

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

INTERROGATION NO.(USSBS 149)  
NAV NO. 35

Place: Tokyo  
Date : 24 October 1945, 1330

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: Battle off SAMAR, 25 October 1944.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Rear Admiral KOYANAGI, Tomiji , IJN, is a naval officer of 30 years service. During the first twelve months of the war he was Commanding Officer of the battleship KONGO, flagship of the Third (battleship) Squadron which was at that time under the command of Vice Admiral Takeo KURITA. Promoted Rear Admiral in November 1942, KOYANAGI commanded a destroyer squadron until July 1943 when he became Chief of Staff to Admiral KURITA, now CinC Second Fleet. In this capacity KOYANAGI took part in the sea battles of June and October 1944. Wounded on 26 October, he returned to duty in August 1945 as Principal of the Naval Torpedo School at YOKOSUKA.

Where interviewed: Meiji Building.

Interrogator: Lt. Comdr. James A. Field Jr., USNR.

Interpreter: Lt. Comdr. D. Bartlett, USNR.

Allied Officers Present: None.

SUMMARY

Rear Admiral KOYANAGI discusses the operations of the Japanese Center Force of battleships and cruisers during the Battle for LEYTE GULF on 24-26 October 1944. Admiral KOYANAGI was Chief of Staff of the Second Fleet at this time, and his information largely repeats and confirms that obtained from Vice Admiral KURITA who commanded this force (see Interrogation #USSBS 47 NAV NO. 7). This testimony is of importance, however, in that it gives the clearest and fullest analysis thus far obtained of the reasons for the Japanese decision to go north rather than enter LEYTE GULF on the morning of 25 October.

TRANSCRIPT

- Q. Admiral KURITA told us that after the Battle in June the ships of the Second Fleet went to the LINGGA Area to train because of the shortage of fuel in the EMPIRE. What type of training did they emphasize between July and the time they left to attack the American Fleet?
- A. The Fleet arrived at LINGGA about the 22nd of July. The main part of the training was to :
- (1) Attack the enemy vessels at anchorage.
  - (2) Training for night battles.
  - (3) Anti-aircraft training.
  - (4) Radar fire control training.
  - (5) Use of starshell in night firing.
- Q. Was there any emphasis placed on radar search and on anti-submarine measures?
- A. We did not worry much about the submarine problem, concentrating on aircraft and surface vessels.
- Q. Did you have a special radar set for fire control, a special radar used only for that purpose?
- A. I think there was no special array for radar fire control because the radar fire control was as yet not well developed; there was no particular confidence in it. They got up to the stage when they could barely use radar for firing, no further than that.
- Q. Do you feel that having your flagship sunk by submarines and having to change flagships had serious consequences on the subsequent conduct of the operation?
- A. First we transferred to two destroyers and by the time we passed PALAWAN STRAIT we had shifted the flag to YAMATO. It was fortunate that the accident or damage occurred before the battle started. We felt great inconvenience on the destroyer, communication was possible only by light flash.
- Q. But once you got aboard the YAMATO did everything go smoothly, was everything all right or was there still trouble?
- A. The most trouble they felt was communication. Half the personnel of the communication staff of the previous flagship was killed in the torpedoing, so lack of personnel caused communications trouble when they got aboard the YAMATO. It did not interfere seriously however.
- Q. On the 24th while you were passing through the SIBUYAN SEA you were attacked by our aircraft. Was any fighter cover from shore bases scheduled in the operation plan?
- A. We did not expect any protection from Japanese fighters because the plan was set that fighters were to be used primarily for attack not for protection of the battleships. To offset the shortage of fighters we had increased the number of machine-guns on the ships by about 120 machine guns on each battleship on an average, 90 on heavy cruisers, 30 to 40 on destroyers. These were 25 MM guns.
- Q. Was there any increase in the number of heavier anti-aircraft Guns?

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Rear Admiral KOYANAGI, Toniji).

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- A. There was no increase.
- Q. In the course of the attacks of the 24th, did you ever request fighter protection from shore based units?
- A. Once we sent request to send fighter protection, but no reply, no planes.
- Q. What damage was done to your ships on the 24th?
- A. YAMATO got four bombs and quite a few near misses. The damage was not so great as to interfere with fighting or navigation. I saw one hit on the foredeck which exploded instantaneously and so did little damage. The other three hits were reported to me and having penetrated did some damage. MUSASHI, according to the report of the officers on board then, was hit by 18 torpedoes, 40 bombs, and could not navigate at all, had to stop. She stayed a few hours then steamed again very slow speed. About 8 o'clock she sank. The extent of damage to MYOKO is unknown--perhaps she was hit by bombing; she steamed back to SINGAPORE. I do not know about casualties.
- Q. Were the other battleships and cruisers hit?
- A. I have not heard anything to the effect that bombs hit any other battleships. Except MYOKO no cruisers were damaged, and I do not think there was any damage to destroyers.
- Q. How many destroyers did you detach and send back accompanying those damaged cruisers?
- A. One destroyer for each cruiser, but I think two for MUSASHI.
- Q. Did the destroyers that were detached with MUSASHI rejoin your force after she sank?
- A. I am not quite sure but think the two destroyers probably did not come back.
- Q. After the air attacks had been completed on the 24th, were all remaining ships in good fighting condition?
- A. They were in good condition.
- Q. What particular type of damage on those ships which were hit, communication or fire control gear, or what?
- A. There was no interference with fighting ability.
- Q. On the day of the 24th, did you have satisfactory information on the location and movement of the American Forces?
- A. Very unsatisfactory information. Judging from the direction of American planes they figured two or three groups of your Task Forces should be about 80 miles to the east off LUZON (indicating on the chart the area between 15N and 16N and between 123 E and 124E). We had no information of presence of your task force east of SAMAR. We were quite taken aback when we met your force off SAMAR on the morning of the 25th and some people even said they were Japanese carriers.
- Q. Didn't you have information passed from your planes on the 24th, from the planes attacking American Forces?
- A. We came to the conclusion that more than 100 troop transports

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Rear Admiral KOYANAGI, Tomiji).

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and some cruisers and battleships were inside LEYTE GULF. We could not figure out exactly how many there were and the planes did not bring any information.

Q. Why was there that lack of information about this area? Were there no planes for search of this area?

A. We took the Fleet's seaplanes and based them at SAN JOSE (MIN-DORO) and they were sent to search the area east of the PHILIPPINES, but no information came back from these planes. That was due to the short range of the planes; they could not search well.

Q. Were these seaplanes from ships or your own force or some other?

A. From our own Fleet. We put them all ashore at SAN JOSE except for two or three spotting planes of the First Battleship Squadron. Except those, they were all in SAN JOSE.

Q. Did you send them to SAN JOSE before your Fleet came or as you passed by?

A. Before the Fleet moved in, one or two days ahead of the time the Fleet moved in, I think; but I am not sure.

Q. On the night of the 24th-25th, at what time did you pass through SAN BERNARDINO STRAIT?

A. Midnight of the 24th. We had planned to pass through at six o'clock evening of the 24th, but we were delayed.

Q. Did you expect opposition from our forces as you came out of the Strait?

A. We expected submarines and attacks from carrier planes. We thought there probably would not be a battle of surface forces there.

Q. You said you thought there were battleships in LEYTE GULF. Did you think there were battleships east of LUZON also or did you think it was a Carrier Force only?

A. When I mentioned three groups, I meant carriers, battleships, cruisers, complete.

Q. Did you not expect the battleships from this Carrier Force to oppose you here?

A. That was also a matter of concern, but not a primary concern.

Q. Were you at battlestations when you came out; were all guns manned, ready for action?

A. The Commander of the Fleet did not order stations; it is given by each ship's Captain. The flagship had taken stations on warning of submarines.

Q. Had you been at stations most of the night?

A. No. Two or three shifts during the night. They were all split watches.

Q. Were the crews of the ships noticeably tired by this time after the events of the 23rd and 24th; was fatigue evident?

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Rear Admiral KOYANAGI, Tomiji).

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- A. Fatigue was evident at this time, but their fighting spirit was very high; still they were very fatigued.
- Q. About what time did you find our force off SAMAR and what was first contact?
- A. 0640 TOKYO time on the 25th we sighted an American Task Force.
- Q. Did you sight ships first of all or airplanes?
- A. First we sighted one or two airplanes, then masts of ships, then saw the formation of ships.
- Q. At the time you sighted our force, what were your intentions? Were you planning to enter the Gulf, or what?
- A. Our first intention was to fight to the last with the ships; then if we won to go on into the Bay.
- Q. What was the original mission assigned your force? Were you to attack the Task Force, the transports, or bombard the beach?
- A. The original intention, by order of the Combined Fleet, was to come to the Bay and attack battleships and transports; but the order was also given if we met the American Task Force we should fight to the finish. The original intention was to attack battleships and whatever was in the Bay, also any intervening force would be engaged.
- Q. If you had gotten into the Bay and met the battleships and the transports, which would have been engaged, the transports or the battleships?
- A. Because the order originally said to interfere with your landing, stress would have been on the transports.
- Q. When you sighted our force here, what was the estimate of the strength disposition, what types?
- A. We thought you were just one group of the Task Force composed of 5 or 6 carriers, a few battleships, and a few cruisers. That was taken by eyesight, we had no information from planes.
- Q. Did you see battleships?
- A. I did not see them. There were those who said they saw battleships, it may have been a mistake.
- Q. When you went into battle formation to attack our ships were you acting on the assumption that battleships were present?
- A. The principal target was carriers. We thought that even though there may be battleships there would be only two or three at the most, so therefore the formation was not based on the assumption of the presence of battleships.
- Q. In the course of the engagement that morning, what damage did the Japanese Fleet receive from air attack?
- A. CHOKAI became un navigable by bombing and she sank; I do not know but I heard she was sunk deliberately by our forces. I heard this later. SUZUYA, I think, again by bombing, became un navigable and I was told she also was deliberately sunk. These reports were not from these ships but from other sources. When they are un navigable they have no communication. CHIKUMA

was sunk but I do not know how.

Q. Do you believe it was a result of air attack?

A. I suppose it was. I think there was no great damage by gunfire, evidently not many gunfire hits, very few if any.

Q. Were there any hits on YAMATO by gunfire?

A. No, only near misses. I think no gunfire was directed at YAMATO because the range was greatest.

Q. Did you have any destroyers damaged by air attack?

A. I don't think there were any.

Q. Was any damage inflicted on your force by the torpedo attack of our destroyers?

A. I saw the track of the torpedoes. Right after the beginning of the battle your force got into a heavy rain squall and we could not see. When the squall stopped, your cruisers and destroyers put down the smoke screen and the interference was very effective. We couldn't see anything during most of the battle; we could not see from the YAMATO to the carriers. The smoke was very effective. I saw seven or eight tracks very clearly and maneuvering to avoid this attack greatly delayed our advance, it slowed us down.

Q. Was there any other damage of any sort done by our Air Force?

A. I don't think there was any damage.

Q. Was KUMANO damaged?

A. Oh yes, I remember -- bombed. She steamed back to port and was later sunk. I was wounded and therefore knew very little about it. It was about one month later, I think.

Q. What damage did you believe you had inflicted on American Forces in the battle?

A. The damage we actually saw was one carrier sunk by either torpedoes or gunfire and one cruiser and destroyer also either by torpedo or gunfire. By gathering data and information, we estimated four carriers, 2 or 3 destroyers and 2 or 3 cruisers.

Q. But you yourself saw one of each sink?

A. I saw one carrier very distinctly; the other two I thought were in a sinking condition. I am sure about the carrier, the staff saw the other two.

Q. About 0930 in the morning, you broke off the attack and what was left of our disposition managed to escape. Why did you break off the attack?

A. We lost sight of your force. We could not close the range your speed was so high, so we gave up the chase.

Q. What speed did you estimate we were making?

A. I thought about 30 knots. NAGATO made 24 knots only and also the

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fuel shortage made it necessary to abandon the enterprise, particularly in the case of destroyers which consumed great quantities of fuel at high speeds.

Q. Then what was your force occupied in doing between the time when this action ceased and you were forced to turn north?

A. At first we turned toward LEYTE, and an interval of about two hours preceded the decision to turn north.

Q. In the course of that two hours, did you steam steadily toward LEYTE, reforming? What took up the two hours?

A. We were collecting, assessing our information and preparing to undertake the attack. All during this two hours we were assembling and assessing the information and taking account of the situation including fuel, etc., and because of the battle we concluded that we had been delayed significantly in arriving at LEYTE. We were scheduled to arrive at 1100 and were still far out at that time. It would be afternoon before they could get into LEYTE.

Q. To go back to the action at the time when you broke off, why were the cruisers recalled from the attack?

A. The order to rendezvous was given because we thought it useless to chase your force, due to reasons stated before---fuel short, your speed too great.

Q. Did you know at that time on the YAMATO that your two leading cruisers were within 10 kilometers of our sinking ships?

A. We did not know on account of the squall and smoke.

Q. They did not have reports from the cruisers by radio telephone?

A. I received a report from the 10th (destroyer) Squadron that they attacked the American Force, but I do not know exactly where the 10th Squadron was. This is the first time that I knew these cruisers were within 10 kilometers of the American ships.

Q. Why was the decision made to go north rather than enter LEYTE GULF? What were the reasons and what were the most important ones?

A. One reason was that the 2nd Division Attack Force reported the almost complete destruction of Admiral NISHIMURA'S force.

Q. What time was that report received? Did you receive it during the action with our carriers or during the two hours interval after the fight before they went north?

A. I do not remember the time. The second reason was that NISHIMURA'S force meant to go into the Bay at 5 in the morning and our force was to have entered at 6 to coordinate; but the approach of our force was greatly delayed. After the battle off SAMAR we finally decided that the cooperation of the two forces would not be affected at all, and if we ever decided to go into the Bay, the interval would be too much. The third reason, we intercepted a telephone message sent by your carrier (we thought it was the carrier that sent the message by telephone) to get reinforcements. We also intercepted answer to the telephone call to the effect that it would be two hours before reinforcements of planes arrived; that is to say by the time we en-

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tered this Bay. We thought that planes would have come out and that warships would have come out and that the transports would have dispersed enough so that only a part would have been inside, they would escape from the danger zone. We figured by that time that the transports might have heard of the battle and started already in the morning. The fourth reason, we intercepted again a telephone message sent by carrier to the planes to the effect that all planes should go to LEYTE shore strips; and also we thought reinforcement of the American carriers might come along and so your force would be very big, carriers and land based planes, and it would not be advisable to go into this danger zone and be a target for attack by shore and reinforced carrier planes in narrow waters. The fifth reason, we surmised that your American Task Force might come down from the north; so after we failed to destroy this first American Force, we thought that if we came back north now we might encounter another American Task Force, but we were very regretful that we had failed to destroy your first American Force. The sixth reason, if we continued the battle here at LEYTE it would consume more fuel, that was another reason for cruising north instead of staying around. We had no tankers anywhere around.

- Q. Did you ever consider the plan of entering the Gulf and fighting your way out the southern way through SURIGAO STRAIT?
- A. The original plan had been after entering LEYTE GULF to leave by way of SURIGAO STRAIT; however, after the battle off SAMAR the possibility of an approach of a Task Force from the north which we could engage seemed a more attractive alternative.
- Q. So the decision to go north was primarily to engage another force, not to retire?
- A. That is correct; towards evening we were north of SAMAR and we saw no chance of meeting another Task Force. We did not meet and did not receive any information, so we changed the course.
- Q. This decision to go north and not enter the Gulf was whose decision? Was anything received from TOYODA at that time?
- A. No orders from TOYODA, it was order of Admiral KURITA.
- Q. Did Admiral KURITA discuss it with his Staff or order it himself?
- A. Of course they had a conference and decided on this plan.
- Q. Was the staff generally united in support of this plan?
- A. Almost unanimous---yes, the decision was unanimous.
- Q. In general, considering the whole operation and all three forces, in your view what was the decisive factor which prevented carrying out the operation? Where did the operation breakdown?
- A. The severeness of the American air attack is one of the chief factors, and there are those five reasons set forth before which played a big part in upsetting the plan, and very poor cooperation on the side of the land-based airplanes. It was very difficult to gain cooperation between the fleet and land-based planes.
- Q. Did you make plans to attempt to work out cooperation between the fleet and land-based planes?



TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Rear Admiral KOYANAGI, Tomiji).  
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A. There was no special training for that cooperation, but we had exchanged messages.

Q. What influence on general Japanese planning and strategy do you feel the Battle of the CORAL SEA in the spring of 1942 had?

A. I was not in headquarters so am not familiar with it. However, I think as far as air campaign is concerned there, the results were about 50-50 even; though by that battle the planning of transporting troops to PORT MORESBY was upset and I thought the damage on both sides was about 50-50.

Q. What influence did the Battle of MIDWAY have?

A. I think it was a big failure on the Japanese side. I felt that due to the fact we lost four carriers, the force of the fleet decreased to a great extent; and being of the opinion that a fleet without carriers was worthless, that it would make future operations very difficult. That is what I felt at the time of the battle.

Q. How about the campaign in the SOLOMONS, GUADALCANAL, RABAUL, etc.?

A. The pressure of the American Air Force was very heavy and the Surface Force of the Japanese Navy was always under pressure, we could not use it as we wished.

Q. Looking at the war as a whole, where do you think the tide of the war swung against the Japanese?

A. I think if I pick up one point, better it would be the occupation of SAIPAN---I consider MIDWAY as the background, SAIPAN as the turning point.

R-E-S-T-R-I-C-T-E-D

HEADQUARTERS  
U. S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY

Washington, D. C.  
January 1946

Interrogation No. USSBS 149 - Sup.  
(Nav. No 35)

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: Battle off SAMAR, 25 October 1944.

Interrogation of: Rear Admiral KOYANAGI, Tomiji, IJN.

Interrogated by: Lt. Comdr. James A. Field Jr., USNR.

The attached chart(s) supplement Interrogation No. USSBS  
149 (Nav No. 35).

Enclosure: Annex "A"



NOSHIRO	ATAGO	MYOKO
	TAKAO	HAGURO
	CHOKAI	MAYA
	NAGATO	YAMATO
		MUSASHI
		YAHAGI
	TONG	KUMANO
	CHIKUMA	SUZUYA
	HARUNA	KONGO
		← 2000M →

FIRST DIVERSION ATTACK FORCE AT TIME OF SUBMARINE  
ATTACK 0650 23 OCTOBER 1944.  
FROM DRAWING BY  
R. ADM. KOYANAGI & CMDR. OTANI

ANNEX A

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PLATE 35-1