

HEADQUARTERS
U.S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)

RESTRICTED

INTERROGATION NO. 405

Place: Tokyo
Date: 23 Nov 1945

Division of Origin: Military Analysis Division

Subject: NO. 61 AND NO. 1 NAVAL AIR DEPOTS (TAKAO AND KASUMIGAURA)

Personnel Interrogated and Background of Each: CAPTAIN HOJO, Gengo, IJN

Graduated Naval Academy 1921; various sea assignments; Technical Department, General Affairs Section, Air Headquarters, 1939-42; Staff Officer, Airplane Section, No. 2 Naval Air Depot, Kisarazu, 1942-43; Chief of Airplane Section, No. 61 Air Depot, Takao, Sept 1943 to March 1945; Naval Air Inspector, Osaka area, March to July 1945; Commanding Officer, No. 1 Naval Air Depot, Kasumigaura, July 1945 to present.

Where Interviewed: Meiji Building

Interrogator: Captain Haskins

Interpreter: Lt Comdr Nichols

Allied Officers Present: Captain Logan, Lt Palfrey

SUMMARY

A discussion was held concerning the maintenance problems at the Naval Air Depots and in the field.

RESTRICTED



Q. What were your responsibilities at the 61st Naval Air Depot (Takao)?

A. I was responsible for speeding up repairs and for determining repair priorities.

Q. Was this a recently created post, or was it a normal position at all Air Depots?

A. This was a normal position.

Q. What determined these repair priorities?

A. Operational requirements.

Q. For what units did you perform repairs?

A. Naval units on Formosa.

Q. What repairs were done by the units themselves?

A. Minor repairs, including engine changes. Units could not, however, overhaul an engine.

Q. Did you ever process new aircraft?

A. No, we did merely repair work.

Q. About how many major repair jobs did you handle a month?

A. About 30 to 40.

Q. Were you equipped to do all kinds of repairs?

A. Yes, but I think that the most fundamental repairs took longer than they did at Depots in Japan.

Q. Was there a shortage of maintenance personnel?

A. No. We were supplied with civilians in Navy employ.

Q. Was there any shortage of parts?

A. There was a great shortage. I think the principal reason was lack of transportation rather than of production.

Q. To what extent were spare parts flown in by air?

A. Not over 10% came by air.

Q. What was your greatest shortage?

A. Landing gear.

Q. In your opinion, what was the reason for low serviceability rates in the operating units despite the elaborate structure of Air Depots and Field Air Depots throughout the theater?

A. Principally because operations were conducted over such a wide area that repair facilities were widely scattered and lines of communication were too long. The field repair shops carried only light mobile equipment and had too few spare parts to fulfill their functions. All they could do was a few simple repairs.

Q. Were they not able to make engine changes?

A. They could have, but they did not have replacement engines.

- Q. Was the solution for this more field depots or more parts?
- A. Primarily the need was for more parts.
- Q. Do you know if these field depots were short of trained mechanics?
- A. I think they had enough for normal demands only.
- Q. Was there any schedule for the overhaul of aircraft after a certain number of hours?
- A. No, in general they were not overhauled until they broke down. Usually they had to be overhauled after 300 hours. No planes were ever scrapped as war-weary on a pure time basis; if they could possibly be made to fly, they would continue in service.
- Q. To what extent were activities at the Takao Depot affected by Allied bombing?
- A. After the carrier strike of October 1944 the Depot virtually ceased to function. I stayed on until March 1945 more or less to wind up affairs, but the Depot was really through.
- Q. Now turning to the No. 1 Depot at Kasumigaura - what new planes were being processed and how many when you took over that Depot in July 1945?
- A. Type Zero (Zeke) and Type 93 (Willow), but only a small number of them. I think we processed about 30 Zekes in July.
- Q. What types of planes did you modify for Special Attack?
- A. The same two types, both new and old planes. In the Zeke we installed bomb racks for a 500 KG bomb and reached a maximum of about 80 planes a month. In the Willow we installed bomb racks for 1 250 KG bomb and modified it for running on alcohol (by using gasoline to start the engine and then switching to alcohol once it warmed up.) Most of the work was done in March, April and May 1945, during which we modified a maximum of 200 Willows a month.
- Q. What was the most frequent mechanical failure you encountered?
- A. Landing gear and brakes.
- Q. What was the average length of repairs?
- A. Major repairs, over 500 man hours; medium repairs, 150-500 man hours; minor repairs, 50-60 man hours.
- Q. From your experience at Formosa and at Kasumigaura, would you say that the situation was the same as it was in the Army, where it was stated that at the end of the war substitution of parts was useless because the failures were caused by basic defects in the construction and material?
- A. Yes, that was true in the Navy at the end, but my feeling is that the situation was not quite as bad as it was in the Army.

R E S T R I C T E D