

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

R E S T R I C T E D

INTERROGATION NO. 517

PLACE: Tokyo
DATE: 11 October 1945
1130 - 1245

Division of Origin: Military Analysis Division

Subject: Evaluation of USSBS document entitled, "List of Japanese Merchant Ships over 500 tons lost Subsequent to Pearl Harbor."

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Rear Admiral NAKAMURA, Senior Naval Officer and the Tokyo Liaison Officer.

Mr. ARIYOSHI of the Japanese Shipping Control Association.

Lieutenant Commander SOGAWA of the Japanese Naval General Staff.

Where interviewed: Office of A-2, ADFEAF, Tokyo.

Interrogators: J. V. CRABB, Brig, General, USA.
WOODBURY BURGESS, Colonel, AC.

Interpreter: None required. Personnel interrogated can speak English.

SUMMARY

1. The document in question is of minor value in its present condition because much of the data included therein is "guesswork" on the part of the Japanese authorities.
2. The personnel interrogated were of high intelligence and very cooperative. Their assigned positions during the war gave them opportunities to obtain considerable information of value.
3. Because many "records have been lost," "commands changed often," "original records many times were poorly maintained," it is improbable that a completely reliable and accurate report of shipping losses can ever be prepared by the Japanese.
4. The form of attack against the Japanese shipping which was most costly to them was "minimum level attacks by strafing bomber airplanes."

R E S T R I C T E D

517

-1-

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERROGATION (Rear Adm. Nakamura, Senior Naval Officer and the Tokyo Liaison Officer, Mr. Ariyoshi of the Japanese Shipping Control Association and Lieutenant Commander Sogawa of the Japanese Naval General Staff. -----)

TRANSCRIPT

- Q. Was there a standard practice and instructions for reporting the distress by merchant vessels of the Japanese Merchant Fleet during the war and if so, describe it?
- A. Yes, throughout the war it was standard practice for Japanese merchant ships under attack or distress of any kind to report by radio in code its identify, location and the nature of the distress including the type of enemy attack, i.e., submarine, mine, surface vessel or aircraft.
- Q. Did this report come through in all cases, was this service always rendered, if not, how many did you expect to get a report from?
- A. The early part of the war about 80% reported and later almost 100% reported. (Note: Later paragraphs of this interrogation tend to discredit this statement).
- Q. If that report came in incomplete, did you try to verify it or did you leave it and make a guess of the cause of it?
- A. Yes, we did.
- Q. What do you think is the degree of accuracy that you have been able to obtain in that investigation for cause of loss of vessels?
- A. The degree of accuracy was about 100% when determined by survivors and surface ships in same convoy.
- Q. Do your merchant vessels carry submarine detecting equipment?
- A. Towards the end of the war merchant ships were equipped with sonic detectors.
- Q. Approximately when did you say that such devices were installed?
- A. Started equipping merchant vessels with sonic listening devices about the middle of 1942 and approximately the middle of 1943 50% of the merchant fleet was equipped with it and by the end of the war practically all merchant vessels had the device except the ones under 1,000 gross tons.
- Q. Prior to the installation of your sonic devices, a ship at sea might be hit with either a torpedo or a mine and the captain of the ship might not know which it was?
- A. Prior to the installation of these devices there were none reported lost by mines.
- Q. We have here a report from the USSBS files dated 24 October 1945, entitled, "List of Japanese Merchant Ships over 500 Tons lost Subsequent to Attack on Pearl Harbor." It is a preliminary report of the U.S. Strategic Bomb Survey. It has been prepared by the Marine Affairs Section of the Japanese Ministry of Transportation. It shows a total of 1,671 ships sunk and a gross damage loss of 6,421,954 tons. It gives for each ship its name, gross tonnage, the type of ship whether cargo, cargo passenger, tanker, etc. The cause of the sinking, the date of the sinking and where known, the location of the sinking. The question asked by Mr. ARIYOSHI is, can you evaluate this report?
- A. This report was prepared from secondary sources, that is, from the ships owners and from the underwriters who got their information through the Navy Department. There is much guess work in this report.

- A. It is not considered complete and at present under revision and expansion by the Shipping Control Association as well as the Army and Navy. This is a preliminary report and cannot be used as final in any respect.
- Q. What is your opinion as to the accuracy of the final report that is now under preparation in comparison with this one or in comparison with actual facts. Will it be completely reliable?
- A. In my opinion the final report will be somewhere between 50 and 90% accurate, There are many things that will prevent it being accurate, such as the loss of records through burning, through frequent changes of administration and through numerous people being responsible for the different parts of the records. The fact that the original records were not maintained complete in all respects. However, every effort is being made to get it as complete as possible, even to searching for survivors.
- Q. Are you acquainted with the similar list of Japanese war vessels sunk? (Question to Commander SOGAWI)
- A. Yes, Sir.
- Q. Does the same answer apply to that list?
- A. The same answer would apply to that list also.
- Q. That list is based on rather incomplete information?
- A. More complete than this but still lacks considerable amount of accuracy.
- Q. You are attempting to get further information on that?
- A. I will submit the full report to Captain Till on the 15th of January.
- Q. As a naval officer, (question to Comdr. SOGAWI) in your opinion, if a submarine of ours were to torpedo one of your vessels and you had escorts for that vessel, do you think that submarine would stay on the surface to observe results and leave himself vulnerable or would he crash-dive under the water?
- A. Of course, dive under.
- Q. Among the possible ways of determining the cause of the loss of a ship such as radio distress signals, observation from other ships, reports of survivors and deduction, what is your opinion as to which are the most frequently used in your reports?
- A. Practically all our good information has come from radio distress signals. A small proportion has come from observation of other ships and in a few cases it has come from survivors.
- Q. All things considered, is the accuracy of your reporting greater after July 1943 than it was before that time and if so. Why?
- A. It is more accurate after July 1944. Our detecting equipment was better.
- Q. Do you, Commander SOGAWI, have any first hand information or you Admiral NOKAMURA, as to the relative value of several types of air attack against your vessels, namely, high level, dive bombing and minimum level strafing attacks. Can you give me first hand information your idea, etc?

A. In my experience during the times I was under air attack, the minimum altitude B-25 attacks were the most costly. I (Admiral NAKAMURA) commanded a heavy cruiser at Rabaul during one attack in which I was not sunk but that at least two bombs caused considerable damage internally.

Q. Were you at Rabaul in latter part of November (1943)? Were you there October 26th?

A. No, no.

Q. As you remember at Rabaul, did high level attacks on ships cause much damage to the shipping?

A. No.

Q. Do you remember or were you at Rabaul the time we struck at your shipping on 2 November 1943?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Give me some of your first hand thoughts as to the efficiency of that attack?

A. You did cause expensive damage to the Japanese vessels that were in the harbor and to vessels that had not gotten under way. Those that were well under way and maneuvering and particularly those that got out of the harbor were not damaged to any extent.

Q. We now understand as regards merchant shipping that a revision and expansion of the Marine Section Report of October 24 will be out as of December 15 and that report will be much more accurate but still not the final word. Somewhere after the first of the year a final report will come out which will answer every question in answer to our request to Admiral NOKAMURA which gives name, date of attack, time of attack and that report will be as complete as anything can be. As far as Naval shipping is concerned, Commander SOGAWA is making a naval report similar to the October 24th one on Japanese shipping. You are now in the process of making a report which will be much more accurate and it will contain a full evaluation where the data is not absolutely accurate. In cases of questions they will be fully explained?

A. Yes.

Q. When does Commander SOGAWA plan finishing his report?

A. 15 January (1946).

Q. After the report is completed, he and Mr. ARIYOSHI and their facilities are going to pool their efforts and go deeply into the naval and merchant shipping losses in an attempt to find an answer to every question we have asked. So a final report on both should be available at some undetermined date after January 15th?

A. Yes.

Note: Colonel Burgess: In connection with the final reports on Japanese naval and merchant shipping, Admiral NAKAMURA stated the final work would be somewhat hampered by the following facts:

Recently some 46 boxes of naval documents were turned over to the ATIS in the NYK Building and were subsequently shipped back to Washington. Among these documents were 11 boxes which contained information pertaining to the naval and merchant shipping subject and some of which were the only copies available. These facts were called to the attention of the bombing survey and of Colonel Munson in GHQ prior to the decision of shipping to Washington.

R E S T R I C T E D

INTERROGATION NO. 517 Cont'd.

- Q. In the personal experience you have had both at sea and in the maintenance of these records, what was the most costly form of our attack against your shipping. Was it air, undersea attack, or naval vessels?
- A. Attacks by air were the most costly to the Japanese Shipping.

R E S T R I C T E D

517--5