

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

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS NO. 33)  
(NAV-7)

PLACE, TOKYO  
DATE 15 Oct. TIME 0930.

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: Occupation of PHILIPPINES and DUTCH EAST INDIES.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

VICE ADMIRAL SHIRAICHI, Kazutaka, IJN, RETIRED, was Chief of Staff of the Second Fleet from December 1941 to March 1943, operating in the South-West Pacific. He was then assigned to the Naval Staff Academy in TOKYO as an instructor. In September 1943 he assumed command of the Seventh Cruiser Squadron operating in the PHILIPPINES Area and held that position until October 1944. From October 1944 until the end of the war he was Chief of Merchant Crews in TOKYO.

Where interviewed: Room 722, MEIJI Building.

Interrogator: T.H. MOORER, Commander, USN.

Interpreter: S. MILLSTEIN, Lt. Comdr., USNR.

Allied Officers Present: Brig. Gen. Grandison Gardner, USA; Lt. Comdr.  
J. A. Field, Jr., USNR.

SUMMARY

The Second Fleet (Vice Admiral Kondo) was assigned the mission of supporting the invasion of the Philippines, Netherland East Indies and British Malaya. The fleet rendezvoused in the INLAND SEA about the middle of November 1941. About 23 November the fleet sortied from the INLAND SEA and proceeded south towards FORMOSA. There a dispatch was received establishing "D" day and the move on the Philippines was initiated.

During the approach to the Philippines, no attack was expected and none received. Probable attack by B-17s was expected within the 600 mile circle. To reduce the weight of these attacks land based planes from FORMOSA were assigned the mission of destroying American Air Power on the ground. This they succeeded in doing and consequently no major unit of the Fleet was damaged in the Philippines operation.

The Second Fleet was divided into various task forces as the move southward into the East Indies progressed. Although the Battle of the JAVA SEA was a victory for the Japanese, Admiral SHIRAICHI considered that the Japanese used poor tactics and were unnecessarily delayed by the battle.

The entire campaign went exactly according to plan except for a few small delays caused by submarine attacks and fuel oil shortage. Total losses suffered by the Japanese were less than expected.

TRANSCRIPT

Q. Have you been interrogated previously relative to the campaign in the Philippines in 1941-42?

A. This is the first time.

Transcript of Interrogation (Vice Admiral Kasutaka SHIRAI, IJN)

- Q. Were you actively engaged in the general planning prior to the outbreak of the war for the campaign of the Philippines and East Indies?
- A. As the Second Fleet was under the Grand Fleet all the plans were made by the Grand Fleet. I merely carried out orders according to the plans provided. I did not take part in the over-all planning.
- Q. Were you familiar with the general plans for the entire Pacific operations? Were you aware of the Pearl Harbor strike?
- A. I had complete instructions sent from headquarters.
- Q. Will you give me a brief summary of the various forces into which the Japanese Fleet was divided?
- A. The Grand Fleet was divided into five fleets as follows:  
1st Flt - BB's; 2nd Flt - BB's, CA's, CL's, DD's; 3rd Flt - CV's; 4th Flt - CL's, DD's, (Wake and Guam) 6th Flt - SS. Forces were reassigned as necessary to various Fleets.
- Q. Do you recall the exact date for "Y" day?
- A. I don't know. I will find out.
- Q. What were the five rendezvous points of the various forces prior to commencement of hostilities?
- A. Fleet One and Two assembled in the Inland Sea, the other two rendezvous were kept secret but I believe that the Third Fleet rendezvoused at Hokkaido, the Fourth Fleet consisted of small ships in the Guam Wake area. I am not sure about the Sixth Fleet.
- Q. When did the Second Fleet assemble in the Inland Sea preparatory to leaving Japan?
- A. I don't know the exact date, but will try to find out. The approximate date of the rendezvous was about a month before the start of the war, and I think the fleet left the Inland Sea about two weeks before the start of the war.
- Q. Where was the Second Fleet when the orders were received from General Headquarters establishing "D" Day?
- A. Right after they left Bako Pescadore. They received the orders establishing "D" Day.
- Q. Do you know who thought of the attack on Pearl Harbor and who worked out the plans?
- A. I haven't the slightest idea who devised the plan.
- Q. Do you know if any thought was given to the possibility of the Japanese moving into the Dutch East Indies without attacking Pearl Harbor at all?
- A. I did not know that the war was going to break out at all and did not know the actual plans. I thought that the differences would be settled by negotiation and that there must have been a way out for Japan rather than to go into war.
- Q. Were you surprised at the outbreak of the war?
- A. I thought war should have been avoided, but once the war started I did my utmost to carry out the orders I received.

Transcript of Interrogation (Vice Admiral Kasutaka SHIRAICHI, IJN)

I was not surprised at the start of the war. I realized that the situation had deteriorated.

Q. Do you remember approximately how many airplanes were in the 11th Air Fleet?

A. I do not know.

Q. Were Army and Navy Planes engaged in the Philippines and Dutch East Indies campaign?

A. Yes.

Q. In general was the Japanese Navy Pilot considered superior to the Army Pilot?

A. Yes, the Navy Pilots are better.

Q. Describe the movements of the fleet from Bako down to the Philippines. What reaction was expected from the U.S. Fleet?

A. I didn't think the American Fleet would attack the Second Fleet. Strong opposition from American based planes in Nichols Field was expected.

Q. After receiving news of the success of Pearl Harbor, was the plan for the occupation of the Philippines changed?

A. There was no change in the plan.

Q. During the Philippines operation, did you expect the U.S. fleet to be reinforced?

A. Yes, I expected reinforcements from the states but I thought it would take about one month for reinforcements to come to the Philippines.

Q. At what time during the approach to the Philippines did you expect the attack by aircraft?

A. The fleet was alerted when 600 miles away. Attack by B-17 was expected but I didn't think it would be severe.

Q. During the approach did you have air coverage from Formosa?

A. I didn't expect any direct reinforcements from the Japanese land based air but expected indirect coverage. That is destruction of B-17's on the ground before they could take off.

Q. Did the planes which attacked Nichols Field take off from Formosa?

A. They all came from Formosa.

Q. Army or Navy planes?

A. Both. I knew nothing of the air operations but knew that the fleet was going to get a certain amount of air force assistance which was used.

Q. On December 10th there were about 200,000 tons of allied shipping at Manila Harbor. Why was this 200,000 tons of vital shipping allowed to escape?

A. Reasons were:

1. The duty of the airplanes was to attack American planes.

Transcript of Interrogation (Vice Admiral Dasutaka SHIRAICHI, IJN)

2. Poor intelligence regarding the fact that the shipping was there.

3. The attack was not in the plans, this is the first news that I have of such shipping. The general plan was to knock out only those offensive weapons which might be used against the Japanese.

Q. What ship was the Admiral in?

A. Etageb (CA)

Q. Did the American boats attack the Japanese fleet?

A. The main body of the fleet was not attacked by air.

Q. Was the Second Fleet attacked by B-17's?

A. As far as I know there was no attack by B-17's.

Q. Was any damage at all suffered by the Second Fleet?

A. The destroyers were damaged by airplanes as they went so close to the shore to transport troops. Big ships didn't go near the shore. One light cruiser was damaged however.

Q. And the heavy cruiser and battleship weren't damaged?

A. No.

Q. Why did not the movement from the Philippines south proceed at faster pace?

A. Mostly due to the fuel supply. The shortage of fuel made the movement very slow. The supply fleet had to go around Formosa in order to deliver the fuel.

Q. Do you feel that the occupation of the Philippines and Dutch East Indies went exactly according to plan as far as time was concerned?

A. There was a delay about one week but no more, otherwise it went according to plan.

Q. Was the loss of ships and personnel more or less than expected?

A. Less than expected.

Q. Do you know what type of airplanes attacked the Repulse and Prince of Wales?

A. Navy planes, land based.

Q. Did the destruction of these two battleships change the plans for the occupation of Singapore?

A. Did not change the plans but the effect on Japanese morale was very great.

Q. Did you expect the British to replace those ships?

A. No.

Q. Where were the planes that attacked the Prince of Wales based?

A. Saigon.

Transcript of Interrogation (Vice Admiral Kasutaka SHIRAICHI, IJN) - - -

Q. At what time during the over-all campaign did the carriers take part? When did they join the fleet?

A. I don't remember the actual date when the CV aircraft participated, but it was not until the fleet was actually in the Sulu Sea Area.

Q. What places did the carrier airplanes attack?

A. The planes from the task force attacked Colombia, Darwin, and others that I can not recall. The small carrier based planes from the light carriers (sea plane tenders) operated in conjunction in every case with land based planes future attacks.

Q. Did the Dutch react as expected during the invasion of the Philippines and N.E.I.?

A. I thought the combination of the American and Dutch forces would furnish stronger resistance.

Q. What loss was suffered by the Japanese in the Makassar Straits on 24 June?

A. I do not know the details.

Q. Can you get that information?

A. Yes.

Q. Did this action delay the Japanese advancement?

A. Yes, but do not know how long?

Q. Do you consider that the American and Dutch submarines delayed the campaign in anyway?

A. To a great extent. One time I received a report that the planes saw 12 to 13 submarines but the fact was that there were whales. It took 2 or 3 days to make sure, which caused a certain amount of delay.

Q. Did you expect that additional aircraft would be flown into Java from Australia?

A. Yes.

Q. Did the Japanese know that the American heavy cruiser Houston was damaged and only had 2/3 of their 8" guns in operation?

A. No.

Q. Did you know that the other American Cruiser Boise ran aground and had to be dispatched from the area?

A. No.

Q. After the Japanese had occupied Bali there was a night action with the Dutch and American ships, two destroyers were sunk and two cruisers damaged, do you know what damage was sustained by the Japanese?

A. Four Japanese destroyers took part and the damage was one destroyer sunk and one damaged. No Japanese cruisers were involved.

Q. Did the Commander of the Second Fleet know that the Langley was coming from Australia to Java with aircraft reinforcements?

Transcript of Interrogation (Vice Admiral Kasutaka SHIRAICHI, IJN)

A. No.

Q. How was it discovered?

A. By search planes.

Q. What is your estimate of the damage suffered by the combined Dutch, American and British Fleet in the battle of Java Sea?

A. I was not on the scene. I heard the result of the battle and thought that, "The battle should not have lasted so long", Japanese strategy was unskillful.

Q. What damage was suffered by the Japanese Fleet?

A. Several ships damaged but no ships sunk.

Q. Do you know how the British ships encounter, Exeter and the American destroyer Pope, were sunk while enroute to Soemba Straits?

A. I know of it, but don't know whether it was by land based planes or submarines, I think that they were sunk by submarines before they got to the Straits.

Q. Are you familiar with the action in which the American heavy cruiser Houston was sunk?

A. I do not know the details, but I am sure that there was a record of that battle. I will get the record if I can.

Q. After the occupation of the Dutch East Indies was completed many of the merchant vessels retired to Fremantle. There were several thousand tons of shipping without fuel. Why didn't the Japanese send a striking force to attack those ships?

A. It was thought that there might be women and children on the ships so we were afraid of attacking the ships, and also our plans took care of immobilizing your offensive weapons only.

Q. Did you realize that the entire western coast of Australia was defenseless?

A. Yes.

Q. Was any consideration given to the possibility of invading the western coast of Australia?

A. There weren't enough forces available to make an invasion without over expansion of limited forces.

Q. Were Army troops used at Java?

A. Yes.

Q. Were there any lessons learned in this entire campaign, which caused the Japanese to change their plans for future operations?

A. Nothing changed the over-all plan.

Q. Will you furnish me with a list of officers who might know something of this action?

A. I will try to obtain such names.

Transcript of Interrogation of (Vice Admiral Kasutaka SHIPAI, IJN)

- Q. After the occupation of the East Indies did you move into the Solomons and New Guinea?
- A. After the campaign I returned to Japan with the second fleet, the entire fleet was sent into dry dock in April just prior to General Doolittle's attack.