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U. S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)
APO #234
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INTERROGATION NO. 349

Place: Osaka W 196
Date: 10 Nov 45

Division of Origin: Military Analysis Divn.

Subject: JAAF training and supply.

Personnel interrogated and background:

Col TANAKA Isekichi - Was CO of the Osaka Supply Depot (Hokyusho) at the end of the war. He had been an army pilot since 1918, and has over 3500 hours of logged flying time. He is a graduate of the Military Academy (1915). His experience includes service on the Air Staff during the China incident in 1937, and service as an instructor at several air schools including Mito and Kumagaya. He became CO of the 107th Training Flying Regiment (Kyoiku Hikorentai) in 1941 and in 1943 was given command of the 106th Training Flying Brigade at the time of its activation. He commanded this unit (which was stationed in Java) until 1944 (October) when the supply functions of the Air Depot were separated from its modification and maintenance sections and he was made CO of the newly-formed Osaka Air Supply Depot.

Where interviewed - At the Osaka Air Depot.

Interrogator - Capt John C. West

Interpreter - Mr MORI Nishio (Note: The interrogation was handicapped by the lack of a qualified interpreter as the original schedule called for a group interrogation of officers of the Osaka Air Depot including Col TANAKA. When it became apparent that a separate interrogation was warranted, the local Japanese interpreter was used).

Summary:

Col TANAKA was an extremely intelligent and affable individual who had a good knowledge of activities with which he had been specifically connected. However, he was able to add little information not already available concerning the JAAF training program, but was of value in giving specific information concerning the use of alcohol instead of fuel in training activities. As the fuel shortage became more severe, alcohol was mixed with gasoline in increasingly large proportions until April 1945 when almost pure alcohol was used for training planes.

INTERROGATION

Q. What type a/c were used in training pilots in 1918?

A. Old type planes which we received from the French.

Q. Did you specialize in any particular class of a/c?

A. No. I was first a fighter pilot, but as I taught at Tokorozawa air school for 6 years after graduation, I became proficient in both bombing and reconnaissance planes as well.

Q. Can you tell us generally how the war effected the time and quality of pilot instruction?

A. Well, before 1941, a cadet or officer usually received training over a two year period before becoming a qualified pilot. The war caused this period to be reduced first to about 9 months and later to as little as 4 or 5 months. Of course the flying hours were likewise reduced as were all other phases of the instruction. I don't know exactly how many hours a cadet got prior to 1941, but at the end of the war some pilots received only 100 hours instruction.

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- Q. How long were you in Java?
A. I was there with my unit (106 Training Flying Brigade) for one year and one month.
- Q. What units did you have under your command?
A. I had seven fighter units and one heavy bomber unit.
- Q. How many aircraft did they have?
A. The fighter units had about 26 planes each, including reserves, while the bomber unit had about 20.
- Q. What type training did your units give?
A. Six gave advanced (Kyoiku) training while two gave operational (rensei) training.
- Q. How many trained pilots did your unit turn out in each period of training?
A. We graduated 800 pilots every two terms.
- Q. How long did each term last?
A. About 5 months.
- Q. Were your cadets or instructors ever used for tactical missions?
A. No, not while I was there.
- Q. How about after you left?
A. Well, I left just before the Philippines campaign, and I have heard that some were used tactically then.
- Q. How did the war effect the quality of pilots in general?
A. We could turn out acceptable pilots at first even with the reduced schedule, but toward the end we couldn't turn out even average pilots in the time allotted us.
- Q. Then do you consider the lack of time the most crippling factor in the training program?
A. I suppose time was the most important factor, although limited planes, poor instructors, and shortage of fuel also hampered the program.
- Q. From your experience as head of an air supply depot and prior to that as CO of a training unit, will you tell us in more detail the effect of the fuel shortage on JAAF activities?
A. The shortage was first felt by training units as they were naturally limited rather than the tactical units. We partially met the shortage by using alcohol to replace gasoline for training purposes.
- Q. To what extent did you use alcohol?
A. When I became head of the supply depot in October 1944, we shipped a fuel mixture to training units consisting of 50% fuel and 50% alcohol. After three or four months we increased the proportion to 80% alcohol and 20% fuel. Finally by 1 April 45, pure alcohol was being used for practically all training activities.
- Q. How about the shortage of fuel and its effect on tactical units?
A. I know that they didn't get all they wanted, that is they had to limit their operations, but I don't know exactly how they did it. I know we shipped them all we could, but they still asked for more.
- Q. Just what area did your supply depot furnish fuel?
A. We had ten branches (shutchojo and shisho) throughout western Honshu and Kyushu and through them we supplied practically all units in the general area.
- Q. Were you bilding up a fuel reserve for the defense of the homeland (Ketsu) operation?
A. Yes, we were trying to.

- Q. How successful were you?
- A. Well, at the normal rate of consumption, we had a 4 months or more reserve. Of course the Ketsu operation would have used fuel very rapidly, so we were still trying to get a further supply.
- Q. One final question, Colonel. I note that you served on the Air Staff in China during the fighting there in 1937. Can you tell us approximately how many aircraft you used during this campaign?
- A. I can't remember exactly, but I'm sure it was no more than 500 tactical a/c.