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HEADQUARTERS  
U.S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY  
(PACIFIC)

RESTRICTED

Interrogation No. 430

Place: Tokyo  
Date: 23 Nov 1945

Division of Origin: Military Analysis

Subject: JAPANESE ARMY AIR FORCE PERSONNEL; COMBAT LESSONS LEARNED FROM CHINA AND MANCHURIAN OPERATIONS.

Personnel Interrogated: Colonel MATSUMAE, M; and Major MARUTA, F. (For background of each see Interrogation #161)

Where Interviewed: Japanese War Ministry

Interrogator: Captain John C. West

Interpreter: 1st Lt Richard Sneider

Summary: Major MARUTA had participated in both the Russo-Manchurian incident of 1939 and operations in China. He was able to give a detailed account of the lessons learned from these operations and their effect on future JAAF training personnel policy. In addition, both officers were questioned further about information contained in USSBS Interrogation #161 with particular respect to the Army training program.



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- Q. From information previously submitted (NOTE: Int. #161), I see you have given various figures on pilot casualties during the war, number of pilots trained, etc. I wonder if you could give us a compilation showing total number of pilots trained during the war, total casualties, and number of pilots remaining?
- A. At the end of the war, we had 8600 pilots left; we trained about 19,000 pilots during the war; we lost 10,000 casualties in battle, and 3,200 casualties from other causes. And at the beginning of the war, we had something over 2,500 pilots.
- Q. How many of these 2,500 pilots which made up your strength at the beginning of the war had had previous combat experience in China or during the fighting along the Manchurian border in 1939?
- A. Approximately 50% of our pilots at the beginning of the war had combat experience in one or both of these operations.
- Q. Major MARUTA, I believe you participated in both these?
- A. Yes, that is correct.
- Q. How many pilots did you have during the fighting in Manchuria?
- A. We used about 450 pilots in the month of fighting.
- Q. How many aircraft were used?
- A. About 1,000.
- Q. Why did you have more aircraft than pilots?
- A. Our aircraft loss exceeded our pilot loss.
- Q. How many planes and pilots did you actually lose?
- A. We lost 152 pilots and 500 aircraft.
- Q. What combat lessons did you learn from the Manchurian fighting?
- A. We learned a bit about tactics: a) we learned that an air force cannot be used piece-meal. A large force must be committed and there must be team-work. We learned that individual "dog-fights" were not the best way to use fighters; fighter a/c must work together; b) we learned along with that to send out large formations of a/c on missions rather than just a few; c) we learned that we had to have an adequate supply of both pilots and aircraft. We ran short of both in Manchuria.
- Q. What part of the total strength of the JAAF participated in this incident?
- A. We committed our entire fighter strength of 5 units with a total pilot strength of 210; in addition we had 2 heavy bomber units with a total of 132 pilots; one HQ Recce unit with 27 pilots and two army reconnaissance units with a total of 54 pilots. We managed to get a few, but not many, replacements bringing the total to about 450 pilots committed.
- Q. What then was your total pilot strength in 1939?
- A. About 1,000 pilots.
- Q. From lessons learned during this fighting, what changes were made in the training program?

- A. Well, we began to emphasize formation flying in preference to individual maneuvers. We changed the organization of our tactical units. Before this time each fighter Flying Regiment had 36 planes and 36 pilots. We changed this to 56 planes and 43 pilots to build up a reserve. For bomber units, we added a 10% pilot reserve and a 33% reserve of planes.
- Q. You mentioned a lack of pilot strength during this campaign. Was the training program expanded to increase pilot personnel?
- A. Yes. For example, in 1939 the Air Academy graduated 32 fighter pilots and this was increased in 1940 to 81 fighter pilots. I don't know exactly what other expansions took place and this increase is probably not an exact ratio of expansion applicable to other training units.
- Q. What were the combat lessons learned from the China operations?
- A. We learned how to fly in a mass bomber formation. In addition, we received valuable experience and training in fighter-escort tactics.
- Q. Did you consider China a training ground for air units?
- A. In a sense, yes. However, our bomber units were the only ones that really received training as fighter opposition was so weak as to be almost non-existent.
- Q. Another subject we'd like information on concerns the holding of command positions in the JAAF by non-flying officers. Just how general was this practice?
- A. In fighter regiments, the CO was always a rated pilot. In other type units, the ratio was about 50-50. The CO of a fighter brigade was always a pilot, but only about 25% of the CO's of other type units were pilots. In divisions (HIKOSHIDAN) it is very unusual for the commander to be a pilot.
- Q. What percentage of pilots at beginning of the war were officers?
- A. Of the pilots in the JAAF at the beginning of the war, about 1/3 were Regular Officers, graduates of the (RIKUGUN SHIKAN GAKKO) Air Academy. The rest were regular non-commissioned officers.
- Q. Did you have any sort of an Air Corps reserve at the beginning of the war?
- A. No. We did have 100 reserve non-commissioned officers who stayed in civilian status until 1943. However, they were all transport pilots. They had received their training along with the regular non-commissioned officers.
- Q. Why didn't you have some sort of an Air Reserve? Didn't you think it necessary?
- A. I suppose it would have been a good thing, but we always had enough regular pilots for the number of aircraft we had.
- Q. Still another subject we like some information on concerns the maintenance problem in the Southern Area during the Philippines campaign. Colonel MATSUMAE, I believe you were with HQ 4th Air Army (KOKUGUN) at that time, can you tell us about any difficulties you may have had?
- A. Yes. Our chief difficulty was in lack of spare parts for new a/c. We did quite a bit of moving around at that time which further complicated things. BACOLOID A/F was a very fine maintenance depot due to the concentration of personnel and equipment. Later, a segment was sent to CLARK A/F and this outfit was, for the most part, totally disorganized.

Q. Did the loss of maintenance personnel in the Philippines seriously impair future JAAF operations?

A. Yes, it did. We sent about 70% of our best maintenance personnel to the Philippines. We lost 80% of these people which created a very serious shortage. We solved that partially by recruiting trained workers from a/c factories and taking instructors out of schools. But as you can see, this policy would have a detrimental effect on both our aircraft production and the future quality of our maintenance personnel.

Q. Another question concerns training activities in the Southern Area and the effect of Allied landings on this training. What can you tell me about that?

A. Well, we sent 5,000 students down to the Southern Area, 2,500 in April 1944, and 2,500 in August 1944 to be trained. The first, 1,200, were to graduate in December 1944, 1,200 in March 1945, and 1,200 in July 1945 and so on. Actually, the December graduates were delayed because of Allied air strikes and they graduated more or less piece-meal thru February 1945. When the 1,200 graduated in March 1945, we couldn't get them back to the homeland so they were spread throughout the Southern Area. No students were sent to the area in 1945, and when a unit finished its training, it was usually given a tactical assignment, much the same as a flying regiment. The carrier strike on FIC in October 1944, materially reduced training in that area. American Army Air Force units based on Palawan and vicinity also conducted daily raids which hampered training activities. All in all, training was seriously hampered after the Philippines campaign.

Q. Colonel KAIMOTO (USSBS Int. #110) told us the other day about the plan of training graduates of the Military Academy in a Training Division at Utsunomiya after July 1945. You, Colonel MATSUMAE told us how the training program was reshaped to dive-bombing, etc., and devoting less time to normal flying. Was the curricula of the Air Academy changed along the lines you mentioned, or was it kept virtually the same?

A. The Military Academy (which gave primary training) and the Kyodo Hikoshidan (which gave the advanced training) continued with their normal training program.

Q. Then the system of training regular army pilots was kept the same, while the reserve and non-commissioned officers were trained for suicide?

A. Yes, that's it. Although regular army pilots would probably have been used in case of the utmost emergency. Of course they would have been leaders (SENTAICHO)

Q. What was the output of pilots under this reduced program?

A. About 800 per year.