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Page 1

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Interrogation of ABE, Koso, formerly Vice Admiral, Imperial Japanese Navy, by Commander MURPHY and Lieutenant HAMBLEY, Tokyo, Japan.

Interpreter - Lieutenant OMBORN.

Recorder - William A. FULL, Yeoman first class.

Q What is your full name?

A ABE, Koso.

Q Were you ever stationed on KAWAJALIN?

A Yes.

Q What date did you arrive on KAWAJALIN?

A On the 8th of February 1942.

Q When did you leave KAWAJALIN?

A Around the end of November 1943.

Q What was your position on KAWAJALIN?

A I was the commanding officer of the 6th Base Unit.

Q Who were the officers immediately inferior to you by office?

A There was a Captain OBARA who was commanding officer of the guard unit.

Q Who was your Chief of Staff?

A The senior staff officer at the time was a Commander by the name of HAYASHI.

Q What other naval units were under you at KAWAJALIN?

A The Guard Unit, the Communications Unit, and the Air Group.

Q Captain OBARA was commanding officer of the guard unit?

A Yes.

Q Who was commanding officer of the Air Unit?

A At first it was Commander WAKAJIMA but he was relieved later and I don't know exactly who took his place.

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s/ E. L. Field Lt USNR

Who was commanding officer of the Communications Unit?

A I have forgotten it.

Q During this time who was your immediate superior officer?

A The 4th Fleet Commander at TRUK.

Q What territory was covered by your command?

A The MARSHALL ISLANDS.

Q Does that include WAKAI?

A Yes.

Q Who was in charge of the execution of the American flyers on or about January 1943 on KWAJALEIN?

A There was no execution.

Q To have the first hand evidence, that is a witness, to the beheading of nine (9) American flyers in January 1943 on KWAJALEIN.

A There was no execution.

Prisoner took oath at this time.

Q Do you know the seriousness and the legal effect of answering questions under oath?

A Yes, I understand.

Q Therefore admiral, I ask you again, what unit was in charge of the execution of the American flyers on KWAJALEIN, on or about January 1943?

A There was no execution.

Q Were you on KWAJALEIN early in 1943 as commanding officer?

A Yes.

Q And yet you know nothing about the execution of American flyers at this time?

A That is right- I don't know anything about it.

Q Did you hear anything about the execution of American flyers about this time on KWAJALEIN?

A No.

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Q In what form did you give the order to Admiral SAKAIBARA at WAKE to execute the ninety-six (96) American prisoners there in 1943?

A I didn't issue any such order.

Q Was Admiral SAKAIBARA under you?

A Yes.

Q Did Admiral SAKABARA report the deaths of these people to you about this time?

A Yes, I received a report.

Q What was that report?

A As I remember it, the report said roughly that WAKE Island had been subjected to a bombardment by the American Fleet and that the prisoners had engaged in riotous activities against our force and that Admiral SAKAIBARA had disposed of them.

Q Did you pass this information on to the Navy ministry in TOKYO?

A Yes, I did, in the form in which I received it.

Q When did you send Lieutenant ITO Torashi to WAKE Island?

A I don't remember. I do not remember Lt. ITO ever being on KWAJALEIN.

Q Was it not just prior to the American Task Force assault on WAKE in October 1943?

A I didn't send him from my location.

Q He came from KWAJALEIN - didn't he?

A I believe that he just passed through KWAJALEIN, if he was ever there at all.

Q Was the message you gave him to Admiral SAKAIBARA with reference to the American prisoners of war?

A I didn't tell him anything about the prisoners.

Q Did you get a report on the execution of any American prisoners of war in May, June, or July of 1942?

A No.

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Q If Lieutenant ITO did not go from KWAJALEIN to WAKE, but merely passed through KWAJALEIN on his way to WAKE, where did he come from?

A I Don't remember.

Q But you do remember that Lieutenant ITO passed through KWAJALEIN in early October, 1943, do you not?

A I think it is probable that he passed through KWAJALEIN at about that time, but I did not meet him, and don't remember definitely.

Q Why do you think it was probable that he passed through there then?

A Since the route by air travel from Japan to WAKE was by way of SAIPAN, TRUK, KWAJALEIN, and then to WAKE, I think it is possible that he passed through KWAJALEIN.

Q How do you know that he passed through KWAJALEIN - what reasons do you have to believe this?

A As I said before, because of the route for air travel.

Q How do you know that he was ever up there?

A I don't have any definite recollection of whether Lieutenant ITO reported to WAKE in October 1943.

Q But you have an idea that he did?

A I have no definite recollection of it.

Q You are reminded that you are under oath and if you are caught telling a lie while under oath, it is a crime of International Law and you can be charged with perjury. Do you understand that?

A Yes.

Q Were any American prisoners of war brought from other islands in the MARSHALLS to KWAJALEIN?

A Yes.

Q What was done with American prisoners of war that were brought to KWAJALEIN?

A They were returned to JAPAN.

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Q Were some of those brought from MALOELAP?

A Yes, I remember, but not clearly.

Q How many were brought from MALOELAP, and when?

A I can't remember exactly at this point.

Q What year? What month?

A I can't remember.

Q As you recall, during your command, about when did the first American prisoners of war arrive from these islands?

A I don't remember exactly - all I know is that it seems to me that some prisoners were sent down from MALOELAP and sent back to JAPAN.

Q What year was this - 1942, 1943, or when?

A I can't remember.

Q When did Vice Admiral HARA leave the Marshalls?

A What was his first name? I don't know him.

Q Who preceded you on command at the MARSHALLS?

A Rear Admiral YATSUSHIRO.

Q Who succeeded you in command?

A Rear Admiral AKIYAMA.

Q What was Captain YAMAGATA's position? Was he not your Chief of Staff on KWAJALEIN at some time?

A No.

Q Who was commanding officer at MALOELAP?

A I can't remember.

Q Did you ever hear of Admiral KOMODA?

A Yes.

Q Was he in command at MALOELAP?

A Yes, he was.

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- Q Admiral KOMODA is the one who told us about Captain YAMAGATA being your Chief of Staff.
- A I believe he was Captain of a ship.
- Q Stationed at KWAJALEIN?
- A It was in KWAJALEIN for a while.
- Q But he was not under you?
- A Yes, he was under my command.
- Q What happened to Captain YAMAGATA - what became of him?
- A I don't know what happened to him after that.
- Q We understand that it is a general policy of the MARSHALLS and eastern CAROLINE ISLANDS to execute American prisoners, especially where an invasion is impending. Did you give this direction, or did it come from higher authority?
- A No, I didn't formulate any such policy.
- Q Who did formulate this policy?
- A Nobody formulated the policy.
- Q Have you ever heard of a policy issued from the Japanese Navy regarding the security of a Japanese garrison by executing American prisoners if the need arises?
- A I don't remember any such policy.
- Q In the case of the WAKE executions - were these executions approved by higher authority?
- A I received a report about the executions.
- Q Were these executions approved by higher authority? We are not talking about Admiral SAKAIBARA.
- A When I received the report, I thought there was no help for it.
- Q Did you get an acknowledgment of this from TOKYO.
- A No, I received no word from the Navy Ministry.
- Q Were the actions ever approved, to your knowledge, by the Navy Ministry?

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- A I don't know.
- Q Who do you think, in your opinion, ordered Admiral SAKAIBARA to execute these prisoners?
- A I don't believe anybody issued the orders.
- Q Then Admiral SAKAIBARA was acting without orders - is that what you mean?
- A I don't know the circumstances at that time.
- Q Is it the practice of the Japanese Navy for a local commanding officer to execute a great number of prisoners of war on his own initiative.
- A In general, it is not done.
- Q Do you think it is a little out of order for Admiral SAKAIBARA to execute these men on his own initiative?
- A Under those circumstances I suppose he reached a decision under his own initiative.
- Q Generally though, that wouldn't be the practice, to execute that great number of prisoners by a local commander on his own initiative?
- A Unless there was some special circumstances to make it necessary.
- Q But it is a general policy that the local commander may execute in view of special circumstances, such as an invasion - is that the policy of the Japanese Navy?
- A I believe that under the circumstances in the case of WAKE, Admiral SAKAIBARA was forced by circumstances to reach the decision that he did.
- Q Then he is within the Japanese policy in doing this thing at WAKE?
- A Admiral SAKAIBARA was, I believe, forced to execute the prisoners because of their riotous conduct and he had estimated that the Americans would make a landing on the island.
- Q Is it not within the bounds of Japanese Naval practice to, if the special circumstances warrant, execute American prisoners of war, as for example, when an invasion is impending?

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A The policy is not like that.

Q What is the policy? When is a Japanese Commander justified to execute prisoners of war within his power?

A Execution is not approved under any circumstances.

Q Now you just got through telling us that you thought Admiral SAKAIBARA was justified in executing these prisoners.

A Since it was after the event, we received no reply higher up indicating whether it was approved or disapproved or whether it was thought bad or good.

Q Have you heard of any executions in the MARSHALLS or TRUK, outside of MAKI?

A I don't remember of hearing of any.

Q We have witnesses that a Navy Unit on KWAJALEIN beheaded nine (9) American flyers early in 1943 or about that time. If you persist in telling, what to us is apparently a lie we will have to charge you with perjury. It is not common sense that nine (9) prisoners of war could be executed on an island so small as KWAJALEIN without the knowledge of the Commanding Officer. Now either tell us the truth, or commit the crime of perjury.

A I know what you are talking about. I don't think they were flyers.

Q Just tell us the circumstances of what you know about the executions.

A They were prisoners taken in the MAKIN battle.

Q American prisoners?

A I believe they were.

Q Continue with the story.

A These prisoners were sent up to KWAJALEIN from MAKIN and originally I intended to ship them back to JAPAN. I intended to put them on a ship and send them back to JAPAN but the Navy Ministry informed me that they could not divert a ship to KWAJALEIN. The ship was a destroyer. I was intending to ship them back to JAPAN and a while passed and then a staff officer from the General Staff in TOKYO came down to KWAJALEIN and said I was not to ship the prisoners back to Japan, but to dispose of them on the spot.

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This being the case, in accordance with Navy policy, I disposed of the prisoners there.

Q In accordance with the Navy policy brought down by the Navy staff officer - is that what you mean by policy?

A The staff member did not bring back orders and he did not order me to carry out the execution on the spot, but he expressed the opinion which I took to be the Navy policy that that would be the thing to do and I agreed.

Q Who was this staff officer?

A Lieutenant Commander OKADA Sadatomo. From my present view point, I cannot definitely say whether the personal opinion expressed by Lieutenant Commander OKADA was the policy of the Navy, but at the time I believed that it was the policy of the Navy and that is why I did it.

Q Give us the general details of the execution - where they were killed and how many.

A As for the actual killing, I issued orders for that to the Guard Unit Commander.

Q Who was he?

A Captain OFARA.

Q Give all the details you know - what happened?

A I don't remember exactly how many there were.

Q Approximately how many?

A Seven (7) or eight (8) I think.

Q Do you recognize any of these men? (AEE was shown a picture of nine (9) Americans in a group).

A I don't recognize any of them.

Q What method of execution did you order the Guard Unit to use?

A I didn't specify the means of execution when I issued the order to the Guard Unit.

Q What kind did they use? Was it shooting, beheading, or what?

A I am not sure.

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Q What is your opinion of how they were killed?

A I believe they were beheaded.

Q What was that date?

A About October of 1942.

Q How about the execution in January of 1943?

A There was no execution then.

Q Were there any other executions on KWAJALEIN during the time you were there?

A No.

Q Who was Captain OBARA's executive officer?

A I don't remember.

Q What was his rank?

A Around a Lieutenant Commander, but I am not sure.

Q Can you give us the names of any other officers in the Navy Guard Unit?

A No.

Q What was the number of this Guard Unit?

A 61st Navy Guard Unit.

Q Again, who was your senior staff officer at this time - what was his name?

A HAYASHI.

Q Did you pass this order to HAYASHI with instructions to pass it on to the commanding officer of the Navy Guard Unit?

A I don't remember.

Q Would it ordinarily be the practice to pass it through your Chief of Staff with instructions to pass it on, or to give it directly?

A As a rule, orders would be passed by way of the senior staff officer.

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Q Did you hear of any executions in any other MARSHALL Islands while you were there?

A Aside from WAKE, I have no recollection of any others.

Q In view of what you said about the representative from the General Staff, do you not think it possible that Admiral SAKAIBARA had word from higher authority to execute the Americans on WAKE?

A Since I certainly did not know of the incident before it took place, I am sure that Admiral SAKAIBARA did not receive authority from higher officials.

Q Did you report to TOKYO that you had carried out the execution of these eight (8) Americans from MAKIN?

A My staff officer made an oral report to the staff officer of the 4th Fleet at TRUK.

Q Was it forwarded to TOKYO?

A I don't know.

Q Before you executed these Americans, after you had been told by the General Staff Officer that the policy was to execute them on the island and not bring them back to JAPAN, did you check with your superior to justify this policy?

A No, I didn't.

Q You just took the word of this Lieutenant Commander - right?

A There was also a staff officer from the 4th Fleet present, and he said the same thing.

Q And who was he?

A I am not sure, but I believe it was a Lieutenant Commander by the name of IIDA.

APE Koso

s/E.L. Field, Lt., USNR
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I, ABE, Koso, being duly sworn on oath, state that I have had read to me and understood the translation of the foregoing transcription of my interrogation and all answers contained therein, consisting of fourteen (14) pages, are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

ABE Koso

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 5th day of March 1946.

WILLIAM P. MAHONEY, Lieut.
154233, U.S.N.R.
War Crimes Officer

COMMANDER NAVAL ACTIVITIES JAPAN) ss
TOKYO, JAPAN)

I, _____, being duly sworn on oath, state that I truly translated the questions and answers given from English to Japanese and from Japanese to English respectively, and that after being transcribed, I truly translated the foregoing interrogation, containing fourteen (14) pages to the witness: that the witness thereupon in my presence affixed his signature (name or mark) thereto.

DAVID L. OSBORN, Lieut. USNR.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 5th day of March 1946.

WILLIAM P. MAHONEY, Lieut.
154233, U.S. N.R.
War Crimes Officer

COMMANDER NAVAL ACTIVITIES JAPAN) ss
TOKYO, JAPAN)

I, WILLIAM P. MAHONEY, LIEUTENANT, 154233, USNR certify that on the 2nd day of March 1946 personally appeared before me ABE Koso, and according to David L. Osborn gave the foregoing answers to the questions set forth therein; that after his testimony had been transcribed, the said ABE Koso had read to him by the said interpreter the same and affixed his signature (name or mark) thereto in my presence.

s/E.L.Field, Lt, USNR
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WILLIAM P. MAHONEY, Lieut.
154233, U.S.N.R.
War Crimes Officer