

HEADQUARTERS
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INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS 258)
NAV NO. 64

Place: Tokyo
Date: 1 November 1945

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: Japanese Naval Planning after MIDWAY.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Rear Admiral TAKATA, Toshitane during this war has been attached successively to the Staff of the 3rd Fleet, the Combined Fleet, and the Naval General Staff.

Where interviewed: Meiji Building.

Interrogator: Captain T. J. Hedding, USN, Lt. Comdr. J. A. Field, jr., USNR.

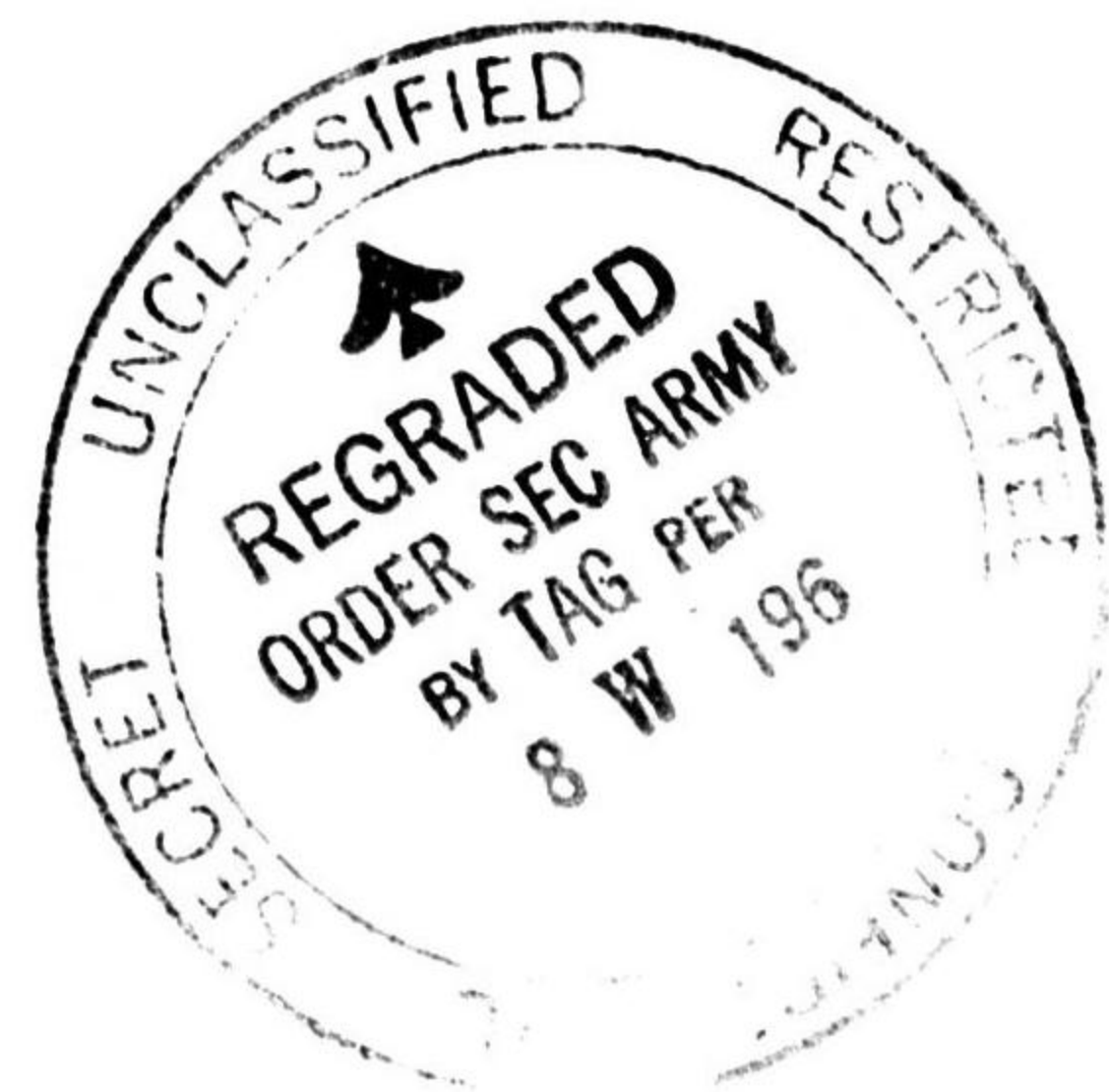
Interpreter: Mr. Fred Woodrough.

Allied Officers Present: Col. R. Potts, USAAF.

SUMMARY

Admiral TAKATA discusses the Japanese efforts to reorganize their Naval Air Force after the Battle of MIDWAY, the effects of the SOLOMONS Campaign and of the Battle of the PHILIPPINE SEA. The planning for the defense of the PHILIPPINES is considered together with reasons for the Japanese failure. In conclusion, Admiral TAKATA offers some general comments on the origin and course of the PACIFIC War.

RESTRICTED



TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Rear Admiral TAKATA, Toshitane)

TRANSCRIPT

- Q. What specific duties did you perform when you reported to the Staff of the Combined Fleet in May 1943?
- A. I was in charge of the general phase of the operation and was promoted at the time of the death of Admiral YAMAMOTO and Admiral KOGA. I was promoted to the position of Chief Staff Officer.
- Q. When you reported to the Staff of the 3rd Fleet in July 1942, what duties did you perform on that Staff?
- A. After the MIDWAY Campaign, as you know, the 1st Air Fleet was very heavily damaged and we had to reorganize the 3rd Fleet. I had the mission to reorganize the 3rd Fleet.
- Q. Approximately what percentage of the pilots were recovered after the Battle of MIDWAY when your four carriers were sunk?
- A. 30% of the pilots were killed and 40% were injured.
- Q. What were your plans for the reorganization of the carrier air groups in training for use in the reorganization of the 3rd Fleet?
- A. At the time of PEARL HARBOR the fleet was organized into fleets by types: the 1st Fleet-Carriers, 2nd Fleet-Battleships, the 3rd Fleet-Cruisers; and it was planned to reorganize the 3rd Fleet units into a combination of carriers, screening and supporting ships.
- Q. This change was brought about by an apparent weakness in the 1st Carrier Fleet as organized at that time?
- A. It was a natural trend of the change from the battleship school to the aircraft carrier school. The trend was to give increased emphasis on carrier fleet rather than battleship fleet. A combined fleet was planned in which the Commander-in-Chief would be on a carrier and control the rest of the fleet, carriers being made the basis of strategy. It was difficult to break battleship tradition for a carrier fleet. Young Naval officers had long wanted change but senior officers were conservative and could not find means to make the change.
- Q. What do you think was the cause of the failure at MIDWAY?
- A. The main reason of the failure was the strategical inefficiency on the side of the Japanese Navy, careless mishandling of the Japanese Navy. I think the chief reason for the failure was the lack of training of the pilots in search. They also put too much emphasis on attack tactics only.
- Q. Which do you think was of greater importance, the failure to conduct proper reconnaissance and obtain necessary tactical information on the location of the American Forces or the better deployment or better tactical operation of the American Forces in the Battle of MIDWAY?
- A. I think that poor reconnaissance on the side of the Japanese was far more the cause than the tactics.
- Q. To summarize the effect of the Battle of MIDWAY on the reorganization of the Japanese Fleet. It was particularly a tactical reorganization. I gather that as a direct result of this action, it was decided to place increased emphasis on the carriers and that this theory of placing increased emphasis on the carriers had long been held by the younger Japanese Naval officers and that as a result of this action the older officers were forced to change their way of thinking. Is that correct?

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Rear Admiral TAKATA, Toshitane).

A. That is right.

Q. Did the Battle of MIDWAY cause increased emphasis on the research on radar or other warning devices for Naval vessels?

A. After the Battle of MIDWAY it was asked by some of the pilots that radar research be increased, but that voice could not reach far enough to the higher Naval officers.

Q. Was there any revision in training standard as the result of this battle.

A. After this Battle of MIDWAY they put more emphasis on search training.

Q. To get back to the air groups of the 1st Air Fleet that were recovered after the Battle of MIDWAY, what disposition was made of these air groups?

A. 30% of the pilots came back to JAPAN to convalesce, and 40 % was shifted to the 3rd Fleet and KYUSHU to go into further training.

Q. We have been told by certain people that some of them were sent to the RABAU Area. Is that correct?

A. The 3rd Fleet was organized on July 15 and they figured two months was needed for their next operation; but before they had enough time to reorganize, the GUADALCANAL picture came up and they were forced to send these pilots prematurely to RABAU.

Q. Do you remember what happened to the pilots in the RABAU Area? What happened to these well-trained pilots?

A. When they went down south, part of this original number of pilots were sent to RABAU carriers; but after the battle of SANTA CRUZ they were brought back to JAPAN to be retrained and reorganized. However, most of them were killed in action at PORT MORESBY, BUNA and SANTA CRUZ.

Q. During the period in late 1943 and early 1944, did you have other air groups for the 3rd Fleet in training?

A. Anticipating island fighting, the Navy trained a new 1st Air Fleet, different from the original 1st Air Fleet of the PEARL HARBOR attack, and trained for land-based operations.

Q. At what time in early 1944 were these newly trained air groups considered ready for operation?

A. The original plan was that they would be ready in May; that is, the 3rd Fleet would have sufficient power by that time. However, the American attack came earlier than expected so they were forced to go south in an incomplete condition.

Q. Did the Japanese Navy consider that it had enough planes in late 1943 and 1944 to defend the islands south and east of TRUK?

A. They did not have enough planes and they were not so confident.

Q. Did they ask the Japanese Army to help them?

A. Yes, they requested reinforcement from the Army and they got some planes.

Q. Did they get enough planes?

A. The Army planes amounted to about 300 at the maximum. The idea was to combine the Army and Navy to meet the needs. It was not the result of the Navy request. Higher forces in TOKYO decided to reinforce that area. They were not sufficient.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Rear Admiral TAKATA, Toshitane).

- Q. Do you consider that the carrier air groups in the battle west of the MARIANAS in June 1944 were as well trained as the pilots in the Battle of MIDWAY?
- A. The trained pilots were not as good as in the case of MIDWAY.
- Q. What do you consider the reason for the pilots in the battle off MARIANAS being not so well qualified as in MIDWAY?
- A. In the case of MIDWAY they had preparation for the encounter, whereas in the MARIANAS they had not time and were rushed.
- Q. Do you think the combat experience of your carrier pilots were maintained throughout the period 1943 - 1944, or did the combat calibre and experience decline?
- A. The skill of the pilots was normal, but they lacked experience because they were on defense.
- Q. Was this lack of skill and experience the result of lack of time for training or reduction in the standards of training?
- A. There was insufficient time for proper training.
- Q. In the battle west of the MARIANAS, it is thought that you lost practically all of your carrier pilot strength. Was that correct?
- A. It was almost a total loss.
- Q. At that period in the middle of 1944, were there other carrier air groups in training?
- A. They were almost unable to train any ship-based pilots.
- Q. Was the Naval air training establishment or organization able to keep up with the demand for pilot training throughout the war?
- A. They could not very well meet the demands.
- Q. When you were on the Staff of the Combined Fleet from May to October 1944, what were your duties?
- A. I was in charge of operations.
- Q. Were you familiar with the planning of the defense of the PHILIPPINES?
- A. Yes, I am very familiar with these operations.
- Q. It is my understanding that the plan was called the SHOGO and was made up by Imperial Headquarters. Is this correct?
- A. Yes, and before the plan was made by Imperial Headquarters, it had gone through a conference of the fleets.
- Q. Did the plan from Imperial Headquarters provide detailed instructions as to operations, or was it a general directive with the details left to be worked out by the Combined Fleet?
- A. The plan made by Imperial Headquarters covered things generally, and specific details were made up by the Combined Fleet.
- Q. Did the plan issued by Imperial Headquarters assume any date for our attack on the PHILIPPINES, or did it assume any place where the attack would be launched?
- A. They assumed the place; they assumed three places very roughly: LUZON, the middle part of the PHILIPPINES and the southern part.
- Q. Did they think any one place was more probable?
- A. They did not assume any place specifically, and the plan was made in case of invasion in one of the three.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Rear Admiral TAKATA, Toshitane).

- Q. Approximately on what date was this plan issued?
A. It was after the Battle of the MARIANAS; it was in August 1944.
- Q. In those plans what arrangements were made for coordination of the Navy with Army and Navy land-based air forces in the defense of the PHILIPPINES?
A. Army and Navy forces were to cooperate as closely as possible; the air forces and the surface forces were to cooperate. No single control was erected, but close cooperation was made.
- Q. We understood that at this time you yourself had some additional duties on the staff of the Southern Army? Is this correct?
A. I had additional duties on the Staff of the Southern Army but it was rather nominal. I was just assigned to make closer coordination. I remained at my regular place in TOKYO, except when I went on survey trips; I went down south several times, in August, October and December.
- Q. In September at the same time that our forces were occupying PALAU and MOROTAI, our carriers attacked the PHILIPPINES. Were the effects of those attacks at all serious on the planning of the SHOGO Operation?
A. While the 1st Air Fleet was assembling at CEBU for the preparation of the SHOGO Plan, they lost about 60 planes.
- Q. The question is whether the loss hindered the plan?
A. Although they did not change the plan materially, it hindered execution of the plan; strength fell off by the loss of the attack on CEBU. These raids halved the execution of the plan. Losses were not satisfactorily replaced and the originally planned strength was not available at the time of the invasion.
- Q. In October the Americans attacked FORMOSA. What was the effect on later operations of the FORMOSA attack?
A. We lost quite a number of land-based planes, so when your invasion came to LEYTE we had very few planes available to oppose the attack.
- Q. You made the decision to send carrier planes and pilots from the 3rd Fleet to FORMOSA at that time as reinforcement. Why was that decision made?
A. The decision was made by the Commander of the Combined Fleet, TOYODA.
- Q. What was the reason for this decision?
A. It was thought in the very beginning that JAPAN gave your Fleet a very big loss. This was later found to be a mistake; but that thought made the decision to send as much reinforcement as possible to give the American Fleet a bigger loss; in a work, to overwhelm them.
- Q. Is it correct to say then that Admiral TOYODA sent down these carrier pilots in an attempt to destroy our task force on the base of exaggerated reports of the battle?
A. Yes, the idea was to destroy the American task force entirely.
- Q. At that time did Admiral TOYODA believe there was sufficient chance of inflicting this destruction on our task forces to justify taking away half the planes of the 3rd Fleet?
A. Although he perhaps did not believe that it would destroy the American task forces, it was thought the most effective tactics to carry out the PHILIPPINE Operation. However, Japanese plane losses were much greater in comparison, making later LEYTE defense weak.

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Q. What was the effect of our B-29 attack on FORMOSA?

A. It did not have much effect on the future operations; although they lost an aeronautical depot in TAKAO, it did not affect future operations. Had the Battle of the PHILIPPINES been prolonged, the loss of this depot would have had an effect; but since the campaign was short, the effect was not noticeable.

Q. In regard to the planning of the fleet movement in the defense of the PHILIPPINES, was it not intended in the Combined Fleet to unite Admiral OZAWA and Admiral KURITA, if possible, before our attack?

A. There was no intention to reorganize the fleet and the whole plan was to operate them separately from the INLAND SEA and LINGGA. There was such a desire but it was impossible to do that because of shortage of fuel and personnel.

Q. I had understood if our invasion came a month later, it would have been possible to unite these two forces. OZAWA could have sailed for LINGGA to combine. Is that correct?

A. One month would not have been enough. Of course, we had this in mind and desired it, had the training of the carrier pilots been enough. Even so, one month would not have been enough. Although training for carrier air force continued, they never caught up with the demand.

Q. On a different subject now, in regard to the attack at LEYTE by way of SURIGAO STRAIT, there were two forces there—one commanded by NISHIMURA and one by SHIMA. Why was it that two independent forces were sent to one place at one time to do one job?

A. Admiral SHIMA'S fleet happened to be there at the same time. In order to get to LEYTE they decided to combine. It was not originally planned that Admiral SHIMA'S force should take part in this southern action. It happened only by a series of coincidences that he was first ordered to OKINAWA, then to MANILA by BUKO to attack your force but found it impossible; and so while enroute to MANILA he was given orders to follow Admiral NISHIMURA'S force in an attempt on LEYTE GULF. This was truly an appendix to our plan.

Q. When the battle was under way what was the relationship between Admiral NISHIMURA and Admiral SHIMA? Did either one control the other or were they in combined command?

A. There was no one command. It was cooperative.

Q. Is it correct to say that the principal duty of the Army air force in the PHILIPPINES was to attack our transports?

A. In addition to that Army planes were supposed to attack the task forces too. This would be done by the very effective types of attack planes and also high class bombers.

Q. Were there any plans made to give fighter cover to Admiral KURITA as he passed through the PHILIPPINES?

A. The order was given that fighter protection should be furnished if possible, but they could not do so because of shortage of gas and bad weather.

Q. What was Admiral KURITA'S fleet supposed to do?

A. His first mission in LEYTE was to attack transport and landing forces if possible.

Q. What was the mission of Admiral OZAWA'S fleet?

A. The first mission was to decoy the American Forces north away from LEYTE GULF.

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Q. Was this decoy mission part of the original plan or was it a last minute decision? Was it part of the original plan going back to the August SHOGO?

A. No, this was not the original SHOGO Plan, but it was in the operation plan issued by the Combined Fleet.

Q. In your own view, your personal opinion, how far did this operation carry through; where did it break down and why?

A. I think the plan was a very good one: but due to damage on the air forces in the FORMOSA Campaign, and also since the damage they inflicted on the Americans was very small, the execution of this plan was a failure.

Q. Do you think the land-based air force in the PHILIPPINES was not sufficient?

A. When the Japanese forces came into the LEYTE region, it was impossible to attack your task forces heavily; and therefore when the Japanese fleet approached LEYTE GULF, the fleet itself was heavily attacked and badly damaged by your task forces. This was the consequence of the operation of FORMOSA and previously.

Q. One of your officers told me one day that looking back on it now it appeared that the whole operation was useless, and doomed from the beginning by our attacks on FORMALOSA. Would you agree with that statement?

A. It might be possible to say that now; though right after the FORMOSA Campaign I, myself thought we could attack fairly well.

Q. Just one question of fact. On the morning of 25th October last year, why did not Admiral KURITA enter LEYTE GULF?

A. Because of shortage of fuel. I was not there so I do not know.

Q. Perhaps you saw the report on the action. What reasons were given in the report?

A. I think there was a report given saying it was shortage of fuel.

Q. Was that a correct decision?

A. I cannot very well say whether it was a correct decision. I have no background to base my opinion because I was away from the scene. My personal feeling is he could not have very well done otherwise, without any air support.

Q. Which branch of the military services, that is, the Army or Navy, do you consider had the most influence in the determination of national policy prior to the beginning of the war?

A. Army.

Q. Did that influence of the Army continue strong throughout the progress of the war?

A. I think it continued throughout the war.

Q. At the end of the war when the final decision had to be made whether to continue or not, was the influence of the Army still stronger?

A. I think that this decision to end the war was in the hands of the GAIMUSHO (Foreign Office). As to the decision to end this war, great influence was given by the Foreign Minister and the Emperor adopted the opinion.

Q. What influence do you think the war in EUROPE had on the decision to commence hostilities in the Greater East ASIA War?

A. I think there was no direct influence of the European War on the commencement of the ASIA War.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Rear Admiral TAKATA, Toshitane). —

Q. On the decision to start the war?

A. Whether there was a war in EUROPE or not, the war with AMERICA would have commenced.

Q. Did the progress of the European War have any effect on the timing of the initiation of hostilities?

A. I think there was none.

Q. Admiral, do you think the Navy as a whole was eager to commence the war or were they influenced by the higher decision?

A. The Navy as a whole was not eager to commence the war. They knew the difficulties of war between AMERICA and JAPAN. The Navy knew their capacity, and they knew that to continue the war the principal part of the warfare would have to be carried on by the Navy.

Q. Which campaign, which series of operations throughout the whole PACIFIC War, do you consider the most decisive?

A. I think failure of the MIDWAY Campaign was the beginning of total failure.

Q. In your opinion what were the basic causes, reasons, for the failure of JAPAN to carry out her war aims.

A. I think there are many opinions; but the chief reason I can give is in the beginning of the war everything went on successfully until right before the MIDWAY Campaign, which marked the end of the successful operation. They should have stopped to think of defense, to consolidate.

Q. Getting into specific causes, could you state them in the order of their importance? Lack of aircraft, lack of fuel, etc.?

A. 1. Insufficiency in scientific or radar research.
2. Lack of mechanical ability, productive ability.

These two caused the big difference between the American and Japanese strength. Work was done by manpower where mechanical power such as the bulldozers the American use was best. This made poor efficiency in transport, submarines, poor air bases. Affected everything.

Q. Of the two major lines of assault—that is, the line through the SOLOMONS, NEW GUINEA, and PHILIPPINES, and the assault across the PACIFIC which was the more serious threat to JAPAN?

A. We were confident that we could repulse an attack across the PACIFIC, but since you came the way you did, the Japanese were divided. The Americans used logical tactics with logical force.

Q. At what point in the PACIFIC War did you think that failure was inevitable?

A. April or May 1943, I was very pessimistic, since I became staff officer of the Combined Fleet.

Q. What do you consider were the principal causes for the defeat of the Japanese Air Force or for the loss of control of the air?

A. Poor production and lack of fuel, hence lack of training.