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INTERROGATION NO: 236
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Division of Origin: G-2, Japanese Intelligence Section.

Subject: Japanese Naval Intelligence Organization and Operation.

Personnel **interrogated** and background of each:

Comdr IMAI, Nobuhiko, IJN. Entered Naval Academy 1929, graduated 1932; from 1932 to April 1934, engineering officer duty; April 1934-November 1934, communications officer on RYUJO (CV); November 1934-April 1935, navigation officer on cruiser KINUGASA; November 1935-December 1936, senior code officer, 3rd fleet Headquarters; December 1936-March 1937, chief navigation officer on OKIKAZI (DD); April 1937-February 1939, language student (Spanish) at Tokyo University; promoted to lieutenant June 1938; February 1939-November 1939, fire control duty aboard training fleet cruiser KATORI; November 1939-January 1942, adjutant YOKOSUKA Naval Base; February 1942-May 1943, adjutant 2nd China Fleet at HONGKONG; May 1943-February 1944, assistant officer on 5th Section of Naval General Staff, handling Latin American matters; since February 1944, regular member of 5th Section of Naval General Staff, handling all North and South American and front line intelligence matters.

Where interviewed: Navy Ministry.

Interrogator: Lt S. P. AHLBUM, USNR.
Major R. S. SPILMAN, Jr, AC.

Interpreter: Mr. John TAJI.

Allied Officers present: None.

Summary:

1. Principal sources of intelligence of the 5th Section (North and South America and front line intelligence) of the Navy General Staff were reports of military attaches in foreign countries, radio news broadcasts, interrogation of prisoners of war, captured documents, and observations by forward units and shore-based forward garrisons. Military and Naval Attaches, although a prolific source up to 1941, diminished in usefulness as the war progressed, and after the break with Argentina this source virtually vanished.

2. Information thus obtained was tabulated over long periods at General Staff Headquarters in the Navy Ministry, and from these tabulations deduction were made as to the Order of

Battle, losses, and future operations. This method was considered accurate within 20 per cent as far as the number of carriers were concerned, but in this instance the deduction method was obviously augmented by papers giving call signs and names of carriers, taken from crashed aircraft after fleet raids on the Empire.

3. During the time in which Comdr IMAI was a member of the intelligence department, radio news broadcasts were considered the best single source of information about the Allies. The ideal method, however, was thought to be the U.S. intelligence system in the Philippines, which the Japanese could not overcome. The intelligence organization within the Navy, at least, was incomplete; photographic reconnaissance was regarded as a "brute force" method which was utilized for strategic planning but very little for intelligence purposes; the Japanese counterpart of flak intelligence was made one of Comdr IMAI's responsibilities, but it was almost non-existent.

4. Apparently General Staff and major fleet Headquarters were only Sections of the Imperial Navy in which officers had intelligence as their principal duty. In lower echelons, it was regarded as collateral duty for communications officers or for officers who had special capabilities, such as knowledge of foreign languages.

5. A list of sources of intelligence for the 5th Section of the Navy General Staff, prepared by Comdr IMAI, and showing method of reception, classification, and value, is appended following the transcript.

Transcript of Interrogation (Comdr IMAI, Nobuhiko, IJN)

Q 1. What were your specific duties?

A. I am a member of the 5th Section, 3rd Department, of the Navy General Staff, which deals with the whole of North and South America. The department consists of the chief (Rear Admiral TAKEUCHI) and four officers under him, known as "A", "B", "C" and "D" members. I was the "C" member in charge of Latin America, Mexico and all of South America. I was picked because of my knowledge of Spanish, but I have forgotten most of it. Up to February 1944, I was not a regular member of the Navy General Staff, but in the form of an assistant officer. This was because of a rule regulating the number of regular members on the staff. I was not given the most important work while an assistant. During the war, the "B" membership, which was responsible for Canada, Alaska, other American territories, Hawaii, and front line intelligence, became vacant. I took on the "B" man's work in February 1944, at which time I became a regular member of the staff and handled more important work.

Q 2. What were your principal sources of information?

A. By the time I became a regular member of the Naval Staff we had no good sources of information in the United States, her territories, Chile, or Brazil, as attaches had been withdrawn. Only the Argentine attache was left. This was the only source of information, plus radio newscasts.

Q 3. How about your responsibility for front line intelligence?

A. Front line intelligence was obtained mostly by summing up radio reports from all over the world, piecing together information from all broadcasts, captured documents, planes shot down, and prisoners of war. These reports were tabulated over long periods of time in Tokyo, in the Naval General Staff, and deductions were made from the tabulations.

Q 4. Are any copies of these tabulations available?

A. No. They have all been burned. In July, the Ministry of Home Defense knew the battlefield would be Japan, and burning was started. Not a single copy was left. The Chief of the 5th Section was very strict about burning.

Q 5. How was the information for this tabulation brought to Intelligence Headquarters from the sources you mentioned?

A. Communication Officers in the fleet and at shore stations were at times also the intelligence officer. Also, any officer who was capable, who spoke foreign languages, for instance, was given the post of intelligence officer. It was additional duty. All units were responsible for obtaining intelligence. In the fleet, it was usually sent to us through the chain of command; sometimes, especially in the case of isolated units late in the war, it was sent directly, but the chain of command was always notified it had been sent. Important documents were sent over by plane, as well as prisoners of war, if of high rank. They were taken to an interrogation center at OFUNA.

- Q 6. In the case of isolated garrisons in the MARIANAS and by-passed islands, how was information obtained after occupation by the U.S.?
- A. Sources were practically negligent, except for broadcasts from the American side, and information from scouting planes.
- Q 7. How about isolated garrisons, such as those on PAGAN and ROTA?
- A. Very little information was obtained. Sometimes there was radio contact. We got some information from U.S. broadcasts and from pamphlets dropped by U.S. planes. No submarines or planes were sent to captured or by-passed islands for intelligence purposes.
- Q 8. After the information was tabulated, what was done with it?
- A. The information was sent only to those lower units which needed it. Very important messages were sent by wire or wireless, the rest by letter. An occasional meeting of commanders was held in Tokyo, but as means of transportation became scarce in the latter part of the war, these were less frequent.
- Q 9. Were intelligence publications issued at regular intervals?
- A. No. My office never issued publications but gave the information to operational units which issued bulletins when they thought this was necessary. My office received copies, but all have been burned.
- Q 10. Did you have any method of receiving information from the United States or Hawaii other than the news broadcasts?
- A. We had no method of communication - no neutral citizens, no spies, no hidden radios.
- Q 11. Did information come from other Japanese agencies - Army, Foreign Office, etc.?
- A. The Foreign Office had recorders for short wave broadcasts. From the Army side we would get information from Army military attaches.
- Q 12. Was Naval intelligence given to the Army and the Foreign Office?
- A. We gave little to the Foreign Office, but gave the Army information of value to them.
- Q 13. Did Navy Headquarters supervise the interrogation of their prisoners of war?
- A. We seldom interviewed prisoners of war with any definite object in mind. A member of this department conducted the interrogations, but usually we did not know what could be obtained, and we had general conversations to see what would come out. Prisoners of war gave very little useful information. Officers seldom talked. Non-coms and enlisted men sometimes talked but had very little information except perhaps names of a few ships, etc.

- Q 14. What do you consider the best source of information for Naval Intelligence?
- A. Do you mean ideal or in actual practise?
- Q 15. I would like your ideas on both.
- A. Actually, radio news reports from all over the world, as we tabulated them, were the best sources we had. For example, we would hear of a conference between MacArthur and Nimitz in San Francisco, which would mean something important was coming up. Then we would hear of a conference in Pearl Harbor of front line commanders, and would try to estimate the direction of the next move. In theory, the U.S. method in the Philippines, about which you knew more than I, is the ideal. We could not improve on that.
- Q 16. What methods did you use in arriving at the Order of Battle of the U.S., both fleet and air?
- A. The Order of Battle was estimated from information obtained from our island forces and front line units. We would make plots and graphs and then estimate. When air raids came from carriers, we would tabulate interval, target, type of plane, length of attack, and could deduce the strength of the carrier fleet involved in the attack. I myself could estimate strength from the length of the attack. I based my estimates on a long background of experience. In the field, there might not be people with the necessary background for such an estimation, but I could use reports from the field for this purpose.
- Q 17. Were captured documents a source of Order of Battle information?
- A. Yes. Now and then we would find the names of carriers checked against call signs on papers found in crashed planes. One or two scraps of paper were of little value in themselves, but putting many together gave a good basis for estimates.
- Q 18. How accurate would you consider these estimates?
- A. Within 20% as to number of carriers.
- Q 19. How accurate as to number of aircraft squadrons or units?
- A. The "D" man was in charge of this. He handled the aviation end. That is Comdr TAKITA now, but he was only in charge after June 1945. Comdr YOKURA, Sashize, was his predecessor. He is in Tokyo, in the Military Affairs Bureau of the Navy Ministry.
- Q 20. Did you have any responsibilities as to air?
- A. I had no work connected with the air forces except that I worked with Comdr YOKURA and was familiar with what he did.
- Q 21. Can you give us the outstanding accomplishments of your "B" and "C" divisions?
- A. We haven't had any outstanding successes. Our best work was on the Iwo Jima attack. We estimated that three divisions would attack about February 10 or 11, which is a national holiday. We deduced that from the number

of air attacks, making our prediction about the end of January or the beginning of February. We can't tell precisely when an attack will start until just before the attack.

- Q.22. What do you consider the short-comings of Japanese Navy Intelligence?
- A. The system is not complete. A national trait of the Japanese is that they are not interested in intelligence; they are apt to start a battle without seeing the end, and are not much concerned with what they are going to have to meet. The main reason for the defeat of Japan is lack of intelligence information. There is a Chinese proverb: "If you know your enemy and know yourself you will win a hundred battles". Japan went into the war without enough information.
- Q 23. You had a great deal of information when Pearl Harbor was attacked.
- A. I was not in this section at the time of Pearl Harbor, but I think information from people coming back from Hawaii was all we had.
- Q 24. Has Japanese Naval Intelligence deteriorated during the war?
- A. Its capabilities have deteriorated since military attaches have been withdrawn. From the point of view of calculating the Order of Battle, it has improved. After Argentine was cut off, the only information was by radio.
- Q 25. Was there any standard for choosing intelligence officers in Headquarters? In the field?
- A. My section did no work on this. The Personnel Bureau handled it.
- Q 26. Were written instructions given intelligence officers?
- A. I have already submitted papers on this which are now being translated. They will be ready on 6 November.
- Q 27. To whom was this submitted?
- A. GHQ, I think. I will give you a copy if there is an extra one.
- Q 28. Can you give the names of any officers in intelligence duties both with the fleet and shore-based units?
- A. I don't know the names, but I can get them from personnel. I will give them to you. I don't think there were many shore-based officers.
- Q 29. How were U.S. Naval losses estimated?
- A. Mainly by U.S. radio reports and reports from submarine and plane commanders. Plane reports were often inaccurate. We would calculate from the size of shells or bombs how much damage could have been done. If the U.S. fleet was attacked and showed up less some ships, we would estimate sinkings or damage.
- Q 30. Japanese claims by DOMEI, for example, were exaggerated. How did you compensate for exaggeration in the reports of pilots and ships?

A. We made deductions from DOMEI reports. These were taken directly from front line dispatches and did not go through us.

Q 31. What about exaggerated claims by pilots themselves?

A. We had to make allowances. Toward the end of the war, the training of pilots and crews was inadequate, and all personnel was inferior. Crews could not recognize carriers, battleships, etc.

Q 32. What percentage of accuracy did you consider these reports had?

A. I can't give percentages because each case would differ. Weather conditions, defenses, size of bombs, the ability of the crew, reports on the extent of damage - all were considered in reaching an estimate.

Q 33. How much use did this department make of intelligence obtained from photo reconnaissance?

A. The Intelligence Department never sent out photo planes, and received photos only now and then. It was considered a "brute force" method of obtaining intelligence.

Q 34. Did any officer in the Navy Staff have charge of photo intelligence?

A. No.

Q 35. What department directed photo intelligence?

A. The commander of each fleet. If headquarters wanted photographs, they would send a directive to the fleet.

Q 36. Were photographs considered more of a strategic planning function than intelligence?

A. Yes. But I thought photo reconnaissance should have been used more for intelligence.

Q 37. Was flak intelligence - the method of avoiding anti-aircraft fire - a part of Naval intelligence?

A. It was part of the department's work, but little was done about it. I am in charge, but have had very little to do with it.

(NOTE: List of sources, cited in paragraph 5 of Summary follows on page 8.)

List prepared by Comdr IMAI of sources, classification and value of information, obtained by 5th Section, Navy General Staff:

- (1) Allied radio information.
 - (a) Method of reception; - via general Division.
 - (b) Classification: - military (general, air, naval vessels, submarines). political, foreign relations, economics, domestic conditions.
 - (c) Value: - because of the publicity control carried out by America, it was not possible to expect much value for information of temporary and short-lived nature. But, in case we were able to make statistical survey by classifying information of all kinds received over long periods, we think it was sometimes possible to obtain material of value upon which to base our judgement. That was especially so in case of the broadcasts by intermediate waves intended for domestic consumption.
- (2) Allied leaflets and newspapers.
 - (a) Method of collection: - Seizure in war zones and purchase in neutral markets.
 - (b) Classification: - no special effort was made at classification because relatively little was obtained owing to the great difficulty of getting such materials.
 - (c) Value: - although they were of greater value than radio broadcasts in that their contents were more substantial, on the whole they did not reach our hands in time to be of much use in directing the war effort. They were, however, of value as material for checking the other information already received. Photographs of naval vessels and aircraft, especially among the material seized in war zones, proved valuable as technical reference material.
- (3) Data from other sources: - none of any particular value.