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U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey Interrogation Reports  
 Battle of the Coral Sea. Wake Island Operations, etc.

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

INTERROGATION NO. (USBS NO. 46)  
NAV NO. 8

Place: Tokyo  
Date: 17 Oct. 1945; 1030-1200

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division

Subject: CORAL SEA BATTLE, 7 - 8 May 1942

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Commander SEKINO, H., IJN, 20 years in Navy.  
Communication Officer, Staff, 6th Cruiser Squadron at CORAL SEA.  
Commander OKUMIYA, Masatake, IJN. Staff, Second Flying Squadron.  
Both officers currently members of General Staff.

Where interviewed: I.J.N., Staff College.

Interrogator: Captain C. (n) Shands, USN.

Interpreter: Lieut. Comdr. Donald (n) Bartlett, USNR.

SUMMARY

(1) 7 May 1942 a Japanese Convoy proceeding through CORAL SEA to attack and occupy PORT MORESEY was turned back by U. S. Carrier Force. Japanese (CV) SHONO was sunk by U. S. Carrier planes. SHOKAKU was damaged and unable to reinforce CV Task Group at MIDWAY. Due to damage received in this battle, plans for occupation of PORT MORESEY by sea were abandoned, resulting in forcing Jap Army to attempt occupation over OWEN STANLEY MOUNTAINS from BUNU. Composition of Jap Task Force at CORAL SEA.

(2) RUYUJO (CV) sunk in the Battle of EASTERN SOLOMONS, 23 August by U. S. Carrier planes, removing air protection for convoy bound for reinforcement of JAP Forces on GUADALCANAL. B-17 sank an old destroyer.

(3) The HYEI and HARUNA exchanged position at MIDWAY the day before the main battle. HARUNA, with carrier force, received no damage until 1945 at KURE by Navy dive bombers.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Comdr. SEKINO, H., IJN & Comdr. OKUMURA, M., IJN)

TRANSCRIPT

CORAL SEA

Q. What was the mission of the SHOHO's Task Force in the CORAL SEA area, 7 - 8 May 1942?

A. To support the force that planned to capture PORT MORESBY. The SHOHO's mission in the Japanese formation was exclusively to guard transports in Occupation Force against submarines and air raids and not to deliver attack. The SHOHO was in the Fourth Carrier Division.

Q. Why didn't that force continue on to PORT MORESBY?

A. Because we couldn't completely destroy the American Task Force. Our carrier based planes were of little use because of the shortage of fuel on board. Although most of your carriers were all about sunk or badly damaged, the remaining surface craft were not damaged. We were not strong enough to try occupation. The main force of our fleet had just completed an operation in the INDIAN OCEAN at CEYLON and returned to JAPAN. Just a small group was left in the CORAL SEA AREA.

Q. What ships were present in the CORAL SEA BATTLE?

A.

MORESBY TASK FORCE

SHOKAKU (CV)  
ZUIKAKU (CV)

MYOKO  
HAGURO and about seven destroyers

DIRECT SUPPORT FORCE

SHOHO (CVE)  
ADBA (CA)

KINUGASA  
KAKO  
FURUTAKA and one destroyer

MORESBY OCCUPATION FORCE

YUBARI, about 6 destroyers and 5 transports.

SEAPLANE TENDER GROUP

KIKOKAWA-MARU  
KENRYU

TATSUTA

On 7 May, the day when SHOHO came under American attack, Japan's scout planes made wrong identification and directed the attack of the SHOKAKU and ZUIKAKU planes to American tankers instead of American carriers, thereby seriously up-setting the entire succeeding battle tactics of the Japanese Task Force. After dropping their bombs on the American tankers, the ZUIKAKU and SHOHO planes were returning to their carriers when they saw the American Carrier Force. Unfortunately they didn't have any bombs to attack. Some planes mistook the American carriers and attempted to land on board. This was at night. It was then reported American Task Force about 30 miles south of Japanese Task Force.

Q. Why didn't you make a night attack?

A. I am not sure. There was some talk but we received orders to go north.

Q. Do you know how many hits were made on the SHOHO?

A. I think about nine bombs and about four torpedoes. The first bombs broke the steering gear and she couldn't navigate.

Q. Were torpedo hits made with the first attack group?

A. No, only the second group made any hits. When the second wave attacked they made about 9 bomb and 4 torpedo hits.

Q. Did the SHOHO sink as a result of the bombs and torpedoes?

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Cdr. SEKINO, H., IJN & Cdr. OKUMIYA, M., IJN)

- A. About five minutes after the first hit was made she capsized. It was not necessary for destroyer to sink it.
- Q. About how many personnel lost?
- A. About 500 lost out of 1200.
- Q. Were the planes aboard the SHOHO when it was hit?
- A. No, very few. Most landed on other carriers, some landed on a small island in the LOUISIANE Group near a seaplane tender.
- Q. Were those pilots recovered?
- A. Yes, they were recovered by the seaplane tender.
- Q. How many planes were lost?
- A. About 21 planes were lost.
- Q. Was the SHOKAKU hit?
- A. Hit by two bombs only. No torpedoes hit. Dropped too far away, easily dodged.
- Q. Was the ZUIKAKU hit?
- A. No, no damage received.
- Q. How much time was required to repair the SHOKAKU?
- A. Somewhere between one and a half to two months.
- Q. Were any planes aboard the SHOKAKU when it was hit?
- A. About a dozen. No damage. Only bow of flight deck damaged. Some damage to repair room in stern but some planes landed after bombs hit.
- Q. What effect did the battle have on the current plan for attacking PORT MORESEY and future plans?
- A. The damage to the SHOKAKU prevented her from being used in the Battle of MIDWAY operation as was planned. The damage to the two carriers SHOHO and SHOKAKU was a serious set-back to the operations for the occupation of PORT MORESEY. Due to the delay of operations in that area and American occupation of GUADALCANAL, it was finally necessary to give up the plan for the occupation of PORT MORESEY by sea, forcing the Army to try to occupy by land from BUIN.
- Q. Was the MOGAMI attacked also?
- A. Yes, but received no great damage.
- Q. Were any light cruisers damaged there, or large destroyers?
- A. No.
- Battle of the EASTERN SOLOMONS
- Q. In the Battle of the EASTERN SOLOMONS on the 23 August 1942, what was the position of the RYUJO?
- A. It was near BRADLEY REEFS, 141° 7' E, 161° 0' E. The ZUIKAKU and SHOKAKU were there too, but separated into a different unit about 90 or 100 miles to the north and east.
- Q. Was the RYUJO sunk?
- A. Yes, sunk very quickly on the 24th.

Q. Do you know how many hits it received?

A. I heard at least ten bombs and torpedoes. The bombs from dive bombers.

Q. Were any hits made by horizontal bombers?

A. Not a single hit.

Q. Were other ships hit there?

A. No battleships or cruisers were hit. However, on the 25th in mid-morning a destroyer which was escorting transports to GUADALCANAL from RABAU in a separate force north of GUADALCANAL, was hit and sunk in the forenoon by B-17s. This was an old type destroyer which was standing by the KIKOKAMA-MARU. The transport had been attacked by dive bombers from GUADALCANAL and was damaged. The escort was standing by. The escort saw the high bombers coming but did not worry and did not get underway. I talked to the Commanding Officer, Commander HATANO, afterward. He was surprised that he was hit, because this was the first ship known to have been hit by horizontal bombers in the war. Commander HATANO was my classmate at Etajima and said, "Even the B-17s could make a hit once in awhile".

Q. Were any ME-109s employed in the SOLOMON Area?

A. No. Only one Messerschmitt Fighter 109 was brought from Germany. It was used for test. It may be confused with carrier borne 2 seater reconnaissance bomber.

Q. Did you have radar at CORAL SEA Battle?

A. Not on cruisers. Maybe carriers had it but do not think so.

Interrogator: I would like to verify the following information:

Q. What battleships were present with the First Air Fleet on the day of the Battle of MIDWAY?

A. KIRISHIMA and HARUNA. The HYEI started out with this fleet, but exchanged position with the HARUNA just before the day of the battle. The HYEI joined the Main Body and the HARUNA joined the Carrier Force.

Q. Has the HARUNA been damaged?

A. It was damaged at KURE by dive bombers this year. It has never been damaged before.

Q. What was the plan of action for the cruisers the night of 4 June at MIDWAY?

A. On the evening of 4 June Japanese Carrier Group had been heavily damaged. The Seventh Cruiser Squadron was ordered at full speed to bombard the airfield at MIDWAY. On the way, appearance of submarines was reported, so they made emergency evasive turn resulting in collision between MIKUMA and MOGAMI. The MIKUMA bow was most seriously damaged and was difficult to steer, but it followed the MOGAMI for protection. Due to loss of speed and ability to steer, the next morning the MIKUMA was attacked and sunk by American dive bomber planes.

Q. Were any radars used at the Battle of MIDWAY?

A. Not sure. The battleships ISE and HYUGA had them about that time.

Q. In the night battle of SAVO ISLAND, did you have radar that night?

A. No, visual fire control was used on that night - 8 August.

Q. In the Battle of SANTA CRUZ, 26 October 1942, how early did you have information of our carrier force?

A. TONE and TERUTSUKI were scouting from position approximately 167.5°E and 7°S. The patrol planes from the GILBERTS discovered American ships from HEBRIDES and sent word to Japanese cruisers by radio about 4 or 5 days before the battle. When these ships received word, they returned to Main Body north of the SOLOMONS.

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

INTERROGATION NO. (USSES NO. 53) Place: Tokyo  
NAV NO. 10 Date: 19 Oct. 1945; 0930-1215

Division of Origin: Naval Analysis Division.

Subject: SAGAMI ISLAND OPERATION and Battle of CORAL SEA.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Captain YAMAOKA, M., IJN, on operation staff 5th Air Flotilla at Battle of CORAL SEA, 7 - 8 May 1942. Later served on staff of 2nd Air Flotilla and instructor at IJN Staff College. Currently on duty at IJNavy Department - 26 years Naval Service.

Where interviewed: MEIJI Building, Room 749.

Interrogator: Captain C. Shands, U. S. Navy.

Interpreter: Lieutenant R. P. Brown, and Lieutenant OGI, H., IJN.

SUMMARY

(a) Two task units in CORAL SEA, 7-8 May. SHOKO (sunk) Unit consisted of transports to occupy PORT MORESBY. SHOKAKU (damaged) and ZUIKAKU, were to support operations, intercept American ships and to attack TOWNSVILLE, AUSTRALIA, where U.S. planes and Army were being disembarked. Interception by U.S. Carrier Task Force thwarted plans which were later abandoned. Resultant damage to Jap CV's weakened air strength at MIDWAY, contributing to annihilation of Jap Carrier Force and failure to capture MIDWAY, 4-6 June 1942.

(b) Tribute to Marines at WAKE, December 1942.

(c) Admiral YAMAMOTO shot down and killed in airplane enroute BUI.

(d) Japanese started night carrier operation about 1933.

Captain YAMAOKA, M., IJN, on operation staff 5th Air Flotilla at Battle of CORAL SEA, 7 - 8 May 1942. Later served on staff of 2nd Air Flotilla and instructor at IJN Staff College. Currently on duty at IJNavy Department - 26 years Naval Service.

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(b) Tribute to Marines at WAKE, December 1942.

(c) Admiral YAMAMOTO shot down and killed in airplane enroute BUI.

TRANSCRIPT

- Q. What was your assignment at the Battle of the CORAL SEA, 7-8 May 1942?
- A. I was Executive Officer of the HIRYU but left in February 1942. At the time of the CORAL SEA Battle, I was Staff Officer of the 5th Air Flotilla.
- Q. Were you in the SOLOMON area during the Battle of CORAL SEA, 7-8 May 1942.
- A. Yes, I was on the ZUIKAKU, which was the flag ship.
- Q. What was the mission of the SHOKO?
- A. The mission of the SHOKO was first to defend the transport ships in it's Task Force going to PORT MORESEY, and secondly to scout for submarines.
- Q. At what distance were the anti-submarine patrols maintained?
- A. About 15 miles.
- Q. What type of planes were used for anti-submarine patrol?
- A. Zero Fighter - type 97. Torpedo planes were used for scouting at the same time.
- Q. About how many planes did the SHOKO carry?
- A. 12 Zero Fighters and about 9 to 12 torpedo planes. The SHOKO isn't a main aircraft carrier.
- Q. Were any land based planes employed in this action?
- A. Yes, RABOUL based planes. It was the 25th LAND BASE AIR FLOTILLA 50 to 60 fighters, Zero type, 30 to 40 bomber planes. They attacked cruisers.
- Q. Were any planes stationed at MUNDIA?
- A. No, not until later.
- Q. Were any planes operated from TULAGI?
- A. Yes, TULAGI was prepared as a seaplane base for operation against PORT MORESEY. DEBOINE and TULAGI are the seaplane bases which were used against PORT MORESEY.
- Q. What was the mission of the SHOKAKU and ZUIKAKU and their task force?
- A. The missions of those two aircraft carriers was; first to defend the PORT MORESEY attacking group. The second mission was to attack the American Fleet which was expected to appear on the scene; and the third, to make an air raid on TOWNSVILLE and to destroy American and Australian planes and ships that were being delivered there.
- Q. When did you first receive information regarding the location of our American Force?
- A. On the 4th of May, TULAGI was attacked by your planes.
- Q. Were you at TULAGI at the time?
- A. No, I was to the North of TULAGI with the Sixth Squadron, which was composed of the SHOKAKU, ZUIKAKU, NOKO, NAGURO, seven destroyers and one tanker.
- Q. Do you know what damage was incurred at TULAGI?
- A. I am not certain, I heard that several small torpedo boats were damaged and sunk - one destroyer and one minelayer received mediocre damage. No seaplane tender present. The damaged destroyer was beached and then later swept out by the tide and sunk. (Name: KIKUZUMI)

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Captain YAMAKA, M. J. IJN) -----

- Q. Do you know if any planes were destroyed?
- A. Two or three sea planes were damaged.
- Q. Was the minelayer sunk or damaged?
- A. It was damaged by near misses and one hit. It sailed to SHORTLAND where it was repaired.
- Q. How did you first know the location of the American Force?
- A. Following the attack on TULAGI we knew the force was in the general area, but the exact location wasn't known, but it was expected that American carriers, battleships and possibly some British Forces were in the CORAL SEA. After our attack on the tanker and destroyer the morning of the 7th June and your attack on SHONO, about 4PM we sent out a dusk attack of about 27 bombers and torpedo planes to attack the American Carrier Force. They did not find it although searched for almost 300 miles. Finally they jettisoned their bombs and torpedoes and returned to their own carriers. While returning they passed over the American Carrier Force at night. Some planes mistook the American Force for the Japanese carriers, turned on their lights and tried to land before they realized their mistake. Then all planes returned to the Japanese carriers. About ten planes were lost during this flight.
- Q. Why did you attack our tanker and destroyer, instead of our carrier force during the morning of 7 June?
- A. Our scouting planes from the SHOKAKU and ZUIKAKU erroneously reported the tanker group as the American carrier group, therefore the Japanese carrier planes attacked them instead of the American carriers.
- Q. Did you have radar at that time?
- A. No.
- Q. Do you know how close the two forces were that night?
- A. I thought that they were about 40 miles north of our force and did not want to have a night action, therefore retired to the North, intending to attack your force in the morning. I wanted to attack your force that night but we did not know how many ships you had so it was decided not to attack until morning.
- Q. Have your pilots been trained to land on the carriers at night?
- A. Yes, about 2/3 of all pilots were thoroughly trained at night.
- Q. When did you first start night carrier operation?
- A. About 1933.
- Q. Was one carrier used for night operation or did you have pilots on each carrier?
- A. Each carrier had a few night pilots at first, then increased. About 2/3 of all pilots on each carrier were thoroughly trained in night carrier operation. About 1/3 were familiar but not so well trained.
- Q. How did you land at night, did you have lights on deck?
- A. We used a green and red light which were lined up for a flight path to come aboard. We also used a signalman.
- Q. Did he control the speed during the landing?
- A. No, after a night battle, only signal used was that the pilot was O.K. and should land or that he was not O.K., and should be waved off in which case he made another approach.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Captain YAMAOKA, M., IJN) \_\_\_\_\_

During the training more signals were used to indicate speed and altitude. These signals were given by blinker guns at night.

Q. Did you have many accidents during these operations?

A. They had no accidents.

Q. Were any accidents incurred in training?

A. Thorough basic training was given at night on land, therefore, we had very few accidents in night landings aboard ship.

Q. How was the SHOKO sunk?

A. Damaged by dive bombers but sunk by torpedoes. It capsized.

Q. Do you know how many hits were made?

A. Do not know exactly. More than five torpedoes hit and many bombs.

Q. Were many personnel lost?

A. About 200.

Q. About how many on board?

A. About 800.

Q. How were personnel rescued?

A. By destroyers and if they had had more destroyers more personnel would have been saved.

Q. Was the SHOKAKU hit?

A. About mid-morning on the 8th, two bombs hit, one well forward on the port bow; second, well aft on the starboard quarter. The first bomb forward set the gasoline afire and destroyed anchor windless room. The second bomb destroyed the air plane motor repair room. As result of the first hit, the flight deck was badly damaged and were unable to launch planes; however, they were able to land them aboard for following the bomb hits, four planes landed aboard and later the fire was put out.

Q. Where did the remaining planes go?

A. Some of them went to ZUIKAKU.

Q. Did any land at seaplane bases?

A. Two landed at seaplane base and the pilots recovered. Five or six planes made a force landing in the water near carrier. The pilots were recovered by destroyers.

Q. Was the ZUIKAKU attacked?

A. Yes, but no damage. Bombs missed, torpedoes launched far away, easily avoided.

Q. How about the torpedo attack on the SHOKAKU?

A. In the torpedo attack on both the ZUIKAKU and SHOKAKU, the torpedoes were launched at too great a range permitting both carriers to avoid them. Slow torpedoes and long range, could turn and run away from them.

Q. Following the damage, where did the carriers go for repairs?

A. SHOKAKU went to KURE for repair. The ZUIKAKU went to TRUK.

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Captain YAMAOKA, M., IJN) -----

- Q. About how many planes were lost in the entire operation?
- A. 30 planes and about 30 pilots and plane crew.
- Q. What effect did the losses in this battle have on current and future plans?
- A. They gave up the plan to attack PORT MORESBY by sea. The Army desired to take PORT MORESBY so attempted to capture by land from BUNA area. These carriers were to take part in MIDWAY occupation, but due to damage were unable to participate, this weakened their air striking force at MIDWAY, with loss of carrier force and failure to capture MIDWAY.
- Q. Were any Me-109's in that battle?
- A. No. No Messerschmitt planes in Japanese Navy.
- Q. Did you know how much damage was made on our carriers?
- A. More than six torpedoes hit on the LEXINGTON, more than eight bombs hit, two torpedoes hit the YORKTOWN.
- Q. Which type of attack did you most fear?
- A. Dive Bombing, because it is difficult to avoid.
- Q. Do you know anything about RABAU action, 19-22 February 1942?
- A. No.
- Q. The WAKE action in March 1942?
- A. No, but I am a little familiar with the capture of WAKE in 1941.
- Q. Were you present when the Japanese captured WAKE in December 1941?
- A. Not at the island. \* I was returning from the Pearl Harbor attack.
- Q. What forces were present at WAKE ISLAND?
- A. On the way home from HAWAII, 2 carriers were ordered to assist in the attack on WAKE ISLAND. I don't know what specific forces were in the WAKE ISLAND attack group. Our planes did not see them. We just bombed the island while enroute to JAPAN.
- Q. Do you know what ships were lost at WAKE?
- A. Two destroyers hit the reef and were subsequently dive bombed and shelled from the beach.
- Q. Was a light cruiser damaged or sunk?
- A. No damage, however, our Navy admires the ability and courage of the pilots and fighters that defended WAKE in the operation. The airplane pilots were very brave and skillful.
- Q. Were any military personnel lost during the landing at WAKE ISLAND?
- A. None of the Navy, but severe losses were suffered in the Navy Special Landing Force.
- Q. Did you expect an attack from us at WAKE in order to recapture the island?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What was the purpose of capturing WAKE?

TRANSCRIPT of Interrogation (Captain YAMAMOTO, M. IJN) -----

A. One, to seize it because it was held by the Americans and the other reason to use it for a base from which to scout and search that area.

Q. Did the American raids on WAKE ISLAND do any damage?

A. On the 6th and 7th October 1942 between 500 and 600 planes bombed WAKE. At the same time 10 cruisers and destroyers bombarded the island resulting in losses of more than 300 personnel. The installations above the ground were almost completely destroyed. (That I learned from a person who came back from WAKE.)

Q. How was admiral YAMAMOTO killed?

A. Shot down while flying in a two engine bomber to BUIN. Five or six of his staff officers including the Chief of Staff and the Chief Medical Officer of the fleet were killed at the same time.

Q. In the opinion of the Japanese pilots was there any difference in the American Army and Navy pilots or planes?

A. Both good. Generally, aircraft carrier pilots are more skillful. Army planes a little faster.