

HEADQUARTERS
U. S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)
c/o Postmaster, San Francisco

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS NO. 34)
NAV NO. 5

Place: Tokyo
Date: 10,12,16 Oct. 1945

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: Allied Offensive Mining Campaigns.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

CAPTAIN KYUZO TAMURA, IJN, Captain on active duty, who at the beginning of the war was in the Tokyo Ordnance Department specializing in mine construction. He was head of the Mine Sweeping Section until last month. He has been stationed in Tokyo in above duty from the beginning of the war until last month when he became head of the minesweeping section of the Tokyo Arsenal.

Where interviewed: MEIJI Building.

Interrogator: Commander T. H. Moorer, USN.

Interpreter: Seymour Millstein, Lieut. Comdr., USNR.

Allied Officers Present: Comdr. J. H. Hayward, USN, Lieut. Comdr. J. A. Field, jr., USNR.

SUMMARY

The Japanese first discovered mines in home waters in 1942. These were presumably laid by submarine. A few ships were sunk and normal sweeping operations were conducted.

Additional mines were discovered in the South Pacific but losses sustained through substantial did not seriously effect the line of supply. A complete record of such losses is not available at this time.

As the B-29 Mining Campaign progressed the mines changed from a nuisance to a major problem. Subsequent to 1 April 1945, the largest shipping losses were caused by mines laid in Japanese waters. The Japanese were not prepared for such air attacks, and although the defense against mining was given top priority over all other defense matters, countermeasures, particularly against the pressure type mine, were neither effective nor available in sufficient quantity. Finally the mines were present in such quantity and supplies were so urgently required that the Japanese were forced to sail their vessels through dangerous waters, regardless of loss.

Shipping control, defense measures, and sweeping techniques are also discussed in this interrogation. Certain technical information was furnished under separate cover.

TRANSCRIPT

Q. When did the Japanese actually suspect mine laying from submarines?

A. The first ones were discovered at CHOSHI and shortly after that at the entrance of OSAKA BAY.

Q. Did they detect mines in THAILAND or INDO-CHINA in October and November 1942?

A. Mines were discovered off the coast of JAPAN in January of 1943. At end of February or the beginning of March 1943. I am sure it was the winter time. From the beginning to the end of the war the only Submarine mines we knew about were the ones at CHOSHI and OSAKA.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Captain Kyuzo TAMURA, IJN).

Q. What countermeasures did you take against these mines?

A. At OSAKA one of the mines rose to the surface, of course we simply removed it. One counter measure in any event was ordinary minesweeping operations. The mines recovered in CHOSHI and OSAKA were in quantity of 10 or 15, I don't remember very well.

Q. Were any ships sunk or damaged by these mines?

A. At CHOSHI, one, two or 3,000 ton cargo ship; at OSAKA about two 1,000 ton cargo ships were sunk as well as one 3,000 ton cargo ship.

Q. Was merchant ship routing changed as a result of this mine laying?

A. Yes, we simply changed the route, by changing the channel; also went further off-shore and avoided points close to land.

Q. Did the Japanese encounter any mines in the SOLOMON'S Campaign?

A. As far as we were concerned the definite information about moored mines was only in these two areas mentioned. We agreed that submarines were laying floating mines, but definite place of moored mines laid by submarines was unknown to us.

Q. were any provisions made for minesweeping gear for the SOLOMON'S Campaign?

A. There were no minesweeping operations in the SOLOMONS area.

Q. Is there a list of the losses which you incurred from mines alone, (merchant ships and naval vessels)?

A. I can get the information, our statistics are not very good because we were not positively informed as to whether or not the ships were sunk by mines, torpedoes, storms or other reasons.

Q. Can you get the information for me? Divide the information by areas and years.

A. Tomorrow?

Q. As soon as possible.

A. Only by mines?

Q. Yes.

A. I have the list for seas around JAPAN and I have the total figures.

Q. Do you have the figures for the entire Japanese area?

A. My job is really research, manufacturing, etc., so I have to get that information from Naval Headquarters.

Q. But you will get it?

A. Yes, but the big problem is that all the records were burned and I must go around asking for information, the figures will not be complete.

Q. At what time in the war did the mines change from a nuisance to a problem?

A. About 1 April 1945. The reason this chart was made was that at the point the chart starts losses from mines started to increase, (terrifically), the losses from submarines decreased.

- Q. Before April 1945 did you anticipate this problem and make any preparations in the way of counter measures?
- A. Yes, but on a small scale. (Refer papers given to Comdr. Moorer). We found a lot of magnetic bars at Singapore, we brought them back and manufactured sweeping gear copied from the English type (Here the talk over blueprints took place).
- Q. Did the use of these various ships, (the disposing ship) the vessels to tow the sweeps, and the men to man them seriously interfere with merchant shipping?
- A. The whole program was not conducted as efficiently as we would have liked. First of all we used as disposing vessels those in a poor state of repair; we realized we would have to have a certain program with a certain number of vessels and personnel for security of safety for other shipping so we did the best we could and used as many vessels as possible, but it wasn't nearly as successful as we hoped.
- Q. Were you prepared in any way for our speeded up B-29 offensive mining operations in April?
- A. We were not prepared, the only way we realized B-29s were dropping mines by parachute (they had no advance notice) was by visual detection. We knew you would probably do it, expected to make some preparation, but we were not satisfied.
- Q. I would like to know if this intensive mine program affected the morale of the crews of the merchant ships?
- A. The crews of the Japanese merchant ships and naval vessels were very worried and frightened by this mining, but they were all under orders and had to work through it.
- Q. What effect did this have on the routing of ships, particularly after SHIMONOSEKI STRAIT was mined so heavily? (Over to KOREA) (Referred to on Chart).
- A. The materials were brought by railroad to points in MANCHURIA and then shipped to inland sea ports. (See chart).
- Q. When did you actually close the SHIMONOSEKI STRAITS?
- A. I admit that it was closed.
- Q. Was the shipping situation so critical that it was necessary to send ships through the minefields regardless of the fact that the minefields were not properly swept?
- A. We forced shipping through regardless of the knowledge that it was dangerous, if we suspected mines were in certain areas we stopped shipping for one day, pending sweeping operations, but then started in again, realizing full well that ships would be lost.
- Q. Will you make an estimate as to what loss the Japanese were willing to accept. For instance, if ten ships passed through the minefield, were you willing to accept the loss of one to get nine through?
- A. Around June and July this year conditions were so bad, that regardless of the losses we pushed the ships through. We never worked out a plan of percentage, I think a certain percentage of losses are expected; we place a certain area under a Commanding Officer with the responsibility of seeing that the area is clear, then if he says it is clear we send the ships through, if he says not we send them somewhere else. We leave it up to the Area

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Captain Kyuzo TAMURA, IJN).

Commander or Port Director to route the ships. The Commanders weren't relieved of their commands if too many ships were lost in their action. We realized big losses would result and we blamed no one. In the beginning we had half regular Navy and half reserves, the losses were terrific so we replaced them (the reserves) with regulars. But even the regulars had difficulty and there were many changes in Commanding Officers, the situation was very bad and we used the most competent personnel available.

- Q. After you swept and marked the channel did you have any difficulty keeping ships in the channels? Were there many ships lost who attempted to take short cuts and who didn't follow the channel?
- A. The obedience to orders in regard to channels was very good, but even so, mines cropped up in supposedly swept channels and there were losses.
- Q. What was the width of the swept channel?
- A. The widest channel was 500 meters, our plans were to sweep channels from 600-800 meters, but due to shortage of sweeps the best average width of a channel we were able to produce was 200 meters.
- Q. What was the procedure used in the passage of a convoy through a channel?
- A. We used a lead ship and followed in column.
- Q. How was the routing of shipping controlled, in other words how was the presence of these various minefields made known to the ships and on whose authority were they routed to the different ports?
- A. Each Naval District or Area Commander was in complete charge of convoy and routing, and had control of all shipping.
- Q. Do you have a publication similar to this (refer papers) which traces development of your various sweeps and which shows how you made improvements as the types of mines were changed?
- A. (Referred to booklets).
The magnetic pressure mine was the most difficult to sweep, this list is put out by the Navy Ministry and is a compilation of the scientists all over Japan who were put to work on developing counter measures against mines, particularly the magnetic pressure mine.
- Q. What system did you use in plotting mines dropped by B-29a and how successful were you in actually determining where these mines were in order to know where to sweep?
- A. In the KYUSHU area we had a lot of radar as well as sweeps and survey crews, in the Inland Sea Coast we had some people watching but these were not very effective methods of plotting.
- Q. Was it very often that mines fell on the beach and if so do you have a list of the mines which were recovered from the ground?
- A. This is the list of those found (Referred to list). This is a chart for March, April, May and June showing the different types of mines which were recovered, swept up, etc. If we didn't get the mines by the third time we quit sweeping, only three tries to sweep. During the May, June and July period the total number was 656 mines (328-209-99 added), this is the total number of all mines recovered on land in each month. All types were recovered on land.
- Q. What are these figures up here (Comdr. Moorer).
- A. I wouldn't know where they came from but they are total mines swept.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Captain Kyuzo TAMURA, IJN)

Q. How many mines do you estimate were laid by B-29's in Japanese Waters?

A. March 450; April 117; May 414; June 1509; July 1200. Total mines estimated by Japanese to have been dropped in Japan home waters - 3690.

Q. What information if any did you obtain from the Germans?

A. This type mine (Refer charts) was brought by Submarine from Germany in summer of 1942. We thought it was very funny because it was the same type as a captured American mine. (Shortland Area) The Navy has no Department of Research on countermeasures against mines at Tokyo Imperial University. In my opinion the main reason for the war's ending unsuccessfully for Japan was the lack of cooperation between the scientists and the military. They (the scientists) got no cooperation, I feel that if they had been placed in the same level as a soldier in a civilian uniform, they would have been done much better; I think they didn't care or didn't try. The Navy made no attempt to put pressure on them. The following Professors were engaged in mine countermeasure work:

Professor Shimizu

Professor Kaya

Professor Usui

Professor Nagamura

Professor Inaba

All at Tokyo Imperial University.

These men cooperated, to a limited extent, but no real effort was made on their part.

Q. Did you ever attempt any minesweeping with ariplanes?

A. We tried but were unsuccessful and stopped. Attempted to sweep the magnetic mine fields. (Moored Mines) The other mines were too small to find by plane.

Q. Can you obtain a list of our mine fields laid in the SOLOMONS, GUANIMON, DANIAVILLE area, also list of damage - if not, do you know anyone who can?

A. There is nobody who made such an estimate or chart.

Q. Can anyone tell us what ships were lost as a result of mines in that area?

A. 1942 - 2 or 3 IJN's large type. I can give you some approximate figures but we wouldn't know what sort these ships, carriers, submarines, torpedo, or what. I only know approximate figures, the man who would know is dead.

Q. In your opinion did the mining affect the Naval strategy in any way?

A. In my opinion and according to what I have heard the only effect your mining operations had in the SOLOMONS area was to force our shipping to exercise a greater degree of caution, did not necessitate an overall change in strategy.

Q. Does this apply to the BALIKPAPAN, DUTCH EAST INDIES, and SINGAPORE area?

A. Plans were not changed in the CELEBES, DUTCH EAST INDIES, SURIBAYI areas, although losses were high, (highest in April 1943).

Q. Were all these areas furnished with very latest minesweeping equipment (Captain shows sketch of sweeping operations), Do you know what ships if any were sunk at PALAU by mines laid by aircraft?

A. 2 or 3 merchant ships were sunk there by mines.

Q. Do you know how many mines were recovered or swept at PALAU?

A. I think about 15 or 16 were swept, the mooring type were at PALAU (the Mark 10).

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Captain Kyuzo TAMURA, IJN) - - - - -

Q. How long was the anchorage actually closed as a result of mining.

A. For four or five days.

Q. Did you continue to use PALAU as a Fleet anchorage after it was mined?

A. Sweeping was very effective at PALAU against the moored type. We weren't able to enter the anchorage but used the narrow channel as an anchorage, but were unable to get into the regular anchorage after the mining operation.

(Captain Hedding then drew plan of PALAU Harbor and TAMURA indicated the channel which was closed - North Channel).

(Statement in regard to list of sinkings): All vessels that were sunk are on this list. (given to Comdr. Moorer). Captain TAMURA tried to determine what ships were sunk by mines, alone, but information at the Navy Ministry is not complete enough to clearly determine the exact cause of the sinking of a given vessel. (Refer to list turned over to Comdr. Moorer). All sinkings are listed by areas, but it is impossible to determine exactly whether vessel sunk by mines or submarines.

Q. Are the merchant vessels on this list, 500 tons and larger?

A. All are over 500 tons, nothing smaller than 500 tons was navigable over such large areas. (Refer to chart which was blue printed by Captain TAMURA.)

Q. Were the SHIMONOSEKI STRAITS actually closed for any period of time, if so for how long?

A. They were closed from March of 1945 up to the end of the war, during each month approximately 15 days represented complete closure due to the necessity for sweeping operations. In spite of supposedly safe periods, the danger of navigation was still existent which explains the high loss as per separate chart.

Q. Explain again the exact manner in which the shipping was controlled?

A. The officers of the MAIZURU Naval Base controlled shipping in the area from NIIGATA to NAGI. In the beginning of the war the Commander of KURE Naval Base controlled all shipping in the INLAND SEA, but due to severe losses in the SHIMONOSEKI STRAITS area a separate command was set up called the 7th Fleet to oversee routing in this specific area. OSAKA Naval Base Chief controlled OSAKA and KOBE area. The SASEBO Naval Base controlled the KYUSHU area and the CHINAKAI Naval Base controlled the KOREAN AREA. The YOKOSUKA Naval Base controlled the entire TOKYO area. The OMIYAMA Naval Base controlled the HOKKAIDO area but the mine problem was never important in this particular area. A special command was set up under a full Admiral to oversee routing over the whole EMPIRE with headquarters at TOKYO called the "General Headquarters Surface Escort Units".

Q. What is the name of the Admiral and when was this Command set up?

A. This command was set up in Nov. 1943, the first Admiral in charge of that was OYABAYASHI former Navy Minister. Approximately June 1944 he was succeeded by Admiral HONDA former Naval Attache to Germany.

Q. After 1942 did you obtain any technical assistance in research work from the Germans?

A. In 1941, representatives from all departments in the Japanese Navy such as gunnery, electronics, mines, etc. went to Germany to obtain all the information they could on what the Germans knew about our mines as well as the English mines. Those reports were brought back but the reports themselves were burned, however I (Captain TAMURA) remember quite well the details on mines, (Refer here to booklet) all of which are in a booklet awaiting translation.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Captain TAMURA, Kyuzo, IJN) - - - - -

- Q. Did you learn anything subsequent to that time? Was there continued liaison up to the end of the war?
- A. There were occasional small bits of information from the German Attache here but nothing after the receipt of this booklet, the German Attache was not a specialist, and merely acted as a go between. For that reason when you used magnetic and pressure mines we were caught flat-footed. We immediately began to experiment with countermeasures. We had no advance notice from Germany.
- Q. Do you think you would eventually have been able to solve the problem presented by the pressure mine? What success did you have up to the end of the war?
- A. When we first discovered the mine in SHIMONOSEKI after great difficulty were we even able to determine it was a pressure mine. The success we had with solving the problem was very small and all details are in the chart I gave you. I think there are a great many still sunk and which we were not able to recover.
- Captain TAMURA was requested to furnish the names of officers in the KURE Naval District and in the 7th Fleet area. The 7th Fleet has been disbanded, but personnel involved in mine countermeasure activities are in OSAKA and Captain TAMURA will find out names of officers concerned and they can be brought to TOKYO or arrangements can be made to visit them at Commander Moorer's convenience.
- Q. I would like to know as quickly as possible the total number of personnel and total number of vessels engaged in mine countermeasures. The list must include all personnel manning sweeps, towing gear, research department, picket ships, disposal ships, and mine watching stations.
- A. Monday afternoon I will have everything; all the names and all the figures at 1330 or 1400.
I will divide the personnel engaged in experimental work into those doing work on their own, and those directly under my charge.
- Q. Did the Japanese have sweeping equipment at all places indicated on this chart (in red)?
- A. At the beginning of the war we had equipment only in areas around major naval bases and some equipment in secondary naval bases, but as mines were discovered equipment was transferred from naval bases to cope with the mines.
- Q. Did you have enough for all bases?
- A. It was not sufficient, I think that the lack of equipment was due to the fact that the Japanese in charge were little prepared for mines, we didn't commence preparation until after the mining began. (In general this showed that the Japanese People were very quick to make preparations for offensive campaigns but not for defensive campaigns.) (Off the record opinion of Captain TAMURA).
- Q. In general do you think that the mining effort we put forth in areas other than the homeland created a problem or changed any military plans.
- A. In general the prevalent opinion was that your mining measures as such would not appreciably alter our operation plans, but in explanation of that the main reason for not thinking too well of it was that we didn't know whether or not a ship was sunk by a submarine or any other weapon, we possibly didn't give mines enough credit. To us the big danger was submarines. It was simply because we had insufficient information to chart the effectiveness of your mine warfare. In other words the submarines were, in my opinion given too much credit, and not enough credit was given to mine warfare. I would give more importance to your mine warfare than my superiors, who didn't make a particular distinction as to whether or not a ship was sunk by submarine or mine.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Captain TAMURA, Kyuzo, IJN)

Q. Are you certain that no one in JAPAN or the Navy Department knows exactly how these vessels were sunk?

A. This information is taken from notes compiled from various people, we really don't know how ships were sunk.

Q. Why didn't this information available; is it because the high command in the forward areas didn't furnish the information to TOKYO or because it wasn't furnished by masters of individual vessels?

A. The Captain of a ship simply assumes that his ship was sunk by a submarine, it does not occur to him that it may have been a mine. They knew you had an electrically propelled torpedo which leaves no wake and even if they didn't see a periscope they still assumed it was sunk by a submarine and didn't specify that it was a mine. Unless for some reason they happened to see the ship hit a mine they assumed it was a submarine. That is why we don't get accurate figures on mine sinking.

Q. Does anyone in the Navy Department have ships plotted in by mine fields, for instance can we find out how many were sunk in each locality (Reference to chart).

A. We haven't got it plotted on a map, but there is such information in notes and I will collect it for you. I will do my best to get the information by Monday at 1330.

Q. Tell me a little more about the methods you used to discover where the mines were dropped.

A. The B-29's were picked up by radar and position communicated to coast watchers, coast watchers picked up the B-29's as soon as they came within vision, at night they used searchlights and simply watched the mines dropped by parachute, they then reported the approximate position to the Naval Base who then dispatched minesweepers.

Q. Were you able to follow the mines down to the water by radar?

A. It's not that good, but we were working on the idea.

Q. Did you consider the B-29 mine attacks sufficiently effective to warrant the redeployment of fighters and anti-aircraft even if it decreased the defense of the cities against the fire bomb?

A. We increased the aircraft units and searchlight units attached to certain areas such as NIIGATA, SHIMANOSEKI at the expense of the cities. There was still a shortage of equipment even with the increasing of aircraft units at those stated points, but as the war in the South Pacific went against the Japanese, we were able to send more anti-aircraft units to the protection of the homeland. However, the Japanese felt that the use of aircraft units as protection against dropping of mines by B-29's was more important than the actual protection of the cities because the life lines from the continent which furnished food and supplies were of first priority. (Discussion here on equipment in the homeland). The reason why so many mines exploded by natural or unknown reasons was being investigated by several men whose names will be on the list provided. However, it is my opinion that most of the mines so exploded were acoustic mines and that they were sensitive enough to have been set off by natural causes such as fishes, waves, and smaller vessels. I think the quantity given on this graph is grossly exaggerated because the same mine may be seen by 4 or 5 different watchers each one is given credit for seeing a mine. When we see Captain MINAMI formerly of the 7th Fleet, whom we are planning to see in OSAKA, we will obtain the entire story.

Q. Verify these numbers on this chart, it is amazing that they were only able to sweep 328.

A. I admit it is a very small quantity and feel that the reason for that was inferiority of equipment and lack of ships, personnel, and sweeping equipment.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Captain TAMURA, Kyuzo, IJN) - - - - -

- Q. Here I have some charts. Will you indicate to the best of your knowledge the shipping trend prior to and during the B-29 mining raids. Tell me if this is substantially accurate and who can I talk to who can verify these charts? (Charts are referred to).
- A. In my opinion the charts (shown by Comdr. Moorer) in regard to effects of B-29 mining operation on convoy routes were substantially correct, but Admiral NOMURA's Chief of Staff will look at the charts and give you accurate information.
- Q. Did you feel that the mines would damage the MOJI tunnel?
- A. We were very concerned about the possibility of damage to the MOJI tunnel, but it escaped damage.
- Q. I have complete records and very good information on the B-29 mine offensive but the information relative to other areas is limited. Can you give us information as to the mining campaigns carried on in 1942, 43, and 44 in the South Pacific. Can we get the information presented in this manner (Refer to papers)?
- A. I don't know but I will make inquiries. I think that it will take a matter of two weeks because people are spread out.
- Q. I would like to give you a list of the areas where we put down mines and I would like to have you use that list and find out for me (1) whether or not you knew the mines were there and (2) what damage the mines did (Here Captain TAMURA made up list from Comdr. Moorer's copy).

Captain TAMURA brought a list (as per request) of vessels sunk by mines, submarines and aircraft in the Pacific Ocean Area. He was accompanied by Commander SUGITA, Binzo, formerly a member of the Staff of the Headquarters Combined Surface Escort Fleet.

Captain TAMURA delivered the information and documents previously requested as follows:

1. List of personnel and equipment engaged in mine counter-measures, divided into those engaged in actual sweeping operations and those engaged in technical studies. 349 vessels and 20,000 men were engaged in mine sweeping.
2. Names of additional officers who can give information concerning mine counter-measures.
3. A list of ships sunk in the various mine fields prior to 1945. (This list is an estimate but is a compilation of all available information).

Captain TAMURA corrected a statement made in previous interrogation. "The Combined Surface Escort Command was set up in the fall of 1943 instead of spring as previously stated".

- Q. In the list of minefields which I previously gave to you, did you find places in which you never discovered mines?
- A. That is quite true, however; I was able to get the information on this list from people who are in the Empire at the moment, so information as to other areas is very doubtful because the people who know are not available. I suggest that you ask Admiral MATSUZAKI. Commander SUGITA, who was in the 8th Fleet (RABAU), states that ships were sunk in that KOLONBANGARA Area. Three ships were sunk by mines, other ships were assumed to be sunk by submarines.
- Q. Was mine counter-measure research accelerated during the war?
- A. At the beginning of the war, studies on mine counter-measures were relatively small, but it was accelerated greatly at the inception of B-29 mine laying campaign. Personnel and equipment were increased about 100% at that time.
- Q. Up until April 1945, approximately how many scientists were engaged in mine research?

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Captain TANURA, Kyuzo, IJN)

- A. Up until April 1945 my department contained only 13 technicians and 50 general employees, but this was increased to 40 and 95 respectively in April 1945.
- Q. When a new type of mine was discovered at outlying base was special assistance requested from your department in TOKYO?
- A. In such cases the Area Commander would attempt to sweep the mines with what facilities he had, however, if any difficulty was encountered, they requested assistance from the Mine Sweeping Department of the Navy Office and they also had access to manufacturing facilities at SOURABAYA which maintained a maintenance shop and warehouse for mine sweeping equipment.
- Q. During the closing months of the war when so much effort was expended on mine sweeping in Japanese waters, did the use of additional technicians seriously interfere with other research and development?
- A. The mine counter-measures research was given first priority. We were commanded to provide results as quickly as possible, therefore in general, it is my opinion that research on other (electronic) devices was interfered with to a certain extent.
- Q. Do you feel that military campaigns outside the Empire were effected by mining campaigns?
- A. Planning was outside of my province, but I believe that Japan's operation plans outside Empire waters were not interfered in any way by ordinary mine-laying, but only by aircraft minelaying. I wish to specify mines by air planes because that is the only type of mine-laying about which we have definite information. (Commander SUGITA, if you can add anything to the answers please interrupt.)
- Q. Can you give me a list of ships sunk in Japanese waters, listed by mine fields?
- A. All the records were destroyed by fire. I am still trying to get this information.
- Q. Will you make the general statement that ships were sunk in every mine field around JAPAN (See Chart).
- A. Yes, at all places with mine fields (as shown on chart) ships were sunk.
- Q. Did the mines interfere with the activities of the Japanese Fleet in the OKINAWA Operation?
- A. Yes, there was some interference in the operation.
- Q. Did the Fleet ever use SHIMONOSEKI after the mining campaign got underway?
- A. They still used it even after mines were there.
- Q. Do you know how many minesweepers were sunk?
- A. Twenty were damaged and practically none were sunk because setting off of the mines usually occurred after the sweeper passed over the mine. I estimate that about three or four sweepers were sunk.

INTERROGATION of Commander SUGITA, Binzo, (Mining Officer
Staff Combined Escort Fleet)

TRANSCRIPT

- Q. When was the Combined Escort Fleet organized?
- A. It was organized on November 15, 1943 and Admiral OIKAWA was in command until Admiral NOMURA relieved Admiral OIKAWA in July 1944.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Commander SUGITA, Binzo, IJN)

Q. What forces were assigned to the Escort Fleet?

A. About 100 - 600 ton Escort Vessels, about 15 old destroyers, about 15 sub-chasers, 2 training ships, four 10,000 ton Converted Aircraft Carriers. Each auxiliary carrier had about 12 planes (land base fighters, type 97).

The Combined Escort Fleet with Headquarters at TOKYO, was subdivided into Naval Bases and the First Escort Fleet with Headquarters at TALSOA. The Naval Bases included all major bases controlled by the Japanese, each of which was supplied with escort aircraft. The First Escort Fleet was composed of the Surface Vessels and the Air Group which included 4 CVE's and land based squadrons. The land based squadrons operated at various bases along the convoy routes in the Pacific Area.

Q. Who was next in line, did the Commander of the Combined Escort Fleet report to the Admiral TOYODA, or to the Navy Ministry?

A. From November 1943 until April 1945, the Combined Escort Fleet was an independent command operating directly under the Imperial General Headquarters. Subsequent to April 1945 it was under the command of the Commander in Chief (Admiral TOYODA).

Q. How were the four converted aircraft carriers employed in convoy escort work?

A. The four converted carriers of about 10,000 tons each, carried 12 type 97 planes. The aircraft carriers were used to escort convoys which was larger than 20 ships. These carriers stayed with the convoy during the entire voyage to and from JAPAN. In the cases where the convoy was too small to warrant the use of carriers. Air cover was furnished by approximately 175 aircraft stationed at strategic points along the route.

Q. Explain how a convoy was assembled and how it was controlled between JAPAN and outlying bases?

A. At the beginning of the war the command of the Naval District where the convoy was assembled laid out the course and controlled the convoy until it reached the next Naval District Command on route to the destination where they were given another set of sailing instructions. After the Grand Escort Fleet was established the Command Headquarters laid out the entire route with all sailing instructions from start to finish. When a convoy passed through the next succeeding Naval District they received all the assistance that they required but no further instructions. Air escort was furnished the Commander of the Escort Fleet.

Q. How were Merchant Ships kept informed of the location of mine fields?

A. TOKYO Headquarters despatched a signal to the Captain of the ship informing him of mine areas and sweeping operations. In areas outside of the home waters, Naval District Commanders informed TOKYO Headquarters and all ships, of the existence of all known mines.

Q. Were MANILA and SINGAPORE ever closed by mines?

A. No, MANILA never was closed, but SINGAPORE was closed for a week.