

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

RESTRICTED

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS 367)  
NAV NO. 73

Place: Tokyo  
Date: 15 & 16 November 1945  
Time: 1330-1730, 0930-1830

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: Operations of the Japanese First Destroyer Squadron in the Aleutian Campaign.

Personnel Interrogated and Background of each:

Vice Admiral OMORI, Sentaro, IJN, was in command (as a Rear Admiral) of the 1st Destroyer Squadron from October 1940 to October 1942. During this time he participated in the attack on PEARL HARBOR, the occupation of ATTU, the reconnaissance of AMCHITKA, and the supply and reinforcing of the WESTERN ALEUTIANS.

Captain ARICHIKA, Rokuji, IJN, was Chief of Staff to Commander 1st Destroyer Squadron from December 1941 until November 1943. After October 1942 the 1st Destroyer Squadron continued in the operations of supplying the WESTERN ALEUTIANS, engaged in the Battle of the KOMANDORSKIS, and in the evacuation of the KISKA garrison.

Where interviewed: Japanese Naval War College and the MEIJI Building.

Interrogator: J. S. Russell, Captain, USN.

Interpreter: R. P. Brown, Lieutenant(jg), USNR.

Other Allied Officers Present: None.

SUMMARY

The plans for the occupation of certain islands in the WESTERN ALEUTIANS, for the purpose of blocking a United States advance from the North, was known to Commander 1st Destroyer Squadron and his staff in late April 1942. The original plan called for the occupation of ADAK, KISKA and ATTU. As a result of the Battle of MIDWAY the occupation of ADAK was cancelled and the force assigned occupied ATTU instead, then conducted a reconnaissance of AMCHITKA. Thereafter the 1st Destroyer Squadron engaged in the supply and support of the ALEUTIANS with the greatest activity in summer because of the bad winter weather. This activity culminated in the Battle of the KOMANDORSKIS on 27 March 1943 (TOKYO date), when a convoy to ATTU was being escorted in force by the 5th Fleet. This action stopped further supply by surface ships except for one or two dashes to ATTU by destroyers, and forced an attempt at supply by submarine. When ATTU was retaken by the United States, the 1st Destroyer Squadron was assigned the task of evacuating the KISKA garrison. The third attempt was successfully completed under cover of heavy fog, the garrison being embarked at KISKA between 1340 and 1435 on 29 July (TOKYO time and date).

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TRANSCRIPT

Transcript of Interrogation (Vice Admiral OMORI, Sentaro, and Captain ARICHIKA, Rokuji, IJN)

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- Q. Admiral OMORI, as Commander of the First Destroyer Squadron, what was your flagship?  
A. The light cruiser ABUKUMA.
- Q. Who relieved the Admiral as Commander of the FIRST Destroyer Squadron?  
A. Rear Admiral MORI, Tomochi.
- Q. How long did Admiral MORI have the FIRST Destroyer Squadron?  
A. Admiral MORI was the Commander of the FIRST Destroyer Squadron from November 1942 until June 1943.
- Q. Who was next to relieve?  
A. Rear Admiral KIMURA, Masatoni I do not remember how long he remained in command.
- Q. Will the Admiral please tell us in what actions he participated during the war?  
A. HAWAII, Occupation of the ALEUTIANS, Battle of TOROKINA STRAITS 1 November 1943, - after which I went to the Torpedo School at YOKOSUKA.
- Q. What was the date of the planning for occupation of the ALEUTIANS, when did the Admiral first hear of the plan?  
A. About May 1942.
- Q. Please describe briefly the plan for the occupation of the ALEUTIANS.  
A. The plan originally was to come directly to ADAK, occupy ADAK, then proceed west to ATTU and occupy ATTU.
- Q. By what forces?  
A. The forces in the plan were the ABUKUMA, flagship, with the 21st Destroyer Division, one battalion of Army troops aboard the KINUGASA MARU, the Seaplane tender KIMIKAWA, escorted by probably two destroyers, and one mine layer the KOGANE MARU.
- Q. Who was to command Army troops?  
A. Major HOMOTO. - This was according to the plan which was made, now I shall tell you what actually took place. - We, the ADAK Occupation Force, left JAPAN and came to approximately 44N 178W where we learned of the Battle at MIDWAY. Because the MIDWAY Battle was a decisive battle, orders came from the Combined Fleet to the FIRST Fleet and on down to the FIRST Destroyer Squadron to stop the occupation of the ALEUTIANS. At this point we had proceeded north toward ADAK approximately 60 miles. The ADAK Occupation Force then reversed course in order to rendezvous with the FIRST Fleet. After steaming south approximately 120 miles and dismissing the KOGANE MARU to return to JAPAN the orders were changed and we were directed to continue with the ALEUTIAN Occupation. After steaming north to approximately the 45th parallel orders were received from Commander FIFTH Fleet to occupy ATTU, instead of ADAK, with the forces present, sending the KIMIKAWA MARU to KISKA to cooperate with the KISKA Occupation Force. The remaining force, consisting of the ABUKUMA, 21st Destroyer Division (NENCHI, HATSU HARU, HATSUSHIMO, WAKABA), and the KINUGASA MARU, arrived in HOLTZ BAY, ATTU, on 11 June and commenced landing one hour before sunrise.
- From HOLTZ BAY the troops moved overland to CHICHAGOF HARBOR, approaching CHICHAGOF HARBOR from the landward side. The landing party was confused in direction and crossed the island to MASSACRE BAY before going to CHICHAGOF HARBOR. When they arrived at CHICHAGOF HARBOR they found only about 40 natives and two Americans. The KINUGASA MARU entered CHICHAGOF HARBOR about noon and began unloading supplies. KINUGASA MARU remained in CHICHAGOF HARBOR completing unloading about 13 June while the FIRST Destroyer Squadron patrolled off shore.

During this time the FIRST Destroyer Squadron conducted a reconnaissance of the SEMICHI ISLANDS to determine the suitability of the terrain there for installing an airfield, then departed on 13 June sailing to AMCHITKA ISLAND where we examined the ground for a flying field. We arrived slightly before sunrise and the NENOHI sent ashore a landing party at CONSTANTINE HARBOR, while the ABUKUMA's planes examined the island from the air. The ABUKUMA cruised along the northeast side of AMCHITKA to examine the shore line. The reconnaissance took approximately three hours, the force then rendezvoused off the Southeast end of the island at which time an American plane was sighted. The weather was bad, and no action took place.

The force then retired to an area centered at approximately 49°-20'N and 171°-40'E. The 21st Division destroyers were ordered to go to KISKA, meanwhile the light cruiser KISO joined the ABUKUMA in the rendezvous area. The SIXTH Destroyer Division consisting of AKATSUKI, HIBIKI, INAZUMA and IKAZUCHI were attached to KISKA Occupation Force, and were not under my direct command. About the 19th, the HIBIKI received sufficient bomb damage at KISKA to be returned to JAPAN.

The ABUKUMA returned to OMINATO about 25 June and sortied again the 30th. On about 30 June, we sortied in company with Carrier Divisions FOUR and FIVE, Cruiser Division FIVE, and Battle Cruiser Division THREE. The purpose of this sortie was to lend assistance and support to the KISKA Operation. The carrier force cruised in an area centered about 43°N 173°E, where they were in a position to intercept any American forces coming up from the MIDWAY Area to interfere with the KISKA Operation. During the time the carrier force was standing by beginning 3 or 4 July, the 18th Destroyer Division comprised of KASUMI, ARARE, SHIRANHI, which had sailed from JAPAN, were operating in the KISKA Area. This division received an attack by an American submarine (5 July) which sank the ARARE, and seriously damaged the other two destroyers. Because of this damage, the ABUKUMA proceeded to KISKA to render aid. We remained in the area until 12 or 13 July.

On 5 July the NENOHI was sunk by submarine off AGATTU. Only 30 survivors from the NENOHI, all enlisted personnel, reach AGATTU. About 12 or 13 July ABUKUMA completed her duty at KISKA and returned to YOKOSUKA. From YOKOSUKA she went to OMINATO arriving about the end of July. From that time until the end of October the ABUKUMA acted as command ship for destroyers going to the ALEUTIANS, however, she herself did not go, but operated between KATAOKA and KAKUMABETSU, PARAMUSHIRO and OMINATO. On 20 October the ABUKUMA, KISO and TAMA plus two destroyers took troops to ATTU. The destroyers were from the 21st Destroyer Division, and were, I believe, the HATSUSHIMO and WAKABA. The troops were carried on board the three light cruisers. These troops were to replace the original ATTU garrison which had been moved to KISKA. Upon the moving of the troops to KISKA, ATTU had been garrisoned only by a Naval Communication Unit. This was for a period from about the end of August to 20 October.

We arrived in ATTU late in the evening of 22-23 October and discharged in haste in order to be at a safe distance to the west of ATTU, and away from air attack from DUTCH HARBOR and AMCHITKA, by morning. 900 troops under command of Lt. Col. YONEKAWA, were brought in on three light cruisers. These were infantry troops. They carried about one month's supply of ammunition and food.

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Transcript of Interrogation (Vice Admiral OMORI, Sentaro, and  
Captain ARICHIKA, Rokuji, IJN)  
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About 6 November, we returned to OMINATO and I was relieved by Admiral MORI.

Q. Was the ABUKUMA ever under air attack?

A. No, never.

Q. Does the Admiral know of any damage or sinking of Japanese ships which he has not already given in the narrative?

A. About the middle of October, the destroyers OBORO and HATSUHARU were carrying supplies to KISKA. The OBORO, which carried the supplies, was sunk and the HATSUHARU was heavily damaged by air attack. This action occurred off the north end of KISKA ISLAND. There were other attacks against destroyers, but I do not know of any other further details of damage.

Q. What routes were used to approach KISKA?

A. The approaches to KISKA most commonly used were those to the western end of the island and north around to KISKA HARBOR. Occasionally ships came straight across from PARAMUSHIRO to a point due south of KISKA where they made a run directly north, these approaches were used because of danger of air and submarine attacks.

Transcript of Interrogation (Captain ARICHIKA, Rokuji, IJN)

Q. When did Captain ARICHIKA first learn of the plan to occupy the ALEUTIANS?

A. At the end of April.

Q. What was the purpose of the ALEUTIAN Operations?

A. The ALEUTIAN Operations were a defensive measure against possible American attack coming from the north.

Q. What was accomplished by the operations?

A. They were not a success because we did not prepare for the occupation as we should, by that I mean we did not make preparations for the airfields and bases which were necessary.

Q. Will the Captain give us a narrative of his experiences in ALEUTIAN waters?

A. My experiences were largely in the summertime because of the terrific winter weather. First I participated in the ATTU occupation, returned from that and later was involved in transport and escort operations.

Q. Please continue.

A. The ATTU Occupation Force was under the Command of Vice Admiral OMORI. It was comprised of the First Destroyer Squadron: - ABUKUMA; Flagship, 21st Destroyer Division, composed of the WAKABA, HATSUSHIMO, NENOHI, and, temporarily attached, the SHIOKAZE; the transport KINUGASA MARU; the seaplane carrier, KIMIKAWA MARU; and the minelayer MAGANE MARU. The HATSUHARU, which was in the 21st Destroyer Division, may have participated also. One battalion of Army troops, known as the HOKKAIDO DAITAI, were aboard the KINUGASA MARU, which was a 7 to 8,000 ton, 15 knot ship.

The occupation force left OMINATO on about 29 May and proceeded to approximately 44°N, 178°W, where it arrived about the 5th of June and began a run directly towards ADAK. At this time news of the Battle of MIDWAY was received and the FIRST Destroyer Squadron was ordered to join the MIDWAY forces, hence the Squadron reversed course. In less than an hour this order was superseded by one directing the force to proceed to and occupy ATTU.

Transcript of Interrogation (Vice Admiral OMORI, Sentaro, and  
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The plan for occupying ADAK was abandoned. The ABUKUMA, KINUGASA MARU, WAKABA, HATSUSHIMO, and NENOHI went to ATTU. I do not remember the disposition of the other ships. The force arrived at the entrance to HOLTZ BAY, ATTU, at about 2100 or 2200 on 7 June and began landing troops at 2300. At first it was thought that the landing had been made in the wrong place, but at 0030 on 8 June a report came from ashore that the landing was a success. (I believe that the dates which Admiral OMORI gave are in error, the dates I have given are correct).

Q. How do you remember these dates, can we be assured that they are correct?

A. I associate the dates with reports from the KISKA landings which took place almost simultaneously, but a little earlier. Records in connection with these landings were found yesterday and are being investigated.

Q. Did you see Captain ITO's unit of six flying boats at ATTU?

A. Yes, I saw them, but at KISKA, later. CHICHAGOF HARBOR was not used for the initial landing because the harbor was narrow and shallow. The original plan was to by-pass CHICHAGOF and go into HOLTZ BAY. The army troops put ashore at HOLTZ BAY made the mistake of going South across the island to MASSACRE BAY, instead of turning east and going to CHICHAGOF. This made a slight delay in the original plans. The ABUKUMA left the entrance of HOLTZ BAY and steamed to the entrance to CHICHAGOF HARBOR, where, at approximately 0700 the next morning, the Army troops could be seen coming down the mountains to CHICHAGOF HARBOR. Until 10 June, ships of the 1st Destroyer Squadron patrolled around ATTU. On 10 June, they left for AMCHITKA, entering CONSTANTINE HARBOR on or about 12 June to investigate the possibility of constructing an airfield on AMCHITKA. The ships which went to AMCHITKA were the ABUKUMA, the WAKABA and one other destroyer. Thirty men from the WAKABA were sent ashore to carry out a reconnaissance. While this was being done a report came from one of the ships that an American plane had been sighted in the area. Because of the fog the plane could not be seen. However it was believed to have been patrolling in the area of AMCHITKA and KISKA. Orders were sent from the ABUKUMA to the landing party to hurry back to the WAKABA. When this was done the ships rendezvoused and fled at 20 knots to avoid detection. They remained in a stand by area about 200 miles south of KISKA for approximately 3 or 4 days.

Q. What time of day was the American plane sighted?

A. About 6 or 7 o'clock in the morning (TOKYO Time), I'm not positive. The reason for standing by off shore was because of air attacks on KISKA by American planes. It was desired to ascertain the results of the air attacks and what further developments might ensue prior to returning to JAPAN.

Q. Do you remember what kind of attacks, and what type of planes were involved?

A. The attacks were made by B-17s, I think. Some time between 13 and 15 June the destroyer HIBIKI received one bomb hit on the bow and was damaged. The KISO which was also there left at this time and came to the stand-by area. She rendezvoused with us, and was undamaged. The HIBIKI, towed by the AKATSUKI, sailed to OMINATO arriving about 26 or 27 June. While standing by and making patrols around the ALEUTIANS we had radio communication with KISKA. When the weather permitted we would sail up near the islands. We came up in the fog to avoid detection by American aircraft.

Transcript of Interrogation (Vice Admiral OMORI, Sentaro, and  
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When the weather cleared we moved back to the stand-by area.

At about the end of June we returned to OMINATO. Shortly afterwards (I don't recall the exact date) we left OMINATO for the ALEUTIANS area again. This time our forces were in three groups. Standing by in waters well south of ATTU, and South of us, was a carrier group. The CHIYODA went in to KISKA covered by three destroyers of the 18th Destroyer Divisions - KASUMI, ARARE, and SHIRANUHI. These three destroyers were just outside KISKA HARBOR and anchored immediately North of LITTLE KISKA Island at 0300 on 5 July when they were attacked by an American submarine. The first torpedo sank the ARARE, the ship closest to the submarine which was at an estimated range of 1,000 meters. The second torpedo hit the KASUMI, the ship next to the ARARE, just forward of the KASUMI's bridge, and almost severed her bow which dropped down to an angle of about 30° below horizontal.

The third torpedo missed the SHIRANUHI, farthest from the submarine, but a fourth torpedo hit amidship and severed the hull plating and bottom so that the SHIRANUHI was held together only by her main deck and centerline structure. This was a daring and skillful attack by the American submarine, and was admirably executed. The ABUKUMA plus WAKABA and one other destroyer went to KISKA to assist in salvage of KASUMI and SHIRANUHI.

On the same day, 5 July, the NENOHI was escorting a tanker when the tanker was attacked by a submarine, the NENOHI then attacked the submarine and sank it at sea off CHICHAGOF HARBOR.

Q. What evidence of sinking was obtained?

A. Debris and oil came to the surface after a depth charge attack. The NENOHI, herself, was sunk later in the day while making 6 knots close aboard AGATTU ISLAND. She was struck from abaft the starboard beam by one submarine torpedo, capsized within 2 minutes, and sank within 5 minutes. As she sank one of her small boats came adrift. About 20 of her crew climbed aboard it and made off towards AGATTU ISLAND. The IKAZUCHI sighted the smoke of the destruction of the NENOHI and steamed to the vicinity of the sinking, but all that could be found were the twenty men in the boat. About 200 persons were lost.

Q. Yesterday in your narrative you told of the ABUKUMA going to KISKA to assist in the salvage of the KASUMI and SHIRANUHI. Will you please continue?

A. The KASUMI's hull was broken just forward of the bridge and her bow hung down so that she could not move, a technician from YOKOSUKA was called into conference to survey this damage and to determine whether the bow should be cut off or whether she should be brought back intact. I believe the bow was cut off and she was towed back without her bow. The SHIRANUHI's hull was ruptured on both sides, but was held together by her main deck and centerline structure. The rupture was just abaft the forward stack. Patches were applied to the sides of the hull at KISKA, and she was towed back to MAIZURU. The KASUMI and the SHIRANUHI returned at the same time, around the end of July or 1st of August, to MAIZURU touching at PARAMUSHIRO.

The ABUKUMO, WAKABA and IKAZUCHI left KISKA on about the 10th and returned to YOKOSUKA arriving on 16 or 17 July. Upon arriving at YOKOSUKA the ships underwent repairs and overhaul, and conditions concerning the attack at KISKA were reported to the GUNREIBU (Naval General Staff) in TOKYO. On the 2 August the ships prepared to get underway for OMINATO, departed on 3 August and arrived at OMINATO 5 August. The cruise was uneventful.

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Transcript of Interrogation (Vice Admiral OMORI, Sentaro, and  
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Upon arriving at OMINATO, plans for training, exercises with the firing of torpedoes and guns were made, but on 8 August, five American cruisers and several destroyers carried out a surface bombardment against KISKA. While we were making plans for our training we received news of the American bombardment and we therefore departed from OMINATO at night on the 8th and arrived at PARAMUSHIRO about 10 or 11 August. The KISO which was also at OMINATO left with us and went to PARAMUSHIRO. At PARAMUSHIRO the FIFTH Fleet rendezvoused and prepared to go to KISKA, but, because the American Forces withdrew, the FIFTH Fleet did not sortie.

The organization of the FIFTH Fleet at OMINATO at this time was:

NACHI (Fleet Flag), KISO, TAMA;  
1st Destroyer Division, - SHIOKAZE, HOKAZE  
1st Destroyer Squadron, ABUKUMA (Squadron Flag)  
21st Destroyer Division, - WAKABA, HATSUSHIMO,  
HATSU HARU.  
6th Destroyer Division, - IKAZUCHI, INAZUMA  
Independent, - USUGUMO  
Tanker, - TEIYO MARU

(The tanker and 1st Destroyer Division were normally under the Commandant OMINATO, but joined the Fleet during sorties.)

- Q. Were there any ships in KISKA HARBOR during bombardment, and were any damaged?
- A. The only ships there were two grounded transports which were previously damaged by air attacks. These two ships were the NOJIMA MARU and the KANO MARU. Also there was a ship, NISSAN MARU, which had been previously sunk, but whose mast and bridge stuck up out of the water. The KASUMI, and SHIRANUHI may have been present. About five midget two man submarines were present. There were no cruisers, battleships nor destroyers. The seaplane carrier KIMIKAWA MARU may have also been there.
- Q. Was there any damage to any of these ships?
- A. No damage was done to the ships in the harbor, mostly the warehouses ashore were damaged. I believe that some planes were destroyed, but how many I do not know. Three persons were killed. I do not remember how many were wounded. The Chief of Staff of the FIFTH Fleet, Rear Admiral Tasaku NAKAZAWA, who had arrived by destroyer, was present during the bombardment.
- From the time the FIFTH Fleet arrived at PARAMUSHIRO until February of the next year there were absolutely no offensive operations carried out by the FIFTH Fleet as such. During this period the FIFTH Fleet conducted training exercises, while the destroyers and the KISO made transport runs to ATTU and KISKA. These were exciting because, in order to avoid detection by American planes, the ships had to run in during the night, unload cargo and get clear before daylight.
- Q. What can the Captain say of the American occupation of ADAK?
- A. I considered the American occupation of ADAK as being a "thorn in the side." Intelligence reports were received indicating that the Americans were building airfields on ADAK and that construction was being carried out very rapidly. This worried us because we realized that we would soon be subjected to additional land-based bombing attacks.
- Q. On what date did you first learn of the ADAK landing?

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- A. I do not remember the exact date. The reports came in from a reconnaissance plane which had reconnoitered ADAK. I believe the first news was around the 1st of October. We were very surprised at the speed with which the building of the airbase progressed.

Originally we planned to occupy the SEMICHI ISLANDS, and build airfields there, but we lacked forces and time to occupy those islands and were forced to hold only ATTU and KISKA.

Method of Running Supplies into KISKA and ATTU

Transport operations were very difficult to carry out because to avoid detection by American aircraft during the daytime, we had to take advantage of storms and fogs. This jeopardized our transport operations.

Three 17 knot transports were used, the ASAKA MARU, AWATA MARU, SAKITO MARU, as well as the light cruisers and destroyers. A scouting radius from ADAK and AMCHITKA of 600 miles was considered, it was presumed that the American search planes scouted a 15 degree sector. When a transport arrived at the 600 mile radius, a dash in was made using radio intelligence of the planes airborne to choose an uncovered sector of approach, or to follow in through a sector behind the plane which was scouting there. The transport attempted to arrive in darkness, and to discharge with utmost speed. The route away from KISKA was also chosen on radio intelligence of the air scouting in progress, choosing a sector which was not covered by air; or following the outbound track of an airplane. Radio intelligence of the search plane call signs was an aid in determining the uncovered sectors, also radar reports from KISKA assisted in this function. We did not break down the aircraft code successfully. The various approaches to KISKA were labelled "A" "B" "C", etc., and from intelligence plotted on board the ABUKUMA, a track for running into KISKA was determined and given to the ships participating. This system was very successful.

In one of the transport operations the AKAGANE MARU was sunk by American cruiser gunfire. The AKAGANE MARU was in position 53°-20'N 171°E, and a picket boat, which heard the sound of gun fire, was about 25,000-26,000 meters to the west. The picket boat was the coast defense ship, KUNAJIRI. At this time KISO and SAKITO MARU were about 200 miles north of KISKA. A seaplane scout reported the American cruisers to be steaming east after the sinking; if KISO and SAKITO MARU had continued to KISKA they would have been intercepted by the American cruisers hence they turned and retired. Also at the same time the ABUKUMA and the AWATA MARU were on their way to KISKA in position approximately 56°-20'N 171°-30'E. The ABUKUMA and the ASAKA MARU plus one destroyer continued on and went to KISKA.

The ABUKUMA and the one destroyer escorted the ASAKA MARU to a point about 120 miles north of KISKA, whence the AWATA MARU continued on into KISKA alone. The ABUKUMA and destroyer reversed course and returned to PARAMUSHIRO because of the great number of American planes in the vicinity at the time. During 21 February the ABUKUMA and her destroyer took the most northerly course possible to make the return voyage. They swung up to about 59°N reaching the most northern point on the night on the night of the 22nd, then proceeded south between BERING ISLAND and the GULF OF KAMCHATKA, to PARAMUSHIRO arriving at PARAMUSHIRO on 24 or 25 February



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The AWATA MARU stayed in KISKA HARBOR about one hour unloading her cargo and returned directly to YOKOSUKA by the southern route.

Because of the sinking of the AKAGANE MARU by naval gunfire a change in transportation plans became necessary. Transports could no longer be sent in groups of one or two ships at a time; it became necessary to send transports to the ALEUTIANS in larger force. At the beginning of March the exact date I do not remember, the entire FIFTH Fleet consisting of the First Destroyer Squadron the NACHI, MAYA and TAMA (KISO is believed to have been in MAIZURU at this time), the transports ASAKA MARU and SAKITO MARU went to ATTU, where they arrived early in March. (The First Destroyer Squadron at this time included the ABUKUMA, and six destroyers: - WAKABA, HATSUHARU, HATSUSHIMO, INAZUMA, IKAZUCHI and USUGUMO, the last operating individually). During the night the larger vessels, the NACHI, MAYA and TAMA with the destroyers INAZUMA and IKAZUCHI patrolled about 20 miles off shore to the north of ATTU. The ABUKUMA with the destroyers USUGUMO, WAKABA, HATSUSHIMO and HATSUHARU, patrolled about 20 miles off the shore to the South of ATTU.

The northern group patrolled only the northern side of the island. The southern group stayed south of the island with the exception of the ABUKUMA, the command ship, which returned to the entrance of HOLTZ BAY. The transports unloaded their cargo in one hour and departed. They rendezvoused to the north of the island and returned to PARAMUSHIRO. The Captain of the USUGUMO believed that he had picked up an American submarine near the entrance to HOLTZ BAY because of a sudden flash which is believed to have been a torpedo fired at him which detonated without have hit anything.

One of the other ships, it is not known which one, heard on their communication system a plain language broadcast from the alleged submarine; the gist of the broadcast was that Japanese ships were coming. This broadcast was about 30 minutes before the cargo ships entered HOLTZ BAY. The convoy returned to PARAMUSHIRO without having received any damage. The exact date of the convoy's arrival at PARAMUSHIRO is not known, but it is believed to have arrived there between 10 and 15 March. The cargo taken to ATTU at this time consisted mainly of materials for airfield construction and food.

On about 24 March the FIFTH Fleet with identical organization as before, but with an additional transport the SANKO MARU prepared a convoy run to ATTU. The force sortied from PARAMUSHIRO in three groups, the SANKO MARU escorted by the USUGUMO, because of the slow speed of the SANKO MARU left on the 23rd. Next to sortie, on 23 March, were the ASAKA MARU, the SAKITO MARU and the First Destroyer Squadron. Last to sortie was the main body of the FIFTH Fleet which was comprised of the NACHI, MAYA, and TAMA. The second two groups rendezvoused sometime during the afternoon of the 26th. Very bad weather was encountered on the 25th and 26th, and little progress was made. Rendezvous was set for 0100 27 March, and a radio message to this effect was sent out. The force was in column in order from van to rear: NACHI, MAYA, TAMA, WAKABA, HATSUSHIMO, ABUKUMA, IKAZUCHI, INAZUMA, ASAKA MARU, and SAKITO MARU; on a course of north when one of the ships in the rear signalled that two silhouettes were to the south at a distance of 6/8000 meters. The distance between ships in our column was 600 meters, except the destroyers which were 300 meters apart.

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The report was passed on to the NACHI that the USUGUMO and SANKO MARU had been sighted. At 0313 we discovered that it was the enemy. At this time the enemy bore 160 degrees true, distance 13½ miles. Because of the high bridge on the NACHI she probably discovered the enemy at the same time that we did, or before. The NACHI immediately ordered the transports to retire to the west. The course of the column was changed to east and then southwards and orders were given to take battle formation.

The FIRST Destroyer Squadron formed with the ABUKUMA in the lead followed in column by the WAKABA, HATSUSHIMO, IKAZUCHI and INAZUMA. The wind was from the northeast, - seven knots. The action was opened with a salvo from the NACHI. The American force opened fire very soon thereafter. The NACHI fired torpedoes within the first 25 minutes at the American force to the southwest.

In the turn to the southwest and west the TAMA cut inside and the FIRST Destroyer Squadron cut inside the TAMA. The TAMA came out slightly in the lead on a westerly course at about 0430. The ABUKUMA was to the north and at this time, that is between 0430 and 0500, the ABUKUMA received most of the fire of the American force. The ABUKUMA fired her four port side torpedoes at a range of about 15,000 meters and made a turn to the north. This placed the ABUKUMA somewhat behind the TAMA and the NACHI. Between 0500 and 0600 the American force laid a smoke screen and it was very difficult to see any of the ships. Occasionally they were made out. At about 0530 the ABUKUMA received orders to cross astern and come up on the south side of the NACHI. Because of the ships of the 6th Destroyer division (IKAZUCHI and INAZUMA) were old and slow and could not keep up we reduced our speed a little, to about 28 knots, from a previous speed of 30 knots. Because of the smoke screen we did not know whether or not the American Force would go north or south but we assumed that if it were to go south, the ABUKUMA and the destroyers would be able to close more quickly. We continued to sail west to close with the American force. At 0615 ABUKUMA fired her four starboard side torpedoes at a range of 16,000 meters. At about 0630 we turned south and the ABUKUMA was again abreast of the TAMA and NACHI in formation. We continued sailing west, zig-zagging somewhat, searching for the American force. A little before 0700 we spotted the Americans directly south and the WAKABA and the HATSUSHIMO fired 6 torpedoes each. The range was approximately 16,000 meters. It is believed that our torpedoes went inside the group of ships, but whether or not they made hits is not known.

(NOTE: The torpedoes which NACHI, ABUKUMA and the two destroyers fired were set at 32 knots, which would give an extreme range of 32,000 meters; all were oxygen torpedoes which left no wake, Type 93, diameter 61 centimeters (24 inch).

At about 0615 we received a message that 10, plus, planes (bombers) were on their way to the scene of the battle, where from and the exact number unknown. It was believed the message came from KISKA, don't know how many groups there were but there were ten plus planes; and at this time we wished to hurry the battle to an end. An additional reason for our wishing to hurry the battle was because of the low fuel capacities of the IKAZUCHI and the INAZUMA.

Transcript of Interrogation (Vice Admiral OMORI, Sentaro, and  
Captain ARICHIKA, Rokuji, IJN)  
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Our observation planes, which had been launched from the MAYA or NACHI early in the engagement, reported to us, but the reports were meager because of the smoke screen and the reports were jeopardized by the inability of the observers. We did not know what damage had been done to the enemy. At approximately 0700 we saw one cruiser with a 15 degree list to the west. --- I could not tell which direction the cruiser was headed. She was also smoking. We saw 2 or 3 destroyers smoking. Later the planes reported that the cruiser with the list was lying dead in the water.

A duel between the NACHI and MAYA and American destroyers was going on about this time (0700). We could see the guns of the American destroyers firing very rapidly. I am not positive whether it was the destroyers or cruisers who fired torpedoes at us. These torpedoes exploded prematurely at 1500 to 2000 meters to the port side of the ABUKUMA. If these torpedoes had not exploded prematurely it is believed that they would have made hits on the ABUKUMA. Shortly after 0700 we decided to break off the engagement because of the report that American airplanes were coming and because of the low fuel capacity of the two afore-mentioned destroyers, and also in consideration of the fuel capacity of others of the ships. The ABUKUMA had plenty of ammunition left at the end of the battle but the NACHI and the MAYA had nearly exhausted their supply. At about 0730 we disengaged by remaining on a westerly course while the American ships went south.

- Q. What were the size and number of the guns on the ABUKUMA?  
A. 14cm - six guns. She carried 200 to 250 rounds per gun. Each gun of the TAMA fired about 50 rounds and they had about 150 rounds left per gun.
- Q. Who was embarked on the ASAKA MARU?  
A. Colonel YAMAZAKI's force.
- Q. What was on the SANKO MARU?  
A. A very few soldiers, and supplies. In command at ATTU at this time was Lieutenant Colonel YONEKAWA, Colonel YAMAZAKI was to take command upon arrival. There were no troops embarked on any of the combatant ships. Later Colonel YAMAZAKI reached ATTU, - I do not remember the ship, but it was at a later date.
- Q. At the time, what damage did you think you had done to the American force?  
A. We thought we had damaged one cruiser, and two or three destroyers, - nothing sunk. When we were steaming west, we came upon a large oil slick and realized that we had done serious damage.
- Q. Did any destroyers make a run into ATTU after this battle?  
A. There were submarines supplying KISKA and ATTU and I believe that one or two destroyers got in to ATTU early in April at which time the Colonel YAMAZAKI was landed.
- Q. What happened when you reached PARAMUSHIRO?  
A. ABUKUMA left PARAMUSHIRO for MAIZURU, arrived there about 10 April, and underwent overhaul. At this time radar was installed on the ABUKUMA. While overhauling, the flag of the FIRST Destroyer Squadron was transferred to the KISO. After embarking the flag, the KISO left MAIZURU for PARAMUSHIRO touching at OMINATO enroute. She arrived at PARAMUSHIRO on about 20 April. On about 9 May the KISO, WAKABA and HATSUSHIMO left PARAMUSHIRO in company with the KIMIKAWA MARU, which was transporting seaplanes to KISKA.

Transcript of Interrogation (Vice Admiral OMORI, Senaro, and Captain ARICHIKA, Rokuji, IJN)

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The plan for the convoy was to proceed to a point about 250 miles southwest of ATTU where the planes were to be launched to fly to ATTU and then proceed to KISKA. However, we learned of the American landing on ATTU at about 1200 on 12 May hence the plan was changed. No planes were launched and the KIMIKAWA MARU was ordered to return to PARAMUSHIRO alone. We planned to go with the rest of the ships, the KISO, WAKABA, and HATSUSHIMO, - to ATTU to make an attack. We realized that if we went during the daylight we would be at a great disadvantage because of the strength of the American Force there. Hence we planned to attack on the night of the 13th. However, from our position we could not cover the distance even though we sailed at full speed, so we waited in an area about 250 miles southwest of ATTU. That night we received orders from Commander, FIFTH Fleet, to return to PARAMUSHIRO.

At the end of May the situation at ATTU had become definitely critical and the ABUKUMA, which had come to PARAMUSHIRO from MAIZURU early in May, was sent out on 25 May with four destroyers. The plan was to take supplies to the troops. After landing the provisions we were to evacuate important personages who were familiar with the situation ashore. These persons were the Naval Communications Staff Officer, a Commander EMOTO, and one Staff Officer of the Army (Name unknown) who had gone to ATTU from HOKKAIDO for observation purposes. It was intended to work past the American ships on the night of 29 May. We proceeded up to about 150 miles southwest of ATTU, but, because the weather was clear, and because we had no intelligence reports, we were afraid of detection by enemy aircraft, so we delayed our run in one day. The night of the 29th, Colonel YAMAZAKI sent a message that the situation on ATTU was very grave, and Commander, FIFTH Fleet, ordered us to return to PARAMUSHIRO.

- Q. When did the last surface ship arrive in KISKA?
- A. About the end of February or early in March, a destroyer. After that there was only submarine transport. Two Japanese submarines were sunk to my knowledge south of KISKA. There may have been more. Transporting goods to KISKA by submarine was a very difficult proposition and early in June it was decided that we would have to withdraw our troops from that island.

Orders came from Vice Admiral KAWASE, Shiro, then Commander, Fifth Fleet, down through Rear Admiral KIMURA, Masatomi, then Commander 1st Destroyer Squadron, to me to draw up plans for the evacuation of troops from KISKA. This plan had to be done in time to withdraw the troops by July. I was given the light cruisers ABUKUMA, KISO, TAMA; the SIXTH Destroyer Division, - IKAZUCHI, INAZUMA; the 21st Destroyer Division, - WAKABA, HATSUSHIMO; NINTH Destroyer Division, - ASAGUMO, USUGUMO, HIBIKI; also the converted cruisers ASAKA MARU and AWATA MARU. These last two ships I decided were too slow for the operation, and also that the TAMA was too old and unreliable. I decided that there were not enough destroyers, and requested six more. As a result, the following were assigned: the 10th Destroyer Division, - YUGUMO, KAZAGUMO, AKIGUMO; and an independent group of destroyers, - SHIMAKAZE, NAGANAMI, SAMIDARE. At the same time the SIXTH Destroyer Division was ordered back to JAPAN. On 7 July the ABUKUMA and KISO left PARAMUSHIRO with the 9th, 10th, 21st Destroyer Divisions, and the three independent destroyers, plus the tanker NIHON MARU which was being escorted by the coast defense ship KUNAJIRI.

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Transcript of Interrogation (Vice Admiral OMORI, Senaro, and  
Captain ARICHIKA, Rokuji, IJN)  
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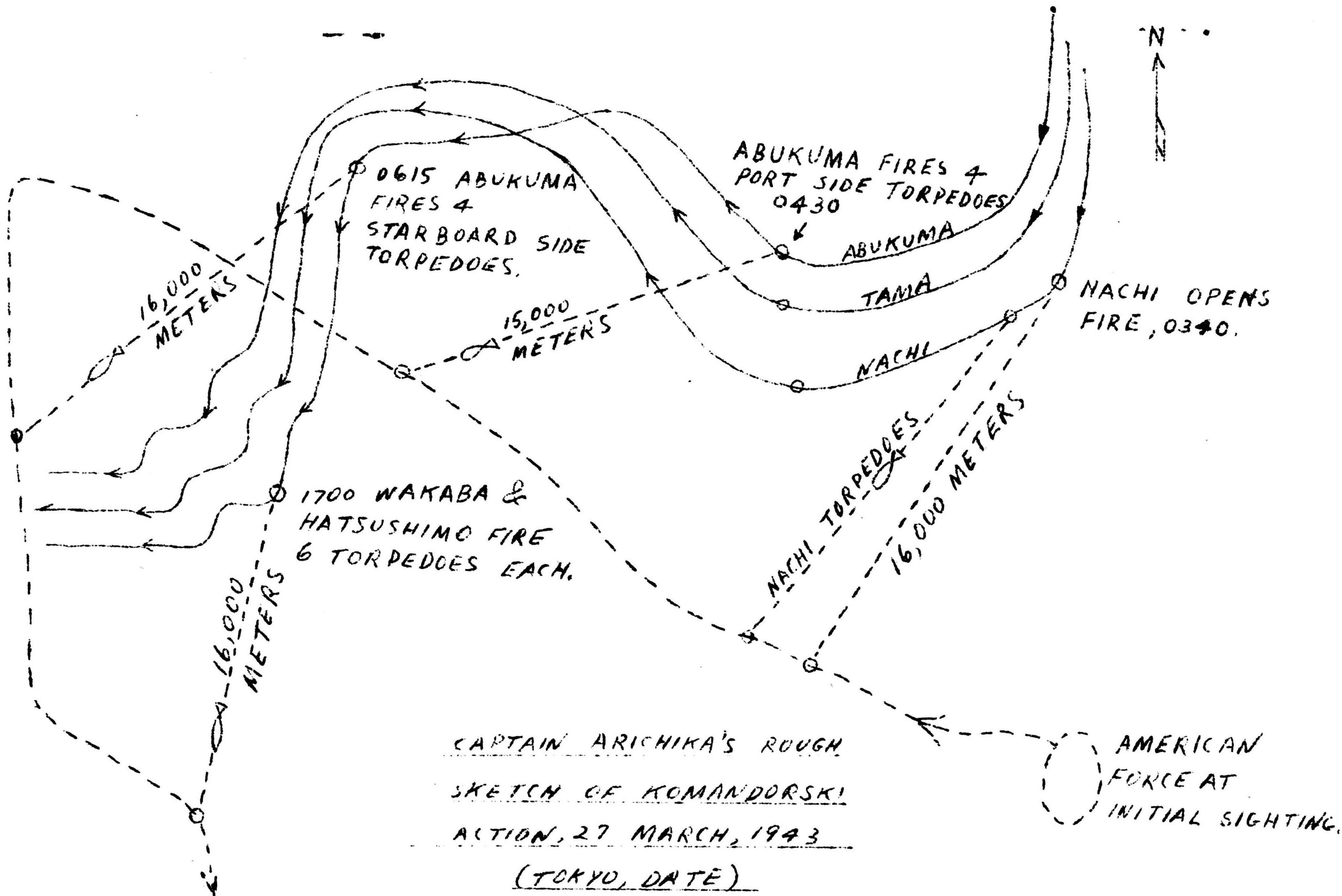
We went to a position about 200 miles southwest of KISKA where we stood by until 16 July, when we returned to PARAMUSHIRO because the weather did not favor our evacuating the troops. The second time we left PARAMUSHIRO at 2010 on 22 July. We ran south southeast to about 46-30N thence east to the 170th meridian where we waited in an area generally to the southeast of that point. At 1700 on 26 July the KUNAJIRI collided with the ABUKUMA. In the resulting confusion the WAKABA and NAGANAMI collided in the rear of the column. The KUNAJIRI returned to JAPAN at 9 knots in company with the WAKABA. At 0000 on 28 July we were roughly at 46-40N 173-10E from this point we made a direct run in, - course about 020 true, - to a point 15 miles from CAPE ST. STEPHEN, at this point the TAMA left us and returned to PARAMUSHIRO. The remainder of the force, after getting a brief glimpse of CAPE ST. STEPHEN at about 1000 29 July, ran on soundings about a mile off shore until we reached the indentation on the west coast of KISKA, when we headed for a point one mile off shore near KISKA VOLCANO. We then circumnavigated the north end of KISKA ISLAND about one mile off shore, thence we ran directly down into KISKA HARBOR. Navigation was by sounding and radar aided on the last leg by bearings of a radio beacon on SOUTH HEAD.

When the ABUKUMA first sighted the north tip of LITTLE KISKA ISLAND it was mistaken for an American cruiser, and four torpedoes were fired. Two of these exploded against LITTLE KISKA and two against SOUTH HEAD. At 1340 all ships went in, anchoring at the inshore end of KISKA HARBOR, except for HIBIKI, which took station off LITTLE KISKA, and SHIMAKAZE, NAGANAMI and SAMIDARE which patrolled the entrance. The visibility inside KISKA HARBOR was good. 5100 personnel were taken aboard, 450 to each destroyer, and 1200 to each of the light cruisers. We were underway at 1435 and proceeded from KISKA HARBOR in two groups. The first group was made up of the ABUKUMA, YUGUMO, KAZAGUMO, AKIGUMO, SHIMAKAZE and SAMIDARE. The second group was made up the KISO, ASAGUMO, USUGUMO, HIBIKI, HATSUSHIMO and NAGANAMI. The track out followed the same track as going in until north of KISKA VOLCANO, when the ABUKUMA Group proceeded down midway between KISKA ISLAND and PILLAR ROCK, then Southwest. At a point two miles south-by-east of PILLAR ROCK an American submarine surfaced at about 2000 meters from ABUKUMA. A 45 degree turn away was immediately made, and the American submarine submerged. Course was resumed again, and the ABUKUMA Group proceeded at 28 knots on course approximately 210° true to the 48th parallel of latitude, thence along that parallel to about 159°E, thence directly to PARAMUSHIRO, where the group arrived on 1 August. The KISO came south only as far as the 50th parallel and arrived in PARAMUSHIRO with her group on the 31st of July.

The senior officer among the evacuated personnel was Rear Admiral EKIYAMA, Katsuzo, IJN, the senior Army officer was Brigadier General MINEKI. There was no one left ashore except for three dogs, however, timed explosives were left to detonate a few days later to give the impression that troops were still present and going about the business of changing the defenses. Each destroyer carried one landing boat, and the ABUKUMA and KISO two each. About five boats were available from the shore. These were sunk after the embarkation was complete.

We wondered if the American submarine had reported our presence, or whether it mistook us for an American force. The center smoke stack of the ABUKUMA was painted white so that in the fog it would appear that she had only two stacks.

I left the FIRST Destroyer Division in November. After the evacuation of the KISKA garrison we engaged in convoy work, returning to YOKOSUKA on 7 October.



CAPTAIN ARICHIKA'S ROUGH  
SKETCH OF KOMANDORSKI  
ACTION, 27 MARCH, 1943  
(TOKYO, DATE)