

WAR DEPARTMENT

Exhibit # 32

File # 129

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Transcript of original notes taken by  
captain Robinson U.S.N.R. in the  
interrogation of Riunosuke Kusaka

Interrogation of  
Admiral Riunosuke Kusaka, IJN

Date and Time: 27 November 1945, 0900-1230

Place: Room 304, NYK Building, Tokyo, Japan

Present: Captain J. J. Robinson, USNR, Interrogator  
Andrew Metsukado, Interpreter  
Admiral Riunosuke Kusaka

- Q. What is your name please?
- A. Riunosuke Kusaka. I have a cousin who is an admiral and whose name is the same as my own.
- Q. What is your address?
- A. 1049 Daiti 2 Chome Setagayaku, Tokyo. In two days my address will be changed to 57 Kitabatake Naka 2 Chome Abenoku, Osaka.
- Q. Your age?
- A. 54.
- Q. Will you state by years your Naval career?
- A. In 1921 I was in Gunnery School. In 1924 I graduated from Naval Academy. In 1929 I was attached to the Naval Ministry and I attended the Disarmament Conference at Geneva. In 1934 I was Captain of the Air Craft Carrier HOSHO and later Deputy Chief of Staff of the China Area Fleet under Admiral Hasegawa. In 1941 I was Chief of Staff of the First Air Fleet and as such, took part in the attack on Pearl Harbor. In December 1943 I assumed command of the Rabaul Fleet. In 1944 I was Chief of Staff of the Combined Fleet until early July 1945. In August 1945, I was on my way to Kuyushu to become commander of the Fifth Fleet Air Command, when the surrender was announced. After August 1945, for one month, I was chairman of the Liaison Committee of the Army, Navy and Foreign Office. I returned to Tokyo on 28 October 1945, and since then have been in the Naval Reserve.
- Q. What were the dates of your service as Chief of Staff of the First Air Fleet beginning in 1941?
- A. 15 April to the end of November 1942.
- Q. What plans did you follow for the Pearl Harbor operation?
- A. I followed the plans of the Navy Ministry and the Admiral of the Fleet. My unit was under the command of Fleet Admiral Yamamoto. I received my final orders for the Pearl Harbor operation in the middle of November at Saeki. There were three operation orders.
- Q. When did you learn the date for the attack?
- A. I first learned of the date when I left Japan on 26 November.

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- Q. Do you have a copy of your official orders?  
A. There were no official orders except a message from Combined Fleet Commander Yamamoto, who stated that the attack was set for on or about the eighth.
- Q. How was the message transmitted?  
A. By verbal order before we left Saeki.
- Q. Delivered by whom?  
A. Through the staff of Admiral Yamamoto.
- Q. Did you receive written orders for the Pearl Harbor attack?  
A. No. In the Japanese Navy written orders are documented only when the attack comes off, so written orders were received at Saeki just before departure. Minute details were probably known by members of the Operations Staff. Captain Genda would know about this matter. The biggest problem was to move the fleet, to keep it in fuel. I may have got orders, but they have slipped my memory.
- Q. What do you know in regard to a declaration of war?  
A. I thought that a declaration of war had been given at the time of the attack.
- Q. Why did you think so?  
A. In any war there is a method of including declaration of war, so I was under the impression that they would be given.
- Q. Did you hear any discussion of a declaration of war?  
A. No. There may have been a slight discussion, but none in detail, because I always thought the declaration would be issued. I based that on common sense.
- Q. Were you at the war games in September 1941?  
A. Yes, I was at the war games at the Naval War College, Tokyo, in September 1941.
- Q. Were you Chief of Staff of the First Air Fleet, "A" Team?  
A. Yes. Ordinarily when we have war games the fleet is divided to represent England and the United States as the assumed enemies, but this year it was divided on the problem of going to Malaya or to Hawaii. I was placed on the one going to Hawaii.
- Q. That was the plan actually carried out?  
A. No there were some changes.
- Q. What details of the plan were worked out to achieve surprise?  
A. During the maneuvers, we found out the difficulties of the attack, so other admirals and myself told Admiral Yamamoto that we doubted that Japan should stake her future on such an attack. Rear Admiral Onishi and I expressed our opinion to Admiral Yamamoto that the attack would be foolish. When we first spoke to him, he had nothing

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to say. Later we went to see him again. He said that he was not in favor of war against the United States, but he felt that if war broke out, Hawaii would be the target, and he asked us not to go against the plan. I replied to Yamamoto that if he felt that way about it, I would do my best to aid the staff to work out a plan.

Q. In mentioning the dangers of the plan to Yamamoto, did you mention the United States and British Fleet?

A. I did explain the dangers to him. I mentioned fuel difficulties and told him that there was only about 10 per cent chance of refueling. I assumed that the United States would be prepared and that in the event that it was attacked, we would have some ships damaged, and it would be very difficult to tow them back to Japan.

Q. What about radio communications?

A. Radio secrecy had to be maintained. Also a unit off Kyushu conducted communications in order to give the impression that a fleet was stationed there. They were acting as if great maneuvers were going off there. They knew that the American Navy was listening to the Japanese communications, so they were just sending out any old thing, just to make the Americans think that there was a fleet off Kyushu. In fact, there were two Navy planes just carrying on off Kyushu (fingers pointed downward and tapping on table as in sending messages). In other words they were land based Navy planes sending out messages between the planes, and between the planes and the base. It was going on near Saeki or Northern Kyushu. It was started in the middle of November and was being continued while the fleet was enroute.

Q. Did you receive a copy of the plan of operations?

A. Admiral Nagumo received, about the middle of November, orders which were to be carried out until further orders were received.

Q. Were about three hundred copies printed then?

A. No, all of the important commanders of the Combined Fleet got copies. I am not familiar with all the details. The Chief of Staff would know. I believe that the general plan mentioned X Day and Y Day.

Q. When did you first learn what day would be X Day?

A. Just previous to receiving the message for execution. The only mention of the date was in November, when it was stated that the attack would be early in December. I believe that we had an order stating that we should make preparations. The commander of my fleet was requested by the commander of the Combined Fleet to start the maneuvers. In the Japanese Navy an overall order is received, then an order to proceed to destinations, such as the group for Hawaii to assemble at one point, another group for Malaya to assemble at another point.

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- Q. What were you to do in case plans were called off?  
A. I do not recall when I got the orders with regard to the date of execution and similar details. I think that I received from Admiral Yamamoto the orders for the attack on December 4, by wireless.
- Q. What ship were you on?  
A. I was on the AKAGI. She was later sunk off Midway on 5 or 6 June 1942.
- Q. What did the orders state?  
A. The orders stated, "Climb Mt. Niitaka." This meant to attack. It was already prearranged that if the attack orders came in the morning, the attack would be around 0730. This was determined before we left Japan. The order was received when we were about 800 miles from Hawaii. We were cruising when we received the orders. From my standpoint, if we had received orders to stand by, we could not have done so, because of sea conditions.
- Q. Could the wireless orders have been heard at Pearl Harbor?  
A. I figure that the orders should have been heard at Pearl Harbor. We did not reply because of radio silence.
- Q. Where did the wireless message come from?  
A. It was dispatched from Admiral Yamamoto, commander of the Combined Fleet in Hiroshima Bay. I believe that the message was not signed, but since it was from the Combined Fleet, that meant Yamamoto's office.
- Q. Was there a message mentioning cherry blossoms?  
A. I believe that there was.
- Q. What was meant by the code message stating that the cherry blossoms were in bloom?  
A. I do not remember.
- Q. Did you have no message regarding the number of war ships in Pearl Harbor?  
A. There was something on war ships.
- Q. Could the words have been, "Fate of Empire"?  
A. I don't remember.
- Q. Did you not receive a message mentioning Mt. Fuji, meaning, weather clear?  
A. I do not remember.
- Q. Did you know that the attack was made without a declaration of war?  
A. No. Such action is not good. Even from a standpoint of BUSHIDO.
- Q. Who is to blame for the failure to declare war before the attack?

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- A. (The admiral raised his hands above his head and delayed his answer, smiling.) I do not know. I was only receiving orders and doing the attacking.
- Q. Do you not as a good Navy officer, feel some resentment against those who were responsible for not having taken care of making a declaration of war?
- A. (Laughing.) I do not know how to express my feelings, but such action was not good.
- Q. In Japan, whose responsibility is it to give such notice?
- A. The Foreign Office, as a matter of common sense.
- Q. About how long before the actual attack should the declaration of war be made?
- A. (Lifting his hands to his head and making a hissing noise, with his eyes on the ceiling). Because of the fact that time would be required to transmit and decode such a message, there should be warning at least thirty minutes to an hour before the attack began.
- Q. Did you see any of the action at Pearl Harbor?
- A. No.

I S/Sgt Andrew Mitsukado, 30109657, 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 are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

*Andrew Mitsukado*

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S/Sgt ANDREW MITSUKADO  
30109657

Witness:

*J. J. Robinson*  

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J. J. ROBINSON  
Captain, U.S.N.R.