

HEADQUARTERS
U. S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)
APO #234 c/o PM, SAN FRANCISCO

Cord Curtis

INTERROGATION NO: 283

PLACE: TOKYO
DATE: 7 November 1945

DIVISION OF ORIGIN: Military Analysis (Army and Army Air).

SUBJECT: Training Activities of Japanese Army Air Force
and Routing of Supplies in MANILA AREA in Early
1944.

PERSONNEL INTERROGATED AND BACKGROUND:

Colonel CHIKAHERU KOMORITA - Supervisor and Instructor of
Rail Construction in Manchuria, Japan; Instructor in general strategy
of air-vs-land warfare, Japan and Manchuria, Oct 41 to Jan 43; Staff
Officer of 14th Army, Philippines, Dec 43 to Mar 44; of Southern Army
Singapore, April to July 44; of Kokuhombu, Aug 44 to Apr 45; of
Kokusogun, Apr 45 to end of war. Officer of Regular Army.

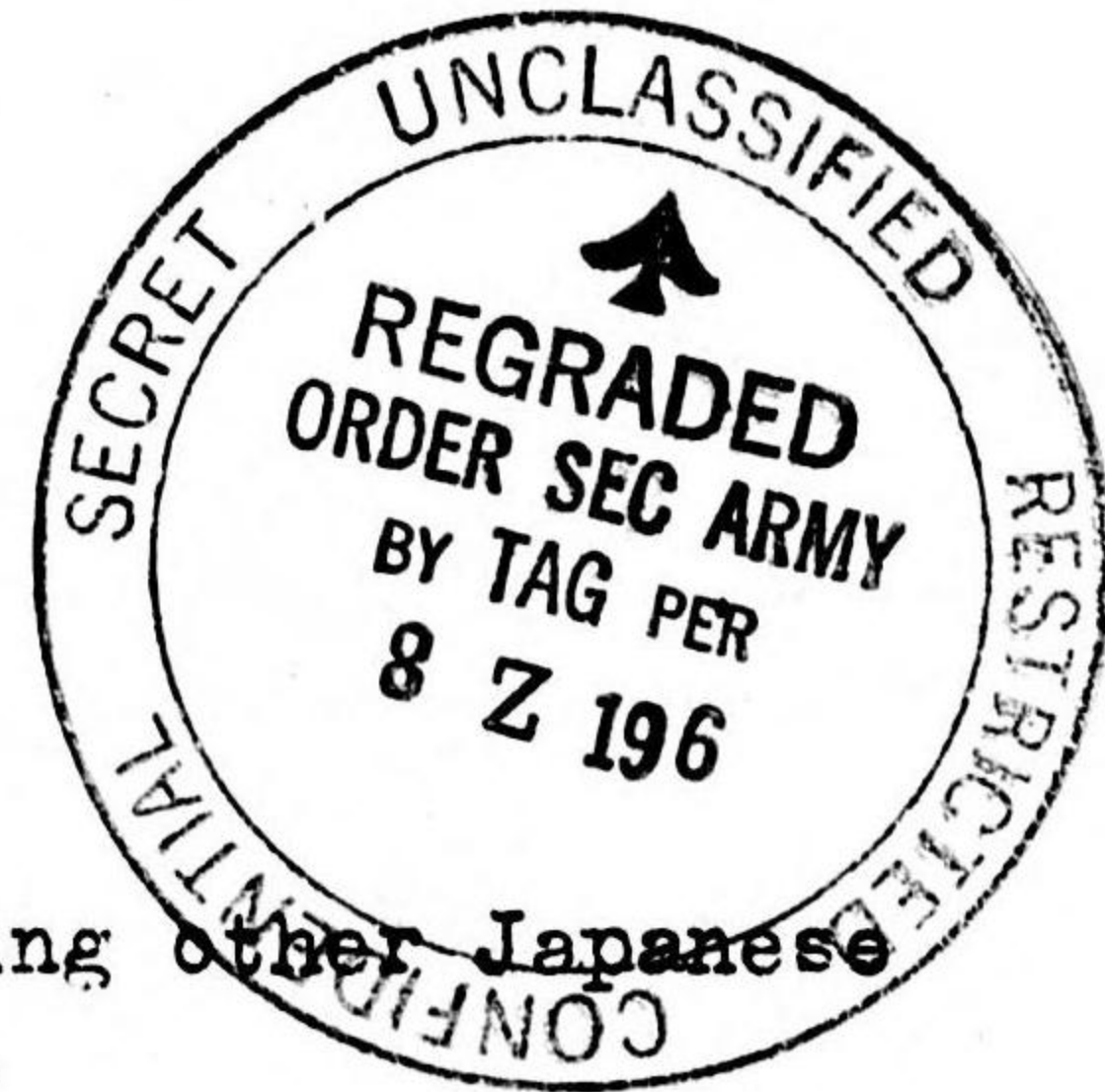
WHERE INTERVIEWED: Meiji Building, Room 722.

INTERROGATOR: Colonel Ramsay D. POTTS, AC.

INTERPRETER: Lt Comdr Walter NICHOLS, USNR.

ALLIED OFFICERS
PRESENT: Colonel David BURCHINAL, AC.

SUMMARY: Screening and general information regarding other Japanese
officers with Army and Army Air planning.



Colonel KOMORITA discusses the Army Air Force training
activities in NE MANCHURIA in 1942, the training and anti-submarine
patrols in and around HOKKAIDO in 1943. During his assignment in
MANILA during early 1944, Colonel KOMORITA had contact with training
units, and was in charge of transport and rail movements of supplies.
The routing of traffic from the home islands to NEW GUINEA by-passed
MANILA at this time. Supplies for NEW GUINEA from MALAYA followed
alternate routes, neither of which went through the PHILIPPINES.
Japanese convoy escort and anti-submarine patrols in the Southern
area are discussed in a general way.

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INTERROGATION NO. 283 (Contd)

Col KOMORITA: I was in each assignment for such a short period of time that I feel I have only a superficial knowledge of any phase of the operations or planning. My best knowledge is on railroads.

Q. Can you give us the names of the officers who can tell us about the coordination of Army and Army Air in the various campaigns beginning with the campaign in Southeast Asia: Malaya, Sumatra, Java, the Philippines, New Guinea, China, Burma?

A. People in Sambo Hombu would be the people who would know. There are four:

Lt Col KAGOSHIMA who is now in the Japanese Government Liaison Office;
Lt Col TANAKA who is now at Sambo Hombu;
Major SHIBA who is now in the Koku Sogun at Sambo Hombu under
Col MIASHI. Major SHIBA would know most about it. There is also
a
Lt Col TAKAGI, but I'm not sure where he is; I think he is with the
First Air Army.

Q. Did you have anything to do with the construction of underground plants or factories?

A. I was only concerned with railroads from before the war when I was at Sambo Hombu. I didn't have anything to do with that. This was a former project, and my railroad work was before the war. I don't know of either of them being constructed or what sort of plans they had for construction except that I know they were constructed. I believe they were planned and constructed after the war started.

Q. But you are not sure?

A. As far as I am concerned, the railroad construction unit had nothing to do with it before the war.

Q. I'd like to have you give me a general idea, briefly, of what subjects you taught at the flying school.

A. My job was to teach ground strategy to the air force personnel because they knew nothing about it, but I myself did not teach anything about air strategy in support of ground forces. My job was purely an informative job to give them the idea of what the ground forces would be trying to accomplish. Therefore I don't know about the air side of it.

Q. Were your students cadets or were they pilots who had already finished flying schools, or commanders of flying units, or what?

A. My students were graduates of the school who had their wings and who had their commissions. This course that I taught came directly after their graduation, before they were sent out to combat units.

Q. How long was the course for a pilot before he went on out to a combat unit?

A. About four months.

Q. Was this course continued on through the war or did you cut it out at some later period?

A. The course was carried on for about one year into the war, but after that it was discontinued, and as far as I know not much training in ground strategy was given to the air forces. On account of that, I understand there have been a great many instances of confusion and lack of cooperation between the air and ground units.

INTERROGATION NO. 283 (Contd)

Q. In teaching this course, what campaigns did you use as your examples to explain ground strategy? Did you use campaigns from this war or from the Russo-Japanese war, or from the American Civil War, or what?

A. I took examples from both the War of 1914-1918 and from this war.

Q. Mainly infantry action, mainly artillery?

A. Mechanized units and infantry.

Q. Did your air force students show a keen interest in this subject?

A. No, they didn't seem to think it was a very vital subject. All they thought of was bombing, strafing, and flying; and I don't think there was much appreciation of the need for it--that they thought it was rather "padding".

Q. Your next duty was with the 66th Flying Regiment in Manchuria, near Chia-my-ssu. What was your specific duty? Did you have command of the flying units as well as the ground echelon?

A. I had control of everything, including flying units and the ground.

Q. What type of flying units did you control?

A. Our chief operations involved close cooperation between our planes strafing and mechanized units.

Q. How many planes and pilots did you actually have in your unit during this period, and what was the average serviceability?

A. Thirty-six planes and 40 pilots. The average life of a plane was 500 hours after which they would have to recondition it.

Q. Out of the 36 planes how many were flyable, normally, and how many had to be held down for normal repairs and service?

A. From 20 to 24 planes were always serviceable; the others were usually in repair.

Q. What operations were you engaged in during this period?

A. Only training; I was not in any operations.

Q. Did you have a great many air force units up in that section for training?

A. There were ten units altogether up there for training purposes. There were four fighter sentai, three attack plane--shugeki--sentai, one reconnaissance sentai, and two heavy bomber sentai.

Q. Did these units, after they had finished their training, go into a theatre of war as units or were they drawn on for individual replacements in other units?

A. They went out to the fronts as Sentai--as units.

Q. During this period, did you have any little brushes with the Russians of any kind?

A. There were no incidents with the Russians that I knew of, but we were ordered to train for such incidents because we thought there was a great possibility of them. That was in 1942.

Q. Did you always have plenty of fuel and enough supplies to carry on full-scale training operations or were you at any time inhibited by lack of fuel or supplies?

INTERROGATION NO. 283 (Contd)

A. There was a considerable shortage of fuel, and occasionally we had to cut down our flying considerably in training because of the shortage of fuel.

Q. Where did your fuel come from that you got in that area? Can you give me the original source and the way it got to your base?

A. I'm not sure about the origin but I think the fuel was shipped from Mikuni, Honshu, to Dairen; by rail from Dairen to Harbin; by ship from Harbin to Chiamussu; by railroad from Chiamussu to our base.

Q. What was the railroad from Chiamussu to his base?

A. Hanghu Chaing.

Q. Were these other units that were in training located in this same general area or were they scattered all across the border?

A. Generally they were concentrated in the Northeastern area of Manchuria.

Q. When they went into battle as a unit, did they take the planes that they had been training with or were they re-equipped with new planes?

A. Usually when the units went out they took all the serviceable planes they had with them. There may have been some allotment of planes from an outside source when they went into battle, but by far the great portion came from those which they had brought with them originally.

Q. I want to ask one more question about fuel: Do you know why shortages developed at certain times? Was it because of trouble with transportation, because there just wasn't any fuel on the home islands to ship, or because they used it all for operations in the combat areas? Do you know exactly what the reason was?

A. I think that there was a general shortage all over.

Q. In this period of 1942?

A. Yes.

Q. In the matter of training and the tactics you taught these pilots: Who decided what subjects you would teach the pilots, and where did you get those instructions?

A. The division commander made those decisions. It was the Second Division.

Q. Was the division commander a flyer himself?

A. No, he wasn't: Lt Gen TERAMOTO, and he was not a pilot.

Q. Let's move on from Manchuria. Your next duty was during the year 1943. You were the Chief of Staff of the No. 1 Flying Division; you were stationed on the Northernmost Island. What were the duties of the #1 Flying Division during the year 1943?

A. At the very beginning their duties were divided into two parts: The first was training; and the second was Anti-Submarine patrol. Later on

INTERROGATION NO. 283 (Contd)

they sent one fighter unit up to Horomushiro, and its assignment was air defense of the island of that area.

Q. What were they defending against? Were you afraid of an invasion from the Aleutians by the United States?

A. It was because of their withdrawal from Attu and Kiska, and we were afraid you would attack us from the air, not necessarily from the land.

Q. You had one flying unit up there. What was the strength of that flying unit in planes?

A. 24 serviceable fighter planes. That was in July 1943.

Q. How long did that fighter unit stay up there?

A. I don't know how long they stayed there because I was withdrawn in December 1943 and they were still there, but I have heard they remained up there until the Leyte campaign.

Q. Were you ever reinforced or was that the strength that remained there during the rest of the war until the Leyte campaign?

A. The average all throughout was 20 to 24 planes.

Q. During the year 1943 what was the strength and composition in types of planes of the rest of the No. 1 Flying Brigade?

A. There was the 54th Sentai, the 63rd, the 38th, the 3rd, the 37th, and the 62nd. The 54th Sentai had 24 fighters and likewise the 63rd. The 38th Sentai was reconnaissance and had ten. The 3rd Sentai had 20 light bombers. The 37th Sentai had 24 attack planes; and the 62nd Sentai had 27 heavy bombers. These figures are full strength--the most we ever had. I have listed 129 planes here; the average operational strength was probably between 100 and 120.

Q. These planes were mainly engaged in training and anti-submarine patrol, is that right?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you show me what areas were covered by your reconnaissance and anti-submarine patrol?

A. Three areas: Soya Straits; around Etorori Island; and the unit that was up in Horomushiro had charge of that area.

Q. What types of planes ran those searches?

A. Horomushiro searches were conducted by fighter planes.

Q. What were they supposed to do if they sighted a submarine?

A. Each one had a 15-kilo bomb which they would drop on it. The Soya Straits searches were conducted by light bombers equipped with from 50 to 100 kg bombs. The Etorori Island searches were carried out by attack planes carrying 30 to 50 kg bombs. Each plane had about two bombs.

Q. You didn't use the heavy bombers?

A. The heavy bombers were used for training and drill only. Generally the whole purpose of the unit was training, and this was just another assignment given to them. Practically no reconnaissance planes were used in these searches. The whole 1st Air Division--Flying Division--was composed of new units which had not had much training.

INTERROGATION NO. 283 (Contd)

Q. Did they ever at any time sight an enemy submarine?

A. While I was with the division, they sighted submarines two or three times. To the best of my knowledge all of the submarines sighted were attacked, and while I was there I believe they sank one submarine.

Q. Did you have any type of radar or search equipment on any of these planes?

A. On these planes they had no equipment of any kind for search--no detectors and no radar; purely visual.

Q. I want to ask you some questions about your activities in the South.

A. While I was in the Philippines, the entire air force strength in the Philippines was the 15th Shotai composed of training and reconnaissance planes. Only one unit was composed of training planes; also the 107FB composed of three regiments. These are all training units. That is the entire strength of the whole Philippine area during the time I was there.

Q. They were training units for what particular area of combat?

A. It wasn't necessarily for any areas. They were training for any campaign. The personnel was composed of pilots who had graduated from the Air Academy and who were now taking courses in reconnaissance, bombing, dive-bombing--in other words, specialization.

Q. What were your particular duties as a Staff officer of the 14th Army itself?

A. My duties were chiefly training. I was a Liaison officer for the 14th Air Army, and under me I had two other Liaison officers, and their duties were arranging matters of transportation with the railways and shipping.

Q. Transportation of the units that were embarking for other combat theatres?

A. Overall transportation including parts, personnel, and planes. It was constantly changing.

Q. Where were you stationed during this period?

A. In Manila.

Q. Was Manila a very large supply base for the shipment of airplanes and spare parts, fuel, etc?

A. At that time the transport lines were running direct to various other areas, and Manila was not necessarily a big relay station; therefore it was not a very large transportation headquarters but did become one after I had left. Since most of the transportation to New Guinea, for instance, was by direct route, my operations in Manila were chiefly concerned with lists of items such as coal, fuel, etc.

Q. Was the command in Manila at that time concerned with making any plans for defense of the Philippines against reinvasion?

A. As far as I know, we had no plans at all for opposing a reinvasion.

Q. Do you know what the strength was of the Army ground units in the Philippines in early 1944?

A. Three brigades and one division.

INTERROGATION NO. 283 (Contd)

Q. Are you sure of that?

AA. Positive. It was only after I left and went to Singapore that we began to increase the strength. I was there at the time when the ground forces were at their lowest strength in the Philippines.

Q. Going back a moment to this routing of supplies to the New Guinea area: I suppose supplies were flowing from two directions, one from the Island and one from the Singapore-Malaya area; is that correct?

A. Yes. We were using two main supply lines.

Q. Now, the supplies that came down from the home island came down by what route to the New Guinea area?

A. From Japan direct to Palau; Palau to the Northern Coast of Biak and Eastward along the Northern New Guinea coast. Also from Singapore to Malaya and down through Morotai, then to Biak along the coast. The other alternate Southern route was from Singapore to Surabaya to Ambon, then over to Biak.

Q. Do you know how much air protection the Army was expected to give these merchantmen as they were going through these channels (interrogator indicated the two alternate Southern routes)?

A. The Navy had the principal duty of escort, and the Army was supplementary.

Q. The Navy and the Naval Air?

A. Just part of the Army Air Forces cooperated.

Q. Did the Army Air Forces in this area at this time have any types of radar or detection apparatus to search for submarines?

A. No, they had no automatic devices of any kind--no detection devices. For that reason our accuracy was very poor.

Q. The anti-submarine patrols were in the hands almost entirely then of the Naval air force?

A. Yes. The anti-submarine patrols were, for the most part, Navy assignment.

Q. You were in Singapore in April of 1944 to July of 1944?

A. I was brought back to Japan because I had become sick with diarrhea.

Q. What were your duties with the Southern Army in Singapore?

A. The rear sections during the whole period; I was sick and didn't do much work, but my duties were supply.

End of Interrogation.