

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

INTERROGATION NO. 11  
(Obtain from G-2)

PLACE: TOKYO  
DATE: 10 Oct 1945

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis.

SUBJECT: Hiryu (CV) at the Battle of Midway.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Capt KAWAGUCHI, Susumu, IJN. A graduate of the IJN Naval Academy; he has had 24 years naval experience and is an aircraft pilot. At Midway he was Air Officer on the Hiryu (CV) and subsequently was Commanding Officer at Kanoya Airfield. In November 1944 he was ordered to Ordnance Supply, Navy Department.

Where interviewed (office): Meiji Building.

Interrogator: Captain C. SHANDS, USN.

Interpreter: Lt Comdr D. BARTLETT.

Allied Officers Present: Brig Gen G. GARDNER, USA.  
Lt PAINE PAUL, USNR.

Summary: (See next page)

### SUMMARY

The HIRYU was one of four aircraft carriers in the Japanese Striking Force, supporting the planned occupation of MIDWAY Island June 1942. When about 600 miles from MIDWAY a U. S. plane passed over head but did not observe ships due to high fog. No aircraft attacks were made on the carrier group until about an hour after sunrise on 4 June when the formation was attacked by torpedo planes (B-26's and TBF's). No hits were made since the long dropping ranges from the carrier permitted them to be easily avoided. A little later the formation was attacked by high (approximately 18,000') horizontal bombers but no hits were made. The HIRYU launched planes against MIDWAY about sunrise then later against the U. S. Carrier Force. Although the KAGA, AKAGI and SORYU had received damage during the day, the HIRYU was not hit until late afternoon when she received six bomb hits from dive bombers setting her afire. Still later the same afternoon an unsuccessful bombing attack was made on the HIRYU by horizontal bombers at medium altitude. The fires resulting from the dive bombing attack spread to the engine rooms during the night, rendering the ship helpless. She was sunk by torpedoes from a Japanese destroyer the next morning. About 60 pilots were lost in the battle. About 500 out of 1500 men on the ship were lost. His group of ships was not attacked during retirement, although search planes were seen. Visibility was poor. Surviving pilots of the battle were distributed between the ZUIKAKA, SHOKOKU and SOLOMON Islands. These pilots later participated in the Battle of Santa Cruz, 26 October 1945.

As the war progressed the quality of pilots deteriorated due to insufficient training facilities, too great attrition with the consequent necessity of using inadequately trained replacements and a shortage of fuel for training.

INTERROGATION

Q. How many years in the Navy, what experience?

A. 24 years from graduation.

Q. Is he an aircraft pilot?

A. Yes, an active flyer.

Q. Was he with the HIRYU at PEARL HARBOR?

A. No, he was not.

Q. When did he join the HIRYU?

A. In March 1942 as Air Officer.

Q. What was his duty after MIDWAY?

A. He was executive officer at KANOYA airfield and later became chief in command there, he was executive officer for three months. Tactics in the use of machine guns and establishing them in planes, this duty was for two years. Then in November last year he joined the Air High Command.

Q. Was he in planning?

A. No sir, he was in Ordnance Supply.

Q. What was the number of the air fleet?

A. It was of the second air attack force of the first air fleet.

Q. What ships were present in Carrier Force at MIDWAY?

A. 1st Div. (CV)  
AKAGI (F)  
KAGA

2nd Div. (CV)  
HIRYU (F)  
SORYU

BB

KIRISHIMA  
HYEI

CA

STONE  
CHIKUMA

CL

NAGARA

About ten (10) DD's.

CHART

( ) Kirishima

( )

( ) Nagara

( ) Hiryu (F) Akagi(FF) ( )  
( ) ( )

( ) ( ) ( )

Tone ( ) Soryu Kaga ( ) Chikuma  
( ) ( ) ( )

( ) ( ) Haruma ( )

( ) ( ) ( )

Q. When he left JAPAN what was the mission of his air fleet at MIDWAY?

A. It was to seize MIDWAY.

Q. What plans were made for the employment of MIDWAY following the seizure? Did they expect to run searches or go to PEARL HARBOR and the ALLEUTIANS or stop at MIDWAY?

A. Just to defend Midway he heard of no other plans other than to seize and protect MIDWAY. The thoughts in his mind were if they took the place easily they would go to PEARL HARBOR and if they had to fight they would stick it out until they were sunk.

Q. What ships were present, that is carriers, battleships, in his force?

A. (See chart).

Q. Were there any other carriers?

A. None in the attack body.

Q. What carrier was in the ALLEUTIANS?

A. RYUJO and JUNYO; there was no 3rd Division, the first and second divisions are in this attack body, the 4th at Dutch Harbor, the third did not exist.

Q. Is he sure that the 4th Division was at Dutch Harbor?

A. He is sure that the fourth division went up there and that there were two carriers in it.

Q. Did his carrier have an air group that was named or numbered or was it just a group of fighters and torpedo bombers?

A. Six groups, fighter planes - nine in each. In the 6th and 7th groups there were nine fighters in each. 8th were dive bombers, nine in that. 9th group also dive bombers, nine in that. 10th group were torpedo planes, 11th also. (See chart).

Q. Does he know of any surviving officer from the SORYU?

A. SORYU and the HIRYU are sister ships, he thinks he can find out where the executive officer is by going to the Admiralty but the rest died.

Q. During the approach to MIDWAY did they expect an attack, if so, about how far out?

A. Thinks a two engine scout plane looked them over once at some distance, but the weather was so bad, they still didn't expect an attack.

Q. About how far was this?

A. 5 or 600 miles, he thinks, is not certain.

Q. Was it the day before the main battle?

A. He thinks it was the morning of the day before the battle opened, he is not certain of the time of day.

Q. Was his formation attacked by submarines at any time during the approach?

- A. No, the first submarine attack was on the KAGA after the battle opened.
- Q. When was the HIRYU first attacked?
- A. On the 4th of June, two hours before sunset. (About 5th of June Tokyo).
- Q. The day before he was hit, were they attacked by a B-17 formation? (Four engine bombers)
- A. No, they didn't get anything the day before but when they were attacked by Boeings on the day of big battle they didn't get hit; there was no attack on 3rd of June.
- Q. Does he know of any ships which may have been hit by torpedoes from B-26 or PBY's?
- A. Not a hit in those days of the battle on the carrier formation.
- Q. Did he know if any transports were hit?
- A. He never heard anything about them.
- Q. Was he attacked with torpedoes in the morning of the battle of 4th June?
- A. About an hour after sunrise, they were attacked by torpedo bombers.
- Q. Were they single or twin engine?
- A. Mostly they were twin engine, none of them hit, they were dropped at very great range and they were able to avoid them.
- Q. Were any carriers hit?
- A. No ship was hit in that attack.
- Q. Does he know if one of the twin engine planes (after dropping the torpedo) flew into the deck of one of the carriers?
- A. No, he was observing and knows that.
- Q. In the early morning of the 4th of June, 5th of June Tokyo, did he receive an attack from high horizontal bombers?
- A. He says that about 2 hours after sunrise very high four engined planes attacked, maybe 5,000 - 6,000 meters, but did not hit anything.
- Q. How was the HIRYU hit, how many hits?
- A. She was the last of all of them to be hit.
- Q. What time of day?
- A. About two hours before sunset. First was the torpedo attack in the morning (they all missed in that first attack) then they had about 20 dive bombers in the second attack and then the third attack came. The other ships got hit on the third attack (AKAGI, KAGA, and SORYU). Between the third and fourth attack, the Japanese planes that had gone to

attack MIDWAY returned. It was when they landed the first they knew American carriers were in the attack. The HIRYU was hit during the fourth attack by dive bombers.

Q. When the HIRYU was hit were any planes on board?

A. Very few about 20 planes had come back. They had been launched to attack American carriers after they returned from MIDWAY.

Q. Does he know which U.S. carriers were attacked?

A. The pilots thought when they came back aboard after attacking that it was the ENTERPRISE.

Q. Did any planes deliver an attack on the ENTERPRISE?

A. Yes, they did attack.

Q. How did they locate the ENTERPRISE?

A. From scout planes about 200 miles off to the East.

Q. How many bombs hit the HIRYU?

A. Six.

Q. What was principal damage?

A. Lifts damaged. Fire. Many engineering personnel killed.

Q. Can he draw us a picture of where they hit?

A. One one forward elevator, two just aft of forward elevator. Three just forward after elevator.

Q. Were there any planes launched after receiving the bomb hits?

A. No, furthermore the floor of the lift flopped against the bridge, they were unable to navigate.

Q. Will you confirm the position of the island in relation to bow of ship?

A. AKAGI - port, SORYU - Starboard, KAGA - Starboard.

Q. Did these bombs sink the HIRYU that day or next day?

A. They didn't at any time, they were able to do 30 knots; afterwards, B-17's attacked them.

Q. Horizontal bombers?

A. Yes, it was horizontal.

Q. What time of day was that?

A. It was about sunset that day.

Q. How many hits did they receive in this attack?

A. It was some time the same day after the dive bombers gave him six hits that he got about ten misses from Boeings, he is not sure he thinks it was B-17's or something else. It was medium altitude horizontal bombing. He said he didn't think they were very high and was astonished at the distance away from the ship when they released bombs.

- Q. How many bombs dropped?
- A. About ten bunches.
- Q. Where did they hit?
- A. They didn't hit - bombs landed about 500 meters away.
- Q. Find out if any of the battleships were hit at that time.
- A. He was burning by this time but he thinks that something touched the KIROSHIMA OR HARUMA in the stern, didn't do much, no difficulty in navigation as a result.
- Q. Was that a result of the horizontal bombers.
- A. No, this is the dive bombing attack. One of them dived and dropped a bomb on the KIROSHIMA but horizontal bombs didn't hit the KIROSHIMA.
- Q. How were the other carriers hit?
- A. All got hit from the dive bombers.
- Q. Does he know how our torpedo planes were shot down?
- A. He thinks it was fighter planes in the main.
- Q. If his ship was able to make 30 knots, how was it sunk?
- A. The fire got to the engine rooms by the next morning and stopped the ship, whereupon a Japanese destroyer was called on to sink it with torpedoes.
- Q. Does he know anything about the damage on the SORYU?
- A. He separated from the SORYU, he doesn't know.
- Q. How many men and pilots were lost on the HIRYU?
- A. About 60 pilots.
- Q. How many men in all?
- A. 1500 total aboard. About 500 of these were lost.
- Q. Why didn't the occupation force and Grand Fleet continue on to MIDWAY?
- A. Because they could not occupy the island having lost their air attack force.
- Q. How was this officer rescued?
- A. Before the torpedo was sent into his ship by the destroyer he was taken aboard with some of the crew.
- Q. During the retreat did they sight any of our reconnaissance planes looking for them?
- A. They saw five or six of our planes, that was the morning of the 5th.
- Q. Were they attacked by any of these planes?
- A. No they were not.

- Q. Did the HIRYU have radar?
- A. No.
- Q. Did any of the carriers have radar?
- A. None of them.
- Q. Did any of the other ships have radar?
- A. No, not on any, as soon as they got back they put them on the carriers.
- Q. When was that?
- A. July 1942 both battleships and carriers received them.
- Q. Was the HARUNA at MIDWAY?
- A. Not in his force. He thinks it was with Grand Fleet.
- Q. How did they control their fighters in the air?
- A. At first at MIDWAY they set the course on the ships and turned them loose on the first attack, no radio.
- Q. Which type of attack did he most fear, dive bombing, torpedo or horizontal?
- A. The worst is dive bombing.
- Q. Why?
- A. You can't avoid it, but you can with long range torpedoes.
- Q. How many losses in planes or pilots did he expect at MIDWAY?
- A. About one third, he said that he thought that they might lose one carrier, he didn't have any idea about how many planes might get lost. The High Command might have had an idea, but they didn't pass any ideas to them, even if they were pessimistic they didn't pass on the information to the skippers.
- Q. Did he know the other carriers were lost?
- A. He had an opinion while on his own ship that the others were disabled, he never learned definitely until he went aboard the destroyer.
- Q. What effect on future operations did the loss of carriers have?
- A. He said he simply got orders from the United Fleet to come away, as to future plans, didn't hear at that time.
- Q. Does he know if they intended to attack Midway again?
- A. All hands thought it was no use.
- Q. Does he know if the attack on MIDWAY was instigated by the Army or Navy Command?



- A. He believes it was a combined general staff decision. Doesn't know who was responsible.
- Q. Did the loss of these carriers result in sending these pilots and aircraft into the Solomons as land based planes?
- A. Some of the pilots went back to JAPAN, some went to bases in the SOLOMONS, and some were assigned to the SHOKAKU and ZUIKAKA in the SOLOMONS area.
- Q. Does he know of any naval pilots, squadron commanders or others of similar rank?
- A. He said he could only help there if we could suggest their names.
- Q. Does he know why they continued to send troops, planes and ships into the SOLOMONS in little groups instead of one big group?
- A. There were not enough personnel and equipment at home to throw a big bunch in there, therefore they had to go in small increments.
- Q. Does he know of any Army units assisting in the Solomons?
- A. He thinks they were there doesn't know much about it tho, he was back at KANOYA at this time.
- Q. Does he know what influenced the decision to withdraw from the Solomons?
- A. He heard it was a matter of couldn't supply them.
- Q. Does he know of what the new plans were for attack or for holding after their withdrawal from the Solomon chain.
- A. He got very little on plans. Personally thought that Americans were landing too much around them and they should have to give up what they had and go on the defensive. He thought that because they had insufficient number of planes, they couldn't hope to take offensive action; he thought it was defensive holding from that time on.
- Q. Does he know if the Navy had planned for a short war or long war?
- A. He said that they all thought that if it was a long war, the Navy would be finished, and they thought it would be a long war. However, officers in his job were not told any plans.
- Q. Would he estimate the number of years they considered a long war.
- A. He thought if it was short it would be less than two years, something over five years if it were long.
- Q. Was there any improvements in aircraft material or personnel during the war?
- A. The pilots got worse but the planes got better.

- Q. Does he know of any reason why the pilots weren't trained as well as the first group of pilots?
- A. It was combination of absence of sufficient training facilities including planes and the necessary fuel for training?
- Q. When did the fuel shortage first influence the training?
- A. Early 1943.
- Q. When he was in the Navy Department, was he on any campaign plans?
- A. He was not in operations planning, he was in Supply-Ordnance.
- Q. Does he have any information concerning the Coral Sea Battle 7-8 August 1942 or the operations of the SHOKAKU and ZUIKAKA or SHOHU?
- A. He can't explain anything clearly on that, he doesn't have any information.
- Q. What type of action reports were submitted following the battle of MIDWAY?
- A. He sent a message on the casualties, nothing written except the radio report. By word or mouth to the Combined Fleet Staff.
- Q. Did the raids on Japan when he was in the Bureau effect his supply requirements?
- A. The chief difficulty he had in ordnance was to obtain ships to send the supplies out.
- Q. What caused the scarcity of ships?
- A. He got no reports except that the stuff didn't get there and is clearly of the opinion that it was a combination of planes and submarines that sunk the ships.
- Q. How deep were aircraft anti-submarine depth charges set to go off?
- A. About 30 meters, maximum.
- Q. How much were they normally set for?
- A. 5 to 10 meters.