

HEADQUARTERS
U.S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)

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INTERROGATION NO. 403

PLACE: TOKYO
DATE : 21 NOV 1945

Division of Origin: Military Analysis

Subject: Naval Air Transport

Personnel Interrogated and Background of Each: Rear Admiral TANAKA, Minoru: Chief Engineering Officer for 1st Air Fleet from April 1941 - July 1942; Sagami Air Group Commander, October 1942 - March 1943; Oimame Air Group Commander, March 1943 - April 1944; Koza Air Depot Commander, May 1944 - September 1944; 101 Air Flot Commander, September 1944 - July 1945; 31 Air Depot Commander, July 1945 to end of war.

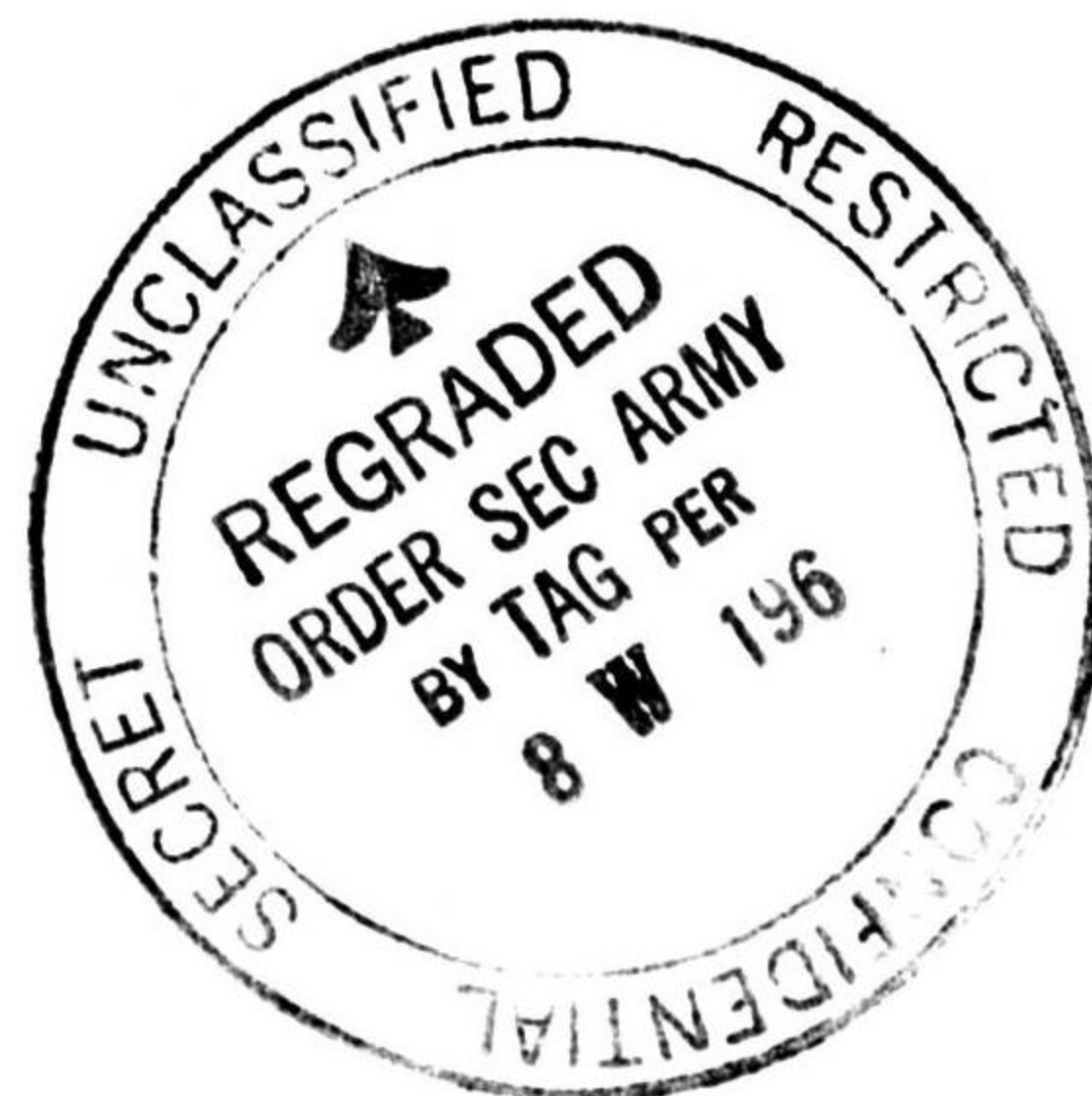
Interrogator: Captain Logan

Interpreter: Lt Cmdr Nichols

Allied Officers Present: Captain Haskins, Lt Palfrey, Lt Newell

Summary: Admiral TANAKA discussed the ferrying system prior to the formation of 101 Air Flot, and changes made after that unit was formed. The interrogation also covered the processing of new aircraft from the factory to the tactical units, and the problems involved.

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- Q. What was the procedure for getting new planes from the factory to the tactical units prior to the formation of 101 Air Flot?
- A. At the start of the war, most of the ferrying was done by the units themselves. They would send pilots back to Japan to pick up the planes and ferry them out. The 1001 Air Group was doing transport work at the start of the war, but did not ferry any new planes until much later. Originally, this Group was under the command of C in C Combined Fleet, but later came under the Yokosuka Naval District, and under 101 Air Flot when the latter was formed. The 1081 Air Group was formed in 1942, and did ferry new aircraft - about 1/3 of the Nakajima output - but probably did not handle more than 1/7 of all the planes going to units. Some planes were supplied to the tactical units by carriers, but most replacement aircraft were flown by the units themselves.
- Q. When was 101 Air Flot formed?
- A. 15 September 1944.
- A. What were the reasons for forming this unit?
- A. As more and more planes were ferried by 1001 and 1081 Air Groups, and the planes had to be picked up at a great many different places, there was a need for centralized control.
- Q. What was the percentage of planes lost in ferrying prior to September 1944?
- A. I don't have any figures on that, but the two principal reasons for losses were the poor pilots and the fact that a lot of the lighter planes were damaged on landing due to poor landing gears.
- Q. Did these ferry losses decrease after 101 Air Flot was formed?
- A. Yes, for three reasons. First, we were able to improve the maintenance system so that the planes were in better condition when they took off; secondly, the centralized control helped us to work more efficiently; and thirdly, we conducted our own training for ferry pilots which helped reduce losses.
- Q. Where did you get your pilots?
- A. They were assigned to us after they had completed the regular Naval training program. We classified them as follows:
- A - our best pilots, who were capable of ferrying planes anywhere
 - B - those who could ferry planes overseas under good weather conditions
 - C - those who could only ferry planes within the home islands
 - D - those just out of school, who were not used for any ferry work
- Our training program was designed to bring the "D" pilots up to the "A" class.
- Q. What percentage of your ferry work was done entirely within Japan?
- A. By far the larger part.
- Q. What were the total number of planes ferried by your organization?
- A. We ferried an average number of 600 planes a month, and the greatest number was 900 planes in May 1945. We never transported any float planes.
- Q. What percentage of the total production did your organization handle?
- A. After May 1945, it was about 95 percent of the total Navy production.

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- Q. How were replacement planes gotten to the Philippines?
- A. 1001 Air Group flew them as far as Kanoya, where they were picked up by pilots sent back there by the units. We very seldom took them all the way, and only when the units were short of pilots.
- Q. How many pilots did you have under your jurisdiction?
- A. All together, in the 1001 and 1081 Air Groups, there was a total of about 400 ferry and transport pilots, but over half of these were in the "D" category.
- Q. How many planes did these two units have?
- A. Each Air Group had about 30 transport planes.
- Q. Did these groups transport supplies overseas?
- A. There were transport routes to Manila and Formosa in 1944, and some supplies went to Formosa in 1945, but most of the transport planes went only as far as Kanoya. We carried principally aviation supplies.
- Q. What the volume of supplies carried?
- A. I do not have any figures, but I would say that it never exceeded 35 tons in any one month.
- Q. What other units were engaged in air transport?
- A. The 1022 Air Group operated between Kyushu and Formosa, but they did not do any ferry work, and only had about 10 transport planes. It came under 101 Air Flotilla in January 1945. The 1021 Air Group originally operated air transport out of Manila, and later out of Formosa. In March, the 1021 moved back to Japan and operated flying boats. A few months before the end of the war, it also came under 101 Air Flotilla, but was abolished in July. Finally, the tactical groups each had one transport plane, and they used to carry some supplies.
- Q. How many planes were lost due to ferry operations after 101 Air Flotilla was formed?
- A. I have no figures on this, but since June 1945 our greatest losses were in ferrying fighter planes. We lost about 7 percent of those. The overall average loss would be about 5 percent.
- Q. Were the losses suffered by the tactical units in ferrying the planes overseas any greater than your losses?
- A. Those losses were at least 7 or 8 percent.
- Q. How were the new planes allocated to the tactical units?
- A. The requests for new planes were submitted by the units to Air Headquarters, where they were compared with the production figures. The Navy General Staff and Air Headquarters then decided where the planes would go. My orders for ferrying them came from the Combined Fleet Headquarters.
- Q. How were the new planes tested before they went to the tactical units?
- A. There were supposed to be tests done by the factory, the ferry units, and the depots, but at the end of the war, the only flight tests were made by the ferry units, who just used their regular ferry pilots for the work. The factories and the depots only made ground tests. Furthermore, the time spent in making these tests was decreased due to the fuel shortage. A Zerc was only flown about 30 minutes, so that the

- A. planes giving more trouble could be flown up to 4 or 5 hours. The ferry units often made complete engine tear-down and reassembly, and had their own maintenance facilities for this.
- Q. Did the general quality of the new planes deteriorate at the end of the war?
- A. Yes, it was generally lower. The Zeros (Zekes) continued to be pretty good, but the Shiden (George) and Raiden (Jack) deteriorated, and the Saiun (Myrt) gave the most trouble because of vibration and overheating.
- Q. Were the depots supposed to make these tests of new planes?
- A. Yes, they were supposed to do it, but there was a great shortage of test pilots near the end of the war, and the ferry units had to do it. The depots continued to equip the planes for combat and do some ground tests, however.
- Q. Was the replacement program seriously hindered by the B-29's?
- A. The ferry schedules were frequently held up due to the bombings from May 1945 on.
- Q. How many ground crew personnel did 1001 and 1081 Air Groups have?
- A. Each had about 1500, and 1021 and 1022 each had about 500. About 75 percent of these actually worked on the planes.
- Q. What sort of work was carried on at the 31st Naval Air Depot?
- A. It was primarily engaged in repairing sea planes.
- Q. Did any serious maintenance difficulties arise at this depot during the war?
- A. Towards the end of the war, there was a great shortage of spare parts for repairing the planes.