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

INTERROGATION NO. (USSES 420)
NAV. NO. 87

PLACE: TOKYO
DATE: 27 October 1945

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: First Air Fleet - Spring 1944.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Captain FUCHIDA, Mitsuo, I.J.N., a permanent naval officer and naval aviator was Senior Staff Officer of the First Air Fleet, 7 March to 20 June 1944.



Where interviewed: Navy Staff College.

Interrogator: Captain Steadman TELLER, U.S.N.

Interpreter: Lt. Comdr. Seymore MILLSTEIN, USNR.

Allied Officers Present: Lt. Comdr. R.P. AIKEN.

SUMMARY

Captain FUCHIDA provides the organization strength and disposition of the First Air Fleet at the time of the first UNITED STATES carrier attack on the MARIANAS 22 February 1944. This air fleet was in process of deploying its units to the MARIANAS at the time and all of the approximate 120 aircraft in the islands were destroyed or severely damaged.

Night aircraft torpedo tactics for attack on UNITED STATES Task Forces were changed radically in February 1944 from a form of coordinated attack which required skillful pilots to a less complicated method.

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TRANSCRIPT

Q. Describe the organization, strength and disposition of the First Air Fleet on 20 February 1944?

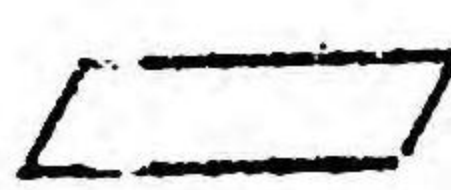
A. The diagram I have prepared shows the information. The First Air Fleet was in process of organizing and training in JAPAN and deploying some of its units to the south, hence the figures on strength represent that to which we were building up. The actual strength was about 500 of which 380 were in JAPAN. When your carrier aircraft struck the MARIANAS on 22 February, 120 aircraft had reached those islands and all were destroyed or seriously damaged in the course of the attack or operations incident there-to. I know that 40 of our aircraft were lost during attack operations against your Task Force the night of 21/22 February and that next day 20 were shot down and 30 destroyed on the ground. I cannot explain the difference between this total of 90 and the figure of 120 lost which appears in the diagram.

By May 1944 the actual strength of the First Air Fleet was only about 400 planes in spite of our attempts to build it up. This was due to the constant attrition in actions with UNITED STATES carrier forces and in the Central Pacific Islands. None of the First Air Fleet's planes were sent to NEW GUINEA during this period.

Operational losses during ferrying flights at this time averaged about 10%. The small carriers TAIYO, JUNYO and CHUYO were used to transport aircraft. Previous to this the RASUGA MARU also had been used.

	C.O. - Type A/C and strength	Bases
<u>121 Air Corps</u>	M. IWAO, Comdr. (KATORI) SUISEI 48 (Rec.)	<u>TINIAN</u> 10
<u>261 Air Corps</u>	T. UEDO, Comdr. (KAGOSHIMA) ZERO F. 96	SAIPAN
<u>263 Air Corps</u>	A. TAIJI, Comdr. (MATSUYAMA) ZERO F. 96	<u>GUAM</u> 30
<u>265 Air Corps</u>	T. URATA, Comdr. (SHINCHIKU) ZERO F. 96	-- SAIPAN
<u>321 Air Corps</u>	T. KUBO, Comdr. (KATORI) GEKKO 48	<u>TINIAN</u> 10
<u>343 Air Corps</u>	M. TAKENAKA, Comdr. (TATEYAMA) SHIDEN 96	-- TINIAN
<u>1st Air Fleet</u>	G. KAMEI, CAPT. (KISARAZU) GINGA 96	-- GUAM
Commander in Chief K. KAKUDA	T. WADA, Comdr. (SUZUKA) SUISEI 96 (Bomb)	<u>TINIAN</u> 20
Vice Admiral Chief of Staff Y. MIWA Capt.	S. MATSUMOTO, Comdr. (KANNOYA) ICHISHIKI 96 (Torpedo)	<u>TINIAN</u> 40
Senior Staff M. FUCHIDA Comdr.	H. AWANOHARA, Comdr. (KATORI) DOUGLAS 48	<u>SAIPAN</u> 10
(KANYA-KATORI) <u>TINIAN</u>		
	Total 816	Lost 120

Note:

 Arrived at MARIANA by 20 February of losses in UNITED STATES Carrier Strikes on 22 February.

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TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Captain FUCHIDA, Mitsuo, I.J.N.) - -

Q. Do you know why the UNITED STATES Carrier Task Force was unopposed in its approach to TRUK on 16 February 1944?

A. The first positive warning of your approach was given by our radar detecting your planes 30 minutes before the first attack. Six reconnaissance planes and bombers were sent immediately to attack the force. None of these planes returned.

Q. Describe the tactics used by your torpedo planes in attacking UNITED STATES Task Forces at night.

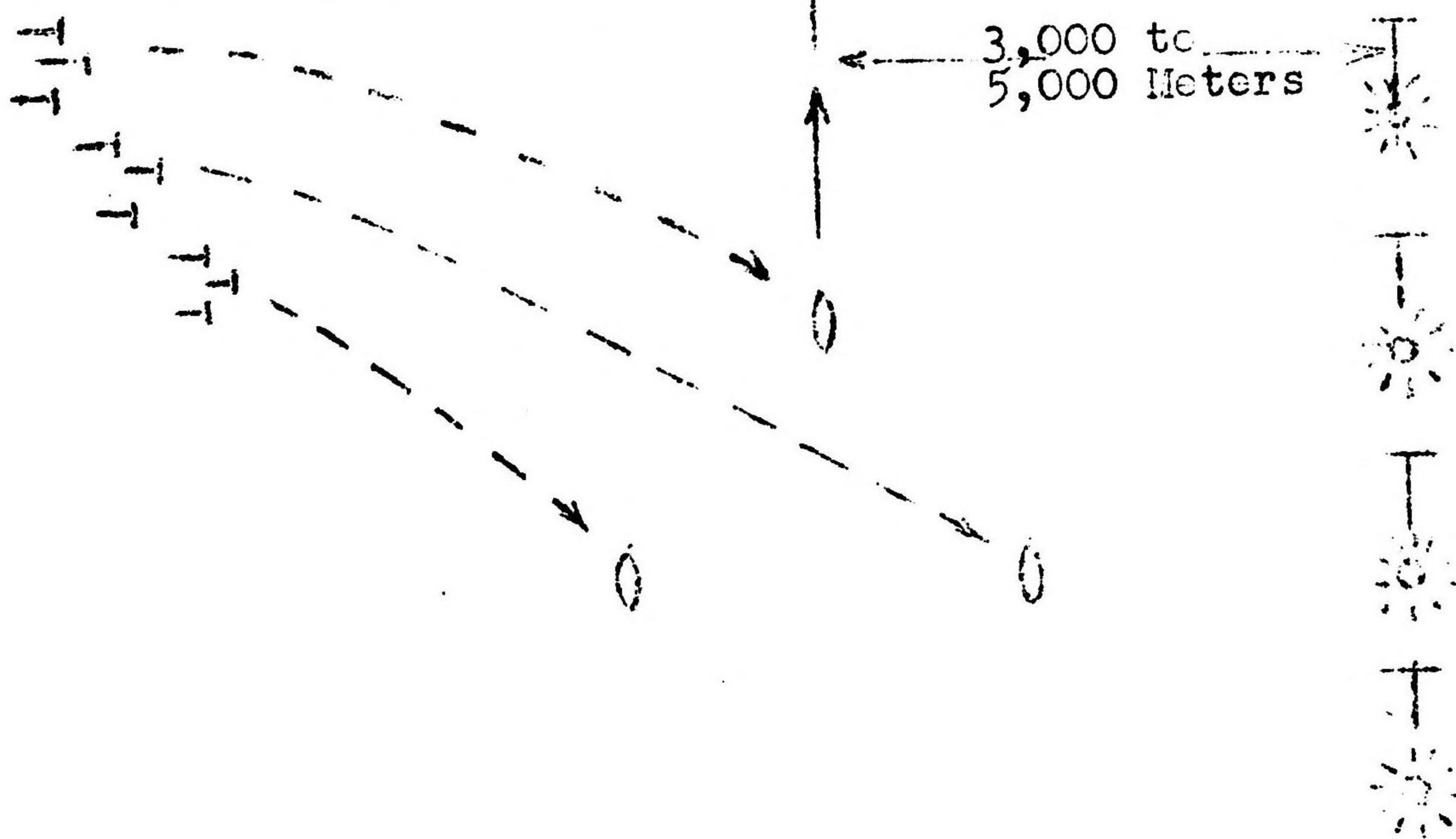
A. (Refer to Annex A). Until February 1944 a method of coordinated attack was used in which all torpedo planes attacked from one side as soon as proper illumination had been provided by illuminating planes which dropped flares (1,000,000 candle power) a distance of 3,000 to 5,000 meters on the opposite side of the force being attacked. This type of coordinated attack required skillful pilots.

In February 1944 the method was changed to one in which the illuminating planes circled the ships to be attacked at a radius of 3,000 to 5,000 meters and dropped flares at 20 minutes intervals. The attacking planes also circled the ships but at about 10,000 meters radius. When the flare illumination was correct for one section in position to attack, that section went in without further orders. Thus the attack was prolonged, but did not require a high degree of coordination and, therefore, not many skillful pilots. This method was attempted without success against your force approaching the MARIANAS during the night of 21 - 22 February 1944.

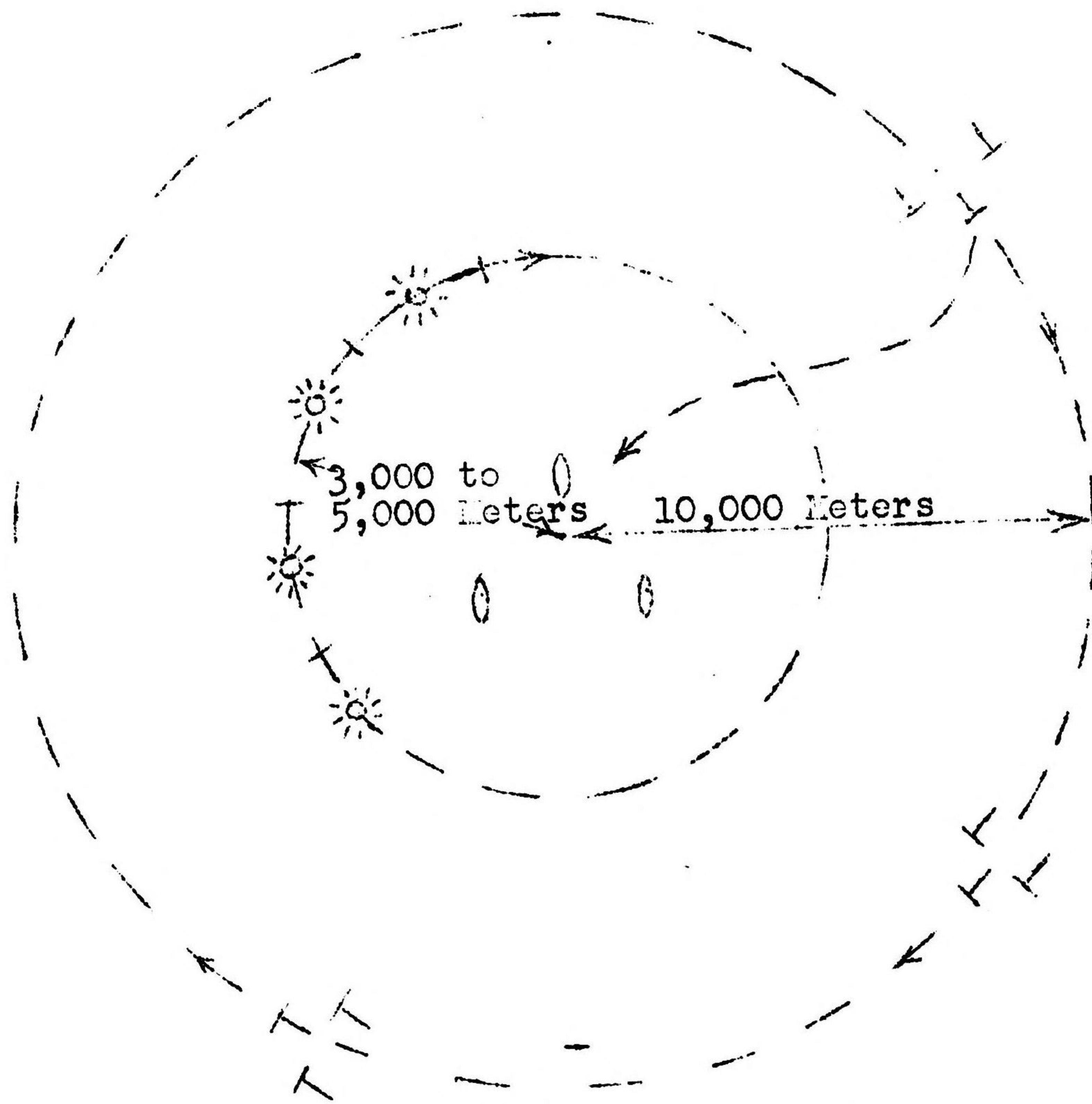
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TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Captain FUCHIDA, Mitsuo, IJN.) . . .



Coordinated night torpedo plane attack employed by Japanese Naval aircraft until February 1944.



Wave form of night aircraft torpedo attack employed after February 1944.

ANNEX A

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