

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

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INTERROGATION NO (USSBS NO 413)
(NAV NO 85)

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division

Subject: Japanese Capture of WAKE Island

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Captain KOYAMA, Tadashi, IJN, was Chief of Staff of the 6th Torpedo Squadron from December 1941 to 26 December 1941; Naval Technical Headquarters in Tokyo from 26 December 1941 to April 1945; Commanding Officer 16th Arashi S.A. Force from April 1945 to August 1945; The 16th Force was a one man torpedo squadron.

Where interviewed: Meiji Building

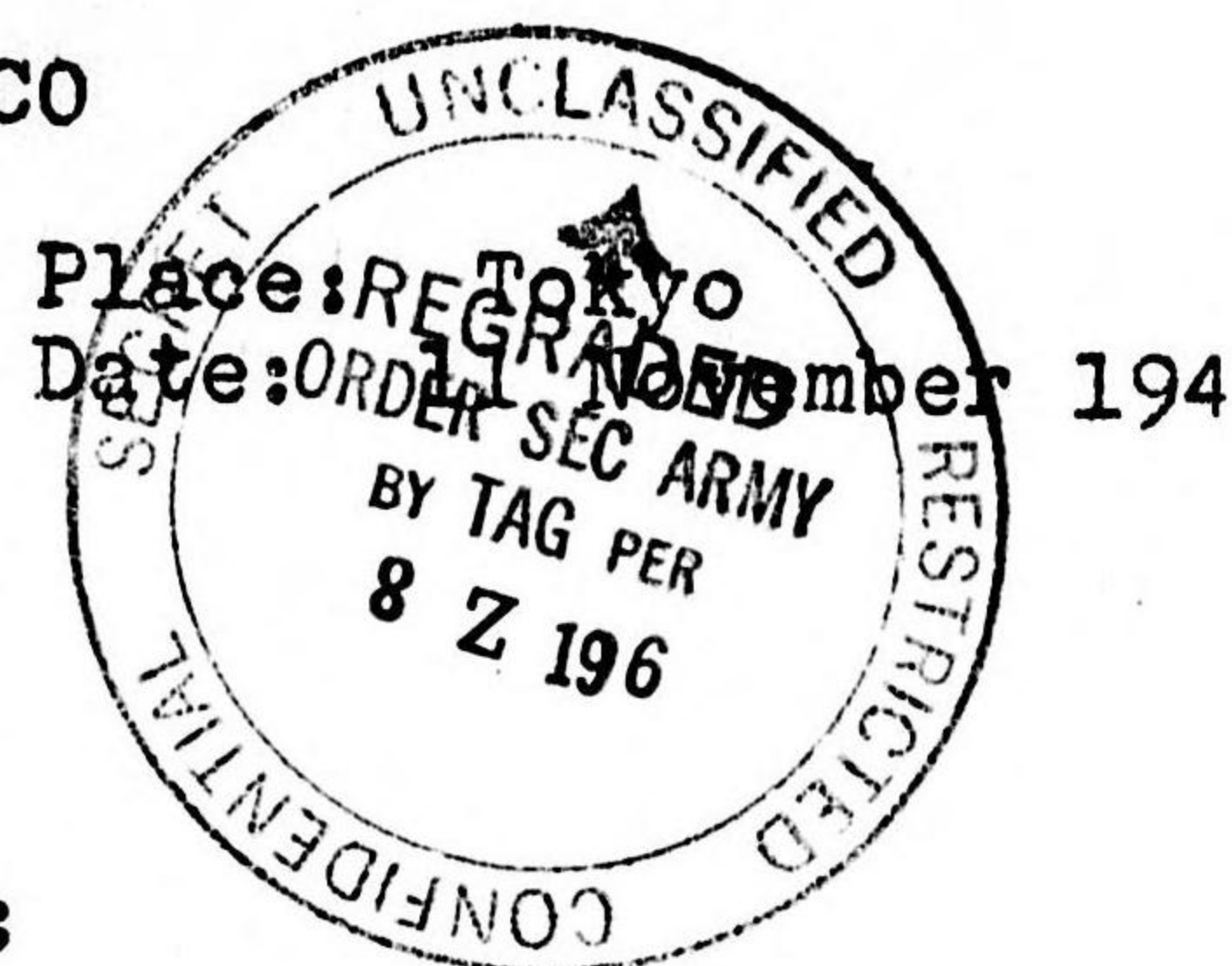
Interrogator: Commander T.H. Moorer, USN

Interpreter: Lt. Comdr. S. Millstein, USNR

Allied Officers Present: Captain C. Shands, USN

SUMMARY

This interrogation describes in detail the Japanese Naval action during the capture of WAKE Island. The first attempt on 10 December was a complete failure and the Japanese were forced to retire to KWAJALEIN where they revised their plans and added considerable reinforcements. On 23 December they successfully forced a landing after having been ordered to complete the capture regardless of losses.



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TRANSCRIPT

Q. List the forces involved in the invasion of WAKE Island.

WAKE Invasion Force
(First Attempt, 10 December 1941)
YUBARI (F) Rear Admiral KAJIOLSO

Destroyers

MUTSUKI
YAYOI
DITE

MOCHIZUKI
KISARAGI
HAYATE

Transports

2 Converted Destroyers (225 troops each)

Submarines

Two old type submarines

Surface Support Force
Cruiser Division 18
TENRYU (OCL)
TATSUTA (OCL)

Air Support Force
Land Based Bombers (KWAJALEIN)

WAKE Island Invasion Force
(Second Attempt)
23 December 1941

Cruisers

YUBARI (F) Rear Admiral KAJIOKA

Destroyers

MUTSUKI
YAYOI
OITE

MOCHIZUKI
ASANGAI
YUNAGI

Transports

2 converted destroyers (250 troops each)

Submarine Force

Two old type submarines

Surface Support Force
Cruisers
KINUGASA
FURUTAKA
KAKO
TENRYU
TATSUTA
AOBA

Air Support Force
Aircraft carriers

SORYU.

HIRYU

Land Based Bombers
(KWAJALEIN)

Q. What forces did the Japanese expect to find at WAKE?
A. The estimate of your strength was 1,000 troops and 600 laborers. We expected to have a rough time and that we would have difficulty with a landing force of only 450 men. As it was at the beginning of the war, we couldn't mass as many men as we considered necessary, and it was planned in an emergency; to use the crews of the destroyers to storm the beach.

Transcript of interrogation of (Captain KOYAMA, Tadashi). -----

- Q. What American aircraft did you expect to find at WAKE?
 A. The estimate of your strength was 15 fighters. In order to neutralize them we had 30 BETTYS at KWALALEIN. They made bombing attacks against Wake airfield on the 8th and 9th of December, so actually we had little aircraft opposition. I think that possibly five American fighters were left when we were ready to make the landing on 10 December.
- Q. In general, what was the plan of the attack?
 A. The general plan was to have 150 men land on WILKES Island and the balance, 300 men, on the south side of WAKE Island to capture the airfield. The northeast coast line was unsuitable for amphibious landings; also we didn't think this was too favorable a place due to the defences. Their alternative landing plan was that in the event of bad winds on the south side of the island we would land on the northeast and north coast.
- Q. What were the missions of the submarines?
 A. They were used as a sort of advance lookout force and their mission was to reach WAKE about 2 a.m. on the 10th, and to look the situation over and see if they thought it was satisfactory for landing and then proceed south along the coast and rendezvous with the main force, 75 miles south of WAKE. The submarines were specifically directed to investigate the reported presence of your torpedo boats.
- Q. What opposition from American surface craft did you expect?
 A. None was expected on 10 December but it was thought probable on 23 December.
- Q. Describe the first attempt at landing on 10 December.
 A. The first landing was attempted at 0300 of the 10th, along the south coast near the airfield; but it failed because the waves and wind were so strong that they overturned the boats as soon as launched. In addition we were attacked by three fighter planes and also gun emplacements from the southeast tip of WAKE. At 0730 the KISARAGI was sunk by bombing attacks and at 0815 the HAYATE was sunk by shore defense guns. Also the TENRYU and TATSUTA were strafed and one of the transports (KONGONRU) was bombed and set afire. By reason of the bad weather and these attacks, the first landing failed.
- Q. At what time prior to the approach to WAKE were you attacked by American aircraft?
 A. In my opinion we were not sighted or attacked at all until we approached in sight of the Island. A picket destroyer was placed 10 miles in advance in order to spot the island and notify of any unexpected opposition.
- Q. Repeat the explanation of why surface forces were not expected from PEARL HARBOR.
 A. We didn't think there would be any surface opposition because we knew there were no local forces. When we received the report of PEARL HARBOR, we knew there would be no opposition. However, by 23 December you had begun to recover from PEARL HARBOR attack so we thought you might give WAKE support.
- Q. Did you make reconnaissance of WAKE before the war?
 A. No, we relied on the intelligence reports from TOKYO.
- Q. At what time was the decision made to abandon the landing attempt on 10 December?
 A. At daylight 10 December; it was already light and we were not able to shoot down your three aggressive fighter planes. Since we had already suffered losses and the defense guns were very accurate, the O.T.C. decided at 0700 to retire to KWALALEIN and make another attempt when conditions were more favorable.

Transcript of Interrogation of (Captain KOYAMA, Tadashi)

- Q. What action was taken by the support force on 10 December?
 A. The old cruisers, TATSUTA and TENRYU, were attached to the invasion force to give support if necessary. They did not take part in the operation, but were strafed by fighter aircraft.
- Q. Describe your movements after the retirement.
 A. We arrived back at KWAJALEIN on the 13th of December, remaining until the 20th of December, during which time we revised plans and conducted landing exercises. The plan was not changed substantially from the previous one although we did think the same difficulty would be present; that is, fighter opposition and weather trouble. However, we received no change in instructions from superior headquarters so we proceeded with the following revision: In place of the two destroyers that were lost in the first attempt, we substituted ASANGAI and the YUNAGI. Also, the two aircraft carriers, SORYU and the HIRYU, were ordered by the Combined Fleet Headquarters to support the landing by a pre "D" Day air attack. We embarked about 250 troops on each of the 800 ton transports. In addition a support force was assigned consisting of four cruisers: AOBA, KINUGASA, FURUTAKA and KAKO. The landing was made on the 23rd of December. The two aircraft carriers commenced their strikes on the 22nd and continued it during the landing operation until just before the troops went ashore.
- Q. What was the location of the aircraft carriers?
 A. I think they were navigating 200 to 250 miles northwest of WAKE.
- Q. Did the support force include the AOBA group plus the TENRYU and TATSUTA?
 A. Yes, there were six cruisers in the group; the AOBA group joined immediately after participating in the GUAM action. The supporting force did not actually take part in the invasion, but was stationed east of WAKE in the event American forces advanced from PEARL HARBOR.
- Q. During the second approach to WAKE, were you attacked by American aircraft at any time?
 A. No, the aircraft carriers destroyed the American aircraft.
- Q. Describe the second landing operations?
 A. The weather was the same as when previously attempted. Due to the threat of the gun emplacement on the southeast tip of WAKE, which had caused such damage, before it was planned to beach the destroyer transports at 12 knots to insure that the troops would reach the shore. The officer in command thought that there might be some danger of the transports capsizing because of the coral, but the decision was made to carry on. Four large MLC's, loaded with with 50 troops each, were put over the side off shore prior to the beaching of the transports. Two of the MLC's landed in the region of the southeast tip of WAKE to attempt to neutralize the gun emplacement there. The other two large MLC's landed on south coast of WILKES Island.
- Q. What damage did your force receive during the approach to the beach?
 A. No damage until after arriving at the beach. In landing on WILKES the troops suffered damage before reaching the beach. One MLC may have been sunk and we had considerable casualties. In general that particular phase of the operation was unsuccessful. This action was before sunrise. The American defense guns fired at the transports seriously damaging the one to the east. Several troops were killed, but they continued with the operation. The other two large MLC's that landed on the south east tip of WAKE were successful and were able to put the gun emplacement there out of commission. After destruction of the

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Transcript of interrogation of (Captain KOYAMA, Tadashi).

American defense guns the operation proceeded satisfactorily until complete security of the garrison. The total casualties were about 250 for the whole operation with about 1/2 killed and 1/2 wounded (figures approximate).

- Q. Then the total loss of ships in the second operation amounted to the two beached transports.
- A. Yes.
- Q. Just prior to the landing on the 23rd of December, did the flag ship and escorting destroyers bombard the beach?
- A. No, Due to the previous experience with the American shore batteries, we did not want to come within range. In addition to this we were not sure of the exact location of your guns. It was thought that under cover of darkness the landing craft and the transports could approach the island undetected and make a successful surprise landing. In the event this failed, it was planned to use all landing forces aboard the cruisers and 6 destroyers. The orders were to seize WAKE Island at all costs, beaching the destroyers if necessary.
- Q. At what time did the Japanese learn that fighters were based on WAKE Island ?
- A. We didn't have any idea before the 3rd or 4th of December, when information was received from TOKYO saying that there were probably 10 fighters on WAKE. Prior to that, we had no knowledge.
- Q. Did you expect to find American flying boats on WAKE?
- A. We thought that there would be some from PEARL HARBOR, going back and forth on patrol. We didn't think any were based there permanently.
- Q. Were the submarines in the second operation also?
- A. Yes, they participated and had the same mission as before.
- Q. Were they of any particular assistance?
- A. We were worried about the presence of torpedo boats off shore and the submarines informed us that there were none. They also told us that there were planes flying around WAKE.
- Q. How long did the Japanese Force remain in the WAKE Area after the operation was completed?
- A. The support force left on the 24th of December and the invasion force left on the 26th.
- Q. How many planes did your ships shoot down during both operations?
- A. I think all of your planes were put out of commission before the second operation, but we downed about seven in the first operation. The American fighter pilots were admired for their skill and bravery.
- Q. Did you receive any report to the effect that an American fighter dove into the Japanese destroyer (KISARAGI) at the time it was sunk?
- A. It was impossible for me to tell whether a plane dove into the destroyer because of the distance. However, I could see a tremendous explosion. Since there were no survivors, it was impossible to determine accurately what happened to the ship. Due to the fact that this ship was carrying an extra supply of depth charges, it is possible that the bomb set them off causing such a big explosion that the plane was caught in the blast.

Note:

Annex "A" attached herewith, shows diagrammatically the track and location of the Japanese forces.

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