

WAR DEPARTMENT

Exhibit # 38

File # 147

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Transcript of original notes taken
by Lt Col B.C. Sackett in the
interrogation of Captain Yasuji
Watanabe.

INTERROGATION OF

Captain Yasuji Watanabe, I.J.N.

Date and Time: 26 November 1945, 1420-1635 hours.

Place : Room 306, NYK Building, Tokyo, Japan

Present : Captain Yasuji Watanabe, I.J.N.
Lt. Colonel B. E. Sackett, Infantry
1st Lt. Richard H. Gilliland, Infantry
2nd Lt. Fred H. Uyehara, Infantry
Tec 4 Lester E. Dalcher, 36477987

Questions : By Lt. Colonel B. E. Sackett

Q. - State your residence address, age, date of birth, and your marital status.

A. - My residence address is Kamakura shi, Yuki no shita, 704 Banchi. I was born in 1902 and am 43 years old. I am married.

Q. - Are you a graduate of the Japanese Naval College.

A. - Yes, I graduated from the Japanese Naval College in 1923.

Q. - What is your present position.

A. - Home Affairs Bureau of the Navy.

Q. - Exercises at the Naval War College were held during the first two weeks of September 1941. Admiral Yamamoto and staff, including you, and the commanders of the various fleets and a number of Navy General Staff officers participated in these discussions, plans, and exercises. What team were you a member of during these exercises.

A. - I was a member of the Nippon Team. (Also an umpire.)

Q. - What were the general problems of the exercises.

A. - The combined fleets of England, America, and Dutch, opposed the Japanese Navy. (Only the Navy)

Q. - When the exercises were started, different groups of officers were assigned to different offices in the Naval Staff College, and they worked together as a team. If you further remember you worked on the conditions for the exercises for the Nippon Team, and those conditions, among other things, called for attack on Pearl Harbor.

A. - That is correct. Not openly but secretly.

Q. - Which officers participated in the plan.

A. - I was umpire. All done very secretly.

Q. - Who among the Nippon Team were the principle officers who planned the tactics.

A. - Captain Kuroshima, Susaki (Air Staff), Torpedo Staff (Submarine Staff) Arima, Admiral Ugaki, Chief Umpire.

Q. - What plan was submitted to the Umpire.

(Interrogation of Captain Yasuji Watanabe, I.J.N., P.2)

- A. - When the attack was to be held on Pearl Harbor. Due to the changing weather the attack had to be activated during the latter part of the month of November.
- Q. - How many ships were to take part in the action.
- A. - As many carriers as we have, half of them must be expected to be lost in the attack. What course to take. Most secretly to make voyage without meeting other ships-: Move East to Northwest of Pearl Harbor and then come down.
- Q. - What was the plan to make it a surprise - how was surprise to be achieved.
- A. - As soon as submit to the United States Government the Degree of War we start surprise.
- Q. - When was this point discussed.
- A. - The meeting.
- Q. - You say that you heard sometime later that the Government delayed in submitting Declaration of War. Who was responsible for that.
- A. - I understand in the Foreign Department. Kadowaki, in Foreign Office, who last year transferred to Moscow, told me.
- Q. - What did he tell you.
- A. - The Japanese diplomats in Washington after getting information from Japan about the Declaration of War, they translated it and it took too many hours and it was delivered after attack started.
- Q. - Coming back to the September exercises at the Naval College, what part in those plans did you play.
- A. - My part in the Nippon Team was Assistant to Chief of Operations Kuroshima, and my part was logistics.
- Q. - After the war games you and other staff members started working on the Pearl Harbor attack plan.
- A. - We took part at first, Kuroshima and Aviation Staff Officer took part. I considered logistics. Nagumo worked out the details of operation.
- Q. - Combined Fleet General Order #1 was written on the Nagato after the September exercises.
- A. - To make attack is decided in Headquarters Naval Staff on the 3rd November and then got out Order #1. Don't remember number.
- Q. - The order from the Naval Headquarters which you say you received on 3rd November - was that a long detailed order or was it a short order.
- A. - No, it was a very long order, contained not only Pearl Harbor, but schedule of war.
- Q. - Did they also sign the Army and Navy central agreement at that time.
- A. - Yes, the Army agreed to the order.
- Q. - That order said, as I recall, that the plan would go into effect on "Y" Day. It also said that war would be declared on "X" Day. What else did the order say.

(Interrogation of Captain Yasuji Watanabe, I.J.N., P.3)

- A. - How to capture Malay and other places to the South. How to invade in the Philippines. This was the main program.
- Q. - Isn't it true that this Combined Fleet Operation Order #1 which gave the general program was printed. Was it printed on the Nagato.
- A. - No. Original copy may have been made on the Nagato but printing was made in the Naval Ministry. And I know after arriving at Naval Ministry it would be printed. 30-40 copies made but I am not quite sure. Admiral Yamamoto added to the order that if the Emperor directed there shouldn't be any attack at the last minute, they were to come back after they were notified. Fleets were to go to assembly points and await further orders, then go to a place out at sea, then make attack when ordered.
- Q. - You and other staff officers and Admiral Yamamoto went to the Army and had a staff conference.
- A. - Yes, such a meeting 10 November.
- Q. - Who was there.
- A. - Yamamoto and Staff, Ugaki, Kiroshima, I was. Aviation Staff, Torpedo Staff. From the Army; General Terauchi and his whole staff. Also the man who is now the Chief of Foreign Affairs Bureau for Army Colonel Arao was there. Many other officers I don't know who they are now, were at the meeting.
- Q. - Was Prime Minister Tojo at the meeting.
- A. - No.
- Q. - Where did the meeting take place.
- A. - Tokyo, Army Staff College.
- Q. - What happened at the meeting.
- A. - We talked if war broke out we fight together and some talk about operations.
- Q. - At that time the Navy Staff told the Army Staff of its plan for the Pearl Harbor operations.
- A. - No. That wasn't stated openly. Only a very few of the staff knew about it. Also Headquarters of Army had the information from Headquarters Navy, very few staff had the information. So there was no talk at the meeting about the matter.
- Q. - Did the Army discuss its plans in the event that war should come.
- A. - Army Staff told us the whole schedule if war breaks out they are going to land North of Malay, send soldiers to Bataan the North part of the Philippines, and Apari, in Northern part of Philippines.
- Q. - When did the Army expect to start those operations.
- A. - Perhaps Army had some date in their own idea but in discussion it was referred to as "Y" Day or "X" Day.
- Q. - No one mentioned when "Y" Day or "X" Day would be.
- A. - No, that was fixed after I think.
- Q. - Let me refresh your recollection a little more. Order #2 fixed "Y" Day.

(Interrogation of Yasuji Watanabe, I.J.N., P.4)

A. - Yes.

Q. - What all did Order #2 say.

A. - I don't remember.

Q. - Didn't it say that "Y" Day will be 23rd November and also that the task force was to assemble at Tamkan Bay from the 21st to 26th November.

A. - I remember the order, but 23 November is not right I think.

Q. - What was the date of "Y" Day.

A. - I don't remember any date.

Q. - After that the fleet was assembled on the 23rd, then Combined Fleet Order #3 came out and said that "X" Day, the day the war would start would be the 8th of December. Is that right.

A. - I am not quite sure. I remember the 8th of December was decided on the 2nd of December. They had no right to issue orders about December 8th before then, so I am positive that such orders were not issued.

Q. - What was Combined Fleet Order #4.

A. - Most important order -: was to climb up Mount Niitaka on December 8th.

Q. - When did that order date.

A. - 2nd December.

Q. - Where did the order come from.

A. - Came from Naval Ministry to Yamamoto and Yamamoto order Naval forces

Q. - What did the order mean.

A. - We begin the war on 8th December.

Q. - Was that the first time you had ever heard in any order or in any conversation, that war was to start on the 8th December.

A. - Yes it was the first time. I heard a rumor in the latter part of November that the war would be th 8th December but the first official word was this order, which was on 2nd December. Up until the 1st of December no information for Yamamoto from the Ministry.

Q. - How was this order delivered to Admiral Yamamoto.

A. - By an officer from Navy Department who brought other documents.

Q. - Does this summarize what you are trying to tell me -:

During the last three or four days of November an officer from the Naval Staff came on board Admiral Yamamoto's ship and at that time gave him sealed orders, and he said that if no other orders were received to the contrary from Naval Headquarters by the 1st of December then war was going to start on the 8th December. Then on the 2nd of December Admiral Yamamoto sent a message to the fleet commanders to "climb Mount Niitaka on December 8th", and they knew from that message that the Pearl Harbor attack, and war would start on the 8th December. Is this right.

A. - Yes.

Q. - Do you have any diary or notes on events.

(Interrogation of Captain Yasuji Watanabe, I.J.N., P.5)

- A. - No, but by memory I make notes.
- Q. - When did the fleet leave Hitokappin Bay for the Pearl Harbor attack.
- A. - I don't know because of secrecy.
- Q. - They had actually left the Bay by 26 November.
- A. - I don't know, but by calculating it might be.
- Q. - Did Admiral Yamamoto communicate with the task force out at sea while they were enroute to Pearl Harbor.
- A. - When Admiral Yamamoto on December 2nd sent the message to the fleet to climb up Mount Niitaka, 8th December, that was the signal to the fleet commanders to go ahead with their plans unless they were called back.
- Q. - During this period, on December 2nd, Admiral Yamamoto and his staff were on the Nagato at Hiroshima. Did Admiral Yamamoto and his staff stay there for the next week and get reports from the different forces that were out at sea.
- A. - Yes.
- Q. - After Admiral Yamamoto sent the message on the 2nd December to climb the mountain on the 8th, which was radioed, radio silence was in effect and no more messages were sent back and forth.
- A. Yes, that's right.
- Q. - In planning this, how much time did you figure (and other staff officers) that the defenses at Pearl Harbor would have to become alert and operating before the first plane began dropping bombs.
- A. - If one day before we are noticed by a scout plane, it is up to Admiral Yamamoto to make surprise or not. But two days before if scouting plane is in sight we had better stop surprise and turn back. These things were talked over and discussed between Yamamoto and Nagumi.
- Q. - If everything went according to plan and the task force was not seen, how much time did they figure the American defenses would have to become alert and operating before the first plane hit.
- A. - Was expected that one or two days out airplanes might come to carrier. Knew American carrier and battleship fleets alternated in Pearl Harbor port weekends. So we expected that on the 8th December we would find the battleship group in Pearl Harbor and the carrier planes would be at sea. Our first aim was to get the carrier forces but unfortunately they were not in Harbor.
- Q. - Then why wasn't the attack postponed.
- A. - Could not postpone the day because of refueling. In planning the attack and in setting the date of ~~December~~ 8th for the attack we hoped to get the carrier fleet as well as other major units of the fleet in Pearl Harbor and knock them out.
- Q. - How did you know the carrier fleet was not in the harbor on this weekend.
- A. - After the task force was already out at sea we got intelligence that the carrier fleet was not in Pearl Harbor but we could not call our fleet back because of the refueling problem.

(Interrogation of Captain Yasuji Watanabe, I.J.N., P. 6)

- Q. - Did you receive any messages from the Navy General Staff or the Navy Ministry on 6th December or 7th December, Japan time.
- A. - No, I am not quite sure. I think I never got any message.
- Q. - When the date of 8 December was finally decided as the date the attack would start, who made that decision.
- A. - I think on the 1st December in Tokyo, Chief Staff Army and Chief Staff Navy, Navy Ministry, and Army Ministry, and Ministry of Foreign Office, and Tojo. These people had a meeting I think. I don't know this. From that meeting came down order to Ministry of Navy, and the Ministry of Navy ordered Yamamoto I think.
- Q. - In these plans for the Pearl Harbor and all other plans, wasn't it agreed that the Pearl Harbor attack would be the first blow of the war.
- A. - Yes.
- Q. - Then other actions would take place in the Philippines and various other places.
- A. - Other actions to take place later the same day.
- Q. - The element of surprise was important to the success. Plans, secret preparations, and etc., had to work it out so that the United States wouldn't have any warning -: what were the plans in that regard so that the United States would not have any warning.
- A. - The first aim, we have to capture Malay and the Philippines, and the purpose to secure the Far East (oil and supplies) but your Navy was so strong so while we make preparations in the Southwest we think your navy came to attack.
- Q. - How were they going to achieve the surprise at Pearl Harbor, to make sure the attack would be successful.
- A. - In order to preserve the utmost secrecy of the task force and to immediately attack after Declaration of War.
- Q. - The moment the Declaration of War was given to the President, Pearl Harbor was to be attacked.
- A. - Just after.
- Q. - How much after.
- A. - One, two, three, hours after it was in the hands of the President.
- Q. - What makes you think that. Whose idea is this, and did you discuss it with anyone.
- A. - My idea. I discussed this with Captain Kuroshima.
- Q. - Was the time discussed, how much time after the notice was handed to the President was it planned that the attack would start.
- A. - About 3 or 4 hours I think would be no harm for our plan - but 10 or 12 hours they would have warned Pearl Harbor.
- Q. - Have you heard any other stories as to what actually happened in connection with the Declaration of War.

(Interrogation of Captain Yasuji Watanabe, I.J.N., P.7)

- A. - I talked to my friend. It is my great regret. If Admiral Yamamoto were alive he would be angry. But Foreign Department took part in this. Great regret in the delay of handing the message of Declaration of War and that is wrong on the part of Japan.
- Q. - During this meeting on the Nagato, 17-18 November, in which all fleet commanders and chiefs of staff, and 11th Air Fleet Commander all got together with Yamamoto and Combined Fleet Staff. Was the attack on Pearl Harbor discussed.
- A. - The attack on Pearl Harbor was not discussed as a whole. Cooperation and coordination of fleets was discussed.
- Q. - Which of the Admirals were in on the discussion of the Pearl Harbor attack.
- A. - Chief of Staff Navy Ministry, Chief of Staff of the Combined Fleet, Commander and the Chief and Staffs of the Fleets, and the rest generally had an idea about it but knew nothing positively. Assistant Chief of Staff Combined Fleet was also in on it.
- Q. - Is this all the information you know about the things which we have discussed.
- A. - Yes. I think I have spoken all I know and heard.

I, Fred H. Uyehara, 2nd Lt., Infantry, hereby certify that I acted as interpreter at the interview set out above, that I truly interpreted and translated the English questions into Japanese and the replies thereto from Japanese into English, and that the English translation of the answers set out above (7 pages) are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Fred H. Uyehara 2nd Lt. Inf.
FRED H. UYEHARA, 2nd Lt., Infantry

WITNESSES:

Practically all of the answers were given in English and it was necessary for the interpreter to interpret only a few words or phrases now & then.

B. E. Sackett
B. E. SACKETT, Lt. Colonel, Infantry.

Richard A. Gilliland
RICHARD H. GILLILAND, 1st Lt., Infantry.

Lester E. Dalcher
Lester E. Dalcher, Tec 4, 36477987, Steno.