

HEADQUARTERS
U.S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)
APO 234
c/o POSTMASTER, SAN FRANCISCO

RESTRICTED

INTERROGATION NO. 337
Division of Origin Military Analysis Divn.
Subject: Osaka Air Depot

Place: Regional Office #1,
Nagoya
Date: 10 November 8 7 1946



Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Col HARA, Hiroshi, graduated Military Academy 1918, Tokorozawa Air Mechanics School 1920; Main Air Depot in Tokyo, Duties Section (Kimmuhan) 1940 - Oct 42; Oct 42-Apr 43 in Air Hq in Tokyo, handling records and transportation; Apr 43-Mar 45 head of Ordnance in the 5th Flying Div; Mar 45 to the end of the war, head of the Osaka Air Depot.

Where interviewed: Osaka Air Depot

Interrogator: Capt Haskins

Interpreter: Lt Sneider

Allied Officers Present: Lt Palfrey

SUMMARY

Problems arising in the supply, maintenance and repair of aircraft at the Osaka Air Depot were discussed.

INTERROGATION

- Q. What was the relative size of the Osaka Air Depot?
A. It was the smallest of the 5 Depots.
- Q. To whom were you subordinated?
A. Before May 1945 this Depot was subordinated directly to Air Headquarters; after that time we were under 6th Air Army.
- Q. What types of new planes did you process?
A. Ki 45 (Nick), Ki 102 (Randy), Ki 54 (Hickory), Ki 86 (Cypress).
- Q. What types did you handle for repairs?
A. Ki 84 (Frank), Ki 44 (Tojo), Ki 51 (Sonia) Ki 46 III (Dinah), Ki 36 (Ida).
- Q. What tests did you perform on new planes?
A. None; this was done by representatives of the Inspectorate General of Aviation at the factory.
- Q. How much testing was being done at the end of the war?
A. Since April 1945, 30 minutes on the ground and 30 minutes in the air. Previously tests had been longer, but declining fuel supplies forced these drastic cuts.
- Q. Have you any Depot pilots?
A. Yes, we have 6. They are used for testing repaired planes and for assisting in delivery of planes from the factory.

- Q. Who ferried the planes to the units?
- A. For units outside of Japan, the Air Transport Department, but for units within Japan frequently pilots were sent from the tactical units. The Depot pilots were not used for this purpose.
- Q. What ferrying losses were sustained?
- A. I am not too familiar with this aspect, but I should estimate 10% on flights within Japan and 50% on flights outside Japan.
- Q. What were the principal causes of these losses?
- A. Within Japan, engine failure, pilot failure and poor quality of planes being produced by the factory. Outside Japan, the above factors plus navigational shortcomings and American interception.
- Q. What was the average length of processing at the Depot?
- A. About 10 days. The planes arrived from the factory in very bad shape.
- Q. Did you make any effort to remedy this?
- A. We were handicapped by inferior maintenance personnel, but we made what minor adjustments we could. Actually most of the trouble was deep seated; there were basic defects in the engines and landing gear.
- Q. Do you mean that the Osaka Depot was turning out new planes which you knew were unsatisfactory?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Would it not have been better to take 10 new planes and out of them turn out 5 which were really in top-notch operational condition?
- A. The trouble was that the same defects occurred in all the planes, so that no exchange of parts would have been of any value. Moreover there was such a pressure from Air Headquarters for delivery of planes in quantity that such a procedure, even if possible, would not have been permitted.
- Q. Of the 4 plane types you processed, which arrived in the best condition?
- A. Ki 54 (Hickory); that type had been in production the longest.
- Q. How many new planes did you handle each month in 1945?
- A. I can only estimate, since all our records are destroyed. I should say that we processed about 50 planes a month and about 300 during the first 7 months of 1945.
- Q. How many of these were Ki 102 (Randy)?
- A. In 1945 we handled perhaps 20 a month.
- Q. How many planes did you repair every month?
- A. About 20, of which 8 were major repairs and 12 minor.
- Q. Where did your maintenance personnel come from?
- A. About one half were civilians and one half soldiers. Only about 10% had had any training before coming to the Air Depot. The rest of them were green farmers whom we had to train on the job. There was no formal training at the Depot.

- Q. How did the Depot mechanics compare with those in the field?
- A. The combat units had difficulties also but they did have a nucleus of trained NCOs and mechanics.
- Q. Were there any training schools for mechanics?
- A. Yes, but they were for officers and NCOs only.
- Q. Were you troubled by shortages of spare parts?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What parts in particular?
- A. Engine parts, tires and landing gear -- in that order.

Note: It was ascertained that the Commanders of the Osaka Air Depot during the war period were as follows:

August 1941-October 1943	KOKUBO, Masahiro
October 1943-October 1944	YAMAOKA, Sakao
October 1944 - March 1945	KOKUBO, Masahiro
March 1945 to present	HARA, Hiroshi