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HEADQUARTERS
U.S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)
C/O POSTMASTER, SAN FRANCISCO

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS 396)
NAV. NO. 82

PLACE: TOKYO
DATE: 20 November 1945.

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: Movements of Japanese Second Fleet in CENTRAL PACIFIC.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Captain SHIKI, Tsuneo, I.J.N., Senior Staff Officer
of Commander Second Fleet (Rear Admiral KURITA) January 1943 to
August 1944.

Interrogator: Captain Steadman TELLER, U.S.N.

Intrepreter: Lt. Comdr. Seymore (n) MILLSTEIN, USNR.

SUMMARY

Captain SHIKI describes the principal movements of the Second Fleet between 1 November 1943 and 1 March 1944 and lists the damage sustained by units of this fleet on the carrier air strike on RABAU, 5 November 1943.



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TRANSCRIPT

Q. Describe the movement of the Second Fleet and other units from TRUK to RABAU in early November 1943.

A. A cruiser and a destroyer force of the Second and Third Fleets left TRUK on 3 November for RABAU to assist in the defense of BOUGAINVILLE. The force consisted of the Fourth Cruiser Division-- ATAGO(flagship of Vice Admiral KURITA, CinC Second Fleet), TAKAO, MAYA and CHOKAI; the Seventh Cruiser Division--KUMANO(flagship), SUZUYA and MOGAMI; the Eighth Cruiser Division--TONE and CHIKUMA; the Second Destroyer Division--NOSHIRO or JINTSU(flagship) and 4 to 6 destroyers; and the Tenth Destroyer Division--AGANO(flagship) and 4 to 6 destroyers. Enroute to RABAU we received information by radio that a tanker to the northward had been attacked and damaged by a submarine. The cruiser CHOKAI and two destroyers were detached to help this tanker and escorted her back to TRUK.

The force arrived at RABAU shortly after sunrise on 5 November and reported to CinC Southeastern Fleet (Vice Admiral KUSAKA). We immediately commenced preparations for fueling. (At this point in the interrogation Captain OHMAE interjected that "recommendation had been made to avoid RABAU because of frequent enemy air attacks on the port").

Q. Describe the carrier air attack on your force that day.

A. About one hour after arrival at RABAU, the force was taken by surprise by a heavy carrier air attack mostly dive bombing. Fuel lines were cast off and most vessels got underway. During the attack the following damage was done to naval vessels:

ATAGO - 3 near misses by bombs, which caused 18 deaths (including captain) and 20 injured. Some damage to above water portion of hull at the bow. Speed and maneuverability were unimpaired. The casualties were due largely to bomb fragments.

TAKAO - 1 bomb hit alongside #3 turret forward, penetrated two decks and detonated in the third deck; knocked guns of this turret out of commission but did no other serious damage except 3 killed and 14 seriously injured.

MAYA - 1 bomb hit which exploded in the engine room. Fire broke out in engine room and burned until sunset that day.

CHIKUMA - 1 near miss by bomb. No serious damage.

MOGAMI - 1 bomb hit on aircraft stowage deck aft. Fire broke out. 20 casualties.

AGANO - All anti-aircraft guns damaged. 11 casualties. Cause of damage unknown.

JINTSU -
or
NOSHIRO- 1 small bomb hit in boat deck, 14 casualties.

KUMANO - May have received slight damage. Details unknown.

NAGANALI(DD) - Aircraft torpedo hit stern and blew off after 1/3 of ship. Torpedo evidently was intended for a cruiser on her beam. This was only torpedo hit and the only destroyer to suffer significant damage.

The submarine tender CHOGEI was present but was not damaged.

Q. What did you do after this attack?

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TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Captain SHIKI, Tsunoo, I.J.N.) - -

A. During the attack most all of the ships got underway and proceeded out of the harbor to obtain maneuvering room. They all re-entered the harbor about 1400 that day. After the attack a discussion was held. There was some feeling that the undamaged or only lightly damaged ships should take reinforcing troops to BOUGAINVILLE or otherwise assist in repelling the American advance in the SOLOMONS. However, CinC Southeastern Fleet decided that the force should leave 1600 and return to TRUK. After landing the wounded the force finally sailed after sunset and consisted of ATAGO, TAKAO, KUMANO, SUZUYA, TONE, CHIKUMA, MOGAMI and 5 or 6 destroyers. This force arrived at TRUK on 7 November. The damaged MAYA was left at RABAU for temporary repairs. She later returned to TRUK also. The NOSHIRO or JINTSU and about 5 destroyers remained to reinforce the Southeastern Fleet.

The force arrived at TRUK on 7 November and between 9 and 15 November the damaged ATAGO, TAKAO, TONE and MOGAMI left TRUK for repairs in JAPAN. The AGANO and NAGANAMI remained about one month making temporary repairs then also left for JAPAN. The MAYA left TRUK for JAPAN late January 1944. Admiral KURITA shifted his flag to the CHOKAI.

Q. What other movements did the Second Fleet make in the CENTRAL PACIFIC?

A. A training cruise was made to ENIWETOK in mid October 1943. On 21 November 1943 a force consisting of the Fourth Division - CHOKAI (flag of Second Fleet), the Seventh Cruiser Division - probably SUZUYA, the Eighth Cruiser Division - CHIKUMA and several destroyers left TRUK for KWAJALEIN. It was our purpose to assist in repelling your invasion of the GILBERTS by attacking a portion of your fleet if our air squadrons had successfully beaten off your air force and to bombard your positions in the GILBERTS if possible. We arrived at KWAJALEIN on 24 November. There I saw the ISUZU and NAKA with troops on board. Because KWAJALEIN was considered within range of your air attack our force left that atoll on 25 November and arrived ENIWETOK on the 20th. We took on fuel and departed on the 28th for KWAJALEIN arriving there 30 November. By that time it was not practicable for us to attack your fleet because of your air superiority and the lack of air cover for our force. Furthermore, we saw a carrier plane approaching one of the nearby islands and assumed there would be an air attack on KWAJALEIN soon. So we left that port on 2 December for TRUK where we arrived the night of 7 December 1943. There were no other significant movements of the fleet until we left for PALAU on 10 February.

Q. When did the Second and Third Fleets leave PALAU and change their base?

A. All of the Second and Third Fleet units, including Admiral KOGA'S flagship, left the evening of 28 March 1944 before your carrier strike on RABAU the 29th. These ships proceeded to LINGGA Anchorage. Admiral KOGA remained at his shore headquarters at PALAU and flew out in a plane after the carrier strike.

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