

HEADQUARTERS
U.S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)
APO #234
C/O POSTMASTER, SAN FRANCISCO

INTERROGATION NO: (USSBS NO. 101)
NAV - 24

PLACE: TOKYO
DATE: 11 Oct 1945
TIME: 0900-1200

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

SUBJECT: Aleutian Campaign, Planning and Operations through November 1942.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

CAPTAIN TAISUKE ITO, IJN, is an officer of the Regular Navy with 21 years service. From August 1941 until November 1942 he was an air officer on the staff of Commander Fifth Fleet, who based variously at AKKESHI, OMINATO, and PARAMUSHIRO. From November 1942 until May 1944 he served as Chief of the Board of Awards in TOKYO. During May and June 1944 he was air officer on the staff of the Central Pacific Command on SAIPAN. He then became Senior Staff Officer of the 61st Air Flotilla on PELELIU until 29 July 1944; thence he was taken to the YOKOSUKA Naval Hospital where he remained until 1 September 1944. He then became Senior Staff Officer of the 20th Air Fleet based at FUJISAWA. From November 1944 to the present he has served in the First Section of the Bureau of Personnel. He is a pilot with 2000 hours in the air.

Where interviewed: Room 618, MEIJI Building.

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

Interpreter: OTIS CARY, Lieutenant, USNR

Allied Officers Present: H. L. McMASTERS, Lieutenant, USNR.

SUMMARY

Captain ITO spoke entirely from memory. He stated that all records had been destroyed on 15 August 1945. The following summary is based, therefore, on the best recollection of one officer:

The primary objective of the Aleutian operation was to occupy ADAK as a northern base for patrol planes, which, in conjunction with MIDWAY, could cover the northern approach across the Pacific to JAPAN. When the Battle of MIDWAY went unfavorably, Admiral YAMAMOTO was against occupying any of the ALEUTIAN ISLANDS. However, Vice Admiral HOSOGAYA, Commander FIFTH Fleet, argued strongly for the occupation of KISKA as a position from which to neutralize DUTCH HARBOR and prevent an advance toward JAPAN via the ALEUTIAN ISLANDS. He was granted permission to land on KISKA on 6 June. Since it was known that Aleutian weather in the winter was very bad, it was the original plan to hold KISKA only until fall. ADAK was selected as the original westernmost target, since it was considered to afford the best anchorage in the Western Aleutians. (Note: Commander MUKAI, commander of the SNLF which occupied KISKA, said, in a subsequent interrogation, that the original plan was to take ADAK and KISKA, then to retire to KISKA and ATTU, and that this original plan was changed, to his knowledge, two weeks before MIDWAY). ATTU, KISKA, and AMCHITKA were scouted by submarine plane a week to ten days before KISKA was occupied.

About a month after the occupation of KISKA, the landing upon which was effected on 6 June 1942, airfields were planned for the ALEUTIANS, based on reconnaissance. One airfield was planned for ATTU. The site originally chosen on SARANA BAY was shifted to HOLTZ BAY (the latter was considered a better location for weather and supply). Two airfields were planned for KISKA; one just north of KISKA HARBOR, and another in the GERTRUDE COVE area. The GERTRUDE COVE site could not be agreed upon and the project was eventually dropped. AMCHITKA was reconnoitered once by the Navy and once, more extensively, by the Army. The party from the latter service stayed on the island three days and made test diggings in the soil.

The initial landing on KISKA, Captain ITO believed was made by No. 5 Special Naval Landing Force, plus construction troops totalling upward of 1000 persons. The initial landing was made in the vicinity of SALMON LAGOON, and the landing party moved overland to KISKA HARBOR, while their ships moved around by sea to meet them. All the personnel of the U.S. Navy Weather Station were rounded up in a few days, except for one who held out for a long time before coming into camp and giving himself up.

The following forces took part in the initial occupation:

2 CL	KISO, TAMA.
2 AP	HIKUSAN MARU, KUMIGA MARU.
2 DD	
3 SC	
Troops:	No. 5 SNLF and a Construction Battalion.
1 LV	KIMIKAMA MARU.
6 VPB	KIMINISHI Type 94 Flying Boats of TOKO Air Group.
10 (approx)	
VO-VS	Float reconnaissance seaplanes.

Both the KISKA and ATTU occupation forces were under the command of Commander FIFTH Fleet, Vice Admiral HOSOGAYA, who remained in PARAMUSHIRO. ATTU was occupied on 7 June by one battalion of Army troops under Major HOZUMI. At KISKA there were three forces without a unified local command. The ground troops were commanded by Lieutenant-Commander MUKAI; the air force was in two parts - the flying boats under Captain ITO and the float planes under Captain TAKAHASHI. All three of these commands were responsible directly to Vice Admiral HOSOGAYA.

American air attacks commenced within a few days after the initial landing on KISKA. These were more harassing than damaging, although he believed that one transport was sunk within the first twenty days. The Japanese seaplane operations were not very satisfactory. Losses were high, principally due to weather, but also to enemy action. He remembered that the flying boats were sent on a mission to bomb American flying boats at ATKA. Photo reconnaissance, which they desired for intelligence and planning, was extremely poor, due to weather. He remembered that in about September, 1942, an RO type submarine reported making one torpedo hit on an ASTORIA type cruiser in NAZAN BAY. This submarine failed to return from its patrol.

Captain ITO made one trip to the ALEUTIANS - in a flying boat. The plane landed at CHICAGO HARBOR, ATTU, the location of the headquarters of the Army garrison. Then, on the next day, he flew on to KISKA. He was in the main camp at the site of the former U.S. Navy weather station in late afternoon of 8 August when an American surface ship shelling took place. The bombardment lasted about 30 to 40 minutes. There were two destroyers, two to three subchasers, four to six midget submarines, one or two transports in the harbor at the time. Some landing barges were sunk and some (two or three) flying boats were damaged, but otherwise the surface ships were undamaged. Two men were killed and some barracks were destroyed. On the next day he flew directly from KISKA to PARAMUSHIRO. At both of his stops there was a considerable stock of drummed gasoline. His flying boat was refueled at its mooring from drums brought out in a landing boat. Gasoline was pumped up to the plane's tanks by hand pumps.

Captain ITO stated that their information on the topography of the ALEUTIAN ISLANDS was poor, and this hampered their planning. They knew the winter weather was bad, and some of their planners thought that KISKA HARBOR would freeze over in winter and be unnavigable. There was a general lack of information and considerable misinformation. Aerial photography was extremely difficult to obtain, and none was done east of SEGUM'S PASS. He knew of an American flying field on ADAK, which was made by draining a swamp. This information was obtained by aerial photographs, and to the best of his memory, he first learned of it in early October, 1942.

As best he could remember, the Japanese losses in the ALEUTIAN Campaign through November, 1942, totalled: two destroyers, three subchasers, one transport, two or three submarines, sunk; and three destroyers heavily damaged.

Captain ITO said that, by and large, the Aleutian Campaign served as a stop to any American advance down the ALEUTIAN ISLANDS, that it was planned in coordination with the taking of MIDWAY, and, had they had a base in the ALEUTIANS and one in MIDWAY, a barrier patrol could have been set up between the two. This was considered a prerequisite to operations against HAWAII.

They did not intend to go into ALASKA. He thought that the general results of the campaign did not amount to very much, and that when they did not take MIDWAY, it would have been better not to go into the ALEUTIANS.

In the defense of their positions in an area of prevailing poor visibility and long winter nights, he said the fact was considered that the Americans were advanced in the art of night flying and radar bombing. These forms of attack had considerable nuisance value and acted adversely against morale; however, their actual value in destruction was much less than they had anticipated.

J. S. RUSSELL,
Captain, USN.