

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

INTERROGATION NO: (USSBS NO. 23)  
NAV - 4

PLACE: TOKYO  
DATE: 9 Oct 45  
TIME: 1330-1700

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

SUBJECT: Battle of Midway.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

CAPTAIN TAIJIRO AOKI, IJN, graduated from ETAJUNA Naval Academy in 1910. He was Commanding Officer of an air training school prior to April 1942, when he was given command of the ANAGI (CV). Following the Battle of MIDWAY in June 1942, he served as Commanding Officer of the Naval Arsenal at KURE. He retired in October 1942.

Where interviewed: Room 749, MEIJI Building.

Interrogator: C. SHANDS, Captain, USN.

Interpreter: DONALD BARTLETT, Lt Comdr, USNR.

Allied Officers Present: Brig Gen G. GARDNER, USA  
Capt C. SHANDS, USN.  
Comdr T. H. MOORER, USN.  
Lt Comdr J. A. FIELD, Jr., USNR.

## SUMMARY

The AKAGI was one of four aircraft carriers, comprising the Eleventh Air Fleet, in the striking force at the planned occupation of MIDWAY ISLAND, June 1942. No attacks received and no planes seen prior to 4 June 1942; however, one plane was heard above the clouds in daytime on the 3rd.

The CV's were first attacked about 200 miles from MIDWAY, 2 hours after sunrise, 4 June by many planes carrying torpedoes, all of torpedoes avoided. Dive bombers scored two hits on the AKAGI starting fires which spread to the engine spaces. This attack was the first indication of the presence of United States carriers. The AKAGI had launched half of her planes to bomb MIDWAY but forty were still being serviced when hit. No more were launched. AKAGI casualties were 200 (including six pilots) lost and 100 wounded, out of a total complement of 1400. On the morning of the 5th a Japanese DD torpedoed and sank the AKAGI which could not be navigated.

The KAGA, SORYU and HIRYU were sunk due to damage inflicted by dive bombers. No other damage sustained from air attack by ships in the striking force except possible damage to one battleship's superstructure. No planes seen on the 5th or later during retirement.

The loss of the CV's caused plans for the occupation to be abandoned.

No carriers at MIDWAY were equipped with radar or homing devices. AOKI first saw radar grids at KURE, August 1942, on the ISE and HYUCA.

Four plane anti-submarine patrols were maintained to a distance of 40,000 meters during approach and no CAP's during approach due weather. DD's were outside of a ring formation maintained day and night. Carriers turned individually into the wind during launching or recovery of aircraft except in a prolonged operation in which the whole formation turned.

C. SHANDS,  
Captain, USN.

TRANSCRIPT

Statement: We primarily want to talk about the Battle of MIDWAY.

A. I understand.

Q. What name and rank?

A. T. AOKI, Commanding Officer of the AKAGI (CV) at MIDWAY.

Q. What was your duty after the Battle of MIDWAY?

A. I reported to Vice Admiral Hirata and then went to KURE as Commanding Officer on 15 August 1942. I was retired in October.

Q. How many years have you been in the Navy?

A. Thirty-five years since graduation from ETAJUNA Naval Academy.

Q. What duty did you have prior to taking command, say one or two years?

A. Commanding Officer in an Air Training School (Course for boys 15 years of age) near KASUMIGAURA at TSUCHIURA.

Q. What ships were present in the carrier force at MIDWAY?

A. AKAGI, KAGA, HIRYU and SONYU (ALL CV's) HYEI or HARUNA and KIRISHIMA (BB), TONE and CRIKUMA (CA), NAGARA (CL), about 10 or 12 destroyers.

Q. Are you an aircraft pilot?

A. No, I am no pilot.

Q. To what division was the AKAGI assigned?

A. AKAGI was in the Eleventh Air Fleet. (See Plan) (Note: - They do not have what we call divisions in Naval terminology; that is the Eleventh Air Fleet).

Q. According to our information it was the Third Air Fleet.

A. It was the Eleventh.

Q. Who were the Commanding Officers of these ships?

A. KAGA - Capt OKADA; HIRYU - Capt KAKU; SORYU - Dont remember.

Q. Who was the Admiral?

A. Vice Admiral Nagumo who died at SAIPAN, Chief of Staff was Rear Admiral Kusaka.

Q. That was known as the Eleventh Air Fleet, what were the other three units? For instance, we call them occupation forces and supporting forces.

A. The Grand Fleet was there to act as support.

Q. Who was in command of that?

A. Admiral Yamamoto.

Q. Are any of these above listed officers available?

- A. There is nobody here, the other Captains died. One officer of the HIRYU may be around somewhere (Captain Kawaguchi).
- Q. What was the mission of the Eleventh Air Force?
- A. Simply to bombard MIDWAY by planes.
- Q. What was the mission of the entire fleet?
- A. That was to help. Entirely separate from this was the occupation force.
- Q. Was that separate from the Air Fleet and the Grand Fleet?
- A. Yes, of course it was under the Grand Fleet, but was a separate force.
- Q. What was the strategic reason for occupying MIDWAY and the ALEUTIANS?
- A. They came to attack MIDWAY, I don't know what the plan was.
- Q. If the MIDWAY attack had been successful did they plan to run air search from MIDWAY or to continue Eastern expansion?
- A. It is my own thought they would only send search runs from there if they had been successful in seizing MIDWAY.
- Q. During the approach to MIDWAY when did you expect the first air attack?
- A. About 500 miles from MIDWAY.
- Q. When were the carriers first attacked?
- A. It was in the morning about 2 hours after sunrise, about 200 miles from MIDWAY.
- Q. What type planes made the first attack?
- A. Torpedo planes, then dive bombers. First a great many torpedoes were dropped from planes, then dive bombers hit.
- Q. About how long after sunrise was that?
- A. About 2 hours.
- Q. Was the AKAGI attacked by B-26's with torpedoes during the morning of 4 June?
- A. Early attack was made by torpedo planes. Many torpedoes dropped. Easily dodged (long range). I had helm myself.
- Q. Were you ever attacked by twin engined torpedo planes?
- A. I don't remember whether or not they were single or double, there were many of them, they came in many at a time at 14,000 yards, Details of that kind didn't interest me just then.
- Q. Were any attacks made on the carrier force during the approach by B-17's or PBY's?
- A. There were none. Torpedo bombers in morning of attack but no four engine bombers.
- Q. Were any planes seen or heard during the approach the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of June?

- A. There was a high fog and the day before the action opened they heard one above the clouds.
- Q. Was that during the day or night?
- A. Daytime. In the morning of the action we saw seaplanes very far off, and I guess they were four-engine planes.
- Q. Was the AKAGI hit by any four-engined or horizontal bombers?
- A. Not once.
- Q. Were any others hit?
- A. I don't know about the others.
- Q. Were any other ships hit by dive bombers?
- A. I think all ships were hit by dive bombers.
- Q. Did you lose any ships to submarines during approach?
- A. No, none at all. Heard that after the dive bombing the KAGA received a torpedo attack from submarines, but that is hearsay (No damage).
- Q. On the day before the main action about 600 miles from MIDWAY, was the formation attacked by long range planes?
- A. No.
- Q. Do you know if any other ships of the other groups of the Grand Fleet were hit during the day before the battle?
- A. There may have been other damaged units of the Grand Fleet, but I heard no talk of it.
- Q. Do you know if any transports were hit during approach?
- A. I don't know. Those are the transports I was talking about.
- Q. How was the AKAGI damaged?
- A. Fire; two bombs by dive bombing, (one had fire at after elevator). Planes were loaded up with bombs inside the hangar and caught fire.
- Q. Any other bomb hits?
- A. None of them hit, they were in the thick of it, but only hit by the two bombs.
- Q. About what time were hits made?
- A. About two hours after sunrise.
- Q. Did you see any horizontal bombers over the formation at the time?
- A. KIRISHYMA was under attack by horizontal bombing, It was not hit. Near misses.
- Q. Were the AKAGI's planes in the air?
- A. About half of them were up, they were servicing others in the hangar, about forty on board.
- Q. Were your other forty attacking MIDWAY or attacking our carriers?

- A. MIDWAY. We had a high cover of six zeros in addition.
- Q. Was this the first group launched from the AKAGI?
- A. This was the first group launched from all the ships.
- Q. Were any other planes launched from the AKAGI to attack our carriers or did they send more into MIDWAY?
- A. No, second flight from the AKAGI.
- Q. Did you know of the presence of our carriers in the area?
- A. The dive bombing attack was the very first we knew about it.
- Q. Which type of attack was most feared, that is - horizontal, dive bombing or torpedo?
- A. Diving, you can swing away from torpedoes, but the worst is dive bombing.
- Q. Was AKAGI sunk as a result of those two bomb hits or was she sunk later by Japanese destroyers?
- A. It did not sink by bombs. She was sunk by a Japanese destroyer's torpedoes during the next morning. This was on the 5th of June. (6th TOKYO time).
- Q. What caused the abandonment of the AKAGI?
- A. Engines were helpless, fire damage, could not navigate so gave up the ship; many engineers were killed.
- Q. How many personnel were lost?
- A. 200 were lost, 100 were wounded out of 1400 on board.
- Q. How many pilots saved; how many lost?
- A. Six pilots were lost. Others landed and were picked up by destroyers.
- Q. During retreat was task force located by any of our PBY or carrier planes?
- A. The next day, on the 5th (6th TOKYO time), they saw nothing.
- Q. Why didn't the task force continue to MIDWAY?
- A. Too much damage to aircraft carriers, lost control of air.
- Q. What effect did the loss of carriers have on any future operations?
- A. I was not in on that. But it was decided that they needed an awful lot more anti-aircraft protection, also more speed was needed by carriers.
- Q. What other carriers were lost?
- A. KAGA, SORYO, HIRYU.
- Q. What battleships were lost?
- A. Nothing happened to the battleships, no damage.
- Q. Cruisers?

- A. Nothing got hit seriously except the carriers in that group. I don't know about the other forces.
- Q. Were any plans made to attack MIDWAY again?
- A. I don't know.
- Q. Was the plan to attack MIDWAY a Naval plan or an Army plan?
- A. I was given command of the AKAGI on the 27th of April and do not know for certain who made up the plan. My Staff, Navigating Officer and others were home on leave when I reported in April.
- Q. In general were the Navy plans concerned with Army plans?
- A. I don't know about that. I was retired in October of that same year, and was later recalled to the service.
- Q. Do you know if the employment of the Japanese Naval Aviators in the SOLOMONS was a result of the loss of carrier strength at MIDWAY and CORAL SEA?
- A. I think they all came back to JAPAN.
- Q. Do you know why they continued to send personnel and ships to the SOLOMONS Chain in small units to try to hold it?
- A. It is my own opinion that it was too expensive to send a big force, and yet we weren't sure Americans were in force, however that is my own opinion.
- Q. Do you know why they decided to withdraw from GUADALCANAL?
- A. I never heard.
- Q. Do you know if Army aviation was assisting Naval Aviation in the SOLOMONS?
- A. I don't know, I was at the Naval Arsenal at the time.
- Q. What was the name or number of the air group on the AKAGI?
- A. There were no numbers except that there were the fighter, bomber, and dive bomber planes.
- Q. What other operations was the AKAGI in?
- A. PEARL HARBOR was the first, she attacked at CEYLON and TRINCOMALEE, next MIDWAY. (MIDWAY was the only action in which I was aboard).
- Q. Did our aircraft carrier raids on JAPAN affect the training of pilots during the war?
- A. When your planes were attackers we had to stop training and so lost time besides training planes. However, we didn't suffer much from the loss of training planes.
- Q. Do you know if the Navy had planned on a war of long duration?
- A. They were all talking that it would be long, but nobody hazarded a guess as to duration. As soon as it began they thought it would be a long war.
- Q. Do you know the total number of personnel lost at MIDWAY?

- A. We were separated right after that, for security reasons our losses were not known to each other.
- Q. About how many planes or pilots did you expect to lose at MIDWAY, that is from Anti-Aircraft and attack?
- A. Because we had suffered so little at PEARL HARBOR at the beginning of the war, we thought we would get away with the same thing at MIDWAY. I think that other ships in the task force lost a good many pilots, but as far as my ship was concerned, we got off very easily.
- Q. Do you know the object of the Aleutians Campaign, was it a feint, or were you to take DUTCH HARBOR?
- A. I think it was an attack but did not know anything about it at the time.
- Q. What type of report was submitted following that action, written or dispatch?
- A. Report was sent from the destroyer that we had received a great amount of damage and were afire and would have to retire, this was sent to Vice Admiral Nagomo only. Dispatch was sent simply "The ship is afire, I must retire." Later submitted the ships' log. This was sent to the High Command at the Admiralty.
- Q. Do you know if any copies are available?
- A. I don't know whether or not they will be available but that is where they should be.
- Q. Are you familiar with any plans on the SOLOMONS Campaign?
- A. Not a thing.
- Q. Do you know that the SHORO was lost? (A small carrier).
- A. Yes, I did hear that a small carrier was sunk in the South.
- Q. When did you hear?
- A. Just after I got back to JAPAN from MIDWAY.
- Q. Do you know if the SHOKAKU and ZUIKAKU were damaged?
- A. I did not know they were damaged at the time.
- Q. Did you have radar on the AKAGI?
- A. No.
- Q. Did any ships at MIDWAY have radar?
- A. YAMATO, MUTSU and NAGATO in the Grand Fleet may have had it. There was nothing at MIDWAY in the carriers who had it, but they may have had it in the Grand Fleet.
- Q. Do you know if radar was used on those ships at MIDWAY?
- A. I think not, they were not viewed with confidence yet.
- Q. Do you know when they were first installed and first used?
- A. I don't know but when I went to the Arsenal at KURE, I saw the grids on the ISE and HYUGA. It was in August 1942



after MIDWAY. I supposed that they must have been installed on better ships about then.

Q. Did any aircraft carriers have radar?

A. No.

Q. While cruising to MIDWAY was radio silence observed?

A. There was radio silence.

Q. Was an interpreter radio guard stood on CW or voice frequency?

A. There was nothing but curiosity, there was not a real guard.

Q. During passage en route MIDWAY, were flight operations conducted or carried out?

A. Training flights for about two days (Weather bad); anti-submarine patrols every day.

Q. How about combat air patrols?

A. No, did not send up fighter planes, however bombers went out looking for submarines.

Q. The day before the battle or two days before the battle, did you have fighters in the air?

A. The weather was so bad, didn't put them up, couldn't have seen much anyway.

Q. What number and types of planes were used for Anti-submarine patrols, fighters or bombers?

A. 97 type attack planes.

Q. How many planes would be out at one time and how far?

A. Four planes were used for Anti-submarine patrol, searching out at a distance of about 40,000 meters.

Q. In the operations at night did the carriers form a column?

A. At night it was the same ring formation.

Q. Were the destroyers stationed astern of the carriers in cruising formation?

A. All outside the circle.

Q. When landing and launching planes also?

A. They were 500 or 600 meters astern at time of recovery of planes.

Q. When you launched or recovered planes did all ships turn into the wind or just the carrier that was landing planes?

A. It was all at the same time if it was a long operation. Otherwise in short operation the single carrier maneuvered.

Q. Did it make any difference how far they were from the enemy?

A. It has nothing to do with that distance.

