

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

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS NO. 527)

Place: Tokyo
Date: 16 December 1945.
1030 - 1230

Division of Origin: Military Analysis

Subject: Shipping in the New Britain, New Guinea, New Ireland Area.
February and March 1943.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Colonel Shinohara, attached to the General Staff Shipping Control Headquarters, 8th Area Army, Rabaul.
Colonel Takagi, 6th Air Force at Rabaul from December 1942 to August 1943 as General Staff Officer.

Where Interviewed: Office of A-2, ADFFAF, Tokyo.

Interrogator: J. V. CRABB, Brig. General, USA.

Interpreter: Staff Sergeant Hugh Tamashire, U. S. Army.

SUMMARY

1. Personnel interrogated were apparently well informed and cooperative.
2. Colonel Shinohara confirms sinking of Lae Resupply Convoy (Bismark Convoy).
3. Colonel Shinohara remembers a Jap convoy west of St. Mathias group of islands on 27 February 1943 but does not know its destination.
4. All ships sunk in Bismark Battle were sunk by air action.
5. Commanders at Lae did call for and get supplies from stations other than Rabaul but every time transports or destroyers were sent in, they were sunk.
6. Distress signals were often not sent by Japanese vessels because of lack of time when under attack.

Transcript of Interrogation. (Colonel Shinohara and Colonel Takagi).

- Q. Does he have information regarding the shipping through out the Bismark Sea from latter February and first part of March 1943?
- A. He has some information.
- Q. Did the Japanese Air Force out of Rabaul escort all the shipping that was operating in the Bismark Sea?
- A. Yes, they convoyed the shipping and gave protection from January 1943 until time he left.
- Q. Does he know of any shipping in the Bismark Sea other than the Lae Re-supply Convoy from the 20 February to the 5 March?
- A. Outside of the Lae Supply they gave cover to Supply Madang and Guadalcanal.
- Q. Did they escort any vessels in the general area of Vitiaz Straits or Long Island other than those of the Lae Re-supply Convoy during the period 28 February until 6 March?
- A. They were not escorted. Had never been escorted by his airplanes.
- Q. Did he have operational control of airplanes from any place except Rabaul?
- A. All the shipping from Wewak to Madang going to Lae were convoyed by his planes.
- Q. Did any of his airplanes from Wewak or Madang escort shipping of any kind in this general area other than this Lae resupply convoy during the same period?
- A. No, sir. He did not have any other convoy duties other than that because this was the main convoy and all of his efforts were concentrated on this convoy here.
- Q. Is Colonel Takagi a pilot?
- A. Yes, bomber pilot.
- Q. Did he fly on that escort mission during the Lae convoy?
- A. No, he was stationed at Rabaul.
- Q. Does he know of any other shipping coming into this area from Truk during that period of time?
- A. He did not know of any shipping going from Truk directly down here.
- Q. Does Colonel Shinohara know of any?
- A. He said he remembers vaguely there was one which left here for the general direction going to Rabaul. He says it may not be the same date.
- Q. Did that ship make the trip without incident or get sunk?
- A. He does not clearly remember what happened.
- Q. Does he have any records available he could get to find out that information?
- A. He said he has no information on that.
- Q. Does Colonel Shinohara have first hand knowledge of the Lae Re-supply Operations?
- A. He says he will say as much as he knows.
- Q. Ask him to give his remembrance of what the operations consisted including number and names of ships and what happened on that operation?
- A. The convoy he remembers had about six army vessels and two navy vessels. A total of eight. He remembers the names of the Army boats: Kyokusei, tonnage 5,493; Nigo 2,746 tons; Teiyo 6, 801 tons; Oigawa 6,493 tons and Kokoku-Maru, he does not know the tonnage, five or six hundred tons. Kambu Maru approximately five or six hundred tons. The convoy left Rabaul headed for the northern direction and then changed its direction and headed for Vitiaz Straits. On 3 March about 105 planes attacked this convoy and Kyokusei was sunk about there. (Indicates). At that time Colonel Shinohara had about twenty-four planes escorting the convoy.
- Q. Ask him to verify that date, whether it was the 3rd or the 2nd?
- A. He said the 2nd day of March.

- Q. What other ships were sunk that day?
A. On the 3rd day everything was sunk. No other ships were sunk on the 2nd .
- Q. On the 3rd all ships were sunk, that includes all the escort vessels?
A. They had eight destroyers convoying and on the 3rd day four were sunk and two returned to Rabaul and he does not know what happened to the other two.
- Q. Does either Colonel Shinohara or Colonel Takiga remember any information about a convoy that was west of St. Mathias group on 27 February and if so, where was it going?
A. He does not remember distinctly whether it was headed for Palua or left for Palau. He thinks there were seven ships in this convoy but he does not know which way it was headed.
- Q. Does he know of any of those seven ships being sunk?
A. He knows of the con by but he does not know what happened to it.
- Q. I would like to get Colonel Takagi to give me any information he has from the air point of view on what went on during the battle of the Lae Ré-supply?
A. In this battle the Japanese Army and Navy worked together convoying the convoy. At the particular time, first it was the Army and then the Navy, it changed around, shifted. When the U. S. first attacked it was at the period of time the Navy was going back and the Army airplanes were to come. When the Army airplanes got there a big portion of the ships were already sunk.
- Q. Does he have any remembrance of the number of merchant ships and of war vessels that were sunk, does he have any information other than that Colonel Shinohara gives?
A. It is just about the same. All of the transports were sunk and about half of the escort vessels, that is four.
- Q. Were all the sinkings caused by aircraft attack?
A. Every one was sunk by aircraft. He says he has the direct information on that. The Japanese navy planes were at a high altitude and the U. S. fighters attacked the low flying Japs and the B-24s and B-25s came in and bombed the ships and in about twenty minutes the ships were sunk.
- Q. How does it happen the Japanese escorting airplanes were unable to prevent the attack?
A. When the Japanese fighters and U. S. fighters were going at it the B-24s and B-25s came in low in an open space and attacked the convoy.
- Q. After that battle did the Japs send any other large vessels in to re-supply Lae?
A. There was no convoy after that. It was supplied by submarines.
- Q. Does Colonel Shinohara or Colonel Takiga know the division line of responsibility between the Naval command and the Army command at Rabaul?
A. He says there is no division point. The command at Rabaul has the command of overall territory.
- Q. Did the command at Lae ground forces or Navy command call for supplies or reinforcements which might have been sent from another station other than Rabaul to supply Lae?
A. He states that yes there has been many reports calling for reinforcements but every time they used transports they were sunk. So destroyers and submarines were used to re-supply.
- Q. I understand from your statement that yes there were other ships came in individually?
A. They tried it but every time they did they were sunk so they gave up the idea.
- Q. Where did Colonel Shinohara get the specific locations of sinkings?
A. He states that he wrote the record down of these shipping losses and remembers only this and when called to report here he knew he had this and thought it might help.

- Q. He wrote that down at the time of the battle?
- A. It was not that day. He got the report as it came in slow but sure.
- Q. Did that information come to him by radio distress or how?
- A. From two different sources. From the observation planes and from fellows saved from the sinking ships.
- Q. Did any of those ships send in radio reports that they were sinking?
- A. He says that they did not send out any wireless for they did not have the time.
- Q. What were the results of this battle as pertains to future Jap plans for their campaign in that area?
- A. He states that after the battle here they came to the conclusion here they could not supply any of those areas here with transports as it was too dangerous and the best means was to supply the area with submarines and destroyers. That would be slow and useless. After the battle here no ships were sent to Rabaul but were sent from Palau down. Re-supply after this battle was by barges along the shore.
- Q. Did they lose many of these barges?
- A. Yes, they lost many to our strafers.
- Q. Was Colonel Shinohara in such a position at Rabaul that he was well informed of all re-supply and reinforcement operations?
- A. He knows of all the supply demands of all the other outside areas for they were sent in by wireless.
- Q. Did he know if supplies were requested from other stations if they could not supply them from Rabaul?
- A. Supplies were sent to Lae and Bougainville from Rabaul Area. New Guinea was supplied from Palau.
- Q. Does he remember the names of the destroyers that were sunk in the Lae convoy here.
- A. He does not remember.
- Q. Can he get a record that would show that?
- A. He does not think he could get the information. He would like to make it clear there was no such boat as Teiryō but it was Teiyo. Kamu and Kembu were the same ship.
- Q. Does Colonel Shinohara know the method by which the Japanese have determined the cause of sinkings? In other words, did they have sufficient definite information when a ship was sunk to know exactly the cause of it?
- A. The method of finding out is from the boats that gave protection or from airplanes or fellows rescued and also by wireless.
- Q. What if the boat is by itself?
- A. He says if it is one by itself the only way they can find out is by the people that are saved.
- Q. Was the standard procedure for a boat to keep radio silence?
- A. It is standard procedure to use the wireless when in danger but when they were attacked by torpedos or mines the mechanism was sometimes broken.
- Q. If a ship is hit by an airplane and goes down rapidly and they are unable to send a wireless report, do they just call the ship missing or attribute it to a submarine, airplane or just call it missing?
- A. After a period of time if the boat does not come back and no information is had on it, it is classified as sunk but they do not say by what method.
- Q. I would like his estimate or the percentage of vessels that went down on which they had no definite information?
- A. He states there would be comparatively few in that category now because most boats go out in numbers. It is the observation of other ships that will record the method that caused that ship to go down.

Q. Are sufficient records in existence in the Jap Army or Navy file to give us an accurate account of the location of sinkings and the cause of the sinkings?

A. He says he doubts whether you can get it. At first he had it but the records were burned. Higher command ordered that during defeat all records be burned.

Q. Does he have any idea as to any records that are available which would give me the type of information which I desire?

A. He has only his notes.

Q. What agencies are in Tokyo that might have that information?

A. He does not know if there is any record on hand. If you will ask the Liaison Officer in the Demobilization Section, they might get that (information) for you.