

HEADQUARTERS
U.S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)
APO 234
c/o POSTMASTER, SAN FRANCISCO

INTERROGATION NO. 6
(Obtain from G-2)

PLACE Tokyo
DATE 6 Oct 45 TIME

DIVISION OF ORIGIN: Naval Analysis

SUBJECT: Battle of Midway.

Personnel interrogated and background of each.

Captain TAKAHISA AMAGAI, IJN, Naval Aviator, Air Group Commander (observer) on CV HIRYU at PEARL HARBOR, Air Officer on CV KAGA at Battle of Midway, 3, 4, 5 June 42, subsequently at Naval Air Headquarters in Training Bureau.

Where interviewed (office)

Interrogator: Captain C. Shands, USN.

Interpreter:

Allied Officers Present: Captain S. Teller, USN
Captain C. Shands, USN
Captain J.S. Russel, USN
Lt Col Parry, USA
Comdr J.T. Hayward, USN
Comdr T.H. Moorer, USN
Lt. Comdr J.A. Field, Jr, USNR.

Summary:

The KAGA (CV) in company with the CV's HIRYU, SORUYU and AKAGI, and BB's HIRISHIMA and HYEI and DD's composed the Air Striking Force approaching MIDWAY ISLAND from the West in support of an occupation force. This force had expected contact and attack by long range United States aircraft when between 500-1000 miles of MIDWAY and attack by short range aircraft from MIDWAY when within 300 miles. Although it was reported a plane was heard over the formation during the night of 2 June, no attacks were made on the Carrier Force prior to the Dive Bombing attack the morning of 4 June. The presence of the United States Carrier was not known to this officer. Dive bombing attacks were most feared.

Several hours after sunrise on 4 June (Plus 12) Dive Bombers attacked the Japanese Carrier Group. Four direct hits were received by the KAGA from the Dive Bombers just prior to turning into the wind to launch the KAGA's air group (6 VF had been launched two hours before as CAP). The fires as a result of the attack ignited planes and ammunition which resulted in the sinking of the KAGA during the afternoon with the loss of 800, saving 1000 personnel. No other bomb hits were made on the KAGA although one submarine torpedo was seen to ricochet from the side. No horizontal bomb hits were received or observed on other ships of the formation, although he thought that the HYEI (BB) just astern of the KAGA had also been hit by Dive Bombers. Due to the smoke from the KAGA he was unable to verify HYEI damage. Captain Amagai stated that as a result of the damage to the aircraft carriers with consequent loss of air power, the decision was made to abandon the attempt to seize MIDWAY. The remainder of the Task Force returned to JAPAN.

INTERROGATION

- Q. Give a brief resume of his duty and ships from 1941 to the present time.
- A. He was Commander of the Air Force on the HIRYU from 7 December 1941 to about the middle of April 1942. From April 1942 to 5 June 1942, he was Air Officer on the KAGA.
- Q. What duty has the Captain been assigned since 5 June 42?
- A. Naval Air Headquarters.
- Q. What did he do there?
- A. For three years he has been in charge of general flight deck installations, arresting gear, lighting and barriers. During the last year he has worked for the Navy Training Bureau.
- Q. Was he training Aviation Personnel there?
- A. Yes, in mechanics, and navigation. Everything except operations.
- Q. Who was head of the Training Program?
- A. Chief of Training, Kazaka. He had been demobilized on the 15th.
- Q. Is Captain Amagai a pilot?
- A. He was a pilot about ten years ago, since then hasn't done any. He has about 2500 hours flying time. He is now a deck officer.
- Q. What was Captain Amagai's rank when Air Officer on KAGA?
- A. He was a Commander then, He is Captain now.
- Q. Who was Captain of the KAGA?
- A. Captain Okada. He was killed at MIDWAY.
- Q. Who was Captain of AKAGI?
- A. Captain Aoki. He now lives in TOKYO.
- Q. Can you reach Captain Aoki for an interview?
- A. Willytry.
- Q. What other aircraft carriers were at MIDWAY and who were the Commanding Officers?
- A. HIRYU - Captain Kaka.
SORYU - Captain Yanagimoto.
- Both ships sunk, both Captains killed.
- Q. Do you know of any surviving officers of the other carriers?
- A. Captain Kawaguchi, IJN. He was the Air Officer on the HIRYU.

- Q. What aircraft carrier divisions were present at MIDWAY?
- A. The Third Fleet or Third Task Force.
- Q. What was the Admiral's name?
- A. Vice Admiral Nagumo, Task Force Commander, Rear Admiral Kusaka, Chief of Staff. The Air Fighting Group was the name of the Task Force.
- Q. Were there any other forces such as Support Force or Occupation Force?
- A. He thinks there were two other forces for occupation, but not sure of composition or relative location.
- Q. Do you know what Force made simultaneous attack in ALEUTIANS?
- A. JUNYO Air Craft Carrier. No. 4 Squadron.
- Q. What was purpose of ALEUTIAN attack?
- A. It was a feint.
- Q. Did the loss of carriers at MIDWAY affect future Japanese plans?
- A. Does not know, only high officers knew plans.
- Q. Draw a diagram of the cruising disposition of the Aircraft Carriers.
- A. (Refer to Chart No. 1).
- In daytime a circular formation was used, but at night a column was formed. He believes the Task Force Commander was on the SORYU.
- Q. What was the number of the Air Group on the KAGA?
- A. The Air Group did not have a name or number.
- Q. What was its composition?
- A. It was composed of 21 fighters (O) type; 27 VB (99 type); 18 VT (97 type).
- Q. Was this the same of the other ships?
- A. Same.
- Q. What was the mission of the Carrier Task Group?
- A. To attack MIDWAY, to help occupation.
- Q. Why didn't the occupation force continue on to MIDWAY?
- A. He has heard later that the Commander of the Fleet had ordered all ships to return because of loss of air power after all Aircraft Carriers were sunk.
- Q. During your approach to MIDWAY did you expect to be attacked by American planes.
- A. They had expected an attack of scouting planes at 1000 miles, and by bombing planes at 700 miles and by small planes at 300 miles.

- Q. Did you see any planes during the approach to MIDWAY prior to the battle on 4 June?
- A. No, but it was reported that an American plane was heard over the carrier formation at night one or two days before the battle.
- Q. Was the carrier formation attacked by long range bombers about 600 miles from MIDWAY?
- A. No.
- Q. Were any air attacks made on the carrier force prior to the day of the battle (4 June plus 12, 5 June TOKYO time)?
- A. No.
- Q. Were any submarine attacks made on the carrier force during the approach?
- A. No.
- Q. When was the KAGA first hit?
- A. It was hit by dive bombers two or three hours after sunrise, 4 June. (5 June TOKYO time). Of course, watch was damaged and useless so can't say perfect time.
- Q. What size bombs hit the KAGA?
- A. He was not able to see, but judging from fire and smoke they were 250 or 500 kilos.
- Q. Does he know if any 100# bombs hit?
- A. Wasn't able to see because of the smoke.
- Q. How many bombs hit the KAGA?
- A. There were four hits on the KAGA. The first bomb hit the forward elevator. The second bomb went through the deck at the starboard side of the after elevator. The third bomb went through the deck on the port side abreast of the island. The fourth bomb hit the port side aft. When the bombs hit, big fires started. Unable to see much because of smoke.
- Q. Did any of the American bombers dive into the deck?
- A. No, not on KAGA. Did not hear that any had dived on other carriers.
- Q. Were any other ships hit by bombs at same time?
- A. It was hard to see because of smoke, but he believes that the Battleship HYEI just astern of the KAGA was hit by dive bombers and a fire started on the stern of the HYEI.
- Q. Was the KAGA attacked by Horizontal Bombers?
- A. No.
- Q. Was the KAGA attacked by torpedo planes?

- A. He saw torpedo planes but does not think KAGA was attacked. No torpedo hits were made. However, while swimming in water several hours after attack saw a torpedo apparently fired from submarine strike side of ship at angle and bounce off. Didn't explode. Torpedo went bad.
- Q. Were any other ships attacked by Horizontal Bombers?
- A. Did not see any hit. Saw some pattern of bombs fall in water during day.
- Q. Which type of attack most feared, Torpedo Plane, Dive Bomber, or Horizontal Bomber?
- A. Dive Bomber, cannot dodge.
- Q. Were planes on board when ship was hit?
- A. Yes, about 30 planes in hangar loaded and fueled, remainder on deck, six VF in air.
- Q. Did bombs sink the ship?
- A. Yes. Gasoline and bombs caught fire. Ship sank itself, Japanese no need sink with torpedo.
- Q. Was KAGA strafed by planes?
- A. Was done during diving, one or two personnel and planes on deck were injured.
- Q. When did it sink?
- A. Same afternoon.
- Q. What kind of planes made the attack, Torpedo Planes, Dive Bombers or Horizontal Bombers?
- A. Dive Bombers.
- Q. In what order was attack made?
- A. He thinks first high Horizontal Bombers, no hits. Then Torpedo attack. Was dodged, no hits. Then Dive Bombers, 4 hits. Then more horizontal bombing about 400 meters away. No hits. Most attack all at same time.
- Q. How many personnel lost when ship sunk?
- A. About 800 lost. About 1000 saved.
- Q. How many pilots saved?
- A. About 40 pilots. About 50% pilots saved.
- Q. How were the personnel rescued?
- A. By cruisers and destroyers.
- Q. How many airplanes did you expect to lose in the attack on MIDWAY?
- A. It all depends upon Captain of ship. He expects about 1/3 do not come back.
- Q. Were any KAGA planes launched to attack MIDWAY?

- A. No, all planes on board except six fighters overhead. He has heard that they landed on other ships. Other ships had launched planes to attack MIDWAY but KAGA planes were waiting for orders to launch and attack.
- Q. How many protective fighters (CAP) were over carrier formation?
- A. Normally 28. Two carriers supplied eight each, the other two carriers provided six each. This was normal patrol. If attacked, other planes rose to meet opposition.
- Q. How long did fighters stay in air?
- A. Two hours.
- Q. How were the planes in air relieved?
- A. When the waiting planes get in air up high, then the former patrolling plane comes down and lands.
- Q. When the carrier launched the patrol did it turn into the wind alone, or did all ships turn?
- A. All turn in same formation. They use 14 meters wind over deck for landing and launching. If only few planes launched individual carrier turns into wind. If many planes launched or landed entire formation turns. When over 300 miles from target, carriers operate independently. When within 300 miles of target, all ships maneuver together.
- Q. About how far apart were the ships in the formation?
- A. A square formation about 4000 meters apart. When need much speed and wind, distance large. When wind and sea strong, the distance diminishes.
- Q. Did the formation zigzag?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Were destroyers employed with the carriers when operating the planes?
- A. Yes, sometimes one, sometimes two destroyers would come from outside circular screen. They take station about 700 meters astern.
- Q. How are fighter planes controlled in the air?
- A. By wireless, A special officer controls the planes. He is a pilot, in his absence the anti-aircraft commander takes his place.
- Q. How did the control officer know where to send the fighters?
- A. By radar. It was an experiment at MIDWAY. Not too good.
- Q. Did the KAGA have it?
- A. No, island too small.
- Q. What ships in the formation had radar?

A. HIRYU, maybe SORUYU. Not sure of AKAGI, it is rather old ship. (JUNYO did not have it because it was a small converted merchant ship.)

Q. What did the radar look like?

A. It was a big wire grid. Kept rotating. Didn't work very well. Destroyers act as pickets and advise by voice radio if planes are coming. More radars put on ships middle of 1942 and used in SOLOMON ISLANDS operations.

Q. Where was it used in the SOLOMONS?

A. On ships. Does not know exactly. Was not there, only heard.