

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

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS 225)
NAV NO. 53

Place: Tokyo
Date: 1 November 1945

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: Escort and Protection of Shipping

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Commander KUWAHARA, Tadao, IJN, (reserve), was commander of an escort vessel engaged in convoy work between MOJI and SINGAPORE. Civilian experience of transpacific N.Y.K. Liners. While in Military Affairs Office, assisted in recruiting and training crews for Naval supply ships and civilian ships.

Where interviewed: Meiji Building. Room 748

Interrogator: Captain Steadman Teller, USN

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

Allied Officers Present: Dr. J.V. Wehausen

SUMMARY

Three ex-NYK liners converted to the auxiliary aircraft carriers CHUYO, UNYO and TAIYO were employed in transporting aircraft from the EMPIRE to FRUK and LABAUL in 1942 and 1943.

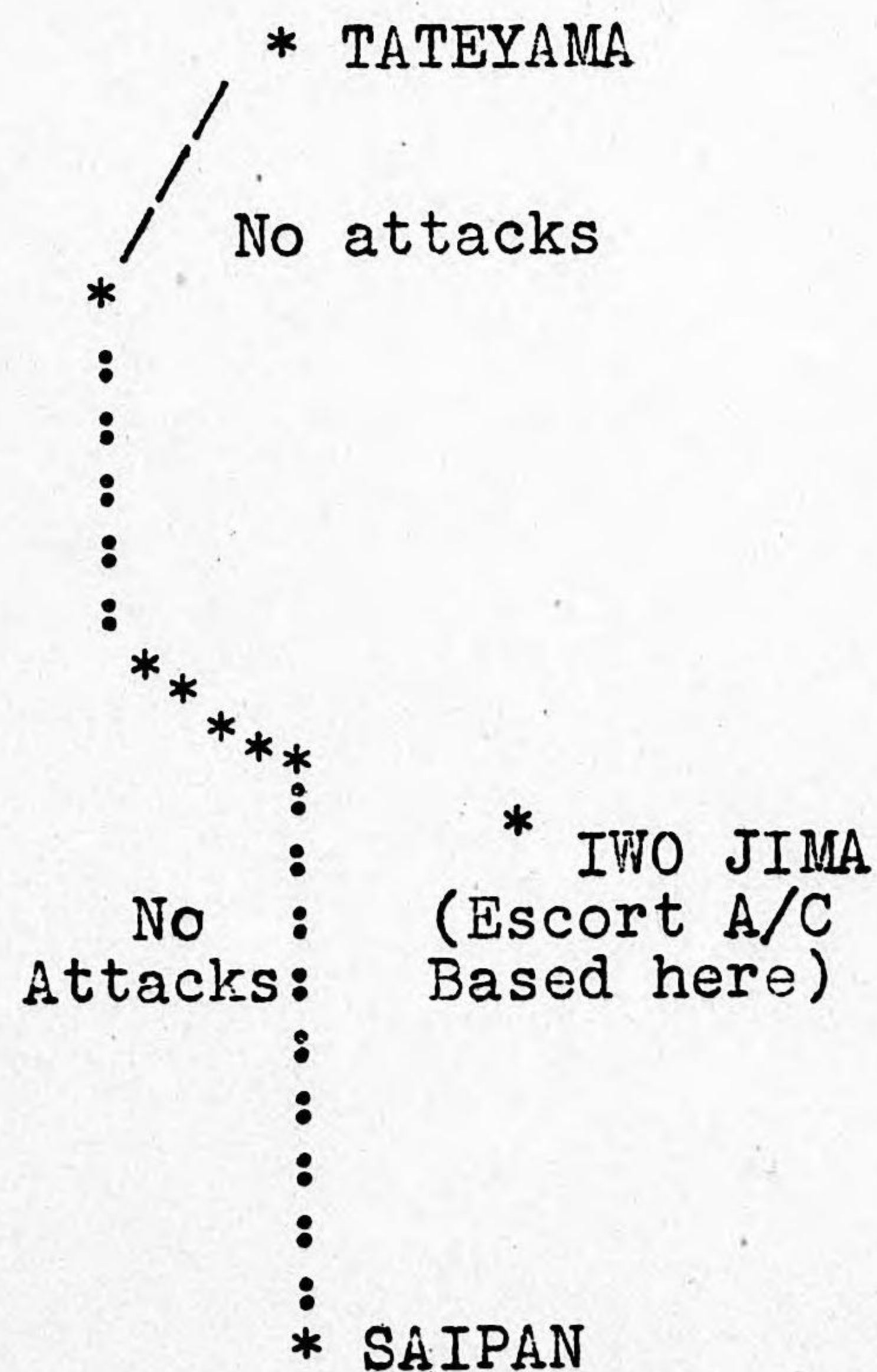
The carrier air strikes on shipping along the INDO-CHINA Coast, 10-17 January 1945, destroyed 11 tankers and freighters, a cruiser and four escorts of which Commander KUWAHARA has personal knowledge. In addition, 16 more freighters and 10 escorts were destroyed by carrier and other air strikes in the vicinity of SAIGON during the same period.

TRANSCRIPT

- Q. Tell me about your experience on the CHUYO between the EMPIRE and TRUK, while transporting airplanes?
- A. I made three trips in CHUYO between the EMPIRE and SOUTH SEA. On the second trip, the ship carried about 54 planes of various types, including some Army heavy planes. About 30, including the Army planes were unloaded at TRUK and the ship then proceeded to a position about 200 miles north of RABAUL in early December 1942. At this point about 24 Navy fighters were launched for delivery to RABAUL.
- Q. What was the normal number of planes taken each trip?
- A. 50 to 60 planes.
- Q. What was the largest plane you carried?
- A. The largest planes carried were light-bombers, between six and seven tons of weight, twin-engines.
- Q. What ships were used for this purpose of aircraft transport?
- A. The CHUYO and UNYO. All were ex-NYK passenger boats and were 22 to 24 knot ships.
- Q. Were you attacked by submarines during any of your trips from the EMPIRE to the INNER SOUTH SEAS Area?
- A. I left TATEYAMA for SAIPAN on 30 May 1944 at 0500 with a convoy of seven vessels and four escorts. Three of the ships were transporting 10,000 troops to SAIPAN. This was the last convoy to go to SAIPAN. The vessels were the following of which the first three carried troops/

NAME	APPROX. SIZE	DATE SUNK
TAKAOKA MARU	6,000 G.T.	5 June
HAVRE MARU	5,000	6 June
KATSUYA MARU	6,000	4 June
KASHIMAZAN MARU	4,000	6 June
TAMAHIME MARU	4,000	5 June
KATORI MARU	4,000	
SHOEI MARU	3,000	

The course was roughly as follows:



Transcript of Interrogation (Commander KUWAHARA, Tadao, IJN)

Q. During your duty in the UKURU, what was her employment?

A. The UKURU was a 1,000 ton escort vessel in the 101st Flotilla of the First Escort Fleet. The 101st Flotilla was composed of the flagship KASHII, light cruiser 4,500 tons, three escort vessels of 1,000 ton and three escorts of 4,700 ton. While in UKURU, we made two round trips between MOJI and SINGAPORE, stopping at TAKAO.

The convoy was attacked by submarines on the 1st through the 6th of June, all attacks occurring at about 1500-1600. The submarines had been following another convoy bound for JAPAN. When the two convoys crossed, the submarines turned around and followed my convoy. During the first three days none of the attacks were successful. On the 4th of June, the convoy was attacked simultaneously from the two front quarters and the port aft quarter. KATSUYA MARU was sunk. On the 5th of June, we were attacked again from two sides and TAKAKA MARU and TAMAHIME MARU were sunk. On the 6th June, we were attacked once more on two sides, simultaneously. KASHIMAZAN MARU, carrying aviation gasoline, was hit during this attack and exploded. About an hour later another attack sank HAVRE MARU. Of the troops of the three troop transports noted above 80% were sunk.

During each attack the escorts dept charged the submarines, using sonar to locate them. Possible damage may have been inflicted on submarines on 1,2,4,5, June since, on each of these days oil appeared on the surface. However, no sinkings were claimed.

Q. Describe the attack, which you received during those two trips.

A. On the first trip we had eight empty tankers bound for SINGAPORE and, seven or eight escorts ships. The only attack, either by submarines or aircraft, was delivered on the 2nd of November 1944 at 1432, just East of HAINAN by one B-24 aircraft, bombing from about 3,000 meters. No damage was done to the convoy.

Q. Did you make any attacks on submarines?

A. This convoy encountered no submarines and followed close to the coast, generally within 2,000 or 3,000 meters.

Q. What was your experience on your second trip?

A. I left MOJI late December 1944 with four Army troop ships: the SHISHU, KIBIYU, HYUGA, (10,000 tons each), the AOBASAN (7,000 tons), and one empty tanker (10,000 tons). We proceeded to TAKAO without incidents and there turned over the four troop ships to another escort for further convoy to the PHILIPPINES. A new convoy was made up approximately as follows: one or two 10,000 ton tankers, four 6,000 ton ships, and three 2,900 ton tankers; eight escort vessels including the KASHII, accompanied the convoy. In the early morning of 3 January, while proceeding South at approximately the east entrance of HAINAN STRAITS, the convoy was attacked by one B-24 aircraft which approached from astern in a glide with motor cut and dropped bombs. One bomb hit was made on the cargo carrier TEIHOKU MARU, 6,000 ton, which was the last ship in the west column. The bomb damaged one of the after hatches. We sent this ship and one escort to YULIN for repair and, while enroute to YULIN, another air attack was made. This one damaged the escort vessel TSUSHIMA (1,000 tons) with a near miss, so that it just barely got to YULIN. The convoy proceeded to SAIGON where the tankers were turned over to another escort group to take them to SINGAPORE. While at SAIGON, for three days, a single B-24 came over frequently although some bombs were dropped, no damage was done to a group of about 20 cargo vessels and escorts which was anchored at SAIGON at the time.

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERROGATION OF (Commander KUWAHARA, Tadao, IJN).

This covered the period from 6 to 9 January; however, some of the bombs hit and started fires in the Army barracks at SAN JUAN.

We left SAIGON on 9 January at noon, with a convoy of two oil tankers, one 10,000 and one 7,000 ton, and six freighters, the largest of which was 7,000 ton. It also included two tankers of 600 tons. The convoy speed was 8 knots. The escorts were the same as before (six, including the KASHII). Before sunset of the 10th, the convoy was sighted by one B-24 which remained over it about half an hour. The convoy proceeded up the coast, spending one night each at VAN FONG BAY and QUINON BAY. The convoy formation was as follows:

	†	Course	
	:	North	
	:		
	:		
	:	⊙sKASHII (flagship)	() #27
INDO	:	1500 M. between flagship and other ships	
CHINA	:		
COAST	:	()b	()b () DAITO
	:	()s	()b
DIRECTION	:	⊙s	()b () UKURU
OF HEAVIEST	→	⊙s	()b
ATTACK		()b	()b ()s#51
	:		
	:	⊙s#23	
	:		
	:		
	:	NOTES:	s = sunk
	:		b = beached

On the 12th the convoy left QUINON BAY at 7 O'clock. Three F6Fs were sighted at 0855 and the one covering Zero fighter was shot down. At 0955 two more fighters appeared and at 1104 about 16 TBFs and SB2Cs appeared. In the attack which lasted 30 minutes, the heavily loaded 6,900 ton freighter, EIMAN MARU was set afire by a bomb hit and sank. I believe one or two of the attacking planes were shot down by AA fire of the KASHII and other escort vessels. The UKURU was bracketed by four or five near misses, thirty or forty meters away, which shook up the ship and caused her to stop about 2 minutes; but no damage was sustained. About 1229 a single plane dove on the UKURU, but only obtained a near miss and did no damage. During the attack the convoy had become scattered due to evasive action and was now reformed. About 20 dive-bombers appeared and circled in the vicinity until 1355 when 50 more of the same type arrived from the north. At 1408 the dive bombing and torpedo attack by all planes began. The KASHII was sunk almost immediately in an explosion. This was a well executed attack, bombers diving in succession and at the same time a torpedo attack was launched at the KASHII from her starboard side. One torpedo and two bombs hit the KASHII, one of the bombs exploded the after magazine. The ship sank stern first, the bow remained about 10 feet above the water which was shallow. Vice Admiral T. SHIBUYA, Convoy Commander, and his entire staff were killed. At 1416 Escort Number 51 on the starboard quarter of the convoy received a hit or a very near miss by bomb, which I believed ignited the depth charges because of the white smoke. She sank very soon. The attack continued particularly uninterrupted until dark. During which time the following ships were sunk;

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERROGATION OF (Commander KUWAHARA, Tadao, IJN).

<u>SHIP</u>	<u>TONNAGE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
YOSHU	5,711	Freighter
KYOKUUN	10,000	Tanker
EIMAN MARU	6,900	Freighter
KASHII	4,500	CL
#51	700	Escort vessel
#23	700	Escort vessel

The following ships were damaged severely and beached:

OTSUYAMA	6,800	Freighter
SAN LUISE	7,628	Tanker
SHOEI	2,768	Freighter
TATSUHATO	6,600	Freighter
TATEBE	4,519	Freighter
#63 BANSHU	533	Tanker
USEI	500	Tanker

The large escort vessels UKURU and DAITO and the small escort vessel #27 all were severely damaged, but were able to reach SANGA, HAINAN at 1540 on the 13th. The UKURU escaped two torpedo attacks by maneuvering.

The UKURU attempted to rescue the crew of the sunken KASHII about 1430, but an attack developed at this time and prevented us from rescuing more than 19. Subsequently we escaped several attacks by maneuvering into nearby rain squalls. The total casualties of the UKURU were 12 killed and 29 injuries. The three remaining escorts arrived at YULIN on 14 January where they joined TSUSHIMA, which had made that port after being damaged in the earlier attack on 3 January. At YULIN between 1100 and 1240, we were attacked by carrier planes, it was believed fighters, during which the DAITO was damaged to some extent by strafing and the HARIMA, a 10,000 ton tanker, was sunk by dive bombing. This tanker was empty and en route to the south with eight airplanes on deck. Two other freighters were damaged slightly. Two American fighters were shot down during strafing attacks by AA firing from escort. The escorts were closely grouped for protection along the shore near the mountains and we were able to shoot down the fighters because they had to pull up in recovering from the strafing attack. On the 16th, about 30 or 40 dive-bombers and fighters made another attack, but it appeared to be directed at shore objects; consequently, no serious damage was done to the escorts or to the freighters. On the 17th three fighters again attacked, but did no serious damage. This was the last attack, which was fortunate, because we were almost out of machine gun ammunition at that time, having only 5000 rounds remaining in the UKURU.

On the 21st of January the TEIHOKU MARU, 6,000 ton freighter, and the AKESHIMA, 2,000 ton freighter (the only ones out of four in port which could get under way) escorted by four escort vessels left YULIN. This convoy proceeded around the western side of HAINAN STRAITS and hugged the coast going north. At Latitude 21°N and Longitude 111°E, at 0930 on the 23rd, the group was attacked by a single B-24 with no damage. A message was intercepted from this B-24 reporting the exact position and composition of the convoy in plain language. On 26 January, at 0130 in the morning in position 25°N and 119°E, a night attack was made by one four engine plane on the leading escort TSUSHIMA. A bomb dropped close but no damage was sustained.

Transcript of Interrogation (Commander KUWAHARA, Tadao, IJN)

On 31st January, in position 34°N, 123°E, our sound gear detected a submarine trailing us and a message supposedly from the submarine was also heard; however, no attack developed.

At the time my convoy left SAIGON, on 9 January, there were many freighters and some escorts still remaining. I understand that on the 10th seven ships, of which two or three may have been oil tankers, and five escorts left SAIGON, north bound, and were attacked shortly after, just north of CAPE ST JACQUES. All these vessels were sunk. I also know that three escort vessels of the First Flotilla, namely CHIBUKI and No. 17 and No. 19 which had remained in SAIGON, and three or four freighters which were loading there were all sunk by air attack. In addition there was a southbound convoy of perhaps five or six empty tankers and two escorts which I believe were all sunk shortly after leaving SAIGON. Consequently, out of a total of 30 or 40 freighters and tankers and 20 escorts, the only ships I know of which escaped were the three escorts of my group which reached YULIN on the 14th.

- Q. What were your duties in the Office of Military Affairs between February 1945 and August 1945?
- A. I assisted in recruiting and training merchant crews for vessels under Navy control and for civilian ships. It was difficult to obtain crews towards the end of the war; but due to the fact that many ships were under repair, we were always able to provide a crew for ships which were to sail. However, the age of the crews was very low, most of them were in their teens. There was a great tendency for crews to jump ship at various ports. About forty percent of our merchant crews were lost during the war.