

HEADQUARTERS
U.S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)
APO #234
C/O POSTMASTER, SAN FRANCISCO

INTERROGATION NO: 263

PLACE: TOKYO
DATE: 6 November 1945
TIME: 1430

Division of Origin: Military Analysis Division.

SUBJECT: Air Transport Department of J.A.A.F.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Major General HORIUCHI Asahi, Commanding General of the Department, formerly engaged in signal and communications work for the J.A.A.F.

Where Interviewed: Room 748, MEIJI Building.

Interrogators: Major BRAUCHER and Capt. LOGAN

Interpreter: Mr. T. YOSHIHASHI

Allied Officers Present: None

SUMMARY

This interrogation covered the organization and operation of the Air Transport Department of the J.A.A.F., including total number of planes ferried, equipment and personnel transported, and losses involved.

Interrogation

- Q. Can you tell me approximately the number of planes assigned to Koku Yusobu (Air Transport Department)?
- A. The purpose of this organization was to ferry planes from the manufacturer to the fighting zones. It is hard to say how many were assigned. There were eight Squadrons of ten planes to a Squadron, or about eighty planes under Koku Yusobu.
- Q. It is my understanding that it was your job to get these planes from the manufacturer to the front, and you had a lot of pilots to ferry the planes back and forth.
- A. That is right.
- Q. Were there any extra pilots in addition to the ones you mention here?
- A. Yes, these were organized into Shotai (Flight Section) of five pilots each. There were from 100 to 120 pilots at the end of the war.
- Q. What was your peak year?
- A. July, 1944.
- Q. Do you have any figures on the number before that time?
- A. In 1943 we had 31 to 35 Shotai, whereas in the peak year, 1944, we had 43 Shotai, making about 215 pilots.
- Q. Before 1943 were many pilots ferrying planes to the Southern area?
- A. This work was organized in the early part of 1943, and I was not in charge before that. Apparently there was not too much of that going on. It was only after the Koku Yusobu was organized. The organization prior to that was under the Air Depots, a special section specializing in ferrying.
- Q. That was in 1942. Do you know if any planes were ferried down to the Southern area in 1942?
- A. Some planes were ferried to Manchuria and China but not many besides that.
- Q. When this organization was formed how far did they ferry the planes? Did they ferry them as far as Wewak?
- A. I do not know for sure but I have heard that some were ferried to Hollandia, Singapore and maybe Wewak.
- Q. Can you give us any figures as to how many other planes were ferried out of Japan proper to all areas?
- A. About 500 per month during the year 1943. About 500 to 600 in 1944 and the first part of 1945, and about 400 to 450 in 1942. I do not have the overall figure for this reason: There were some officers that took their own planes. Also some planes were assigned to students at the air schools and ferried by them.
- Q. Do they include planes which were ferried within Japan?
- A. It does not include domestic.
- Q. Can you give me approximately the number of planes that were lost while being ferried to these areas?
- A. In 1942 and 1943 none lost in combat; 10 to 15%, due to accident.
- Q. Were any of these repairable?
- A. As far as I know, not all of them were totally damaged. About half were repairable and saw further active service later.
- Q. What were the principal causes of these accidents?

Interrogation Cont'd

A. Errors made by the pilots and poor quality of the planes.

Q. Was that after 1943?

A. Especially in 1945. There were quite a number of structural defects this year.

Q. Do you have the percentages for 1944 and 1945?

A. In 1945, 10 to 15%; in 1944, about 20%, an increase of 5%.

Q. Were the same number repairable out of that figure?

A. I do not know. Many of them made emergency landings on isolated islands.

Q. How many were lost due to combat in 1944?

A. In 1944 about 100 pilots died in combat.

Q. In ferrying planes to the Philippines did you lose more planes in the latter part of 1944?

A. Yes, most of the losses were sustained in the Philippines.

Q. Would you say that along with the 100 pilots lost there were 100 planes lost or were there some pilots that escaped when their plane was lost?

A. It is hard to say. On the trip back sometimes there ~~are~~ ^{are} 10 pilots on one plane. The cases of bailing out and saving life are very few.

Q. How about in 1945?

A. About sixty perished.

Q. What percent of the planes were lost due to accident?

A. About 20%.

Q. Another one of the officers in Koku Hombu (Air Headquarters) has stated that about 50% were lost in going from Kyushu to Okinawa in 1945.

A. That is not the rule but there were some cases where we lost the whole Shotai. That is not the average.

Q. Do you think that the figure of 50% repairable is too high?

A. I think that less than 50% were repairable as most of the planes that were lost fell in the sea.

Q. Do you think that out of the planes which were ferried only 20% were lost?

A. I will change that. It is possibly a little bit more than that, including accident and combat in 1944. This 20% is just for accidents.

Q. If you ferried 500 planes per month did you lose 100 pilots per month or 100 during 1944?

A. One hundred pilots in one year.

Q. Where did these pilots come from? Did they receive the regular army pilot training?

A. Yes.

Q. How were they selected for this work?

A. They were selected primarily for their traits. We preferred men with perseverance rather than the brave. These traits were observed in training.

Interrogation Cont'd

- Q. After the Philippine Campaign we understand that the pilot training was cut short. Did that effect the pilots that you got?
- A. It has effected the quality of our pilots a great deal.
- Q. Did that lead to more accidents?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Was a very large percentage of the accidents due to the condition of the fields along the ferry route.
- A. I think that the accidents were mostly due to the defects in the motor and body of the planes rather than in the fields.
- Q. What were the principal stopping points between Kyushu and Singapore?
- A. Naha, Taihoku, Canton, Tourane or Hanoi, Saigon, Singapore. There were occasions when they went to Manila and Kuching, Bornea.
- Q. How many planes were taken to all parts of the Southern area?
- A. I do not know how many in all.
- Q. Were any planes taken down to Hollandia, Wewak or Rabeul by carrier?
- A. I do not know.
- Q. Did you have any planes in Koku Yusobu for transporting materials?
- A. There wasn't any special planes to carry materials except there were big planes to bring back the pilots and these planes would carry materials up and bring pilots back.
- Q. Did the bombers carry any materials?
- A. They carried personnel as well as parts for the planes on these bombers.
- Q. Did these planes carry ground personnel or ranking staff officers?
- A. There were pilots and officers who had a change in assignment.
- Q. Did they ever carry anything like medical supplies or any other materials for the ground troops?
- A. I think at times they did carry medical supplies as well as supplies for the ground troops.
- Q. Were any planes transported by ships?
- A. I think some small types like fighters were taken down by ship but I do not know how many.
- Q. These were Army planes on Navy ships?
- A. I think there were special boats for transporting planes. I do not think it was Navy carriers that took the planes down. It was a boat with a wide deck.
- Q. Were they under the same jurisdiction as Koku Yusobu?
- A. No.
- Q. Was any equipment for the Infantry brought in by Koku Yusobu?
- A. I think not.
- Q. Could you give us any figures on how much equipment was moved in this way?
- A. In 1943 about 4,000 men and 163 tons of material; 1944, 5,760 men and 230 tons of material; 1945, 1,764 men and 245 tons of materials.

Interrogation Cont'd

- Q. Did the air crews in Koku Yusobu receive any further training after they left the Kyoiku Hikotai (Training Flying Units) before they went into Koku Yusobu?
- A. They came directly from Kyoiku Hikotai to Koku Yusobu.
- Q. Did you or your predecessor at Koku Yuseby send such pilots fresh from school direct to overseas stations with new aircraft?
- Q. After they came from Kyoiku Hikotai they were given some additional training.
- Q. What kind of training?
- A. Navigation and just putting in time.
- Q. Did you ever give pilots training by using them for domestic ferrying before using them for overseas?
- A. Yes, we used green pilots to ferry planes from the factory to the Koku Yusobu air fields. I did not have anything to do with ferrying planes within Japan.
- Q. What was the minimum number of flying hours that a pilot would have before he would be sent on overseas ferrying?
- A. About 500 hours.
- Q. What would be the minimum flying hours for a Shotai leader?
- A. About 1500.
- Q. For the ordinary pilot what would be the average at the end of the war for pilots going overseas?
- A. Towards the end of the war it dropped and we have had men with from 240 to 250 hours. The average was about 500 as some had 1000.
- Q. The minimum of 500 then was the amount you would have required if you had had enough pilots?
- A. There was no minimum requirements. If they were capable pilots 240 to 250 hours would be acceptable.
- Q. Was there any requirement for Shotai leaders?
- A. No requirements for a Shotai leader.
- Q. But the normal Shotai leader would have 1500 hours?
- A. Any officer that was worthy of becoming a leader of Shotai would have that many.
- Q. Did the average number of flying hours for overseas duty decrease as the war progressed?
- A. Yes.
- Q. When did it start to decrease?
- A. I think it was about the middle of 1944 when it started.
- Q. Did you always have enough crews to ferry all the planes that you were supposed to ferry?
- A. Towards the end we had a surplus of pilots.
- Q. There was never a shortage of pilots?
- A. About July and August of 1944 there was a time when actually the planes were more numerous than the pilots.

- Q. Why was this?
- A. Because of the very heavy load of ferrying going into the Philippines.
- Q. Were pilots with combat experience ever assigned to Koku Yusobu?
- A. Quite a number. Those were the ones that became leaders of the Shotai.
- Q. Did crews or pilots of the Koku Yusobu ever transfer to a combat unit?
- A. Seldom have we ever had that much reserve. We were always getting them from elsewhere.
- Q. What would be the total personnel strength including air crews and ground crews in all the units of Koku Yusobu at the end of the War?
- A. Air crews, 500; ground crews, 2000; but this would include the civilian workers as well as enlisted men.
- Q. Were those mostly servicing personnel or administrative personnel?
- A. They were mostly servicing personnel. Top mechanics were about 10% and the rest were laborers, including women.
- Q. That was in addition to Kokurobu (Air Route Department)?
- A. Yes.
- Q. In transferring planes overseas was there always an experienced Shotai leader in the flight?
- A. Yes, there was always a leader.
- Q. Were the figures for personnel that you gave me much changed during the course of the war?
- A. There was no great change.
- Q. Was Koku Yusobu ever concerned with the dropping of supplies by parachute?
- A. No.
- Q. Did you ever do any testing of new planes?
- A. No.
- Q. What organization did do test flights for new army aircraft?
- A. If it was new models it was done by the Koku Shinsabu (Air Testing Department) but if it was another of the current model it was done by the department known as Hikehan (Flight Squad) in the Kokusho (Air Depot).
- Q. When pilots of the Koku Yusobu went from the field to the factory to get planes, they did not fly those planes until the test pilot from the Kokusho had already finished testing them?
- A. That is right.
- Q. Do you think that this arrangement was a good one?
- A. When the planes roll out of the factory, men from Koku Yusobu would be there, and they would watch the tests. That has been a great problem. It was very unsatisfactory. The main confusion was as to the planes' durability. A new plane will normally fly well, but our men were more interested in what would happen on a long trip.
- Q. Was the testing process cut down too short in your opinion?
- A. I have always held that the test flights were too short.

Q. Do you know the reason why they cut it?

A. The demand from the theatres of war to get planes as quickly as possible. As the manufacturers could not supply as many as were demanded, naturally to meet the quota they would put out rough stuff. Some factories put out good planes and some put out bad planes.

Q. Which companies put out good planes and which put out bad planes?

A. It wasn't so much the company as the model which they came out with. KI-84 (Frank) at Utsonomiya was very poor. It came from Nakajima.

Q. What was the relationship between Koku Yusobu and Nampo Koku Yusobu (Southern Air Transport Department)?

A. No relationship.

Q. Did Nampo Koku Yusobu do the same type of work as Koku Yusobu?

A. Yes.

Q. What was the division of responsibility between Koku Yusobu and Nampo Koku Yusobu?

A. The Koku Yusobu would take materials as far as Saigon and from there on Nampo Koku Yusobu would take over.

Q. Did Nampo Koku Yusobu operate planes over the same routes as Koku Yusobu?

A. Rather than parallel it was more of relaying. What Koku Yusobu brought Nampo Koku Yusobu relayed on.

Q. Do you know any officer that we could ask about Nampo Koku Yusobu that is available in Tokyo?

A. Major General Fujimoto. He is not in Tokyo.

Q. Is he in Japan?

A. I cannot say.

Q. As I understand it Nampo Koku Yusobu would operate up to a certain air field and Koku Yusobu would operate down to that air field but they would not overlap in area?

A. As far as I know there was none.

Q. Can you approximate the line of demarcation?

A. I am not too certain but I think it was from Tourane south.

Q. Was there any other organization in the Japanese Army which transported cargo or passengers by air?

A. No, there were times when they appropriated the civilian airplanes belonging to newspapers and these planes were put under command of Koku Yusobu.

Q. What were the airfields used by Koku Yusobu in Japan and what were the plane types at each field?

Interrogation Cont'd

A.	<u>Airfield</u>	<u>Type of Plane</u>	<u>Allied Code Name</u>
(End of war)			
	Tokorozawa	KI-57	
	Tekahagi	KI-43	Oscar
	Ota	KI-84	Frank
	Utsonomiya	KI-84	Frank
	Hamamatsu	KI-21,67,48	Sally, Peggy, Lily
	Komaki	KI-43,61,100	Oscar, Tony, modified Tony
	Yokaichi	KI-46,49	Dinah, Helen
	Tachiarai	KI-27	Nate

(Previous to
end of war)

Kakogawa
Osaka
Nittabara
Kameyama

Q. Did you ever ferry any trainers?

A. We never ferried them overseas. Occasionally we delivered them within Japan in order to train our less experienced pilots. We also had some trainers of our own for the same purpose.