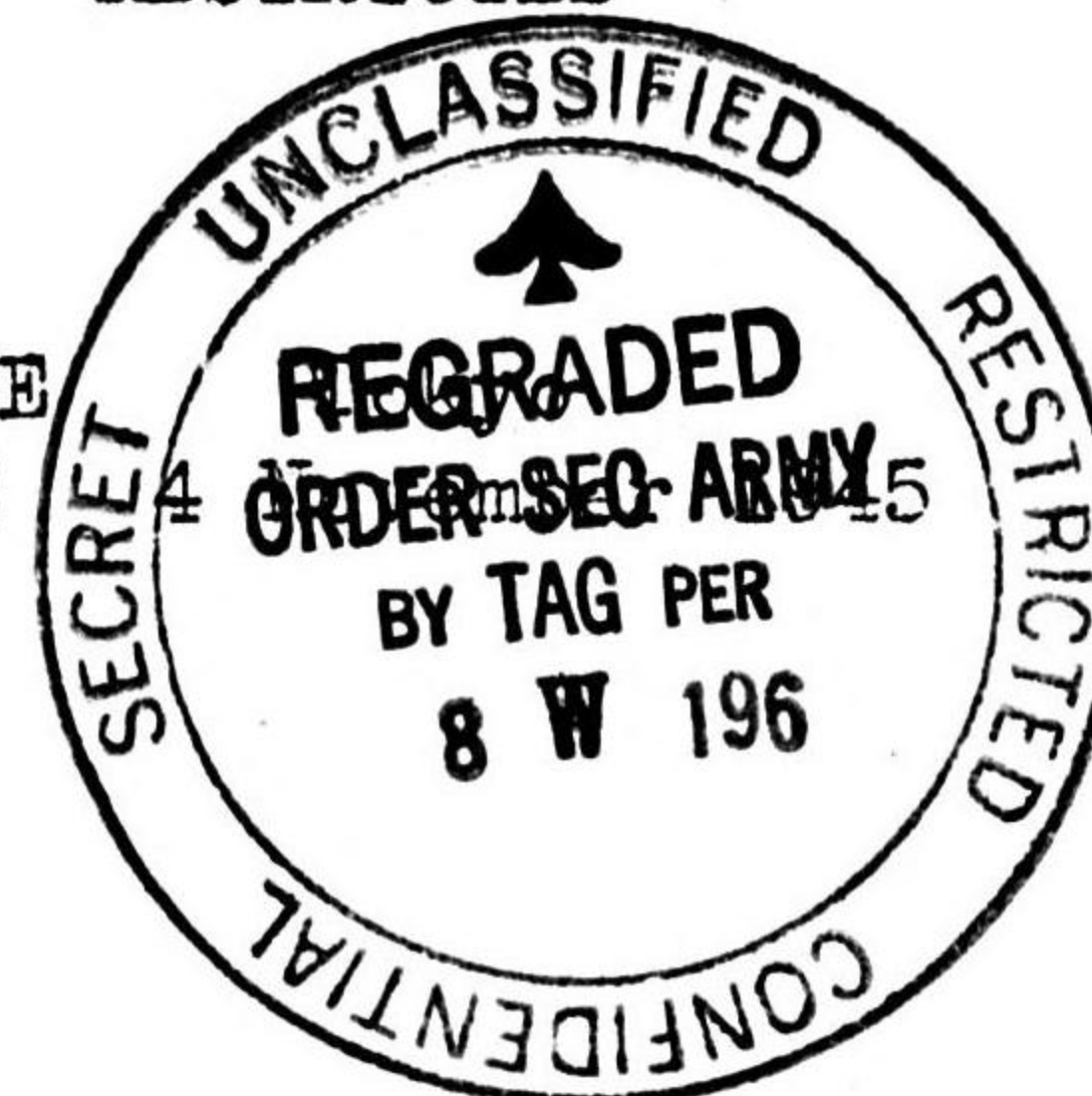


HEADQUARTERS  
U.S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY  
(Pacific)

RESTRICTED

PLACE  
DATE



INTERROGATION NO. 354

Division of Origin: Military Analysis Division

Subject: Japanese Naval Air Force

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Lt Comdr SHIGEKI, Takeda, Chief of Training of the Kowa Naval Air Base. He was graduated from the Naval Academy in 1938 and after a tour of duty on the battleship Ise began flight training. Becoming a pilot in 1942 he received training in land-based navy planes. He served with the 141st Kokutai at Miyakonojo and was also at Okinawa in October 1944 during the first Allied air strike. He became chief of training at Kowa Air Base during the first part of August 1945. He has over 1500 logged hours.

Interrogator: Captain John C. West.

Interpreter: 1st Lt Richard Sneider.

Allied Officers Present: Captain Haskins, Lt Palfrey.

Summary:

Comdr Shikei was able to give a rather general account of the decline in the Naval Training Program and some specific information concerning the fuel shortage at this particular base.

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Q. Where did you receive your flight training?

A. The greater part at Tateyama and Kure naval bases.

Q. How many hours of training flight instruction did you receive before becoming a pilot?

A. Approximately 330 hours in all.

Q. How much of this time was in training and how much in tactical a/c?

A. About 160 hours were in training planes, the rest in regular tactical a/c.

Q. How did the pilots turned out during the war compare in quality to those who received their training with you in 1939?

A. The quality of pilots steadily decreased throughout the war.

Q. What reasons account for this?

A. There were several: 1) The mass production of pilots caused flying hours to be reduced; 2) The quality of the instructors went down. Many instructors were killed on combat missions; their places were taken by students as they finished their flight instruction; 3) There was a shortage of fuel for training 4) The general curriculum (including such basic subjects as navigation, etc.) was reduced.

Q. Can you tell us how the flying hours were reduced after 1939?

A. Well in 1939, each student pilot received at least 300 hours before becoming a full-fledged pilot (I received 330). The amount was about the same through 1941, but in 1942 it started being reduced by degrees until 1945 when a finished pilot received only about 100 hours.

Q. In what phases of flight training were the biggest reductions made?

A. Practice shooting (gunnery) was eliminated. Also fighter tactics (maneuvers, etc.) were reduced.

Q. Were standards of recruitment lowered in this mass production of pilots?

A. Yes.

Q. How?

A. I don't know exactly, but I do know they were lowered.

Q. How about age? Did you take cadets at a younger age after war?

A. Yes, I believe the age was lowered by about a year. We took in some cadets at 17 years (16 by American computation) but the average was 18 or 19.

Q. How did the army and navy pilots compare in quality during the war?

A. At the outbreak of the war the navy had much better pilots. But the best navy pilots were killed in the early stages of the war while the army pilots sat at home in safety. Therefore at the latter stages of the war they were about the same.

Q. Did Special Attack (Kamikaze) pilots get any special training?

A. Except in the latter stages of the war, they got none.

Q. What did this training consist of?

A. Mostly dive-bombing with some night-group flying and night diving. Of course they had a certain amount of this in their regular training.

Q. How did they get Special Attack pilots?

A. Mostly by volunteers. However when these pilots were selected several factors such as family circumstances, dependents, etc. were examined. However, some unit commanders simply said their units were special attack and led them on a mission.

Q. Were any other circumstances considered in selecting these pilots?

A. Well, the best pilots were not taken. We tried to take inexperienced pilots who weren't good for much else.

Q. How many hours of training did a special attack pilot need?

A. It depended on the type of plane being used.

Q. How much was needed if training planes were used?

A. Thirty to fifty hours was considered sufficient.

Q. How much flying time did the average suicide pilot have who participated in the Okinawa campaign?

A. He needed 100 hours, but I suppose some got through with less.

Q. What type plane was used chiefly?

A. All kinds, but I think the T.97 (torpedo bomber, "Kate") was the most common.

Q. Did the shortage of fuel ever affect tactical operations?

A. Yes, particularly toward the end of the war.

Q. In what respect were tactical operations limited?

A. Well, at the end of the war we (Kora Air Group) were under orders to intercept only B-29 raids and to ignore naval carrier strikes. The fuel situation had become acute by the beginning of 1945 and we had to start limiting the number of hours a plane could be used each month.

Q. What was the effect of the fuel shortage on training?

A. We had to limit training activities to conserve fuel beginning in the spring of 1944. Prior to that time there had been a drive (propaganda campaign) to conserve fuel.

Q. Did you have a fuel reserve for the defense of the homeland (Ketsu) operation?

A. Yes, we did.

Q. How much?

A. We had enough for 5 tankfuls for each plane at this base.

Q. How many planes did you have here?

A. Sixty-six.

Q. How long could a plane fly on one tank of gas?

A. Three to four hours, depending on type of plane.

Q. To your knowledge, did other bases have a similar reserve?

A. No, this base had more reserve fuel than any other.

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