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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
WAR DIVISION
ECONOMIC WARFARE SECTION

REPORT ON
CITY AND ENVIRONS OF TOTTORI, JAPAN

September 3, 1943

Submitted by: Ernest B. Price
Economic Warfare Section
Department of Justice
Denver, Colorado

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War Division
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Washington, D. C.

Confidential Report
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Re: City and Environs of Tottori,
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Submitted by: Ernest B. Price
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CITY AND ENVIRONS OF TOTTORI, JAPAN

What little importance the city of Tottori, capital and largest city of the Prefecture by that name, possesses, derives from the facts that (1) it is one of the few cities even of moderate size on the west coast of Japan, and (2) because of its location on the Sea of Japan facing the Asiatic mainland, it might offer one route for sea-borne invasion from that quarter.

Physical Description

The City of Tottori (estimated population, 1938, 50,400) is situated about three air miles up the Sendai(gawa) River, which flows into the Sea of Japan, and lies upon a narrow but very fertile plain formed by that river. Two branches of the Sendaigawa unite just below the city. The Sendaigawa is shallow and non-navigable except by small boats. The port for Tottori is Karo, at the mouth of the river, but because of river silting it is useable by fishing boats only. There is no good harbor nearer than Sakai, the port for Matsue, 50 air miles to the west, or Tsuruga, 115 air miles to the east. The coastline is low, with a fairly good beach, except that it drops off rather abruptly into deep water.

The region has heavy rainfall in the spring and autumn, and deep snow (as much as five feet) in winter. The best season of the year is summer. Winters are quite cold. The plain in which Tottori city is situated is very fertile, growing wheat enough for local consumption, and an excellent quality of rice, of which there is some export to other parts of Japan. The hillsides grow peaches, melons, and other fruits and vegetables. The nearby mountains are well-wooded, and some lumbering is done. There is considerable fishing along the coast, the catch being entirely consumed locally. Our informant knew of no mining in the vicinity. He believed that the city had no industry of importance.

Communications

Having a poor harbor, Tottori is not a port of call for ocean-going ships. It is served, however, by the San In (so-called "West Coast") Railway, which connects it with Matsue and other points west, and with Toyooka and other cities to the east. From Toyooka another Government railway line runs south to Kyoto. A branch of this line runs from Wadayama to Himeji on the Inland Sea. Two branch lines of the San In run south

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from Tottori; one of these, informant understood had recently been completed to connect with Okayama City via Tsuyama. All these cross-island lines and the San In Railway itself traverse mountainous country and have many tunnels. Informant said that on the route between Tottori and Kyoto, which was the route he took in coming from and returning to America, there were between forty and fifty tunnels. These lines are frequently blocked by landslides in the spring.

Hence, while theoretically an invading force would have the choice of three rail routes to reach the industrial heart of Japan along the Inland Sea, these routes are physically hazardous and could easily be blocked.

Informant said he knew of no vehicular highway passing through or in the neighborhood of Tottori.

Military and other Strategic Installations

Shown on the map of Tottori city which forms Exhibit A of this report is the Tottori "Castle", which in 1940 formed the headquarters for the 40th Regiment (believed to be infantry). Informant did not know of any radio station in the city in 1940. The city had electricity, but informant did not know the source of power. It also had a waterworks system, but informant could not locate it. He did not believe the coast was fortified, and he did not hear of any airfield in the vicinity. In general, he considered the area unprotected.

Source of Information

Mr. Denzo Kawaguchi, born in a village close to the City of Tottori, Japan, in 1885, came to the United States more than twenty years ago, but has made several brief visits to Japan since, the last time in 1939-40. Before evacuation he managed the Corona Hotel, Seattle, Washington. He is currently residing, with his wife and two daughters, in Minidoka Relocation Center, Hunt, Idaho, where he was interviewed August 17, 1943. He has a son, a volunteer, in the United States Army. Though the informant is technically an alien because of his birth in Japan, he has declined to ask for repatriation to Japan.

Exhibit

Map (scale about 1:80,000) of Tottori City, reproduced from the "New Century Atlas of Japan" (14th Edition, 1931).