

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

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS NO. 526)

Place: Tokyo  
Date: 14 Dec. 1945.  
1530.

Division of Origin: Military Analysis

Subject: Shipping in the New Britian, New Guinea, New Ireland Area  
February 1943.

Personnel interrogated:

Keisuke Matsunaga, Captain, IJN.

Where interviewed: Office of A-2, ADFFAF, Tokyo.

Interrogators: Colonel W. M. BURGESS, G. S. C., FEAF.

Interpreter: T/5 Saburo Hasegawa, ATIS (GHQ) (TD - FEAF).

SUMMARY

1. Interrogatee apparently cooperative.
2. Ships operated between Palau and Rabaul during the period late February and early March 1943. He did receive reports between Palau and Rabaul whenever ships were attacked. He received reports from the Lae Transport Operation. He states that all transports were sunk and several of the escort vessels sunk. He does not know how many.
3. Ten submarines went to the rescue of survivors of this battle. Does not know whether or not any were sunk.
4. The AAF sighting of seven vessels off Ubili on North coast of New Britian 26 February 1943 was probably of coastal resupply vessels which operated along the New Britian Coast.

Transcript of Interrogation. (Keisuke Matsunaga, Captain, IJN) -----

- Q. Name, duty, during February and March 1943?  
A. Keisuke Matsunaga, Captain, Imperial Japanese Navy, He was Chief Senior Staff Officer in Charge of Minor Base Forces at Rabaul.
- Q. What were the duties of the Minor Base Forces at Rabaul?  
A. To furnish escort for the convoys.
- Q. Duties of the escort vessels was to accompany merchant shipping between Rabaul, Palau, Kavieng, Truk and New Guinea?  
A. Escort was between Palau and Rabaul only.
- Q. Truk Island?  
A. It wasn't his escort. Escort from Truk was furnished by Minor Bases Units at Truk.
- Q. Did his unit have any control of the movements of the merchant vessels from Rabaul to the Southwest?  
A. In 1942, yes. But in February and March 1943 they had none.
- Q. Did the Minor Base Forces have information as to the movements of shipping along the north and south of the New Ireland and eastern coast of New Guinea during March 1943?  
A. Yes, he knew the movement of the ships but did not know the exact route or procedure they were going thru.
- Q. When a merchant vessel in this area was under attack, did a report of that attack come in, and did the Minor Base Forces at Rabaul receive that report?  
A. He received reports between Palau and Rabaul whenever they were attacked. On the reports the information was only things concerning the Minor Base Units forces.
- Q. When a merchant ship southwest of Rabaul toward NG and NI coast was under distress to whom did it make its report?  
A. The Eighth Minor Base Unit at Rabaul received reports of distress in the area of the Bismark Sea and down to about the Vitiiaz Strait. Vessels south of the New Ireland and below Vitiiaz Strait sent distress reports to the 7th Minor Base Unit which was at that time stationed at Lae.
- Q. Did you have liaison with the 7th Minor Base Unit at Lae?  
A. They had liaison between the 8th and 7th Fleet.
- Q. Are you familiar with the operation called the Lae-Transport Operation which took place in late February and early March 1943, and was an escort from Rabaul bound for Lae?  
A. That operation was operated by the 8th Fleet. He knew the operation was going on but doesn't know minor details of it.
- Q. Did the 8th Minor Base Unit receive reports of distress from those vessels in that convoy?  
A. Yes, he received reports.
- Q. Do you remember what those reports were?  
A. The report was that it was under air bombardment and it was all sunk.

- Q. Ask Colonel Imoto about the convoy that left from Rabaul the 28th of February and known as the Lae Convoy?
- A. He said that is the one that started for Lae.
- Q. How many vessels in that?
- A. Five or six transports and the rest convoy vessels.
- Q. Where was he on the 28th February?
- A. In Rabaul.
- Q. What was he doing?
- A. He was attached to the Eighth Army in Operations Headquarters.
- Q. Ask Colonel Imoto if he was for duty or in the hospital on 28 February?
- A. Yes, after returning from Guadalcanal he was sick. He was in his office but was not doing any work.
- Q. Did he see the convoy sail?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Did he see the number of vessels?
- A. His estimate was 13 or 14. He says the ships left at night and he did not see all of them leave out.
- Q. Does Admiral Nabashima have information as to whether ships being sunk had instructions to send in a radio distress message?
- A. He says yes they did send out distress signals in code.
- Q. Did he require that of the vessels under his jurisdiction?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Did he always get that report?
- A. Yes, in most cases. If they were in battle, yes, but if en route to join the fleet or the convoy they did not send a radio message.
- Q. Ask if at the time of this battle he heard about it up at Truk?
- A. No report came directly at the time of the battle but when this unit sent the message he intercepted that message and he happened to read about it.
- Q. Did the Admiral consider that a real critical loss?
- A. Yes, he did.
- Q. If Colonel Imoto knows the names of the vessels in the convoy, ask him what they were?
- A. He does not remember the names. In the near future he thinks you will interrogate Colonel Shinohara and he will know about shipping.
- Q. In regard to supply of New Guinea, did that supply come from Palau often times down through Western Bismark Sea?
- A. He says the Army gets supplies from Palau. Truk supplies the Navy.
- Q. Do you know of any of the activities out of Palau?
- A. He does not know much about that.