

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

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS NO. 62)
NAV NO. 12

Place: Tokyo
Date: 15 October 1945

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: KAMIKAZE Corps

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Captain INOBUCHI, Rikibei IJN, commanded the light cruiser MATSURI from July 1942 until November of that year when he was transferred to the Bureau of Naval Personnel. In February 1944 he became commanding officer of 153 Air Group in New Guinea where he remained until assigned as Senior Staff Officer of 23 Air Flotilla on CELEBES in July 1944. The next month he became Chief of Staff of 1st Air Fleet in the PHILIPPINES where he remained through the PHILIPPINE Campaign. Since March of this year he has been attached to the Navy Department in TOKYO.

Where interviewed: MEIJI Building.

Interrogator: Lt. Comdr. J. A. Field jr., USNR, Lt. Comdr. R. P. Aikin, USNR.

Interpreter: Lt. Comdr. S. Millstein, USNR.

Allied Officer Present: Captain S. Teller, USN, Lieutenant R. Garred, USNR.

SUMMARY

Captain INOBUCHI discusses the origin, philosophy, and history of the Kamikaze Corps, with particular reference to the PHILIPPINE Campaign. The interrogation contains some specific facts on Japanese air strength in the PHILIPPINE and OKINAWA operations, and on Japanese air order of battle, but in general is of most interest as a picture of the state of mind that gave rise to Kamikaze.

Transcript of Interrogation (Captain INOUCCHI, Rikihei, IJN)

TRANSCRIPT

Q. What was your position in the PHILIPPINES in 1944-1945?

A. Operations Plans, Staff of First Air Fleet.

Q. Was the First Air Fleet combined with the Second Air Fleet during the time of our attacks there?

A. At the beginning they were separate. 22 October they combined with the Second Air Fleet. They had a single staff but remained under separate operation. Kamikaze was begun by the First Air Fleet.

Q. Were the plans of the First Air Fleet and surface forces combined in the Sho Operations?

A. They were.

Q. Who made the plans for coordination?

A. The Imperial Headquarters. (Daihonei)

Q. Admiral TOYODA?

A. Admiral TOYODA was the Senior Navy Member of Imperial Headquarters.

Q. Does the plan cover the complete Sho Operation?

A. The entire study of the Sho Operation is not in the plan. It is divided into three phases (3 plans) but the whole plan was directed at the same objective.

Q. I am not so much interested in the Kamikaze but in the Air Fleet cover for Admiral KURITA'S fleet. Is this covered in the plan?

A. Yes, it is covered in the plan. Due to bad weather they never received cover and the Air Fleet was not able to get into the air. There was a very bad cloud bank between LUZON and BATANGAS. U.S. planes of your Task Force were able to escape thru this cloud bank.

Q. Where were your planes on LUZON?

A. Nichols Field - and we had an insufficient number of aircraft in the command to complete the mission.

C. I would like to read you the history of Kamikaze which I have prepared and perhaps you will find the answers to your questions in it.

Admiral ONISHI ordered the organization of the Kamikaze on 19 October 1944. They were ready to go on 20 October, but no opportunity presented itself. On 25 October the first Kamikaze attack was made, having a great morale-raising effect. Although the attacks were ordered by the Commander in Chief (1st Air Fleet) in fact it was originated by the feeling of all combatants in the PHILIPPINE area. All were beginning to think that there was no way but suicide to save the situation; there were many volunteers.

For example, on 15 October, Admiral ARIMA, Commander of the 26th Air Squadron, himself dove into an aircraft carrier. Admiral ARIMA lit the fuse of the ardent wishes of his men in order to bring their wishes into reality. At this time we in the PHILIPPINES thought about the approach of the crisis, owing to the odds. So we felt as follows: we must give our lives to the Emperor and Country, this is our inborn feeling. I am afraid you cannot understand it well, or you may call it desperate or foolish. We Japanese base our lives on obedience to Emperor and Country. On the other hand, we wish for the best place in death, according to Bushido. Kamikaze originates from these feelings.

It was the incarnation of these feelings. We believe in absolute obedience to the supreme authority who is unselfish, and whose concern is the welfare and peace of mankind. By this means we can accomplish peace. In view of this - from this standpoint, the Kamikaze deserved the consideration of the whole world.

The center of Kamikaze is morale. To achieve Kamikaze, the ordinary technique of the pilot is sufficient, no special training methods are necessary. Certain points about special attack are given. But to pilots who have had short training and least flight experience we give the essence of Kamikaze attack in the shortest period possible. Later on we gave them training in Kamikaze night attack.

As soon as our reconnaissance flight consisting of several planes ascertained the location of the enemy, then the Kamikaze units would start. Our Kamikaze units tried to make their operations secret so they did not start to attack until preparation was completed, and the location of the enemy fleet ascertained. Each unit consisted of five planes; one unit after another would take off, in the usual method. The method of attack changed in accordance with the attacks of the Task Force.

Later the method of attack was changed. Small numbers of planes were deployed to many bases. The other method was to deploy a large number of planes at only a few bases. This method has the advantage of providing many supporting planes. It was useful when defense of your carriers was very effective. This method was also used when we were going to attack the enemy at the landing point.

It is to be regretted that the number of bombers we had were insufficient and cruising radius of planes inadequate.

Q. Were any of the men refused permission to make Kamikaze attacks because they were considered valuable for other missions?

A. Anybody who felt that he wanted to, could do so, and he was pledged to carry out his feelings for the Emperor. The only trouble with the U.S. way of looking at it is if you start out on a mission with the idea of coming back you won't proceed to carry out the mission with 100% efficiency. The main point of failure was the short cruising radius of the planes. When we dispersed a small number of Kamikaze planes to a large number of bases it confused the enemy but lacked cover. When a large number of planes were based at a small number of bases it gave more opportunity for cover but lessened their opportunity to attack objects from many angles.

Q. Were you cognizant of overall plans of the PHILIPPINE campaign.

A. Only acquainted with air operations.

Q. Overall air and fleet?

A. Only with operations plans of my base.

Q. Were these plans made up by your staff or made up by GHQ?

A. From GHQ. The details and execution of over all plans were left up to us.

Q. Was the use of Kamikaze envisaged by GHQ?

A. No. They were purely and simply a policy of that base.

Q. First Air Fleet started Kamikaze?

A. Yes.

Q. But the Domei News Agency announced that they were training Kamikaze pilots in August 1944?

Transcript of Interrogation (Captain INOBUCHI, Rikihei IJN)

- A. There is absolutely no basis for such a statement and possibly what they meant was that the Japanese war was going badly and that the nation would use suicide as a policy, not that the Kamikaze was a definite plan.
- Q. Were Army and Navy pilots in the first Kamikaze attack?
- A. Navy only. Members of the 201st Air Group. This sort of thing has to come up from the bottom and you can't order such a thing. At no time were Kamikaze tactics ordered.
- Q. Do you know whether the Carrier Force under Admiral OZAWA took part in this campaign?
- A. A task force under his command participated in the attack.
- Q. Was it intended that the pilots from the carriers should carry out Kamikaze attacks?
- A. There was no plan as to whether carrier based pilots would take part in the action and it depended on the unit in the area and the responsibility for carrying out the Operations Plan. In the PHILIPPINE campaign it was the First Air Fleet's responsibility. Because of lack of personnel and planes they felt that it was their responsibility to evolve some tactic that would cope with the situation. Later on when the Second Air Fleet came into the picture in the PHILIPPINE action they too had some Kamikaze flyers. But, the main point is that initially the Kamikaze concept was a method of coping with local situations and not the result of an overall policy handed down from GHQ.
- Q. Did any of the carrier pilots join your forces on shore or take part in the operations?
- A. The carrier based planes were actively engaged between the period 24th and 25th after which they joined our land based forces.
- Q. Did any of them carry out Kamikaze attacks from carriers or from your base?
- A. Generally it was from a land base that the Kamikaze attacks were started.
- Q. Do you know of any specific instance in which carrier based planes carried out Kamikaze attacks?
- A. Possibly.
- Q. When was the Baka (Oka) bomb invented?
- A. Approximately August 1944. The name was given to the bomb by a Navy Petty Officer.
- Q. Did it come from GERMANY originally?
- A. Maybe; my opinion is absolutely no. It has no connection with the German plan.
- Q. Doesn't the fact that construction of Oka was begun in August 1944 indicate a general plan for the use of Kamikaze attacks?
- A. The Oka did not precede the Kamikaze plan.
- Q. How do you reconcile the two dates, August for Oka and October for Kamikaze?
- A. While there may have been overall conceptions of the Kamikaze idea outside the PHILIPPINES there was no connection. The Kamikaze spirit is uniformly Japanese. They may have, very well, been thinking about it at Imperial Headquarters but the first were put into practice in the PHILIPPINES. I do not know of any Kamikaze ideas in the Imperial Headquarters.

Transcript of Interrogation (Captain INOBUCHI, Rikihei IJN)

Q. Did they have Special Attack Units training in Japan?

A. There was no connection, that is, in the plans and policies. The Special Attack is a submarine attack. The common thing with all these attacks is the Kamikaze idea.

Q. In carrying out Kamikaze attacks in the Philippines were any special methods of approach used to avoid radar detection?

A. The main method was to have planes, off course, drop window etc., in order to distract, while the other planes made the main attack.

Q. But as to the altitude of approach, was there any specific instructions?

A. Altitude policy was to fly as high as possible, about 18,000 feet (6000 meters). We tried various altitudes. Came in at 18,000 feet and as soon as they realized that the radar had picked them up they would go down to as low as 80 or 90 meters. After they became accustomed to your defense tactics they found that the easiest altitude was about 3000 meters.

Q. What was the best type for dive attack?

A. Tactics changed with the type of planes. A fighter would come in at 3000 or 4000 meters and then when sighting the enemy would go down to 500 meters and perform a 45° dive.

Q. Did they prefer to attack from astern, ahead, or on the beam?

A. Preferred to aim at the forward elevator from astern. We found that diving from astern and aiming for forward elevators reduced the efficiency of the target's evasive action.

Q. Did they have priority on targets, were they specifically instructed as to what targets to attack?

A. It depended, on certain days aircraft carriers, on other days destroyers, etc.

Q. Who gave out these instructions.

A. It was usually embodied in the Operations Plan handed down by the Commander of the Air Fleet.

Q. Why was it that Kamikaze pilots, when attacked by our fighters, did not attempt evasive tactics?

A. In such cases, if they were quite far off from their main objective, they would take evasive tactics. Sometimes it was too late.

Q. Which service, Army or Navy, conceived the idea first?

A. Navy.

Q. During the PHILIPPINE campaign what types of aircraft were used for Special Attack Units?

A. "ZEKE", "JUDY" and "FRANCES".

Q. What types of planes were used in the OKINAWA Campaign?

A. Same types of planes were used by the Fifth Air Fleet (KYUSHU) in their suicide attacks at OKINAWA as the First Air Fleet did in the PHILIPPINES, but as the supply of bombers and fighters became insufficient, training planes were used.

Transcript of Interrogation (Captain INOBUCHI, Rikihei IJN)

Q. What type of training planes?

A. SHIRAGIKU was used.

Q. Any other type of training plane?

A. Type "93" (WILLOW) from Formosa only.

Q. Any other type of planes?

A. No other type that we could use.

Q. What about float planes?

A. We did use float planes - "ALF" and "PETE".

Q. Any other type?

A. "DAVE"

Q. When did you get short of combat type planes?

A. Beginning approximately 10 April 1945?

Q. When was the 10th Air Fleet formed?

A. 1 March 1945. 5th, 3rd, and 10th Air Fleets cooperated in attacks against OKINAWA.

Q. Was the First Mobile Base (i.e. tactical title of 5th Air Fleet) Air Force Commander in charge of the 5th, 3rd, and 10th Air Fleets?

A. The commander of the First Mobile Base Air Force (5th Air Fleet) commanded the 3rd, and 10th Air Fleets.

Q. Did the Commander of the 3rd Air Fleet move from KISARAZU to KYUSHU during the Okinawa Campaign?

A. The Commander of the 3rd Air Fleet went from KISARAZU to KANOYA. The Commander of the 10th Air Fleet went from KASUMIGAURA to KANOYA as soon as the OKINAWA operations began. The Commander of the 10th Air Fleet stayed in KANOYA a month and went back to KASUMIGAURA. The 5th Air Fleet Headquarters was at KANOYA.

Q. Who was in charge?

A. The Commander at KANOYA was Vice Admiral UGAKI, CinC of the 5th Air Fleet for tactical operation.

Q. Was there any trouble with those three senior commanders being at KANOYA at the same time? Who commanded?

A. There was no trouble at KANOYA. As a matter of fact, the commanders of the 3rd, and 5th Air Fleets were classmates at the Naval Academy. The commander of the 3rd Air Fleet was a jolly fellow.

Q. Was the 6th Air Army under command of the 5th Air Fleet during the OKINAWA Campaign?

A. Yes.

Q. Was the 29th Air Flotilla in FORMOSA under command of the 5th Air Fleet?

A. No.

Transcript of Interrogation (Captain INOUCHE, Rikihei IJN)

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- Q. Who was it under, 8th Air Division?
- A. It operated as an individual command.
- Q. Under whom did the 8th Air Division operate in FORMOSA?
- A. Do not know.
- Q. Do you know the name of the man who made the plans for OKINAWA?
- A. The man who knows the most about the OKINAWA Campaign is in KYUSHU, but Commander TERAJ is in TOKYO and he knows a good deal about it too.
- Q. What percentage of hits were obtained in relation to the number of KAMIKAZE planes employed in the PHILIPPINE Campaign?
- A. Approximately one-sixth of all Kamikaze planes used hit their target.
- Q. At OKINAWA?
- A. My estimate of the OKINAWA figure was approximately one-ninth (1/9)
- Q. To defend the homeland what percentage of Kamikaze planes were expected to hit targets?
- A. I think that it would have depended a lot on the point at which you would have landed. We probably would have used inexperienced pilots and the figure would be probably only one-ninth (1/9) or one-tenth (1/10) successful. Another factor in the low score was that we had no defense against fighters.
- Q. Were they going to make Kamikaze attacks at night or day?
- A. The plan was to use them primarily at twilight or on bright moonlight nights.
- Q. What types of planes were they going to use during twilight and on bright moonlight nights?
- A. SHIRAGIKU, ZERO fighters and WILLOW.
- Q. Did you plan to use pathfinder planes equipped with radar during KETSU Operations (Defense of Japan)?
- A. There were too few radar equipped planes to plan any considerable use of them in the KETSU operation. Certain reconnaissance planes were equipped with radar such as "Frances" and "Myrt".
- Q. Were they going to be pathfinder planes for the Kamikaze planes?
- A. In my opinion, if it came to KETSU Operations, there would be no need for pathfinder planes.
- Q. Was it planned to use Kamikaze planes after the landings on the beaches?
- A. The plan was to wait until the very last moment, until the American forces were dispersed as little as possible and thus inflict a greater amount of damage.
- Q. Do the figures or results in the PHILIPPINE and OKINAWA Campaigns include joint Army and Navy Kamikaze units?

Transcript of Interrogation (Captain INOBUCHI, Rikihei IJN)

- A. The figures are for the Navy only. If the Army were involved the figure would probably be less. (i.e. smaller percentage of hits)
- Q. Did the Army use Kamikaze attacks in the PHILIPPINES or just the Navy?
- A. Both Army and Navy.
- Q. Did the Navy plan to use all training planes (Kamikaze) and all combat planes to resist an invasion of KYUSHU or did they plan to hold back some planes for the defense of HONSHU?
- A. About 2/3rds of the planes would be thrown into an attack on KYUSHU.
- Q. Do you know what the Army planned to do?
- A. I would not attempt to estimate what the Army plan would have been.
- Q. How many flying hours did the Navy Kamikaze pilots have in the (a) PHILIPPINE Campaign (b) OKINAWA Campaign?
- A. Most of the men in the PHILIPPINE Campaign they had about 300 hrs, but in the OKINAWA Campaign the had Kamikaze pilots with as little as 100 hours.
- Q. Were Kamikaze pilots, during the PHILIPPINE Campaign, limited to those having 300 hours or less in order to conserve the more experienced flying personnel?
- A. Every one of the pilots hoped to get into the Kamikaze Corps but several of them, with the best flight time, were prevented by order of the Commanding Officer from doing so as he wanted them for torpedo bombing.
- Q. Why does he limit it to torpedo bombing attacks?
- A. We felt that torpedo bombing took a greater amount of accuracy.
- Q. In the middle of September our carrier force attacked in the PHILIPPINES. Do you know the total loss from those attacks?
- A. We lost 200 planes in one attack in one day. About 60 fighters in one day.
- Q. Do you know the total loss in September from the carrier strikes.
- A. About 1000 in September.
- Q. When the Second Air Fleet came down from FORMOSA how many did they bring?
- A. 300 from FORMOSA on the 22nd of October.
- Q. On the 24th of October Admiral KURITA was attacked while passing through the SIBUYAN Sea. Did he have any Navy land based plane protection?
- A. They did not get through because of weather.
- Q. Did they plan to?
- A. Yes, but there was no cover.

Transcript of Interrogation (Captain INOBUCHI, Rikinei IJN)

Q. What did Admiral KURITA have scheduled for the 25th?

A. He depended on indirect support, our plans attacking your ships.

Q. Did Admiral KURITA call for fighters, on the 24th when he was attacked?

A. Admiral KURITA did not request air cover. If you haven't got enough planes there is no sense sending them.

Q. In your opinion, what was the failure of the plan to defend the PHILIPPINES?

A. First: Lack of planes.
Second: Lack of experienced pilots.
Third: The superiority of the U.S. GRUMAN fighter over the ZERO and the fact that the P-38 could get such good altitude.

Q. Do you feel that the shortage of planes was due to production at home or our attacks?

A. First important reason was production failure. Second was attrition of planes before they reached the scene of combat.

Q. At the start of the war did you expect a long war?

A. I thought it would last more than two years.

Q. At what stage of the war did you realize that victory was not possible for Japan?

A. Battle of MIDWAY.

Q. Were you at MIDWAY?

A. No. After GUADALCANAL U.S. pressure become irresistible. With a TASK FORCE you still have mobility and you can still operate but with land based aircraft you have to have air bases which you must hold or else your air force is neutralized and when pressure became so strong after GUADALCANAL we couldn't use our air forces effectively from the bases that we had left. Another factor was that we had no long range planes like U.S. B-29's and B-17's.