

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

INTERROGATION NO: 217

PLACE: Rm 722, Meiji Bldg
DATE: 26 Oct 45

Division of Origin: Military Analysis

SUBJECT: Japanese Strategy

Personnel interrogated and background:

Lt General Arisue -- Commissioned 2nd Lt 1917. Attached to the General Staff Office 1925. Military researcher in Italy 1928. Adjutant of the War Department and Private Secretary to the Minister of War 1932. Member of the Military Affairs Bureau, War Department 1935. Military Attache to the Japanese Embassy in Italy 1936. Chief of Military Affairs Section, Military Affairs Bureau, War Department 1939. Staff Officer of the Japanese Area Army in North China 1939. Vice Chief of Staff of the North China Area Army 1941. Attached to the General Staff Office 1942. Chief of G-2, GHQ 1942. Chairman of the Atsuki Liaison Committee 1945. Chairman of the Yokohama Liaison Committee of GHQ 1945. Chairman of the Army and Navy Liaison Committee (Tokyo).

Where Interviewed: Rm 722, Meiji Bldg.

Interpreter: Lt Commander Nichols.

Allied Officers Present: Major General Anderson

SUMMARY:

1. Since I did not come to the General Staff until the middle of 1943, I cannot speak from personal knowledge of plans before that time. It is my impression, however, that there were no plans at the beginning of the war for the invasion of the Hawaiian Islands. Indeed, the Army had no plans for the occupation of New Guinea. The Navy would keep capturing islands and asking the Army to send men. The Navy did not have enough troops to occupy any of the Hawaiian Islands and the Army had no plans to do so.

2. I came into the General Staff while the air operations over the Solomons Islands and Rabaul were going on, and it was my personal opinion that our forces were greatly overextended. I did not get much support for that view, however, because of the enthusiasm over Japanese successes. The Navy was particularly enthusiastic.

3. It was thought necessary to hold Rabaul at all costs in order to protect the main fleet base at Truk. We tried to send ships into Rabaul to supply our forces there. We had enough ships if they could get through, and we tried to protect them with air cover. We were forced to use Army planes in the Rabaul Area, however, and, consequently, their activities in the forward areas were greatly restricted due to the escort of transports. We lost about 600,000 tons of shipping there, mostly as a result of attacks by B-17's and B-24's. The Battle of Midway impaired our ability to send planes to Rabaul because of the loss of carriers. Some Navy planes were flown down through the Marianas and Truk; most Army planes came through the Philippines and New Guinea.

4. It was felt that if we lost Rabaul, air attack from Rabaul would make Truk untenable for the fleet. The Allied landings at Lae and on Bougainville demonstrated the Allied intention to by-pass Rabaul, and showed that the Rabaul campaign was lost, but

it was already too late to evacuate. It was decided to hold on a line between Truk and Rabaul and to put up a last-ditch fight at Rabaul. In February 1944 the fleet was moved to Palau after the attack on Truk by Allied carrier planes, and Rabaul lost its importance; but it was then impossible to evacuate our forces from Rabaul and they were left to fend for themselves. Meanwhile our forces on New Guinea were to withdraw overland toward Geelvinck Bay, but they were cut off by the Allied landings at Hollandia and had to be written off.

5. After the landing on Saipan it was felt that the next attack would come in the Philippines, although it might come on Iwo-jima. It was decided to prepare for a decisive battle on Mindanao and to strengthen the supply line through Okinawa, Formosa and Luzon. One of the weaknesses of the defense is that all possible points of attack must be reinforced; and Kyushu, the Tokyo Area, and Iwo-jima also had to be protected. The landings on Morotai and Palau confirmed us in the view that the next move was to Mindanao, and planes were brought in to the Philippines from Southeast Asia.

6. The landing at Leyte came as a surprise, and since our forces were concentrated in Mindanao and Luzon we were at a disadvantage. We made a finish fight with our Navy and air forces, and tried to make a finish fight with the Army, but only a part of our Army forces in the Philippines could be transported to Leyte. We reinforced Leyte as much as we could. The Naval air force was practically wiped out and had to be completely reorganized after the Philippines campaign. Not many planes were sent to the Philippines after the Allied landings began on Luzon. The reason planes were captured on the ground in Luzon must have been lack of fuel or parts. Those who know the situation at that time state that many planes might have been unable to move due to the vigorous attack by the U. S. Air Forces.

7. After the Philippines campaign, we expected a landing on Iwo-jima at about the time when it actually took place and were ready for it. The distance was too great for air defense, however, and the airfield at Hachijojima was too small to stage many planes through.

8. Because of the appearance of British planes at about this time, and because of a public announcement, I think by President Truman, I thought the next attack would come in the Hongkong area, or possibly in Formosa, and Okinawa as a third possibility. However, competent officers of the Army and Navy, especially those of operation sections, thought Okinawa might be the first possibility. Therefore, the landing there did not come as a surprise like Leyte.

9. It was decided at the time of the Okinawa campaign not to oppose B-29 attacks in the air, but to concentrate all air forces in Kyushu to attack Okinawa. It was felt that, although the B-29's were doing great damage to our cities and war production, the Okinawa campaign was more important because it would lead to invasion of Japan. The B-29 attacks on Kyushu airfields did not destroy many airplanes. The first-line planes were moved to secondary airfields and concealed and dispersed, and most of the planes hit were dummies. This was true both in Kyushu and in the Tokyo area. The 19 July carrier strike on the Tokyo area destroyed 100 dummies and only two operational planes, but after that carrier planes did more damage. However, those attacks did hinder operations against Okinawa by hindering the assembly of first-line planes and also by putting operating airfields out of commission.

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10. One of the greatest problems facing us was what to do if the Allies did not invade Japan. We had been expecting invasion and preparing for it for a long time, but it did not come. The people were complaining because of the lack of opposition to the B-29 attacks. Just before the end of the war we were forced to order our first-line fighters to intercept the B-29s to quiet the people, even though we thought it more important to save them to oppose invasion. In addition, we had faster fighters with better altitude performance just getting into mass production, which would have been available in another month. Also, aircraft production had been dispersed, and the rate would have begun to increase in September.

Note: No stenographer was present, but General Arisue's remarks were written down in long hand and later summarized and sent to him for correction. The foregoing summary was approved by General Arisue and contains several corrections which he made.