

No. 3103

Lth. No. 3103

Defense Document No. 2171

INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL FOR THE FAR EAST

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, et al

- VS -

ARAKI, Sadao, et al

Sworn Deposition

Deponent: Yasuji WATANABE

Having first duly sworn an oath as shown on attached sheet and in accordance with the procedure followed in my country I hereby depose as follows:

My name is Yasuji WATANABE. I was formerly a captain in the Japanese Navy. From June 1943 until April 1945 I was assigned to the Navy Ministry, Naval Affairs Bureau, and from May 1945 until the termination of the war I was assigned to the Maritime Supervision Board. My duties chiefly encompassed matters concerning the schedule of merchant shipping.

1. At the outbreak of war Japan possessed approximately 6,300,000 tons of merchant ships. This calculation is based on vessels of 100 tons or more in capacity. Largely because of the action of United States submarines against Japanese shipping, in August 1945 this tonnage was reduced to approximately 1,500,000 tons. Since this figure included grounded ships, those requiring repairs and others not capable of immediate sea duty, only 500,000 tons could actually be operated in homeland waters.

2. Ships sunk or damaged by United States submarine activity, aircraft and mines amounted to approximately 1,100,000 tons in 1942, 2,100,000 tons in 1943, 4,100,000 in 1944 and 1,500,000 in 1945 until the end of hostilities. This was a total of approximately 8,800,000 tons.

In spite of a 4,000,000 ton increase in merchant vessel construction, captured ships, etc., there was a great decrease in over-all total tonnage as shown in Annexed Document Number One. The ships newly constructed were inferior in structure and slow in speed thereby hampering the efficiency of the transportation.

3. The commodities carried by these merchant ships varied from time to time, but consisted largely in foodstuffs and those products needed for the war effort. There were service vessels, which consisted of those requisitioned by the military, and civilian vessels, operated without the direct supervision of the military. The service vessels largely confined their activities to the South Seas Area, Malaya and Netherlands Indies, while the civilian vessels ran between China, Manchuria and Japan together with some in the Malayan, French Indo-China and Philippine Areas. The merchant traffic consisted of coal, petroleum, grain, iron ore, bauxite, lumber, cement, salt, etc.

4. In order to remedy the situation caused by heavy shipping losses, General Headquarters set up a revised and strengthened convoy escort. But due to lack of necessary escort warships the plan was not effective and a priority was given to the escorting of those convoys carrying petroleum and bauxite. The importation of iron ore from Hainan Island had to be ceased together with the importation of food stuffs from French Indo China. Then in June 1944 after United States troops landed on Saipan the maintenance of the southern sea routes became most difficult. A Maritime Commission composed of military and civilian representatives was set up to seek a solution to the dangerous problem then facing us. The losses had resulted in a miserable condition reflecting heavily on the people's livelihood. Shortages of fertilizer caused a decrease in the harvest of grain and an accompanying 10% cut down in distribution of staple foodstuffs.

Hence the food supply of Japan decreased and the supply of our armed forces overseas likewise became a serious problem. I am able to give the percentage of decrease of supplies to our forces overseas if the Tribunal desires it and have not done so here in order to save time.

5. In 1945 the transportation districts were limited to Manchuria, Korea and Northern China. In addition to enemy submarine activity our loss of merchant shipping became even more acute due to mine laying operations by B-29's. Sea routes were practically restricted

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to Japanese home waters and resort had to railway transportation. In view of the prevailing conditions in May 1945 the Maritime Service Supervision Board was set up as an over-all organ to supervise military and civilian water transport but it was too late to do much with the situation since the transportation capacity had been reduced 75% since the outbreak of war. Circumstances of that time are explained in Annexed Document Number Two which shows the amount and kind of cargo carried among the Japanese Islands and to and from Japan proper.

To sum up the whole situation, sea transportation in the latter half of the war was devoted to raw materials for munition industries with a heavy effect upon the people's livelihood. In the final stage of the war, in order to secure a minimum of food commodities to sustain the people, the import of raw materials for war manufactures was almost eliminated. The transportation capacity was then only 21% of the pre-war strength.

On this 29th day of August, 1947
At Tokyo.

DEPONENT: Yasuji WATANABE

I, Yasuji WATANABE, hereby certify that the above statement was sworn by the Deponent, who affixed his signature and seal thereto in the presence of this witness.

On the same date
At the same place.

Witness (signed) AKATANI, Kan (seal)

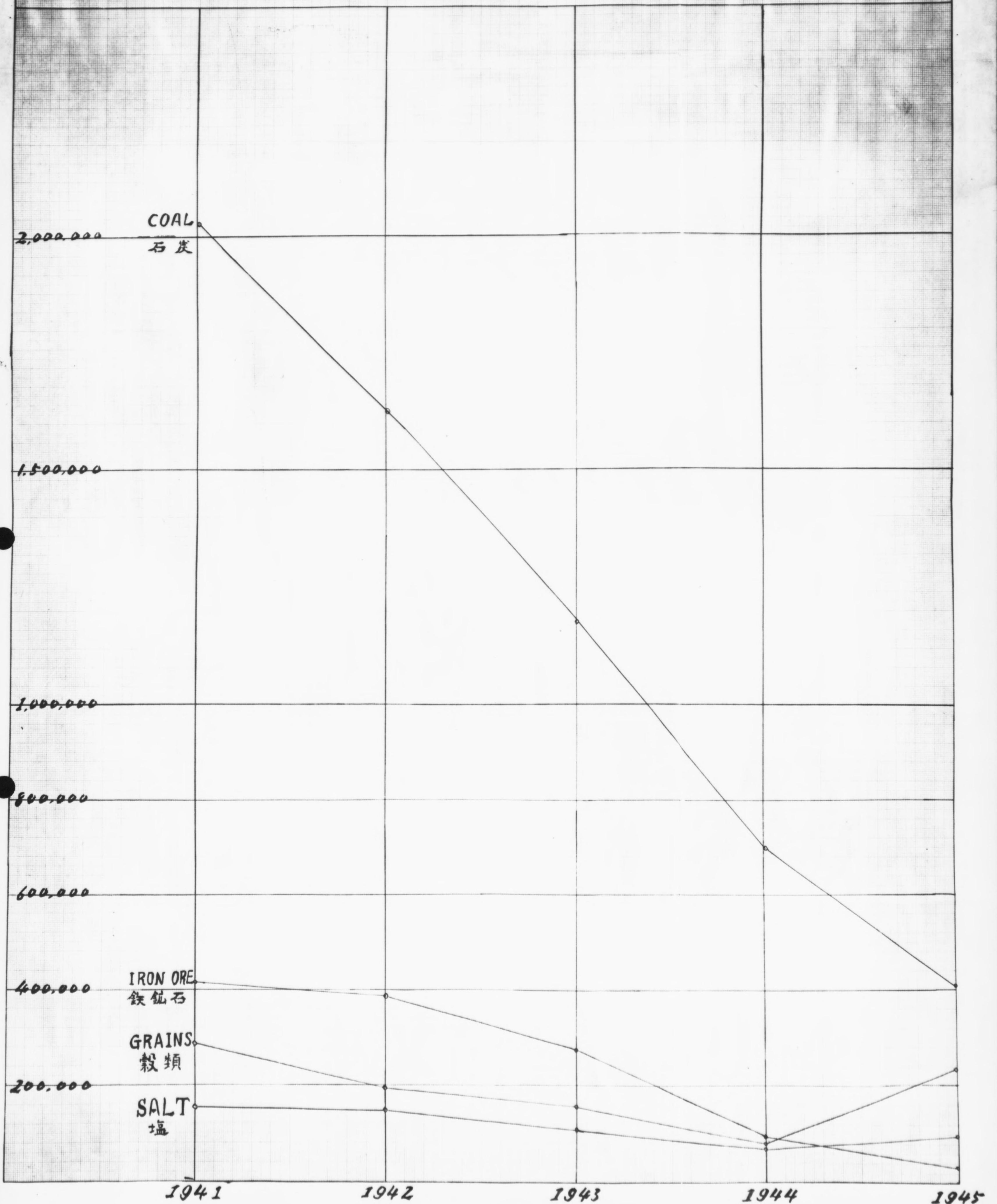
OATH

In accordance with my conscience I swear to tell the whole truth withholding nothing and adding nothing.

Yasuji WATANABE (seal)

AMOUNT OF MATERIAL TRANSPORTED BY SHIP (AVERAGE AMOUNT MONTHLY)

LIST I



AMOUNT OF MATERIAL TRANSPORTED BY SHIP (AVERAGE AMOUNT MONTHLY)

LIST II

