

RESTRICTED

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

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS 435)  
NAV NO. 92

Place: Tokyo  
Date: 20 November 1945



Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division

Subject: Ship Operations in the RABAU Area.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Commander DOI, Yasumi has 21 years service in the I.J.N. He served as Gunnery Officer at AOBA from September 1941 to March 1942; served as student "Total Effort", Research Laboratory in TOKYO from March 1942 to March 1943; served on Staff of S.E. Area Fleet at RABAU from March 1943 to March 1945; and served as a Member of Military Affairs of Navy Department in TOKYO from March 1945 till the present.

Where interviewed: Room 748, Meiji Building.

Interrogator: Commander T. H. MOORE, USN.

Interpreter: Lieut.(jg) R. P. BROWN, USNR.

Allied Officers Present: None.

SUMMARY

This interrogation contains information relative to the effect of Allied mine attacks in the RABAU Area as well as the operations conducted by the Eighth and Ninth Fleets.

NARRATIVE of Interrogation (Commander DOI, Yasumi, IJN) -----

## NARRATIVE

During the SOLOMONS - NEW GUINEA Campaign from August 1942 to March 1944, the mine sweeping forces available in the RABAU Area consisted of 4 minesweepers augmented by 10 destroyers and auxiliary craft as necessary. The minesweepers were based at TRUK but controlled by Eighth Fleet at RABAU. Sweepers were operated as far south as SHORTLAND Harbor where they succeeded in clearing the channels of mines. However, ships did not follow the channels and consequently 3 destroyers were damaged. Farther south at KOLUMBANGARA three destroyers (KAGERO, KUROSHIO, OYASHI) were sunk on the morning of 8 May 1943. Since two or three submarines disappeared in the SOLOMONS Area it is possible that they also hit mines.

The American attempt to mine RABAU (SIMPSON Harbor) was unsuccessful because of the depth of water. One mine was recovered and analyzed. There were no ships damaged at RABAU by mines.

The mining of KAVIENG, beginning in September 1943, was very effective. KAVIENG was particularly important to Japanese operations since it was used as a major supply point from which supplies were carried down to RABAU via truck and small boats which were not so vulnerable to air attack. Also, KAVIENG was used as a haven for damaged naval vessels while effecting temporary repairs. The mining of KAVIENG was first observed by watchers in July 1943. At that time no minesweepers were present and were dispatched from the SHORTLAND Islands. The first sinking occurred in September and continued until January 1944 when the harbor was no longer regularly used. One survey ship and five large cargo vessels were sunk and several ships damaged. The mining attacks also forced the Japanese to anchor outside of the regular harbor, thus greatly reducing the efficiency of the port and interfering with logistic support. The mining of the ADMIRALTY Islands was not effective and no sweeping operations were attempted.

The mining at WEWAK was not effective. One destroyer was damaged.

Minesweeping equipment throughout the RABAU - NEW GUINEA Area was deficient in quantity and quality. Since the American ground mines were ineffective in depths greater than 50 meters, an attempt was made to keep ships in deep water.

Operation of Japanese Surface Vessels in the RABAU and  
NEW GUINEA Areas

The Japanese surface forces operating from RABAU were controlled by the South East Area Fleet through the Eighth Fleet and was composed of the following ships:

2	heavy cruisers
1	light cruiser
12	destroyers
4	minesweepers
10	auxiliary vessels
7	submarines

The Eighth Fleet was established in RABAU in June 1942. Until 3 August 1943, the Eighth Fleet was responsible for the area eastward of a line running southeast from a point just west of the ADMIRALTY Islands (2°30'S - 146°E) through the KIRIWINA Islands. This included the entire SOLOMON Area. After 3 August 1943 the Eighth Fleet moved to BUIN and assumed responsibility of the area east of longitude 154°E. The South East Area Fleet then took over the responsibility of the area formed by the 45° triangle having 2°-30'S-146°E as apex and 154°E as the base.

Ships of the Eighth Fleet lost in action were replaced by forces from TRUK, Headquarters of the combined Fleet. Also reinforcements were furnished as necessary for particularly important operations.

After the Battle of the BISMARCK SEA, it was realized that control of the air was lost and consequently, supplies to NEW GUINEA were shipped by destroyer and submarine only. FINCHHAVEN was supplied until captured by the Allies, but supplies in the NEW GUINEA Area were totally inadequate.

RESTRICTED

NARRATIVE of Interrogation (Commander DOI, Yasuni, IJN) -----

In 15 October 1943, after the loss of LAE and SALAMAUA, the Ninth Fleet (1 destroyer, 6 subchasers, 1 coast defense vessel) was established at WEWAK and MADANG to assist in convoy work from PALAU to WEWAK and to maintain liaison with the Army. This liaison was particularly important in view of the fact that the land forces in NEW GUINEA were composed of 7,400 Naval personnel at WEWAK and MADANG in addition to the two Army divisions. Before the loss of LAE and SALAMAUA the ground forces were under dual control but subsequent to that time the Army assured control of all ground forces.

After Allied occupation of the ADMIRALTY Islands it was no longer possible to convoy ships from PALAU to WEWAK. At this time the Ninth Fleet was ordered to report to the Southwest Area Fleet since all forces were withdrawn from the Southeast Area Fleet at RABAUL.

The attack by American Carrier planes on 5 November 1943 seriously damaged the heavy cruisers HAGURO and MIYOKO. After December 1943 no large Japanese ships entered RABAUL.

During the Allied invasion of the ADMIRALTY Islands all forces had been withdrawn from RABAUL and the Eighth Fleet was unable to offer opposition. The Southeast Area Fleet recommended use of surface forces from TRUK but the idea was vetoed by the Combined Fleet Headquarters who were attempting to replace the forces destroyed by American carrier plane attacks on 17 February.

Although the Japanese realized the vital necessity of reinforcing the defense forces in NEW GUINEA, the attrition in the SOLOMONS of land, sea, and air forces was so high that such action was impossible.

RESTRICTED