

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

RESTRICTED

INTERROGATION NO. 457

PLACE: Tokyo

DATE: 24 Nov 1945

Division of Origin: Military Analysis.

Subject: Japanese Aircraft.

Personnel interrogated and Background.



Lt. Comdr. OHIRA was born in 1914. He graduated from the Naval College in March 1937. In April 1938 he was assigned to the Training Corps (RENSHU KOKUTAI) as 2nd Lieut. He received 10 months experience on carrier-borne attack planes, followed by 2 months on land-based attack planes. He was then transferred from KISARADZU to MIHORO, where for 22 months he was attached to a land-based unit. He was here promoted to Lt. Comdr. In August 1942, he was transferred to YOKOSUKA 1st Naval Air Technical Arsenal, as a member of the Air Experimental Department. His work here consisted of testing experimental models of land-based bombers. In 1944 he was transferred to a branch of the YOKOSUKA Naval Air Station at MISAWA.

where Interrogated: Meiji Building Room 340.

Interrogator: Major John J. Driscoll

Interpreter: Mr. YANO Haro

Allied Officers Present: None.

SUMMARY

Lt. Comdr OHIRA was primarily familiar with Navy Bombers. However, he also had some knowledge of the airborne radar equipment. He was, from personal observation, familiar with the training of BAKA pilots, and on one occasion personally released a BAKA over YOKOSUKA.

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Q. How many flying hours do you have?

A. About 3500.

Q. How many of these hours were in combat?

A. Between 400 and 500.

Q. With which aircraft are you familiar?

A.	TYPE	REMARKS
	Type 97 Carrier-based Torpedo Bomber	No combat experience. Use for training only. (In 1939, before the war.)
	Type 96 (Model 21) 2-engine Bomber	Used in combat.
	Type 96 (Model 23) 2-engine Bomber.	Tested superficially.
	Type 1, (Models 11, 22 and 24) 2-engine Bombers.	Tested
	RENZAN 4-Engine Bomber (Homare Type 24 Engines)	Tested

Q. What Radar equipment was used on these aircraft?

A. Practically the only one in use was the Type 3 Mark 6 Model 4 Radar apparatus. It was noted for its frequent breakdown. Also, there were few qualified operators, due to the shortening of the training courses, with the subsequent lack of time for mastering so intricate a machine. This apparatus was only installed on the Types 1 and 96 land-based bombers. Plans had been initiated to install radar on all types, but the supply was limited.

Q. Did you ever carry any guided missiles or special-type bombs?

A. I once carried a SAKURA BANA (BAKA).

Q. What was the purpose of the operation?

A. It was to give the BAKA pilot training, and was done at YOKOSUKA.

Q. What did the training program consist of?

A. The training was primarily done in the Zero fighter. The procedure was to climb to altitude, and to then commence gliding into the airfield at a 7:1 angle which was the normal BAKA gliding angle. The engine was throttled down to reduce resistance, and an attempt was made to land near a pre-designated spot (target).

Q. What other training did the BAKA pilots receive?

A. They were first taught to solo, prior to the Zero gliding training. And after being checked out on gliding into the target, they were released in the training model BAKA two or three times.

Q. Were there many losses in the BAKA training?

A. There may have been other losses, but I personally know of one death to a pilot of the training-model BAKA.

Q. Do you know if these pilots were volunteers?

A. I believe most of them were.

Q. What effect did the BAKA have on the parent plane?

A. The range on the Type 1 (Betty) was decreased from 2000 to 500-600 miles; and the speed from 230 to 200 knots. This was due to the weight of the BAKA which was about 2 tons.

Q. At what speed was the BAKA released?

A. At about 140 knots. This was very important as speeds above or below this brought about the danger of a collision between the BAKA and mother plane.

Q. What was the method of approaching the target?

A. The BAKA was released at 3000 meters. The BAKA glide angle required that the altitude of release be 1/7th of the distance of the target.

Q. List all the aircraft you have flown and any defects and maintenance problems.

A.	Type	Defect	Maintenance difficulty
1.	Type 96 land based attack plane	Weak defensive fire-power. 1 20mm and 1 7.7mm gun have an insufficient field of fire. Performance characteristics of the plane were poor. It had no defensive power and according to my opinion it is an old type plane with little combat value.	Since it was an old plane the maintenance was easy and familiar. They could fix it up quickly.
2.	Type 1 land based attack plane	Weak defensive power. It exploded easily when hit. It had a 13mm MG (and was known as "one shot fighter.") It was ineffectual against B-29s due to its poor comparative performance.	Although the plane was first built in 1937, the plane was difficult to repair due to its poor construction which is a result of our present poor production quality.
3.	SHINZAN	Poor performance (Old Model).	
4.	RENZAN 4-motored bomber	It was thought that a long range plane was necessary. We were in the midst of testing and perfecting a new model.	I feel that it was difficult for our factories to make a large model 4-motored plane and maintain it adequately.

Q. What are your opinions on Allied Aircraft?

- A. 1. I do not believe that we could surpass the superiority of the equipment and the reliability of the Allied aircraft due to the great advances of their productive capacity.
- 2. The defensive power (weapons, armor, ability to keep in the air after being hit, etc) of the allied aircraft was a great advantage to them in combat.
- 3. The Japanese were not able in their aircraft production and development to equal allied hydromechanical and mathematical ability. The allies made better use of these technical subjects in their production. They were not only familiar with mathematics in their laboratories, but they were able to use it in combat effectively.
- 4. More important, Japanese productive capacity in aircraft could never equal that of America.

Q. What are your opinions on a comparison of the defensive ability of Japanese and Allied bombers?

A. As I previously stated due to poor Japanese production, the equipment was poor. Although the Japanese air force has great morale, namely a willingness to sacrifice their lives in defense, the performance of our planes was much poorer than those of the Allied forces. Although we improved the quality of our machine guns, our development of defensive cannons for large bombers and of power gun mounts was very slow. Furthermore, because there was insufficient training in the sighting and firing of power gun mounts, the losses in heavy bombers were very great. A unified aircraft production program throughout the country is very essential.