

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

INTERROGATION NO. 524 Place: Tokyo  
Date: 12 December 1945

Division of Origin: Military Analysis of Japanese War Plans

SUBJECT: War in the Pacific

Personnel Interrogated and Background: Admiral FUKUDOME Shigeru  
Nov 33 - Apptd to Staff of COMBINED FLEET and staff of 1st Fleet  
Nov 34 - " Chief 2d Sec'n 1st Div'n, NAVY GENERAL STAFF  
Nov 37 - " by EMPEROR to Staff of IMPERIAL GHQ, NAVY MINISTRY  
Apr 38 - " Vice Chief of Staff CHINA FLEET & member of Staff, 3d Fleet  
Nov 39 - " Chief of Staff COMBINED FLEET and 1st Fleet  
Apr 41 - " Chief, 1st Div'n, NAVY GENERAL STAFF  
May 43 - " Chief of Staff, COMBINED FLEET  
Apr 44 - " to NAVY GENERAL STAFF  
Jun 44 - " Cmdr 2d Aerial Fleet (with EMPEROR's sanction)  
Jan 45 - " " 13th " " & Cmdr 1st Southern Expeditionary Fleet  
Feb 45 - " " 10th Area Fleet, 13th Aerial Fleet, 1st Sou'n Exp. Fleet

Where Interrogated: Room 722, Meiji Building  
Interrogator: Maj Gen Orvil A. ANDERSON, USA

Interpreters: Mr. MIZOTA, a Japanese National

Allied Officers: Rear Admr W R OFSTIE, USN  
Col Robert H TERRILL, AC  
Lt Cmdr Walter NICHOLS, USNR  
Maj Edwin M CELWAIN, GSC

SUMMARY

Japanese War Plans and aims during the Pacific war, including high level decisions, are discussed.

All questions are by Gen ANDERSON unless otherwise indicated:

- Q. I'd like to ask the Admiral a few questions, just carrying on from Admiral OFSTIE's interrogation, which I think he has covered pretty thoroughly. I'd like to start with the item of MIDWAY: What I wanted to ask is the value that the Japanese put on this island as an operating base for land-based aircraft, what did they consider its capacity to be, the number of airplanes that he felt they could operate from that island?
- A. At the time of the MIDWAY CAMPAIGN, our fleet was still in sound condition and had plenty of carrier planes; consequently it was Admiral YAMAMOTO's intention to carry out this campaign depending principally upon the carrier planes. The object of the land-based planes being principally for reconnaissance. Just exactly how many planes it was intended to base there I do not know, but in any case the intention was that the principal part of such land-based planes should be reconnaissance planes.
- Q. You did not visualize then that MIDWAY would have ever been charged with providing its own final defense without fleet support?
- A. MIDWAY was, of course, intended to be our eastern outpost, and the purpose in occupying it was to give cooperation to the fleet. If, as we had intended, we could have fought the decisive fleet battle there successfully, we felt that MIDWAY thereafter could be left to take care of itself.
- Q. Do I understand by that that its occupation was considered to be of a temporary duration to support a fleet action?
- A. In the beginning we did not look that far ahead. The original intention being that MIDWAY should be used as a base for cooperating with the fleet, but if that fleet engagement should prove successful, then the occupation of MIDWAY should thereafter be made to serve as a base for further extension into the East, perhaps as far as HAWAII. That problem was studied but no final decision was taken on it.
- Q. If, as I gathered from an early remark, the security of MIDWAY was dependent upon fleet support, how does the Admiral feel that, in the matter of restricted freedom of fleet action, that occupation would entail? The point I'm trying to get across is: We have implied that MIDWAY, which was primarily a base for reconnaissance aircraft, could not provide its own final defense—that it relied upon and had to rely upon fleet support to give it security. What effect did that have on the freedom of action of the Japanese main fleet, this requirement for security of an island?
- A. If the occupation of MIDWAY had been successful, it is possible that the fleet's freedom of action might have been restricted to some extent, but it was Admiral YAMAMOTO's strong conviction that decisive fleet action should be fought at as early a time as possible because, with passage of time, AMERICA's preparation for war would go apace at a faster speed than ours with resulting increase in the difference of strength between our Navy and yours. He was aiming at all times to bring about this fleet engagement at an early period. If that opportunity had not come and consequently necessitated leaving part of the fleet to take care of MIDWAY, the situation might have arisen where our fleet might have been restricted in its action to some extent by the necessity of protecting MIDWAY. The very question that you have raised, General, became the subject of considerable discussion between the fleet on the one hand and the Imperial GHQ on the other, the fleet taking a positive and the Imperial GHQ more or less of a passive stand on it, but agreeing with the fleet in the end as the fleet insisted that it saw sufficient chances of success of the MIDWAY operation.
- Q. Now what degree of probability did the Japanese Main Fleet give in the matter of forcing the decisive fleet action on the UNITED STATES through the occupation of MIDWAY? What probability did they give to a decisive fleet action in case they were successful at MIDWAY? You see, you are hinging your decisive fleet action to the taking of MIDWAY. What degree of probability did they give to such decisive action transpiring in case you

captured MIDWAY?

A. Our fleet did not think that the occupation of MIDWAY would necessarily bring about this decisive engagement upon which they had their minds, but the feeling was, that the occupation of MIDWAY would increase the chance for such an engagement taking place and that, should it come about, then the fact that we could use MIDWAY as a base for long distance reconnaissance planes would give us advantage when such an engagement did come.

Q. In the event that the AMERICAN Navy declined--assuming success at MIDWAY--the invitation to a decisive fleet battle and elected to defend the HAWAIIAN group of islands by its land-based, both ground and air, defenses, what was the future contingent employment of the Japanese Navy in the event that a decisive action did not develop through this occupation?

A. This is not an idea that Admiral YAMAMOTO transmitted directly or formally to the IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF, but on one occasion when Admiral ETO, the Deputy Chief of the Naval General Staff, visited the fleet, Admiral YAMAMOTO told him that, should the MIDWAY CAMPAIGN prove successful, he wanted to push further east with the idea, if possible, of fighting this decisive engagement in HAWAIIAN waters. That appears to be an idea that Admiral YAMAMOTO had constantly in mind. If the decisive battle could not be fought in HAWAIIAN waters or anywhere to the east of MIDWAY as the Admiral wished, it might have been very difficult to defend MIDWAY after its occupation. That we do not know; actually, however, the results were the reverse. The MIDWAY failure made it necessary for us to fall back and to plan the decisive battle somewhere nearer home.

Q. I am still trying to explore the eventual Japanese Navy operations upon the presumption of MIDWAY success: I gather from the last answer that the Japanese Navy envisaged that they would make an offensive assault on the HAWAIIAN group of islands and the defenses in HAWAII?

A. That was the plan. Had they been successful at MIDWAY, the operations to occupy HAWAII might have been a part of the problem studied by the fleet, but such was not the idea of the Naval General Headquarters at the time. Had our fleet been able to fight a decisive engagement in the waters to the east of MIDWAY successfully, then that problem of HAWAIIAN occupation might have come up and a definite decision taken on it. That is a possibility.

Q. Let me make one more presumption in apparent conformity with the views then developed as the plans of the General Staff--that decisive action had been declined by the UNITED STATES Navy--had never developed: how big a carrier-based air force and for what length of time did the Japanese Navy intend to continue in the role of defending MIDWAY? I would like to get an appreciation of the support that you would have given from carrier-based aircraft? and the length of time over which you had contemplated that that assignment would have remained in force?

A. There was no intention to station fleet units there at all permanently, the intention being similar to the action that we took in the ALEUTIANS and RABAUL, namely, to station there sufficient land force and reconnaissance planes. The fleet was to be kept around the MARSHALLS.

Q. No land-based air defense or land-based air attacking craft to be assigned permanently to MIDWAY?

A. The base being not a big one, definite restrictions on the total number that could be based there, consequently the intention was to place there principally reconnaissance planes, and in addition such number of attack planes and fighters as there was room for.

Q. For this MIDWAY operation and the successive operations against HAWAII in the event of success at MIDWAY, the MARSHALLS were to be the Navy base for operations?

A. In such an event the fleet's advance base would probably have been placed at KWAJELEIN.

Q. I want to step next down into the SOLOMONS-NEW GUINEA Area: I understand that in the defense of the RABAUL area, as the result of American air successes down there—that some time in late October 1943 the Navy took the aircraft from about five carriers, presumably moved them down to RABAUL, and land-based them for operations in the SOLOMONS area and the RABAUL area. I would like to get the Admiral to give me the naval reason that divorced the carrier aircraft from the carriers and moved them down there to land bases for operations—even for the first limited period, which I understand was ten days to two weeks. Why did they consider it necessary to move the carrier planes from their aircraft carriers proper and land-base them for that temporary operation?

A. From the outbreak of the war until the close of 1943, we had what we call plenty of planes, pilots well-trained. At first our air experts held the view that in the air we could hold our own if the Allied Air Force outnumbered us not more than ten to one. By October of 1943 that proportion had come down to three to one in the minds of our air fighters. Thereafter, replacements of lost planes became increasingly difficult owing principally to production difficulties. At RABAUL our air force was gaining considerable results, but the losses were heavy and replacements were not coming through. RABAUL, being under the command of the Combined Fleet, was calling constantly for air reinforcement, but the fleet did not respond to that call because Admiral KOGA wished to save his carrier planes for the one decisive fleet engagement. Just at that time the fleet went from TRUK to BROWN but no decisive engagement took place, so the fleet returned to TRUK, and as there did not appear to be a chance for a decisive fight in the near future, it was then decided to comply in part with the demand for reinforcements from RABAUL by sending a part of the fleet's air strength to RABAUL for a period of ten days or two weeks. In other words, the sending of that reinforcement was not in compliance with what the fleet considered an absolute need but rather to meet the request from RABAUL itself for help.

Q. The question that I'm trying to advance in this is that, recognizing the requirement for additional air in RABAUL, why were the aircraft removed from the fleet and land-based in preference to keeping the fleet in balance by sending the aircraft carriers with their aircraft to that area? You see, you are separating and unbalancing temporarily the fighting capabilities of the Japanese Main Navy?

A. The reason for that was that it was a simple matter to send the planes from TRUK to RABAUL. If the carriers were sent there, it was feared that they would immediately become the object of your air attack, and as for the unbalancing of fleet strength it was only for a matter of ten days. We intended to get those planes back to their carriers after a period of ten days; actually however it did not turn out that way because those planes were retained there.

Q. I don't know whether I get that answer correctly or not: Was it because of the greater simplicity of the air movement of the carrier-based aircraft to the RABAUL Area? Was that the primary consideration, or was it the added hazard attached to the carriers themselves?

A. I think that the stronger of the two reasons was a desire not to expose the carriers to the danger of attack.

Q. Do you feel that restoring the carrier aircraft to the carriers would have been approximately as simple to meet a threat by our Navy from their operations on land bases as they would have been had they been kept aboard the carriers during the 10 to 14 days commitment to the SOLOMONS? I'm trying to get the value in time: How much do you feel would be paid or consumed in restoring fleet balance in the event that a threat should develop at this particular time that the carrier aircraft are land-based and are not

aboard the carriers themselves? How badly did you visualize the balance in terms of time for the fleet force by having these carrier aircraft based on land? The point that I'm trying to make here is: Somewhere on these waters we have an AMERICAN NAVAL FORCE, presumably balanced. It had been the policy of the Japanese force to keep their fleet balanced. Now, they are temporarily, for a period of 10 to 14 days, unbalancing that fleet's combat capability by shore-basing their carrier-based aircraft. I would like to get an evaluation on the time factor that he considered would be consumed in restoring fleet balance in case an unforeseen threat develops to the fleet--get the carrier-based aircraft back to their carriers--in comparison to the availability of the fleet as a balanced force had they continued aboard the aircraft carriers? You see, if they're on board the aircraft carriers you would have the proposition of moving them back to the fleet rendezvous; if they are on land bases they would first have to marry up to the carriers and then rendezvous. How much handicap did you accept in not keeping them with their carriers? I'm trying to determine the degree in time: The fleet accepted an unbalanced combat team in order to provide support to the SOLOMONS--land-based aircraft support to the SOLOMONS operation--as compared to retaining them on the carriers themselves?

Mr MIZOTA: In the event of an enemy attack being made against our fleet, how much longer?

Q. You have divorced your aircraft from the carriers and placed them on landing fields. How much longer would it take them to marry up with your carriers from those land bases over what it would have taken them had he kept them on board the carriers--if the carriers had gone down there?

A. Merely from a standpoint of time, certainly it would have been better had the planes been sent down aboard the carriers, but at the time we did not anticipate an attack against TRUK. Had we expected that, we might receive an attack there, the planes would probably not have been sent down at all.

Q. You evaluated the matter of reforming and rendezvousing as requiring a little greater time in sending them down by air and land-basing them, than in keeping them aboard the carriers?

A. Yes.

Q. I wonder how much more time that would have been, how much more time would have been required?

A. Actually I think it was not a great difference in time. One advantage in sending them down on carriers would have been that when they received notice they were attacked and started back they could fly off after they had come only part of the distance back to TRUK. Actually I think there would not have been a very great difference in time until the time that planes could be used effectively.

Q. In the matter of maintenance of aircraft, how much more efficient did he consider that the carrier maintenance establishment would have been in repairing damaged aircraft over the land-based facilities that were provided at RABAU for this extra force that came in on those land bases, the matter of getting those airplanes back into combat after they have suffered some minor damage?

A. From a standpoint of maintenance there was no question but what it would have been better to have sent the carriers in if it could have been done without risk to the carriers.

Q. In view of the air reverses that the Japanese Naval air force had previously suffered and was suffering in the SOLOMONS CAMPAIGN, what degree of probability did Admiral KOGA place on the return of an effective carrier-based aircraft force to the carriers following that ten-day to 14-day active period of operation in that area?

- A. It was expected that about one-fifth might be lost. That was the reason that the time was restricted to about ten days so as not to have the loss exceed that figure. At that time we would have had little difficulty in getting a replacement to that extent to the fleet. Up to that time our fleet air force was still in good condition. The pilots were well-trained and they were all keyed up, volunteering for assignments to these various jobs.
- Q. At the time they were sent down to RABAUL, did the Commander-in-Chief of the Main Fleet give any instructions restricting the employment of those forces to prevent a loss exceeding a given percentage, say one-fifth? Was there any protective instruction given to assure that the loss would not exceed the acceptable amount?
- A. No order restricting the use of the planes was given to Admiral OZAWA, the Commander of the Air Fleet, who himself went down with those planes. That was the figure of the loss already given, the figure that Admiral OZAWA had in mind in directing the operations.
- Q. Now in the event that that air force from the carriers suffered what we know now that it did, almost a complete annihilation, what effect did that have on the overall combat capabilities of the Japanese Main Fleet?
- A. Admiral KOGA's idea being to send them down for a period of ten days, they left for RABAUL on the 1st and 2nd of November and were expected to return on the 11th. Actually the RABAUL air operations lasted eight days, and during that time the loss to those planes was approximately one-fifth or the number that Admiral KOGA had in mind. However, commencement of the BOUGAINVILLE landing operations coming just at that time made it impossible for those planes to return to the fleet and resulted in almost a complete loss. Since that meant the loss of the fleet's carrier air force, it was a heavy blow to the fleet in respect to future plans, but the attitude of the fleet toward that loss was, that while it could not fight a major engagement, until that loss could be replaced, the situation couldn't be helped.
- Q. Following that loss of the air arm—the carrier-based air arm of the fleet—what would have been the action of the main fleet in defending, we'll say, KWAJELEIN in the MARSHALLS had the AMERICAN navy and amphibious force elected to launch its initial assault in late November or early December, against that point in preference to the operation that we actually ran into the TARAWA-MAKIN area? What would have been the capabilities of the main fleet and the defenses in the MARSHALLS to oppose that landing force had we selected KWAJELEIN in the MARSHALLS, instead of the GILBERTS for that operation?
- A. I think that there would have been very little difference in the situation, no matter where you had directed your attack at that time. In other words, without the air support, the Navy could not have come out to meet you in a decisive engagement anywhere, for not only had we lost the carrier air arm but the level of our land-based air strength was very low.
- Q. Let me carry that a little further: Supposing that this amphibious and air assault had been launched at TRUK instead of TARAWA and MAKIN at this time—early in December—if, had we elected to by-pass these two and effected our first major air and amphibious operation against the TRUK Naval Base?
- A. The situation then would have been quite different: Our fleet would have been placed in a most difficult position, especially as TRUK was practically unprotected through 1943, defense works having been started only in 1944. We would have had to recall from RABAUL and other regions such small air forces as we had left and employed these, together with what was left of the air arm of the fleet itself, but those would not have been sufficient in number to have enabled us to employ them in any organized opposition.
- Q. Now, let's assume that we had selected that as our first major amphibious objective and had attained success and had followed that operation up,

within a matter of two to three months, with an operation in the MARIANAS of major scope, with all of our amphibious and air force support; What would have been the condition in the MARIANAS to such an operation taking place in late February or early March of 1944?

A. Such an attempt on your part would no doubt have proved immediately successful because our MARIANAS-WEST CAROLINE line at that time was practically undefended, unprepared for defense, those preparations not having been commenced until around March of 1944. The reason for that delay was that it was considered as the inner line of defense and had not been given much attention until we had lost the MARSHALLS.

Q. The next question that I wanted to ask is the value that the Admiral would have placed on the MARSHALLS following our assumed success in occupying TRUK and occupying the MARIANAS. What military or Naval value--following these two operations--would he give to the MARSHALLS--assuming that we had been able to obtain possession of these two areas? What Naval and Military value would the MARSHALLS now have had for continuing the war?

A. In that case it would have become more or less an orphan, so to speak, of little value to us aside from possible use as a sub-base for operations against your communications.

Q. How long do you feel you would have been able to supply a sub-base activity there in the MARSHALLS?

A. We would probably have been able to supply it for only a short period after which it would have been turned into what we call an intermediate base.

(Note by the interpreter: "That is not a good translation.")

Q. So it would have become to JAPAN, i.e., an outpost rendezvous?

A. Yes; sometimes a replacement post.

Q. This is extending this a little far, probably: I'd like to explore the BONIN ISLANDS area. If we'd continued that direction of advance following a successful occupation of the MARIANAS and launched our next assault as quickly as possible--it would have been something probably again requiring a month-and-a-half to two months--to the IWO JIMA area of the BONINS, what capability does the Admiral believe you would have had to prepare defenses in the BONIN area to meet our third step forward, had we elected to come up that route?

A. I think that, given about two months' time we would have been able to carry out a defense of the BONIN group. It would have depended on the degree of success, or the degree of completeness of the preparation would have depended upon the intensity of your interference with MARIANAS bases, because if the line of advance that you propose had been taken we would have put into the BONIN ISLANDS all the work that we put into the defense of the MARIANAS over a period of 4 to 5 months--put it all into the BONIN ISLANDS which is a relatively small area; we could have carried it out quite well.

Q. Now do you mean, the final defenses, the land defenses, that you would have been able to set up in the BONINS or does the Admiral feel that you could have set up an effective air defense, recognizing that as soon as we'd landed in the MARIANAS a sustained air attack would have been started on the BONIN ISLANDS; probably just as soon as we got airstrips in the MARIANAS this air campaign would have been initiated against the BONINS so that there would have been sustained attacks up to the limits of our capabilities which would have included aircraft carrier attacks to prevent establishment of sound defenses. There would have been no freedom there, because we would have been throwing all the air we could, including carrier-based, into the BONIN ISLANDS, just as soon as they could have been released from the MARIANAS campaign. I'm asking you to project your thinking pretty much into realism in getting the BONINS established, which would have been impeded to every degree we could impose?

- A. No, if you had carried out attacks from the MARIANAS so intensively, as you have just stated, it would have been quite impossible to prepare adequate defense of the BONIN ISLANDS. As I said to Admiral OFSTIE yesterday, once the forces took the MARIANAS, that marked, broadly speaking, the decision on the war was near. In other words, that there was very little hope for us irrespective of the direction of your next thrust; whether it should be the BONINS or OKINAWA made little difference.
- Q. Yesterday the Admiral, in answering one of Admiral OFSTIE's questions, made an estimate that we supposed was realistic, re the condition that faced him for the defense of the MARIANAS, in which I understood him to say that it would have required about three times as many land-based aircraft to provide effective defense of this line--TOKYO to MARIANAS to PALAU--against our air-amphibious assaults. I want to get from the Admiral a description--a definition--of the type of land-based air force that he was considering at that time, in terms of the range of the aircraft, their operating bases, their early-warning service, and their logistic support. I'm a little at a loss to know the formula or the type of land-based air force that he was thinking, or considering, at the time he made that estimate? Did he feel that it would have to be three times the size of the attacking carrier-based force?
- A. This figure of three times which I gave Admiral OFSTIE was merely an estimate based upon my own experience; since your air force was composed not only of task-force air force but also planes which you would use from land bases, we would have to have three times of the total of the task force air and the land-based air force. As regards the kind, the category, if you include in your air arm long-distance bombers such as B-29s, it would be necessary for us also to have long-distance bombers. We could not go to the extent of saying that we must have three times category for category, but as an ideal, an average of three times in respect of the various kinds--perhaps twice in some, four times in another, but generally speaking about three times.
- Q. Is that estimate based on a capability to rendezvous his forces after a warning of the approach of the enemy? You see the point I'm trying to get at: An estimate of whether or not he feels that it would require three times as many in the actual combat or that he has to have three times as many in order to insure that he will have a certain percentage of that three in the air in actual combat--in the actual fighting? I'm trying to find out how many he feels he has to have in combat to oppose the invading force?
- A. That is a lottery, the number that can rendezvous upon receiving warning, but it is necessary that those numbers be located in sufficient proximity to enable them to rendezvous in good time before landing is started.
- Q. Is it the Admiral's estimate that in fighting or opposing an amphibious operation that land-based aircraft are only one-third as efficient as carrier-based aircraft? Do you have to have that multiplicity of three because of that inferiority of land-based aircraft? Recognizing the vulnerability of the amphibious force afloat as compared to unsinkable bases--I'm trying to get your formula for measuring that combat capability?
- A. The reason for my including the land-air arm is that you would also be using land-based combat planes, moving your bases little by little.
- Q. Oh, yes, I appreciate that, but I gathered from the interview that you included our land-based aviation and the carrier-based aviation and felt that the defenders of that area should have three times. Now in combat why will it be necessary for the defender to be three times as strong in an air battle as the attackers--the attacker coming from some land base, but a big portion of his force coming from carrier bases? You see in the air action you have certain vulnerability--vulnerability of bases, vulnerability of logistics, vulnerability of installations of the forces that support the air bases. Does the Admiral feel that there is a degree of capability of the assaulting forces--carrier-based forces or land-based forces--that are assaulting which is three times as great as the defender in air action?



- A. The reason for my estimating the need of three times the force of the attacking party, is, that on the basis of my experience I have seen that in the air combat in the early stage, landings on the two sides generally cross each other up. Supposing there is "X" number of planes on each side; I want "3-X"; the first, "X" will cross out with your "X"; I want the second "X" to be used against your surface units; the third "X" to be used against your transports bringing your landing forces. Employing the three "X"s in that manner, I think the landing operations can be definitely pushed back.
- Q. That is what I was trying to get, more or less, your formula. Then I wanted to get from the Admiral an appreciation of the land-based aviation against this approaching amphibious force: Does he visualize that the major portion of his defending air force would be limited to air action or that a portion of that force would be assigned immediately to the attack of the approaching surface craft? Also I would like to have him give me in effect in that situation, were such an approach coming, what assignment in priority he would give the surface craft as he regards carriers, transports, battleships --you see, the composition of that force?
- A. If possible, I would place much greater emphasis on offensive than on defensive; consequently would order the majority of my planes to attack the surface units if possible--if circumstances permitted. In that case, first in priority would be the carrier.
- Q. In this evaluation that the Admiral has given, has he given the appropriate evaluation to the relative vulnerability of the surface bases from which the two air forces operate: the vulnerability of the carrier base in relationship to a land base, the ability of air to completely nullify a base of operations, for air forces in this type of operation?
- A. I should have added one more statement to that at the close, namely, that in yesterday's discussion I gave the figure "three": that was in answer to the question, what strength I would need in case I had to depend solely upon air strength. That was what I intended; if I had fleet support, that would be different.
- Q. Or effective land surface support, then, to repel the invasion? You see, you said you wanted "X" force to defeat the Air-Navy-Landing operation. Now if you have a land defense set up for an island, then you have an army force available to defend assault of the beaches. Now does he mean that air is to oppose all these without the support of a Navy or an Army?
- A. Yes, that was about the way it was intended.
- Q. That air was intended to do the total job? Well, then, I'd like to ask just one more question exploring along that line and that is: The value that you put on the increased range capabilities of land-based aviation over that of carrier-based aviation. Was that a factor in your estimate or were you assuming that the ranges would be approximately the same for land-based and carrier-based?
- A. That estimate was based on the assumption that the capabilities of the craft on both sides were approximately the same. If we had planes on our land bases which could far outrange yours so that we could reach your carriers before you could reach our land bases, then we'd figure perhaps a ratio of two.
- Q. I wanted to get the Admiral's view on the capability for setting up a land-based force for operations in this area against the force that we had built up, an evaluation on the limitations of islands to the establishment of a concentrated force. In the MARIANAS did you feel that you had land mass here, in these small islands, to base a force big enough to oppose us, assuming that you had the airplanes available? Could you set up the fields and logistics on these outlying islands here to support such a major operation?

- A. We might not have sufficient space there to base three times the number of your air force, the number which I deemed necessary, but there is certainly room for expansion beyond what we did have. One difficulty there was our lack of engineering capability which was far below yours.
- Q. I gathered that the Admiral yesterday felt that having lost this line--which is composed of course of these islands of limited dimensions--that JAPAN would have lost the war, that her capabilities for further success would be limited. Now this is a little beyond the scope of our interview this morning, but I want to ask the Admiral how he feels now as to what his capabilities would have been had he, in the initial phases of war, elected to put the overall military and naval resources of JAPAN into a defense in depth on the Continent at the time we went to war, with strong defenses on these larger land masses (indicating on a map, BORNEO, JAVA, SUMATRA and surrounding territory) of his air forces--the PHILIPPINES, BORNEO, SOUTHERN RESOURCES AREA--supporting this line of outposts, JAVA, SUMATRA, BORNEO, PHILIPPINES, up to JAPAN, with all of his Navy, Navy Air, Army, and Army Air, based where it has great land masses for defense, rather than fighting a decisive battle out on these small islands (Note: Indicating on map the outer perimeter: the MARSHALLS and GILBERTS, SOLOMONS, WAKE IS., etc.) and using his Navy for support of these small islands, using this interior waterway for his shipping line, with an exploitation of all his military resources along this line--PHILIPPINES, FORMOSA, then the RYUKYUS ISLANDS to the mainland--rather than to expand to the East and expose yourself to decreasing your capabilities while you were increasing our capabilities? Had you elected initially to hold that line and put all of your investment and building up the defenses to hold this (Note: Indicating on map the inner line as described above) rather than to come out here (Note: Indicating the outer perimeter). I just want to get the Admiral's view on how he feels about that now, from hindsight, had JAPAN elected to expand into the Continent and used these (Note: Indicating JAVA, SUMATRA, BORNEO, etc.) as her outposts--to exploit the SOUTHERN RESOURCES--to keep more compact and at a much greater distance from the UNITED STATES--how does he feel now about that as an overall plan had it been implemented with the initial outbreak of war, rather than to expand as he actually did: Went out into the Pacific, over-expansion into the Pacific, being an over-extension of his lines, increasing his vulnerability, expanding his lines, measured in terms of the UNITED STATES. I just wonder whether the Admiral, as he sees it now, would have put into that compact defense all of his investment, put into strong air and ground defenses throughout that line--the Navy working in behind that line to meet any thrust coming from outside that line itself--rather than this line here (Note: NEW GUINEA, SOLOMONS, MARSHALLS, GILBERTS, etc.) which is composed of some rugged small islands. I admit that in 1943, you probably couldn't have changed that, but what I wanted to know is, what does he think about having done that in the first place?
- A. From the very beginning there were two divergent views; namely (1) holding a long line; (2) the other, compact, as you have said; the Navy favoring the former and the Army the latter. The two views in the end, however, came together more or less with the Navy's view prevailing, and I still believe that was the wiser of the two plans because, had we elected to occupy the narrower area, that would have enabled your forces to take the intermediate bases without any opposition so that the greater distance from the UNITED STATES would not enter into the picture as a serious factor. The closer you could come without opposition, the closer you were to the heart of the area which it was incumbent upon us to protect. If you used from those near bases those attacking planes which far outranged ours, it would have placed us at a decided disadvantage; so the Navy's idea of occupying this more expansive area with the hope of getting a chance to strike a heavy blow against your fleet from one of the outlying bases, we felt, gave us a greater chance for continued success, and through that line we intended to gain time.

Time, we felt, was very important. If the war could be continued long enough, we expected that there might be slips on your side of which we could take advantage. I believe that if we had elected this other line, defeat would have come sooner.

Q. I believe I've got one thing clear: The strategy adopted by JAPAN was linked to a major degree on an expectancy that you would be able to force a decisive fleet battle and achieve a victory of your fleet over our fleet, and therefore give you a capability for holding these outer bases--these outposts. I thought that I got that and would like to know if that was a major factor in Japanese strategy--a matter of forcing a decisive fleet action between those two major fleets early in the war and a victory through that fleet action?

A. Yes, you might even say that was the primary factor.

Q. That's what I thought; for the adoption of this strategy that is the only justification. . . . I would like to have the Admiral touch on this also; How important he feels, in the outcome of the war, were these initial SOLOMONS-NEW GUINEA-RABAUL operations in the overall action. For well over a year-and-a-half we fought a relatively high attritional war on that southern front. What was its result and the effect on Japanese capabilities to continue effective military and naval operations? I am thinking in terms of air, Army and Navy?

The concept I'm driving at is: Out here, well away from JAPAN and well away from the UNITED STATES, we fought a fairly high attritional war over an extended period of time. The Japanese Naval Air Force and the Japanese Army Air Force lost a fairly heavy echelon of its experienced combat personnel with the result that the Japanese finally were forced to move back, ultimately giving up the defense of RABAUL. The expenditure that they had made on that front must have had some effect on the overall capabilities of JAPAN to wage war out in the Pacific. How disastrous, how much did that operation in the SOLOMONS-NEW GUINEA-RABAUL area reduce overall Japanese war capabilities, Navy Air and Army?

A. The losses you speak of in that southern region had a very serious effect upon the subsequent over-all war strength, war capabilities, of JAPAN. It is certain that we put too much into that mission and that, as a direct result, the first effect was to deprive the fleet of the capability to undertake a decisive war in the immediate future because of the loss of carrier-based planes, and weakened air strength at various other fronts. That region being the point at which we received your first counter-offensive, we thought it important to turn that back lest your success there give you confidence for further similar undertakings. Therefore we decided to put all that we considered necessary to turn back the first counter-attack, but were not able to send an air force there as we expected all at once--it trickled in little by little, and that was the cause of failure.

Q. That was the point I was making, that this type of operation invited what you call "trickle"--piecemeal commitment which was made over a very extended period of time. . . . With the importance that the Navy attached to RABAUL and the necessity for giving it defense in depth, what degree of importance did the Navy attach to the PORT MORESBY and this Eastern Coast of NEW GUINEA area as bases for AMERICAN air forces in operating against RABAUL? How important did you consider the need to neutralize that area, to increase the defense in depth for RABAUL?

A. In order to retain hold on RABAUL we considered it necessary to establish a perimeter including the SOLOMONS, MORESBY and other points along Eastern NEW GUINEA. This originated with the Navy authorities at RABAUL.

Q. When did the Admiral go down to TRUK? When did he take this assignment, as Chief of Staff?

A. In May of 1943.

Admiral OFSTIE: Succeeding Admiral YAMAMOTO?

- A. I assumed the post of CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE COMBINED FLEET upon my arrival at TOKYO on May 22, then returned with Admiral KOGA to TRUK--I believe it was on the 31st of August.
- Q. Was the Admiral familiar with this "BATTLE OF BISMARCK", the convoy that left RABAU, I think around the first of March, and was attacked by NEW GUINEA land-based air forces during its approach? That was an air engagement against an escorted convoy of troop transports and supplies, March 2 to 4--I think--in 1943?
- A. I was in TOKYO at the time and although I heard about it I don't remember particularly what it was about. I do recall that about that time our communication with RABAU was becoming extremely difficult owing principally to the constant interdiction by your B-17s. By the end of '43 it was becoming virtually impossible for us to get any surface vessels through to RABAU.
- Q. You wouldn't know then the relationship of that air-sea battle to the decision of the Army not to send any more reinforcements down into the LAE-SALAMAU-FINSCHAFEN area--the whole Eastern NEW GUINEA area?
- A. I recall that it was near the end of 1943 that that decision was made, not to send further reinforcements to Eastern NEW GUINEA. Just what relation the BATTLE OF BISMARCK had on that decision I do not know, but I believe that the principal reason for that decision was the increasing difficulty of sending transports through and the feeling that our Eastern NEW GUINEA operations showed no promise of success, so that there was no use of sending any further down there.
- Maj McELWAIN: By EASTERN NEW GUINEA do you include WEWAK, or how far do you take it down generally? I am referring to the movement of forces through this strait (Note: Indicating on map, approximately the VITIAZ STRAITS) past GLOUCESTER down into the LAE Area--not up along here (Note: Indicating along North Coast of NEW GUINEA); here's where the BATTLE OF BISMARCK was, and that was the last convoy sent down to this LAE-SALAMAU area?
- A. Yes, WEWAK was included in the area to which it was decided that no further reinforcements should be sent.
- Q. By latter '43 it was decided not to send to WEWAK?
- A. Yes, that is right. The line within which we must defend was fixed up around a point just East of HOLLANDIA, and to the region west of that line they were going to send reinforcements, but not to any point East.
- Q. That was in late 1943?
- A. Yes, and it includes HOLLANDIA; we were going to reinforce HOLLANDIA. I believe I stated to Admiral OFSTIE yesterday that those forces would take care of themselves.
- Q. How effective were those anti-shipping operations run by the B-17s and B-24s from this area to interdict the Port of RABAU and also to intercept the airfield attacks we made? How did that affect your decision not to reinforce that area? We were running a series of B-17 and B-24 operations occasionally affecting the shipping into RABAU--how effective were they?
- A. Yes, the activities of your B-17s and -24s from the land bases to the south hit us very heavily; however, more on shipping than on land bases.
- Q. It was on shipping? That was the primary attack. . . .

NEW SUBJECT:

Q. By the time we were effecting our landing at LEYTE, how many aircraft carriers did the Japanese Navy have--totally equipped and operational, ready to fight with their full air complement?

A. I was in the INLAND SEA at the time with the air fleet. There were eight carriers in all, but only four fully equipped for operation.

Q. Were any of those carriers moved down with this LEYTE operation, moved down and assigned to the fleet?

A. Admiral OZAWA brought three of his carriers--I'm not absolutely certain about this number, but I think it was three--about the 25th for attacks against your air force here. That was the same day that Admiral KURITA came with his fleet from the SINGAPORE region.

Q. The fleet coming from SINGAPORE had no aircraft carriers?

A. No.

Q. Was this air carrier task force married up with any of the other fleet elements?

A. Yes, I believe there were a few cruisers and a few destroyers, but we did not call that group by itself a task force--we called the combination of Admiral KURITA's fleet plus this group the task force.

Q. Did those carriers get into this battle of LEYTE GULF? What was their role? What did they actually perform in the sea battle, the naval battle?

A. Off LEYTE?

Q. Yes; when we were bringing up these forces, apparently the Japanese Navy was committed to an all-out battle. Where did the carriers come into this battle; what role did they play?

A. The planes took off from the carriers and attacked your task force in this region; then, after the attack I believe that the majority went back to TAIWAN instead of back to the carriers.

Q. I take it then that the fleet action, the one that came from the South--then we understood there was one that came almost straight from the West in toward LEYTE--they had no carrier-based aircraft to support their movement, their operations?

A. That's correct. Admiral KURITA was counting heavily on the land-based air force, but actually got very little support.

Q. Had any of that land-based air--I understand it was composed of both Naval air and Army air--had any of that been trained to support a fleet action, particularly the Naval air?

A. The Army of course had no training of that kind, and the Navy also virtually none. The planes which had been there from the beginning were practically gone by that time, and new ones had been rushed down from the North, and they had had no training of any kind for cooperative action.

Q. None of the Naval echelon there had had any carrier-based training or experience at all?

A. Yes, perhaps a few had had experiences, but the number of experienced pilots, highly trained pilots, was extremely small; only a very few, for instance, could distinguish between the various types of surface vessels.

- Q. Was there an evaluation placed on the capability of this land-based air to rendezvous with a fleet at this time? I am wondering if, preceding the decision to launch an all-out naval attack in this area, the limited capabilities of that land-based aviation, both Army and Navy, was measured and evaluated in considering that problem and arriving at a decision to commit the fleet?
- A. Yes, that was taken into consideration in making that decision, but there was nothing else we could do; there was nothing else we could bring to take their place.
- Q. How high--if you can express it in those terms--a degree of probability did you give to those air forces, then based in the PHILIPPINES area, to give effective air support to operations in these restricted waters? Did you give them much value or did you just expect little or no support from them?
- A. The fact is that we counted on considerable assistance from the land-based air force. At the time there were about 180 planes there. On October 22 I left TAIWAN with practically all of my air fleet there, numbering about 450 planes, and arrived there Oct 23. The manner of cooperation was not so much to protect Admiral KURITA's fleet coming through this strait as to strike blows against the two task forces that were there and drive them back with losses. We hardly anticipated that we could destroy the task forces, but we could inflict sufficient damage on them to drive them back. The actual use of the planes however did not come up to our expectations.
- Q. Why did they, after this 25th of October sortie--the carrier-based aircraft--go to TAIWAN instead of going back to the carriers?
- A. I do not know whether the planes had been ordered by the carriers not to come back but believe that the reason was, that while the planes were attacking your task force our carriers were being attacked by yours, with the result that our carriers had drawn further north. Probably the distance to TAIWAN was less than the distance to the carriers which had moved north. I recall that a few planes came to the northern tip of LUZON.
- Q. Does the Admiral know where the carriers actually went following this engagement? Where did they finish up?
- A. In time they came back to their base.
- Q. Was there an effort made to accelerate the movement of these carrier-based aircraft down to the PHILIPPINES from FORMOSA to support the battle of LEYTE GULF, the carrier-based aircraft that had landed on land instead of their carriers?
- A. That is exactly what happened with the majority of those that did come to TAIWAN and LUZON. The total number however that went there instead of back to the carriers was between 50 and 60. I think that practically all of them were sent down.
- Q. I wonder--you were down there commanding an air fleet at that time: What assignment did you give to those? You see, these were experienced aircraft carrier crews--were they assigned to rendezvous and give close support to the surface fleets?
- A. They were all fighters. When they came down they were ordered to join the fighter formation that was already at LEYTE.
- Q. That formation was not apparently covering the fleet, or did they assume that it was--it was already covering the fleet and they just augmented that fleet coverage?

- A. Yes, they joined with the local fighter units in all the operations. The cooperation with this fleet was of a very short duration because the fleet came through, then went right back again. After protecting them they engaged in operations independent of our fleet.
- Q. Yesterday I got the impression that the Admiral felt that carrier-based aircraft had capability for more sustained operations than land-based aircraft. Did I understand correctly?
- A. Aircraft carrier planes were more effective because they were able to hit and come back. They were able to strike more often than land-based aviation.
- Q. I wanted a value of what you mean by this: Do you mean over a period of one day or one week or a month?
- A. By sustained operations you mean continued attacks in the course of one flight?
- Q. Not exactly one flight, but whether you mean continued attacks in one day, one week, one month? I want to know how you measure that in terms of time?
- A. I wonder if you haven't in mind a statement I made regarding the superiority of carrier-based planes because of the difference in training of the pilots, that it takes at least six months to get pilots ready for carrier planes whereas three months would suffice for land-based pilots. Because of the longer period their all-around ability is higher, and for that reason then it could be said that they could be employed more effectively than land-based planes because of their training.
- Q. The matter of capability--sortie capability, attack capability--over an extended period of time: Would you consider that carrier-based aviation would be able to conduct more flights over a period of time--say over a month--than land-based aviation?
- A. At least from the standpoint of my experience I would not say that carrier-based planes could be used more frequently within a given period than land-based planes, but even if used no more in point of number we would get more results because of their higher training.
- Q. Would you feel that carrier-based aviation would be able to conduct an equivalent amount of sustained operations with land-based aviation?
- A. Yes, in a certain position the carrier-based planes, I believe, can make as many.
- Q. What effect do you think the requirement for going back to a port of base to get replenished on supplies would have in sustaining the operational capabilities--the requirement that the carriers go back and resupply?
- A. There is a serious misunderstanding of your question: I thought that the number of flights meant, number of flights from land bases in those cases, having in mind the situation down in the SOUTHERN AREA where carrier planes were sent down and land-based. If those planes are operated from the carrier, certainly they can be used more frequently. I think that, in case of a land-based plane, two attacks in a day is maximum.
- Q. Does that have anything to do with the range of the target for the land-based?
- A. Yes, the distance has some relation to it, but in most cases the land-based planes go farther to get to their target, and consequently twice in a day is the maximum.
- Q. You maybe mean they go far enough out to not do two missions, then they would only do one; range then would be a consideration. Is that what the Admiral means?

A.. That is an important factor because in attacking here (Note: Indicating LUZON) from TAIWAN, one would be the most possible in one day, whereas two could be made from LUZON to any targets here (Note: Indicating SOUTHERN AREA), but another factor is that maintenance equipment on a warrior is far superior to that you can get on land bases.

Q. They did not have any equipment for reserivcing on their land bases that compared to their carriers?

A. Yes, that is true, principally because of the difficulty of supply.

Q. Now, I'd still like to know, in the matter of a sustained operation, how much the sustained operation would be affected by the carrier going back and restocking with gasoline, ammunition, supplies, before they can renew active combat. How much does that affect the capability of a carrier to sustain operations, their requirement for taking the carrier as a base--as an airfield--back to a base for restocking, resupplying? Do you mean during the period of supplies that you have aboard the carrier, or do you consider that that would hold over an extended period--to include the resupplying of a carrier?

A. Yes, it goes without saying that that holds only for a limited period, during which the carrier can operate without refueling. The reverse might be the situation if you take into consideration the return to a distant base.

#### NEW SUBJECT

Q. I was wondering if the Admiral was acquainted by briefing or otherwise with the REPULSE and the PRINCE OF WALES? What were the types of aircraft that the Japanese used against those two targets and the technique of their attack?

A. The type of aircraft were CHUKOs (Medium Attack Planes).

(Note: The discussion now broke up into a discourse of war operations in general. At its conclusion Admiral FUKUDOME was asked if he had anything to say regarding the Japanese views of the war.)

Admr FUKUDOME: I don't like to say to you that we undertook this war in expectation of losing. The situation was this, that there was general agreement in the upper levels of the Navy that this war could be continued only two or three years. At the last meeting of the SUPREME WAR GUIDANCE COUNCIL, Admiral NAGANO, then Chief of Naval Operations, submitted the figure, two years, for which the war could be waged. The Deputy Chief of Staff held the opinion that it could be continued for two and one-half years, and the figure which Admiral TOYODA himself gave, as the result of study of the various materials made by his subordinates, was three years.

My personal reason for taking three years as the maximum period was that, in that time from a standpoint of material we would come to the end of the rope, especially in such matters as heavy oil, gasoline, lubrication oil, steel, special metals, ships, machine tools, etc. There were some who argued that the raw materials which we would get from the occupied area in the South would remove that difficulty and enable us to stretch the war to a much longer period. That might have been possible if the transportation of the material from the South could have been carried out under peace conditions, but we faced the necessity of first capturing, getting control of, these areas, then of shipping them to JAPAN under war conditions. Then, on the side of operations, the losses we would suffer as a result of the operations.

In the first stage, things would go smoothly enough without any serious loss to naval vessels, but the losses would gain with the second period which was that of opposition. We estimated that there would be three big fleet engagements per year with perhaps few minor engagements in



between, and the total loss to be estimated from all of those engagements in a year was 30%, of which we expected to be able to replace 10%—I am speaking now of surface vessels—resulting in a net loss or reduction of 20% per year, so that at the end of three years we would have suffered a total net loss of more than one-half of the total strength of the surface units of the fleet, and with such a weakened force, continuation of the war would become impossible.

Now the reason for the Deputy Chief of Staff contending that we could hold out for two and one-half years was based on somewhat different figures as regards surface units. He estimated we would suffer a loss of one million tons per year of which one-half could be replaced by new construction, resulting in a net loss of one-half million tons, but loss of tonnage would be accompanied by even a greater loss in total fighting power of the Navy, i.e., the loss of ships was not an exact or accurate measure of the actual loss in Navy's fighting power. Exactly what that figure was I do not know—whether it was 700,000 or 800,000 or what—and that was his reason for saying we could hold out for two and one-half years. Admiral NAGANO however took two years to be the figure that we could hold out.

Coming back to my reason for disagreeing with you, General, is: That, it is so obvious that we could not hold out indefinitely or for any long period of time. We had to adopt some measure to gain time, and we felt that by operating in this very broad war zone we could gain time within which time we strove to get one decisive victory over your fleet, and it was our intention to bring about that decisive victory at as early a period as possible.

- Q. One more question: Does the Admiral feel that this evaluation, this ability to endure over a fixed period of time as a result of fleet attrition would have held approximately the same had he selected the more contracted defense line and restricted the freedom with which decisive fleet action would take place—unless that fleet action be under more favorable circumstances—to the restricted waters, defended waters, of the Japanese Main Fleet? You see, you said that in this strategic concept, fleet elements would be lost at a certain rate and be replaced at a certain rate. Would that same formula hold if you had operated within that more contracted area?
- A. I doubt whether any appreciable difference would have resulted in the attrition on our side by restriction of our line to the more compact area that you have in mind because, as I stated in an earlier answer, you could have gained one base after another to come very close up to that compact line virtually without opposition. Of course the occupation of RABEUL and MIDWAY was in pursuance of fleet suggestions: The NAVAL GENERAL STAFF favoring from the beginning the area in which the Navy had always held in mind, namely, within the MARSHALLS and the EAST CAROLINES.
- Q. You do not feel that fleet attrition could have been kept much lower if it was kept behind these land masses and had concentrated the air that the Japanese would build into these land masses, the fleet action to take place within the interior of that line?
- A. You mean, not let the fleet get out into the Pacific at all?
- Q. No, not let the fleet out into the Pacific at all; it had to take advantage of these land masses in depth, guarding their actions, declining decisive fleet action?
- A. That's possible.
- Q. What I'm wondering is, whether or not—as I tried to get earlier—you carried through an evaluation of this: How fast would the fleet attrit if it were kept on interior lines to defend this final line rather than to defend successive lines, putting the mass of the military resources into the line that has land mass and not the line that is composed mostly of coral reefs?
- A. In that case I wonder whether it might not have become even more difficult for us to carry the raw materials from the South/

Q. I was wondering what evaluation you put on it. You said the Army defended this plan. What evaluation did the Army put on protecting one lane of ships rather than protecting literally scores of lanes of shipping: All your military strength defending one, not defending 40 or 50?

A.. The reason for the Army favoring the more compact war zone appears to have been optimistic views that all we needed to do was to get hold of the raw materials area; didn't go to the extent of thinking in terms of how it should be defended.

Q. They were not thinking in terms of defensive depth--one as to a Continent and large land mass, the other as a defensive depth of small land masses without great mutual support? I thought that the Army would put a value on that?

A. I do not know that they had put a value on establishing that; perhaps the fact that we couldn't adopt more than one plan at a time was all there was to it.

Q. This one, you put a value on it; after a given time you would have lost the war. How long did you figure you could hold this (inner line) before you would have lost the war? You put a time value on this (outer defenses); did you put a time value on this (inner defenses)?

A. The figures given for the naval attrition of fleet surface units, given in respect to the broader area, was based on the capabilities of supplies from the south. Now whether, under more restricted conditions, war could have been continued in a longer period, I have some doubt. I think that it wouldn't have made much difference as to the ultimate result.

Q. So far as making a detailed evaluation of the two places, it was not made?

A. No, it was never made.

END OF INTERROGATION