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HEADQUARTERS
U. S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)
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INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS 503) PART I
NAV. NO. 115

PLACE: TOKYO
DATE: 9 December

Division of origin: Naval analysis Division.

Subject: The Naval war in the PACIFIC

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Vice Admiral Shigeru FUKUDOME, IJN; Chief of Staff, Combined Fleet from 1940 to April 1941, Chief First Section, N.G.C., TOKYO, April 1941 to May 1943. Chief of Staff, Combined Fleet from May 1943 to March 1944. On sick leave in TOKYO from April 1944 to June 1944. Commander, Second Air Fleet from July 1944 to January 15, 1945. Commander, 10th Area Fleet from January 15th, 1945 to present date.

Where interviewed: Weiji Building, Room 719

Interrogator: Rear Admiral R. A. Ostie, USN

Interpreters: Mr. Mizota
Mr. F.C. Woodrough, jr.

Allied Officers Present: None.

SUMMARY

Admiral FUKUDOME offers high level comment on important plans and operations throughout the PACIFIC War. He discusses the employment of shore-based naval air forces throughout the PHILIPPINE Campaign and action in the SINGAPORE Area for the last seven months of the war, the planning and decision of the Combined Fleet under Admiral NAGARA, and the planning of the Naval General Staff from the beginning of the war to the spring of 1943.

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TRANSCRIPT

Part One

- Q. What was the reason for your being ordered to command of the Second Air Fleet, and what were the movements of your headquarters?
- A. The only reason I can think of for my appointment to that position, since I was not an air expert, was the fact I had just recovered from a sick spell when the new air force was organized, and it was a matter of convenience that I was assigned to that position. At the time I took it, the Second Air Fleet really had not reached the stage of a unit; it was more in the training stage. I received the appointment in TOKYO and took over command at KATORI, in CHIBA Prefecture, on 15 June. Toward the end of July I received orders from Central Headquarters to move headquarters to KANOYA, in KYUSHU. The areas of operation assigned to me was KYUSHU AND OKINAWA district. In the opinion of the Imperial General Staff at that time the American offensive was expected to be at one of three possibilities; first, against the PHILIPPINES; second, against TAIWAN - KYUSHU Area; third, against HONSHU; and as I already had headquarters in KYUSHU I was ordered to take charge of the TAIWAN - KYUSHU district. It was as a result of that order that my command became operational. At the time, the First Air Fleet was stationed in the PHILIPPINES Area and the Third Air Fleet, based at KISARAZU, was responsible for the KANTO District. Toward the end of August it appeared that the weight of the American offensive was directed southward, namely the PHILIPPINES, and I was therefore ordered to change my headquarters to TAIWAN which I did on 10 September. There was, however, no change in the area for which I was responsible, KYUSHU, OKINAWA, TAIWAN district - it was simply a change in headquarters. At the time that I took over the Second Air Fleet the pilots were still inadequately trained, so that the period when I was in KANOYA was spent in further training. Four days after I had established my headquarters, on September 14th, I received first attack from your Task Forces.
- Q. On arrival in FORMOSA on the 10th, what was the status of your aircraft?
- A. My fleet had approximately 100 planes, but simultaneous with my advances into TAIWAN about 200 Army planes were placed under my command; so from that time on I had a total of about 300 planes. As already stated you made your first air attack on the 14th, and I undertook a counter-attack with a part of my air force on the night of the 15th and 16th with some success. The greater part of my air force was used in day counter-attack, but I believe that they obtained very little result with that counter-attack. The 300 planes used in this counter-attack were those stationed in KYUSHU, and after attack flew down to TAIWAN. These were in addition to the other 300.
- Q. What were those 300 counter-attack planes; were they Army, Navy or both?
- A. All Navy planes which I had trained from the beginning.
- Q. What was the organization in KYUSHU on your arrival; what flotillas did you have, and what types?
- A. There were many changes in reorganization during the time I was there. I cannot recall the exact system, but there were three principal divisions; the fighter corps, reconnaissance corps, and attack planes. Each division was further divided into two groups ranging in strength from 30 to 40 planes each. In addition to those three divisions there were the land service forces divided between TAIWAN, OKINAWA and KYUSHU. These latter might be called maintenance units.
- Q. You took command of the Second Air Fleet plus the Army aircraft on your arrival. Were those all the Army planes in TAIWAN, and did you have direct command of these Army planes?
- A. I had command of the Army planes through the Commandment of the Army Air Division which was already there, and the two Army planes I mentioned were all of the Army planes there.
- Q. What advance intelligence did you have of the approach of the Carrier Task Force on 12 - 14 September:

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- A. As I had just established my headquarter in TAIWAN only a few days earlier my intelligence had not been well organized yet, and I was therefore forced to rely on information from Central Headquarters. However, since your Task Force had attacked OKINAWA on about the 11th or 12th, I conjectured that the Task Force on its way southeast might undertake an attack against TAIWAN.
- Q. What reports did you have on the strike on OKINAWA, which was within your area or command as I understand it?
- A. Just prior to your attack on OKINAWA a very small number of scouts which I had in OKINAWA, as a result of daytime reconnaissance, brought the report that the Task Force was not a very large one. Its nucleus was probably two or three carriers, and not certain whether or not there was a battleship included. As a result of the first attack all of those scouting planes were lost to that no further reports of scouting were received.
- Q. About how many Japanese planes were reported lost at OKINAWA?
- A. Around ten, all scouting planes. The following attack on TAIWAN was made jointly by your Task Forces moving up from the PHILIPPINES: that was the report we got from our reconnaissance planes in TAIWAN.
- Q. What losses did you sustain in the Task Forces attack on TAIWAN?
- A. The Navy lost between 170 or 180 planes, which included about 120 fighters, 30 attack planes, and 10 reconnaissance planes. Of the Army planes only about one-half of the total of 200 were really fit for actual fighting, and I believe that practically all of those were lost. Consequently the total aircraft loss was somewhat less than 300. (Note: This apparently refers to the attack in October, as mentioned later).
- Q. What results by way of damage to the American Third Fleet, did you report to TOKYO?
- A. As already stated, our daytime counter-attack proved practically of no value, we got very little results. The night attacks undertaken on two successive nights were considerably better. Of course, the reports made by commanders of the units actually participating in the raids are inclined to be exaggerated. As reported by them, however, three carriers and several other vessels were reported either sunk or damaged. These counter-attacks were made by medium type land-based attack planes with torpedoes. The day attack was made from TAIWAN, but that did not prove effective; the two night attacks were made from KYUSHU bases (aside from Mr. Mizota, the Japanese interpreter, - I might add at this time, as there had been no reports of successful engagements for some time, the newspapers played this up quite prominently).
- Q. Was the report believed by the General Staff; did you send in a qualifying statement to TOKYO or was it a positive statement?
- A. As the two night attacks were made by the planes based in KYUSHU, the results were reported in by a Captain in command there. Of course, the only thing I could do was get those reports together for transmittal to the Imperial General Staff. As a general practice I believe that these reports from the operating units were not taken at their full value by the Imperial General Staff; just what attitude they took toward this particular report I do not know.
- Q. After the action was over, what reinforcements did you then receive from the Homeland; army, Navy, carrier planes, etc.?
- A. In September it became more and more apparent that your counter-thrust would be directed further southward, namely the PHILIPPINES; and as the First Air Fleet assigned to the PHILIPPINES Area had lost the greater part of their planes it was decided that the Second Air Fleet should be sent into the PHILIPPINES Area to reinforce the First Air Fleet. With that end in view the Second Air Fleet received by way of reinforcement perhaps a slightly larger number of planes than I had lost in the TAIWAN engagement. These reinforcements were planes which had been gotten together from all parts of JAPAN and sent to TAIWAN.

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- Q. What was the actual date of movement of headquarters to the PHILIPPINES?
- A. I myself went to MANILA on the 22nd, and the 450 planes of the Second Air Fleet reached CLARK Field the next day, on the 23rd.
- Q. What were the results of the Carrier Task Force attack on TAIWAN 12 - 14 October?
- A. I am afraid that I had the September and October attacks somewhat confused, and that the results of the September attack were probably the figures for the October attack. The statement I made before for September should be confined to the OKINAWA attack, and all I said with regard to your Task Force attack on TAIWAN for September should be for October instead. In any case, the replacement of planes was carried out quite expeditiously and I had about 450 planes by the time I moved headquarters to the PHILIPPINES.
- Q. What would you say were the overall results of the Task Force strikes on the RYUKYUS and FORMOSA; what effect on the subsequent PHILIPPINES Operation?
- A. In the TAIWAN engagement a part of the planes of the First Air Fleet took part together with my planes. While the results attained were probably not as great as reported at the time, I felt that considerable success had been attained and hence expected that some time would lapse before you would undertake the attack further south. However, your thrusts against the PHILIPPINES came much sooner than expected.
- Q. What aircraft were received from Admiral OZAWA's force, and were they received in response to a request from you?
- A. I think that at that time I received no carrier-based planes from Admiral OZAWA's force. I wonder whether or not Admiral TOYODA did have in mind some 40 or 50 well trained pilots who participated in the night counter-attacks against your Task Force on October 12 and 14 from KYUSHU, working under the Second Fleet. It is possible also that I might have received some reinforcement from the carrier fleet. However, as the reinforcements come from Central Headquarters, I don't know exact source from which planes actually came.
- Q. In the PHILIPPINES on your arrival, 22 October, I understood you brought with you, arriving a day later, roughly 450 planes of the Second Air Fleet, is that correct?
- A. Yes, attached to the Second Air Fleet. More accurately the majority of the 450 flew down there on the 23rd, the balance coming later. It was the intention, however, that those planes flying to the PHILIPPINES on the 23rd should attack your Task Force on the way, but on account of bad weather conditions they didn't encounter your Task Forces.
- Q. What was the strength of the First Air Fleet at this time?
- A. The First Air Fleet had suffered heavy losses around DAVAO and the balance of approximately 100 planes were concentrated around MANILA, the Commandant of the Fleet at the time being Vice Admiral ONISHI.
- Q. What was the exact date of formation of the First Combined Base Air Force?
- A. I believe that the time was 26 October. When I arrived in MANILA I joined Vice Admiral ONISHI, and from that time on the two Air Fleets operated jointly under Vice Admiral OKOCHI, who was Commander in Chief of the Southwest Area Fleet. The First Air Fleet was already under the Southwest Area Fleet, and when I joined Admiral ONISHI then we both came under Vice Admiral OKOCHI's Southwest Area Fleet. On the 23rd the majority of the 450 planes which flew from TAIWAN to LUZON undertook attack on your Task Force on the way north of LUZON, but without success owing to bad weather as I stated earlier. Then on 24, 25 and 26th October, three consecutive days, the First Air Fleet under Admiral ONISHI and the Second Air Fleet carried out attacks against your Task Forces north of LUZON, operating not as one unit but separately. I followed my own tactics while Admiral ONISHI used his own. Incidentally Admiral ONISHI's force was very weak at the time.

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Q. What results were reported to you from the Air attacks against American forces?

A. The Second Air Force reported very limited results, namely some damage to two carriers, types unknown. As against that, the First Air Fleet, which was much weaker in strength than the Second Air Fleet, reported several vessels sunk or damaged. This difference in results between the two fleets is to be explained by the fact that while the Second Fleet, which was relatively well balanced, followed standard tactics, the First Fleet under Admiral ONISHI attempted the so called special attack tactics which probably accounts for the difference in results.

Q. Over that same period of time, through the 26th, approximately what losses did the two air fleets sustain?

A. I don't remember exact figures but the loss was relatively slight in the case of the Second Fleet owing principally to the fact that planes had difficulty in finding your units owing to bad weather. The First Air Fleet, while they used the special attack method, had only a small number of planes to begin with. Consequently, I believe that the total loss of the two fleets was somewhere between 20 and 30. On the 25th our surface fleet came into action and the planes which gave air support to the surface fleet suffered some loss.

Q. What was the approximate status of the Army air at that time; strength, losses, etc.?

A. Most of the well trained Army Air Force was concentrated in northern BACALOD, further south, and were directing their attack directly against LEYTE. Those further north were still in the stage of training. Altogether the Army aircraft were slightly less in number than the Navy planes.

Q. From the time of the LEYTE Operation, what reinforcements did you request from TOKYO and what did you get?

A. Myself, together with my colleagues on the spot felt that victory at LEYTE was absolutely indispensable; and those in General Headquarters were of the same opinion. So there was agreement that every possible plane as well as all possible Army forces should be sent to the PHILIPPINES. I believe that up to the middle of December, the total air strength of between 600 and 700 planes was maintained. After that, however, replacement could not be continued to keep up that level. The losses increased as time passed and from the middle of December replacement could not keep pace with out losses, and by early part of January I had lost practically all of my planes, my air force had been practically wiped out. Replacements were not getting through owing to operations of your air force. Consequently I had made up my mind to concentrate thereafter on deployment as ground forces. However, I was transferred to SINGAPORE just at that time, the order being dated January 8th. The winding up of the business took so much time it was not until the 15th that I was able to go to SINGAPORE and relieve my predecessor on the 16th as Commander in Chief, 10th Area Fleet.

Q. Did you leave from LUZON?

A. The latter part of my stay in the PHILIPPINES was at CLARK Field, but in going to SINGAPORE I went on a seaplane taking off from MANILA.

Q. During your whole period in the PHILIPPINES, what is your rough estimate of the total air losses you sustained?

A. I would guess roughly around 3,000 planes.

Q. Was that due to general attrition losses, material failures, or how can you break that figure down as to the principal cause of the loss of that number of planes?

A. I enumerate the various causes without dividing the number. Our planes were flying almost daily over LEYTE and surrounding waters usually under unfavorable weather conditions, and many planes were lost due to weather itself. New replacements were not highly trained which accounts in part for the fact that many planes were lost on the way before they got to TAIWAN. There was also a steady increase in the frequency and number of your attacks,

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with the result that our losses on the ground increased greatly, and when our planes took off in a hurry to avoid being destroyed on the ground they were immediately knocked down by your planes. Generally speaking, as replacements were relatively poor pilots, there was considerable loss resulting from poor handling. In other words, the greater part of the total loss was traceable to other than air combat.

- Q. At the end of that period then (Mid-January 1945) would you say that the air striking power was very low, both Army and Navy?
- A. The situation just prior to January 8, when I was ordered to SINGAPORE, was that the Navy had only 30 fighters which I moved from CLARK Field to ICHAGI near APARRI. My intention at the time was that, with the remaining 30 lost, I would have to resort to ground operations, as mentioned previously. I believe that the situation with regard to the Army Air Force was probably even worse than in the case of the Navy.
- Q. What happened now to the former First and Second Air Fleets, which formed the Combined Air Fleet, when you moved out?
- A. Simultaneously with my transfer to SINGAPORE the Second Air Fleet was dissolved, its personnel being incorporated into the First Air Fleet as it had no more planes. But I believe that the name "Combined Base Air Force" was used for some time after that, instead of the First Air Fleet. At that time the remaining air fleet under Admiral OHISHI changed its base to TAIWAN from the PHILIPPINES.
- Q. During your period of stay in the PHILIPPINES how did you coordinate your operations with those of the Army Air, through what agency?
- A. The Army Air Forces had its headquarters throughout at MANILA, but its Chief of Staff was stationed at CLARK Field in order to coordinate with the Naval Air Forces. There was general agreement between the two services that they should work very close together, and if possible as a single unit. But in practice that was very difficult to attain for various reasons, one of which was the fact of difference in formation between the two air forces, difference in terminology used in orders, etc. Even when an order was given to take off and rendezvous at a certain point they couldn't always do that; so that in actual practice about the best they were able to accomplish would be that the army would take off at a certain hour, the Navy would take off at a certain hour; just agreement at different times of taking off.
- Q. And agreements on targets, etc.?
- A. Yes, designation of time and target was about the limit of actual cooperation.
- Q. Referring now to the SHO-GO Operation Plan. Did you have full knowledge of the plans for fleet employment at LEYTE?
- A. I did not have information in detail regarding the use of the fleet. I knew only such as was contained in the orders which the air force received from the Combined Fleet. The same applied to Admiral ONISHI.
- Q. What was the substance of the directive for the employment of the air forces in this operation?
- A. It was only in the nature of a general order to the effect that whether in the course of the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd SHO-GO Operation, our air force should be employed to drive back any attempt at landing by the enemy. There was no detailed order regarding special points to be attacked.
- Q. Did you have direct communications and direct access to the fleet forces moving up to LEYTE?
- A. Yes, we had direct communication.
- Q. Was it satisfactory?
- A. Yes, I was able to send any kind of communication. However, actually messages from myself to the fleet were usually reports of reconnaissance planes, and in the reverse direction from the fleet to the airforce it was usually asking for air support. It was of course my desire to give the utmost support to the

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Task Forces under Admirals OZAWA, KURITA, SHIMA and NISHIMURA, but I discovered as a result of this, my first experience with land-based air forces, that land-based air forces are lacking the same facility in operation that you have in a carrier force. The result was that I was not able to give to our surface forces one-tenth of the assistance I would like to have given.

- Q. Did the fleet forces inform you from time to time of the actions they were engaged in, or their difficulties and movements, besides requesting cover?
- A. Yes, constantly.
- Q. With specific reference to Admiral KURITA's force, do you recall what air protection was arranged for in the plans, and what was given to KURITA on the 24th, the day of KURITA's approach?
- A. In using this unwieldy land-based air force to support a constantly moving fleet, about the best that could be done would be to send fighters to protect the surface units, and scouting planes to search for submarines. But to do that would mean a serious weakening of the attacking power of the air force; therefore, although there were repeated requests for such support from KURITA, I turned a deaf ear to those requests, and decided that the best protection I could give to KURITA's force would be to concentrate my entire air force in attacking your Task Force which was waiting outside beyond the channel. However, owing partly to bad weather conditions, that attack against your Task Force was not successful. I did send a few fighters to protect the surface units and to scout for submarines in compliance with KURITA's request.
- Q. The reason then for the ineffectiveness of the air protection against air attack was the small numbers available for the job?
- A. Yes, in part, lack of sufficient numbers and also in part to the bad weather mentioned before.
- Q. Would you comment on the use of the Special Attack (Kamikaze) at LEYTE?
- A. After the two air fleets were combined to form the Combined Base Air Force, I being the senior officer took command with Admiral ONISHI as Chief of Staff. Throughout, the Kamikaze or special attack planes constituted the nucleus of my air force. The targets varied from time to time and were selected from a standpoint of obtaining greatest advantage to our forces. Principal targets were perhaps carriers, sometimes cruisers were selected, and again, especially when your destroyers came in large numbers against the forces that we had landed in LEYTE, they were designated as principal targets. The Kamikaze confined its operations to naval vessels (sea units). In the operations against land targets we used principally medium type land attack planes and ordinary attack planes and bombers, but used horizontal-bombing and not dive-bombing against land targets. In addition we used seaplanes for attacking torpedo boats.
- Q. What was the reason, throughout this period, that loaded transports were not a primary target of the special attack forces?
- A. I wish to correct myself on an earlier statement. Loaded transports were looked upon as at least of equal importance with carriers, perhaps even a little higher than carriers, as targets.
- Q. In fact, however, no loaded transports were ever hit, and for that reason I assumed that such orders were never issued?
- A. On one occasion loaded transports were made the principal targets, some 300 miles east-southeast of LEYTE; and on another occasion, in an area very close to LEYTE, our Kamikaze were sent out to attack what we supposed were loaded transports but by some error the attack was made against small landing craft.
- Q. With respect to the whole LEYTE Operation, you have already stated that it was virtually a finish fight. Can you say whether or not the Army, from the beginning, intended to make LEYTE an all-out operation, including all reinforcements they could put in there?
- A. What the policy was at the top, I don't know because that was in the hands of

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the Commander in Chief, Southwest Area Fleet. But, I was under the impression that at first the Army was hesitant to throw in their full force with the idea of fighting a decisive battle, but after a few days elapsed it appears as if headquarters and local authorities agreed that that was what they should do. But when decision was made, actually they couldn't get reinforcements down there to carry on the fighting.

- Q. Subsequent to the retirement of Admiral KURITA's force through SULU SEA, and the completion of the Naval Operation; what, if any, new directive was received from CinC, Combined Fleet?
- A. So far as I can recall there was no change in the operation ordered from the Combined Fleet. I believe that the order was to continue using the Naval Air Force to its utmost with a view to cutting off subsequent landing operations.
- Q. Again at this time, after the naval action had been fought, roughly how many planes did you have and roughly how many planes of the Army were operational in the PHILIPPINES?
- A. At the period that you mention, namely, immediately after our Task Forces had withdrawn, there had not been any serious depletion in air force because it was still the early part of the LEYTE Operation, and the continuing bad weather made the number of air combats relatively few.
- Q. Did you have definite plans for air support of the reinforcing convoys going into ORMOC, and was it in conjunction with the Army?
- A. I am not at all certain on this, but I do not believe that any definite air support was planned for that reinforcement. However, I think that that job was assigned to the Army Air Force based near MENADO.

(To Be Continued)

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