

WAR DEPARTMENT

Exhibit # 34

File # 106

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(PMGQ)

Transcript of original notes
taken by Captain Robinson U.S.N.R.
in the interrogation of Captain
Minor Genda

INTERROGATION OF
CAPTAIN MINOUR GENDA
IJN

DATE AND TIME: 28 November, 1945, 1000-1130.

PLACE : 304 N.Y.K. Building, Tokyo, Japan

PRESENT : Captain J. J. Robinson, USNR, Interrogator
Captain Peyton Harrison, USN, Interrogator (part time)
Douglas T. Wada, Interpreter
Captain Minoru Genda

PRESENT ADDRESS: Hyogo Ken, Nishinoniuja, Dango, Aza Hirabayoshi, c/o Yae Sano.

HOME ADDRESS : Hiroshima Ken, Yamagata Gun, Kake-machi,
After December, at Naval War College, Tokyo.

PERSONAL HISTORY

Born in August, 1904.
1924 Graduated Naval Academy.
1924 - '28 General sea duty.
1925 Visited USA as midshipman on training ship, Izumo, commanded by Captain Shigeoka. Called at Hilo, Acapulco, Balboa, Manzonias, San Francisco, Victoria, Vancouver, Honolulu, South Sea Islands.
1928 Traveled on Izumo as Lt. (jg). Called at Shanghai, Keelung, Hongkong, Singapore, Batavia, Freemantle, Adelaide, Melbourne, Hobart, Sidney, Wellington, Auckland, Suva, Honolulu, South Sea Islands.
1929 - '30 Yokosuka Air Force.
February 1930 - November 1930 - Carrier Akagi.
November 1930 - March 1931 - Returned to Yokosuka Air Force and learned air fighting tactics under RAF Squadron Leader Chappel and Flight Lt. Wingate. 4 Mos.
March 1931 - November 1932 - Instructor at Kasumigaura Pilot School.
December 1932 - June 1933 - Instructor at Yokosuka Air Force in fighter training.
June 1933 - September 1933 - Duty aboard carrier Ryujo.
September 1933 - October 1933 - Instructor at Yokosuka.
November 1933 - November 1934 - Returned to Ryujo.
November 1934 - November 1935 - Instructor at Yokosuka.
December 1935 - July 1937 - Attended Naval War College.

July 1937 - December 1937 - Staff Officer of China Area Air Force.
January 1938 - November 1938 - Returned to Yokosuka as instructor.
December 1938 - October 1940 - Ass't Naval attache for air in London.
November 1940 - March 1941 - Staff Officer for air, 1st Carrier Division.
April 1941 - June 1942 - 1st Air Fleet, Staff Officer for air.
July 1942 - End of September 1942 - Senior pilot, carrier Zuikaku.
October 1942 - Mid November 1942 - Staff Officer for air, 11th Base
Air Fleet, Rabaul.
November 1942 - Mid January 1945 - Staff Officer for air operations at
Imperial Headquarters.
January 1945 - October 1945 - Commander 343d Naval Air Group.
October 1945 Assigned to Sasebo.

Q. We have heard of "Gendaism." Will you tell us what it is?
A. While at Yokosuka, there were two trains of thought in regard to fighter combat and the use of aircraft carriers. My theory was that maneuverability should be considered first and speed second. The other school contended that speed should be first and maneuverability second. The majority of those at Yokosuka followed me. It was finally proven that I was right in the China battles. However, I changed my mind in regard to it during the middle of the recent war to speed first and maneuverability second.

Q. Why did you reverse your theory?
A. With the advance of science, better planes and weapons were being developed. Another aspect of my theory pertained to the use of aircraft carriers. Prior to November 1940, the theory of the Navy was to use them separately and in dispersed formation. I reached the conclusion that they should be used in groups rather than separately. I derived this idea from a saying of an old Chinese military critic, called "Sun," who lived about 2000 years ago. He said, "Do not place your expectations or hopes on the enemy not daring to invade. Instead be always prepared." My theory was that aircraft carriers, when used separately and individually, were vulnerable to enemy attacks, but if used in groups, they would be able to ward off an attack by their group strength.

Q. Was this the theory you used in the Pearl Harbor Attack?
A. Yes.

Q. What were your duties on Nagumo's staff?
A. I was staff officer in charge of air operations.

Q. Did you leave for Pearl Harbor on 26 November?
A. Yes.

- Q. How were you to receive instructions from the Navy Ministry if the Washington negotiation had been concluded, thus nullifying the necessity to attack?
- A. The message was to be received by wireless.
- Q. How were you to be informed to go ahead as planned?
- A. The message was to be received from Commander-in-Chief Yamamoto of the Combined Fleet. This message was "Niitaka-yama Nobore," ("Climb Mt. Niitake") a code message ordering all forces to attack. This message was received on the 2d or 3d December. I am not certain about the date, but the exact message was in code. It was "Niitaka yama Nobori," followed by another code indicating that X Day was 8 December.
- Q. Where were you when this message was received?
- A. At North Latitude 40 degrees. (Indicated approximate position on map.)
- Q. What was your speed after leaving Etorofu?
- A. About 12 knots.
- Q. How far were you from Etorofu when this message was received?
- A. Our position was from 1500 to 1800 miles from Etorofu.
- Q. What time did you leave on 26 November?
- A. At about 0600.
- Q. Did you proceed on a regular speed?
- A. No. We had to drop our speed down to six knots every day for refueling. This was our greatest problem.
- Q. When it was decided to attack, at what speed did you come in?
- A. We proceeded at 12 knots toward Pearl Harbor until we reached a point True North 700 miles away. After refueling at this point we ordered the tankers to leave and the rest of the ships sped toward Pearl Harbor at 26 knots. In front of our group, we had three submarines to scout our way.
- Q. Could you name the captains of the various ships?
- A. Yes. Akagi was captained by Captain Kiichi Hasegawa. This was the flagship of Admiral Nagumo and I was aboard it. Kaga by Captain Jisaku Okada. Soryu by Captain Pyusaku Yanagimoto. Shokaku by Captain Jojima Hiryu by Captain Tomeo Kaku. I can't recall the Captain of Zuikaku.

- Q. What was the total flying personnel?
A. From 500 to 600.
- Q. How many planes did you lose?
A. 29 planes.
- Q. What was your personnel loss?
A. About 50 or 60.
- Q. How many of the fliers that participated in the attack are still living?
A. Only about 10 percent. The leaders still living are Lts. Sakamoto, Makino, Nikaida and perhaps Ichihara.
- Q. After the "Niitaka" dispatch, did you receive any others from Admiral Yamamoto?
A. I think no other dispatch was received.
- Q. Then, how did you know what was in Pearl Harbor?
A. We received all that type of information from the Imperial Headquarters.
- Q. How did you receive it?
A. We had been receiving a monthly report in regard to the location of the United States Fleet. The last one was received about 3 or 4 days before the attack. It told us how many ships were in each area and from the customary practice of the United States Navy, we knew exactly where the battleships were berthed.
- Q. Did you intercept any message from the United States?
A. We listened to the radio broadcast of Honolulu stations.
- Q. Did you hear of any news pertaining to the Washington negotiations? Whether they had ended in a failure or not?
A. I did not listen to the radio, but they got information to the effect that there was no hope for the negotiation being brought to a satisfactory conclusion and that the situation was becoming tenser.
- Q. What was your purpose in checking the broadcast of these radio stations in Honolulu?
A. We wanted to know how the situation in Honolulu was. Whether it was normal or abnormal. We were able to do this by the tenor of the broadcast.

- Q. Did you hear anything about war being declared?
A. We did not hear anything. In fact, it was not in our mind, as it was something out of our field.
- Q. Did you intercept any of our messages?
A. Yes, from patrol planes.
- Q. Were you able to break our code?
A. No, but we were able to take a radio bearing, which indicated that the patrol planes were all in the southwestern area, leaving the northern area wide open for us.
- Q. Did you see any plane or ship?
A. No.
- Q. What action would you have taken if you had seen one?
A. If we had met one, the three submarines in front, would have seen it first and warned the main group by a weak powered wireless, and the main group would have turned away.
- Q. How far ahead were the submarines?
A. I am not sure, but about 100 miles in front.
- Q. Who planned this course?
A. I did, and it was approved by the higher command.
- Q. How did you come to decide on this course?
A. I took into consideration the weather and the ship lanes. I found out that the weather over that area during that particular time of the year was bad and the sea was foggy and high. Besides, no ship lane crossed it. So the possibility of meeting a ship was slight. But it made refueling very difficult as we refueled every day.
- Q. You did a very good job of planning. Could you show us your return route?
A. (Traced his course on the map. It went north, then northwest, then west on about north latitude 42, then south.) At this point, two carriers broke off to attack Midway. (Continued tracing his course. Headed toward the Marshalls, then north to Shikoku and into the Bungo Channel to Kure.)
- Q. How many months did it take you to plan this?
A. It took me three months, from September to November.

- Q. When was this plan first thought of?
- A. It all goes back to February 1941. One day, Admiral Yamamoto had a talk with Admiral Onishi, then commander of the 11th Carrier Division, telling him that if there is going to be a war between Japan and America, Japan has no hope of winning as long as the U S Fleet in the Hawaiian waters is not destroyed. So he told Admiral Onishi to study and draw up a plan. Hence, Admiral Onishi called me and asked if I could formulate a plan. I worked on it that whole month (February) and presented it to Admiral Onishi, who presented it to Admiral Yamamoto for approval.
- Q. What was that plan?
- A. That plan was to find out whether it was possible or impossible to attack Pearl Harbor. And if possible, how it should be carried out. It was changed several times.
- Q. Then, this was the plan that was discussed at the war games held at the War College in September?
- A. Yes.
- Q. How many teams were there? Three?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Could you give us the names of the persons that took part in it?
- A. They were Admirals Yamamoto, Nagumo, Ugaki, Yamagishi, and Kusaka. Captains Onishi and Kuroshima, Comdr. Sasaki, Lt. Comdr. Ono and myself and representatives from the General Staff.
- Q. Who were the representatives?
- A. Admiral Fukudome, Captain Yanagi, Captain Tomioka and Comdr. Miyo.
- Q. Were there any Army representatives?
- A. I don't know whether the Army was informed or not, but at the War College, one room was set aside for this purpose and no one outside of this group was allowed to enter it.
- Q. Now, in executing the plan, what precaution did you take?
- A. I knew that the American Fleet was in the Hawaiian waters, but I was worried as to whether a part of the fleet was at Lahaina Roads. So the day before the attack, we dispatched a submarine to Lahaina and got word that the fleet was not there. So I figured that the fleet must be in Pearl Harbor with at least five battleships. I believe we received a message on the count of ships, but I got the number after the attack.

- Q. Was the element of surprise considered to be vital to the success of the attack?
- A. In warfare, the element of surprise, of course, is necessary. Hence, the ideal time to attack is when foe is not ready. Therefore, to plan it that way is a matter of common sense. But Admiral Yamamoto warned us never to do anything rash (unfair.)
- Q. Did you plan on starting the attack before the American Navy was warned of the attack and placed on alert?
- A. (Wanted this question explained. He stated he understood that before we fight a person we tell him we are going to fight him, but to punch a person from behind when he is not looking would be unfair).
- Q. Do you consider the Pearl Harbor attack to be wrong?
- A. I believe it was not wrong. I thought that the declaration of war had been made.
- Q. Since declaration of war was not made, do you consider the attack to be unfair?
- A. The Pearl Harbor attack was planned with the element of surprise taken into consideration, but we thought war would be declared first, about an hour or an hour and a half before the attack.
- Q. Then, in working the plan, you took into consideration the element of surprise, didn't you?
- A. In forming my plan, I took into consideration the element of surprise, but we were prepared to force the attack if the American Navy had been prepared. So in our training, I primarily stressed fighter combat training and we were confident of being able to take on three times our strength.
- Q. Did you receive any other message indicating whether the American Navy was prepared between 2 or 3 December to 8 December?
- A. I can't recall receiving any and I believe we received no message. We listened to the radio broadcast from Hawaii to find out the situation in Hawaii.
- Q. What was the nature of the broadcast?
- A. I did not listen to it. It was done by a section set up for the purpose of intercepting messages and was headed by Comdr. Ono, who was killed on Saipan.
- Q. Did you have any equipment aboard the flagship to intercept trans-Pacific telephone calls?
- A. No.

- Q. From whom did you get the message regarding the number of ships in Pearl Harbor?
- A. From the Imperial Headquarters.
- Q. What do you mean by the Imperial Headquarters?
- A. Navy General Staff.
- Q. How did they get their information?
- A. I am not familiar with that aspect.
- Q. Since you drew the plans for the attack, how were you going to carry it out without any information?
- A. I had two plans. One was to send all 80 and some odd fighters we had, if United States was prepared. This was to wipe away all opposition before the other types of planes took off. The other was to send them up in two waves. In the second plan, the first attack was to be made by torpedo planes, horizontal bombers and dive bombers. The strafing of the airfield was to be done after this, because if they were strafed first, the smoke resulting from it would cover up the location of the ships in Pearl Harbor and hinder the task of the torpedo planes, horizontal bombers and dive bombers. After that, Hickam, Wheeler and Ford Island were to be attacked simultaneously.
- Q. Where did the planes that hit Kaneohe come from?
- A. From the Wheeler Field group.
- Q. When you received orders to make war preparations, did it state for early September?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Did you receive it before you left Etorofu?
- A. No. When the order to make war preparations was received, the Akagi and Kaga went to Sasebo for minor repairs and the Shokaku and the rest put in at Kure. This preparation took from 8 November to 12 November.
- Q. Did it state that X Day would be 8 December?
- A. As far as I can recall, no specific date was set in the order other than the fact that it was to be in early December. However, I seem to remember hearing a rumor or it may have been in the order that X Day would be about 8 December.
- Q. Did the Niitaka message include the date December 8?
- A. Yes. It came in code after the phrase "Niitaka Yama Nobore."

Q. Did you receive other code messages?

A. Yes.

Q. Did any of them pertain to the information on the warships in Pearl Harbor?

A. I can't recall it.

Q. Did you see Admiral Yamamoto after the attack?

A. Yes.

Q. What did you say to him?

A. I had returned to Kure from Tokyo, where I had flown to deliver pictures of Pearl Harbor attack. Admiral Yamamoto called in all the air officers to commend them "well done." I was presented to him, but Admiral Nagumo did all the talking.

Q. Did all the six carriers launch their planes?

A. Yes. We left only 30 for defense. In all there were 350 planes in the air -- 81 fighters, 145 dive bombers, 104 horizontal bombers and 40 torpedo planes.

I, Douglas T. Wada, Senior Translator, 14th Naval District, hereby certify that I acted as interpreter at the interview set out above, that I truly interpreted and translated the English questions into Japanese and the replies thereto from Japanese into English, and that the English translation of the answers set out above are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

WITNESS:

C. J. Robinson
C. J. ROBINSON
CAPTAIN, U.S.N.R.

Douglas T. Wada
DOUGLAS T. WADA
SENIOR TRANSLATOR
14TH NAVAL DISTRICT