

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

INTERROGATION NO. (USSBS 169)
NAV NO. 40

Place: Tokyo
Date: 26 October 1945

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: NON-COMBAT LOSSES OF AIRCRAFT.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Captain KANAI, K., IJN. Head of the first section of the first department of the KOKU HONBU from 1941 to 1943; and head of general affairs of the Southeast Air Depot of the 11th Air Fleet, RABAU from 1943 to 1944; head of the supply department of the KISERAZU Depot from 1944 to 1945.

Where interviewed: MEIJI Building.

Interrogator: Lieut. Robert C. Garred, USNR.

Interpreter: Lt. (jg) R.P. Brown, USNR.

Allied Officers Present: None.

SUMMARY

Replacement aircraft to tactical units in the RABAU area were first allocated by KOKU HONBU and then either air ferried or surface transported, depending upon the range of the aircraft involved. Aircraft losses in supplying the southeast area were from 2 to 5 percent during 1942 and increased considerably during 1943 due to a lack of experienced pilots. On the route between the EMPIRE and RABAU, most losses were incurred between TRUK and RABAU.

The air ferry route between HONSHU and RABAU was kept open until the U.S. carrier attack on TRUK February 16-17, 1944. After that time, no attempts were made to supply RABAU with replacement aircraft.

TRANSCRIPT

Transcript of Interrogation (Captain KANAI, K., IJN)

Q. In 1942, was it your job to arrange for the transfer of Naval aircraft from depots to tactical units?

A. Yes, that is correct.

Q. Can you estimate the losses incurred of aircraft being ferried to tactical units overseas?

A. About 2 to 5 percent of the aircraft were lost.

Q. What caused these losses?

A. Crash landings, bad weather, navigational errors and mechanical failures.

Q. Were CVs used to transport aircraft to the SOUTHEAST PACIFIC Area?

A. Toward the end of 1942 a few of the older carriers were used to transport aircraft from the EMPIRE to TRUK. I can remember the names of a few of the carriers, the KASUGA MARU (50 A/C), the CHUYO (50-60 A/C) and the UNYO (50-60 A/C).

Q. Was the lack of range of the smaller planes the reason for using carriers for the transportation of aircraft to TRUK?

A. No, the principle reason was the lack of experienced pilots for ferrying purposes. We had enough pilots available to fly the planes from TRUK to RABAUL, but not enough to air ferry replacement aircraft from YOKOSUKA to TRUK.

Q. Did the percentage of losses in the transportation of aircraft increase or decrease in 1943?

A. Our losses increased due to the depreciation in our pilot's flying ability.

Q. What caused this depreciation?

A. Our training program was accelerated to the extent that our pilots were not adequately trained.

Q. What was the reason for accelerating the training program?

A. We needed more pilots. It is my opinion that combat losses in the SOLOMONS plus losses from malaria were the main reason for speeding up the program.

Q. In general, what were the problems that you encountered in supplying tactical units with replacement aircraft?

A. Our single-engine aircraft had a limited range and it was difficult to route them over long over-water stretches. Carriers were satisfactory, but we didn't have enough available to carry all our replacements. I think the main trouble I had was in finding experienced ferry pilots. We did not have enough in the EMPIRE.

Q. What percentage of aircraft were air ferried and what percentage carrier transported?

A. 50% each way. The carriers carried fighter aircraft.

Q. You were in RABAUL in 1944, what is your estimate of the losses in ferrying aircraft to RABAUL from TRUK during your tour of duty there?

A. About 5% due to navigational errors, crash landings and bad weather.

Q. In early 1944, after Allied forces had advanced along the SOLOMONS chain to BOUGAINVILLE, were aircraft re-routed, or still ferried direct from TRUK to RABAUL?

A. As a result of the American carrier attack on TRUK, all air ferrying to RABAUL from TRUK ceased on the 20th of February. Up until then, we flew direct from YOKOSUKA to RABAUL, via SAIPAN.