another was relatively useless after those three bomb hits.
- Q. Was the fire control damaged to any extent by these hits?
A. No effect on the main battery fire control. I had the impression that because of the ineffectiveness of the after port batteries the YAMATO received more attacks on that quarter.
- Q. As a gunnery officer what is your opinion as to the relative effectiveness of dive bombers and torpedo planes in attacking a battleship of the YAMATO class?
A. Individually not very effective, but the mixture is effective, because it is impossible to undertake evasive action against. It is very difficult to coordinate the defense against that combination of torpedo planes and dive bombers.
- Q. Which type of attack did you fear most, torpedo attack or dive bombing?
A. If the torpedo attack is done well, that is the worst.
- Q. I would like to have you explain a little further the reasons for turning a formation into the wind in order to avoid the type of attack to which the YAMATO was subjected.
A. A single ship is headed into the wind for the reason that the ship can turn more rapidly under those conditions due to the effect of the wind on the side of the ship. If the attack be coming from starboard beam the ship should turn midway between the point of attack and the point of the wind, and by that means bring all guns to bear on the attack while turning away from it and she turns slowly into the wind. Attack was evaded by changing course and by gunfire.
- Q. What was the doctrine for evading torpedo plane attacks?
A. According to the wind, turn away from it or into it.
- Q. In a combined dive bombing and torpedo attack, which type of attack would govern the maneuvers or turning of the ship?
A. Torpedoes.
- Q. What were the size of the YAMATO's main battery guns?
A. I was not informed. It was a terrific secret. They were referred to as 45 CM. I wonder if they weren't bigger, certainly not smaller than 45 CM.