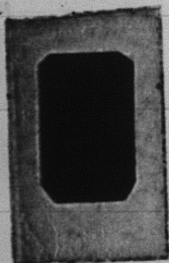


JAPANESE MONOGRAPH No. 90

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The "A-GO" Operations  
May - Jun. 1944



## PREFACE

Through Instruction No. 126 to Japanese Government, 12 Oct 45, entitled "Institution for war Records Investigation", steps were initiated to exploit military historical records and official reports of the Japanese War Ministry and the Japanese General Staff.\* Upon the dissolution of the War Ministry and the General Staff, and the transfer of their former functions to the Demobilization Bureau, the general research job continued and resulted in the development of a series of historical monographs. Detailed instructions covering the preparation of these monographs were included in memoranda 15 December 1945 and 21 November 1946, subject "Japanese Operational Histories".

The basic material contained in this operational record was developed by former officers, on duty in command and staff units within major units during the period of operations. It should be noted at once, that the enormous destruction by aerial bombardment and fire has practically wiped out the Tokyo records; much of this material was reconstructed from memory.

The paucity of original orders, plans and unit journals, which are normally essential in the preparation of this type of record, most of which were lost or destroyed during field operations or bombing raids rendered the task of compilation most difficult; particularly distressing has been the complete lack of official strength reports, normal in AG or G-3 records. However, while many of the important orders, plans and estimates have been reconstructed from memory and therefore are not textually identical with the originals, they are believed to be generally accurate and reliable. Further data as a result of continuing research and the occasional recovery of hitherto unavailable original documents will be covered in the subsequent publication of "supplements" by the Demobilization Bureau.

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\* The action under this memorandum and incidental detailed instructions, which followed, were initiated by the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, GHQ, charged with responsibility for execution of the program under G.O. No. 9, SCAP, 2 October 1945.

In order to protect the interest of the United States, in the exploitation of Japanese Military Information, sub-paragraph 4 of G.O. No. 9 further provided for the screening of enemy documents and established inventories in Japanese Governmental Archives. Careful examination of the first records submitted by the Japanese Government in the summer of 1946 detected a misconception on the part of the Japanese as to what should be included in comparative histories; in a memorandum issued by Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, on 21 November 1946, the Imperial Japanese Government was directed to record the operations of the Japanese forces more extensively. The G-2 Section thereafter assumed coordination of the entire program, including the establishment of a small historical research section within the ATIS (Allied Translator and Interpreter Section.)

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS  
FAR EAST COMMAND  
MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SECTION, GENERAL STAFF  
Allied Translator and Interpreter Section

Translation Requested by G-2 Historical Section

Date Rec'd ATIS 10 Oct 47

Description of Contents: Full translation of Operation "A", as directed by  
Imperial Naval General Headquarters.

(TN \* indicates an exact ROMAJI transliteration of the original KANA.)

Operation A

Operation A

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Chapter I. General Developments.

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## Operation A

Operation A was planned and executed, during the middle part of 1944, to discourage the enemy's plans for a counterattack by concentrating and deploying the greater part of the Combined Fleet's decisive strength along the main counterattack front and annihilating the enemy fleet with one blow.

## Part One. The Situation.

After the enemy began their counterattack, on August 1942, from the Solomon Front, a fight to the death was continued for a year and a half.

Although our navy, with the main strength of the Combined Fleet relatively dominated the enemy and inflicted great losses upon him, we also incurred many losses from among the elite of our air force and naval units.

In November of 1943 the difference between our air strength and that of the enemy became greater. As soon as the situation in that area became favorable to the enemy, they increasingly strengthened their offensive and also launched an attack on the GILBERT Islands.

We defied all risks in planning the destruction of the enemy force in the Solomon Area. Not only did we provide for the strengthening of base air units but, also, we increased the carrier-based air strength of the combined fleet in that area. For this reason, it was possible to slow down, to a certain degree, the speed of the enemy's assaults in this region. However, as for other areas, the enemy strengthened their counterattacks in the Marshall and New Guinea areas. Finally, on 1 Feb 45, (19 Feb 44?) they quickly launched an attack on KWAJALEIN Island, the central base of the MARSHALL Islands. Along with occupying this island, they furthermore attacked the BROWN Islands.

On 17 February, for the first time, we suffered a carrier-based raid on TRUK and the enemy threatened our rear line of operations in the Southeastern Area. Therefore, the Imperial Navy, in view of the overall situation, transferred the entire mobile air strength in the RABAU area to the rear during the latter part of February 1944, and the necessity for meeting the enemy's counterattack with a new plan was recognized.

During this period, an enemy task force carried out initial air raids on the islands of SAIPAN and TINIAN, on 23 February. They concurrently swarmed over the eastern portion of NEW GUINEA and occupied the ADMIRALTY Islands. The speed of the offensive from the two enemy fronts gradually increased and

the invasion of the inner South Pacific, defensively important to national protection, was merely a matter of days.

In accordance with the foregoing, from the middle part of February 1944, Imperial General Headquarters had the main force of the First Air Fleet, which had undergone organizational training as a unit directly supervised by Imperial General Headquarters since 1 July 43, successively proceed and wait at the inner South Pacific and PHILIPPINE Islands. Concurrently, they were made to co-operate with Combined Fleet operations, and this same fleet was integrated with the Combined Fleet on 15 March. The strength of base air units which were caused to retreat from RABAU were reorganized and stationed in the inner South Pacific Area. The main strength of the sea units of the Combined Fleet transferred it's advanced bases from TRUK to PALAU the first part of February (prior to the air raid on TRUK by the enemy task force). Combined Fleet Headquarters was also in the process of directing operations at PALAU.

In accordance with the critical conditions in the inner South Pacific Area and in order to fortify defensive conditions in the area, the 14 Air Fleet was newly formed on 4 April, with the majority of the air units of the 11 Air Fleet, then in the inner South Pacific Area, as its nucleus. On the same day this air fleet and the 4 Air Fleet formed the Central Pacific Area Fleet and was stationed on SAIPAN. Together with the army unit (32 Army) newly stationed in the same area under the operational command of the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet, they were entrusted with the defense of the inner South Pacific Area. During the period from 30 March to 1 April an enemy task force raided the PALAU Area, as well as TRUK, on 1 April, with one element of its strength. They again raided the HOLLANDIA Area on 3 April and finally began to land on HOLLANDIA, on 22 April.

During the period from 30 April to 1 May the enemy task force made a third raid on TRUK. In May, the enemy proceeded westward along the northern coast of NEW GUINEA and finally landed on BIAK Island on 27 May. Whether the Marianas Area, the Western Caroline Area, or the northwestern part of NEW GUINEA was to be the next invasion objective of the enemy was difficult to predict. Since the greater part of the sea units of the Combined Fleet, which had been laying in at PALAU from February 1944, suffered some damage at the time of the raid on

PALAU by the enemy task force, the majority were moved to SINGAPORE and the Lingayen Areas, while one element of damaged ships was sent back to JAPAN (While attempting to evade the air raid of 29 March, the MUSASHI, flagship of the Combined Fleet was anchored north of PALAU, at which point she was attacked and damaged by enemy submarines. She was sent back to Japan for repairs.)

As of April 1944 the Imperial Army and Navy were resisting the enemy in the inner South Pacific north of AUSTRALIA and in the South East Area, with units already in those areas. In general, they were equally matched with the enemy on the other fronts. During this time, the main force of the Imperial Navy surface units, in the Lingayen Anchorage of the Southwest Area, and one element in the western area of the Inland Sea were engaged in training and preparing for the next operation.

#### Part Two. The Progress of the Plan of Operation.

In view of the situation previously described and in order to safeguard the nation's defense by stopping the enemy's counterattack, Imperial General Headquarters, taking advantage of the reorganization of our surface task forces and base air units, made its pre-requisite the destruction of the enemy task force which was the nucleus of the counterattack, and whose main strength consisted of aircraft carriers. They had been awaiting a good opportunity for this and they saw their chance when the enemy launched its attacks in the Central Pacific - Philippines Area and the area north of AUSTRALIA (particularly the PALAU Area). By co-operating with the army and strengthening land defenses in those areas and by assembling the major part of the decisive strength of the Combined Fleet from other areas, they thought to force the enemy to a fight to the finish in those areas. On 3 May 44, the following orders were issued by Imperial General Headquarters, Navy Section, Order No 373.

Imperial General Headquarters, Navy Section, Order No 373, 3 May 44

By Commander-in-Chief of the Naval General Staff, SHIMADA, Shigetaro (嶋田繁太郎)  
Directed to TOYODA (豊田), Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet.

As for immediate operations, the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet

will, aside from following Imperial General Headquarters, Navy Section, Order No 209, "Operational policies to be followed by the Combined Fleet", take action according to "Policies to be taken by the Combined Fleet in the Immediate Operation", as per separate sheet.

Imperial General Headquarters, Navy Section, Order No 373, Separate Sheet.

Policies to be followed by the Combined Fleet in the Immediate operation.

1. By assembling the major part of our decisive strength and placing it along the enemy's main counterattack front, you will annihilate him with one blow and destroy his plan of counterattack. To this end, the following measures shall be taken:
  - a. You will immediately organize our decisive strength and plan to engage and annihilate the main strength of the enemy fleet contained in the area from the Central Pacific Area to the North Philippines and area north of AUSTRALIA, approximately after the latter part of May.
  - b. Before the aforementioned decisive strength is organized, the main object, aside from special cases, is to avoid a decisive battle.
2. The outline of operations in the area for the decisive battle is as follows:
  - a. You will await the preparations of the 1 Task Force and of the 1 Air Fleet, to be completed by the latter part of May, and instruct the 1 Task Force to wait in the south-central area of the PHILIPPINES. By deploying the 1 Air Fleet in the Central Pacific Area, the Philippine Area and the area north of AUSTRALIA, you will be in a state of readiness and, taking advantage of a good opportunity, will employ your entire strength, making particular use of the forces to their best advantage, to engage and annihilate the main force of the enemy.
  - b. The area for the decisive battle shall be selected as close as possible to the area in which our task forces are deployed.
3. The following operations shall be taken in the event the enemy attacks us before our decisive battle strength is readied.



a. Securing of strategic points and conditions:

Except when the situation is especially advantageous, decisive battles using surface forces shall be avoided. In the main, the enemy shall be diverted and annihilated by base-air forces and local-area defense forces. Specified strategic points will be separately indicated.

b. As pertains to the utilization of base-air strength in this event, you must foresee the changes in the general battle situation. In particular, except when our advantages are such that success is inevitable, we must plan our future decisive battles so as not to deplete our strength any more than necessary in order to be able to properly carry out the following decisive sea battle.

4. Operations in other areas during the period of the decisive battle will be as follows:

a. Maintaining close army-navy co-operation, the enemy offensive shall be diverted in general by forces on hand and they will secure designated strategic points according to previously-set policies, to the best of their abilities.

b. Surprise operations will be conducted as much as possible and steps will be taken to destroy the enemy's offensive spirit.

5. In preparing for decisive battle, the following points shall be especially observed:

a. A combined land and sea operation shall be planned to annihilate the enemy at one blow. With the objective of completing operational preparations around the latter part of May, the operational preparations in the area extending from the Central Pacific Area to the PHILIPPINES and the area north of AUSTRALIA, and especially in the West CAROLINE Islands, South-Central PHILIPPINES, the Halmahera Area and West New Guinea Area shall be hastened. At the same time, the defenses of the strategic points located in these areas shall be strengthened. In this manner an attempt shall be made to establish strategically advantageous positions in the area in which the battle is to be fought.

b. Priority must be given to preparations for air operations. Utmost

efforts must be put forth in the construction of bases and in defense preparations in the accumulating of required fuel and ammunition. In particular, emphasis must be placed on the construction of an impregnable air base.

- c. Disregarding existing regulations concerning the use of air bases, the Army and Navy must utilize all its bases to a maximum degree in order to fully execute combined Navy and Army air operations. Even where it concerns defense and the accumulation of fuel and ammunition, both organizations must act as one body.

6. This operation will be called Operation A.

### Part Three. Operations Directed by Imperial General Headquarters

Although the basic orders issued by Imperial General Headquarters concerning Operation A are as per the foregoing paragraphs, Imperial General Headquarters, in anticipation of enemy moves, has been steadily working beforehand, since the latter part of 1943, in organizing those units which were to be the foundation for the previously described operational policies. That is, the 1 Air Fleet, 1 Task Force, Central Pacific Area Fleet, and 14 Air Fleet were newly organized and previously existing surface units were strengthened.

Furthermore, in March 1944, and prior to Operation A, Imperial General Headquarters planned a surprise attack, Operation U, on MAJURO, the advance base of the main strength of the enemy's task force. This operation was unavoidably called to a halt, due to the disaster which befell the staff of the Combined Fleet while negotiations with Combined Fleet Headquarters were in progress.

The plan of Operation U was as follows:

1. Time: The first or middle part of May.
2. Strength Employed: Task Force and about 1,000 planes, the majority of base-air units, and an element of the advanced naval units.
3. Outline of the Operation:
  - a. The task force will attack MAJURO from northeast of the MARSHALL Islands, departing MITSUKAI Wan and passing OGASAWARA to the northeast, MARCUS Island, and north of WAKE Island.

- b. Base-Air Unit Bombers will operate with the MARCUS Islands and WAKE Island as their bases.
- c. Advanced forces: Five or six submarines will land four special tanks each, which will cross coral reefs and attack.

#### Chapter I. Organization of the 1 Air Fleet

In July 1943 the 11 Air Fleet was putting up a strong defense in the important battle area of the Solomons Front and was being used to bolster the front lines. At this time, with disregard for all difficulties, the 1 Air Fleet was being organized with the 11 Air Fleet as its nucleus, in anticipation of the coming decisive surface battle.

The 1 Air Fleet, (Commander, Vice Adm SUMIDA ( 角 田 )) was directly under the command of Imperial General Headquarters. The commander, staff officers, senior officers, and senior flight personnel were all highly skilled veterans of battle. The equipment of the fleet was modernized as much as possible.

Although, at first, the training period for this fleet was scheduled to be approximately one year, the enemy counterattack came sooner than was expected. Consequently, there was no alternative but to successively advance to the Inner South Pacific Area bases, beginning in the middle part of February 1944,

From the time of its organization, the 1 Air Fleet steadily became stronger. On 1 May 44 there were the 61 Air Flotilla (10 air groups, about 670 planes) and the 62 Air Flotilla (10 Air Groups, about 670 planes), but the 62 Air Flotilla, lacking sufficient training for Operation A, was excluded from the organization and was left behind in the homeland.

An attempt was made to increase strength by adding the air groups under the command of the superbly trained 13 and 14 Air Fleets. For this reason, the 14 Air Fleet did not possess the essential operational air strength.

On 5 June 44 the organization of the 1 Air Fleet just prior to the commencement of Operation A was as follows:

DISTRIBUTION				TYPE OF AIRCRAFT	NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT (FIXED NUMBER)	TOTAL
FLEET	AIR FLOTILLA	AIR GROUPS	FLYING UNIT			
		121 AIR GROUP		LAND RECON-NAISSANCE	48	672
		261 AIR GROUP		"A" FIGHTER	72	
		263 AIR GROUP		"A" FIGHTER	72	
		265 AIR GROUP		"A" FIGHTER	72	
		321 AIR GROUP		"C" FIGHTER	72	
		343 AIR GROUP		FIGHTER-BOMBER	72	
		521 AIR GROUP		LAND BOMBER	96	
		523 AIR GROUP		CARRIER-BOMBER	96	

AIR FLEET	22 AIR FLOTILLA	761 AIR GROUP			LAND ATTACK	72	552	
		151 AIR GROUP		T 101	LAND RECON- NAISSANCE	24		
		202 AIR GROUP	S 301		S 603	"A" FIGHTER		96
		251 AIR GROUP			S 901	"C" FIGHTER		48
		259 AIR GROUP	S 309		S 310	"A" FIGHTER		96
		301 AIR GROUP	S 316		S 601	"A" FIGHTER FIGHTER BOMBER		48 48
		503 AIR GROUP			K 107	CARRIER- BOMBER		48
		551 AIR GROUP			K 251	LAND ATTACK		48
		755 AIR GROUP	K 701		F 706	LAND ATTACK		96

23 AIR FLOTILLA	153	T 102	S 311	LAND RECON- NAISSANCE "A" FIGHTER	24 48	552
	732		K 707	LAND ATTACK	48	
	755		K 705	LAND ATTACK	48	
26 AIR FLOTILLA	201	S 305	S 305	"A" FIGHTER	96	240
	501	S 351	K 105	"A" FIGHTER CARRIER- BOMBER	48 48	
	751		K 704	LAND ATTACK	48	
Attached	1021			TRANSPORT	12	12

<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>LAND RECON- NAISSANCE</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>1644</b>
				<b>"A" FIGHTER</b>	<b>648</b>	
				<b>FIGHTER BOMBER</b>	<b>120</b>	
				<b>"C" FIGHTER</b>	<b>120</b>	
				<b>CARRIER BOMBER</b>	<b>192</b>	
				<b>LAND BOMBER</b>	<b>96</b>	
				<b>CARRIER ATTACK</b>	<b>48</b>	
				<b>LAND ATTACK</b>	<b>312</b>	
				<b>TRANSPORT</b>	<b>12</b>	

		Distribution	Surface Units	Chain of Command	Commander	
Central Pacific Area Fleet	4 Fleet	4 Base Force		Commander-in-Chief of the Central Pacific Area Fleet	Commander of 4 Base Force	
		6 Base Force			Commander of 6 Base Force	
		Attached	NAGO Others omitted			
		22 Air Flotilla	202 Naval Air Group 301 " " " 503 " " " 551 " " " 755 " " "		Commander-in-Chief of the 4 Fleet	Commander of the 22 Air Flotilla
	14 Air Fleet	26 Air Flotilla	201 Naval Air Group 501 " " " 751 " " "		Commander-in-Chief of the 14 Air Fleet	Commander of 26 Air Flotilla
		Attached	802 Naval Air Group AKITSUO		(Also Commander-in-Chief of the Central Pacific Area Fleet)	
		5 Base Force				Commander of 5 Base Force
		39 Base Force				Commander of 30 Base Force
		Attached	ISUZU Others omitted			



## ORGANIZATION OF THE 1 TASK FORCE

Distribution		Surface Craft Units	Chain of Command	Commander
2 Fleet	4 Squadron	ATAGO, TAKAO, MAYA CHOKAI	Commander-in-Chief of the 1 Task Force	Under direct jurisdiction of the 2 Fleet Commander-in-Chief.
	1 Squadron	NAGATO, YAMATO, MUSASHI		Commander of 1 Squadron
	3 Squadron	KONGO, HARUNA		Commander of 3 Squadron
	5 Squadron	MYOTAKA, HAGURO		Commander of 5 Squadron
	7 Squadron	KUMANO, SUZUTANI TONE, CHIKUMA		Commander of 7 Squadron
	2 Destroyer Flotilla	NOSHIRO 24 Destroyer Division 27 " " 31 " " 32 " " SHIMAKAZE		Commander of 2 Destroyer Flotilla
3 Fleet	1 Air Flotilla	TAIHO, ZUIKAKU SHO KAKU 601 Naval Air Group	Commander-in-Chief of 3 Fleet (Also Commander-in-Chief of 1 Task Force)	Under the direct jurisdiction of 3 Fleet Commander-in-Chief
	2 Air Flotilla	HAYATAKA, HIYO, RYUO 652 Naval Air Group		Commander of 2 Air Flotilla
	3 Air Flotilla	CHITOSE, CHIYODA, ZUIHO, 653 Naval Air Group		Commander of 3 Air Flotilla
	10 Squadron	AGANO, YAHAGI 4 Destroyer Division 10 " " 16 " " 17 " " 61 " "		Commander of 10 Squadron
		MOGAMI		

Note: 4 Air Flotilla omitted.

Furthermore, the fixed number of airplanes of each Air Group is as follows:

Air Group	Carrier Reconnaissance Plane	Carrier Fighter	Carrier Bomber	Carrier Attack Plane	Total
601 Air Group	9	81	81	54	225
652 Air Group		81	36	18	135
653 Air Group		63		27	90
Total	9	225	117	99	450

Each of the foregoing Air Groups was put aboard the aircraft carrier of the Air Flotilla to which it was assigned.

## Chapter II. Organization of 1 Task Force and Reinforcement of Air Strength

1. Because of the lack of base-air unit strength in the Solomon Area, the carrier-air strength of the 3 Fleet was first increased by the air strength of the 1 Air Flotilla in November 1943. Alternating with the 1 Air Flotilla, the 2 Air Flotilla, which had finally completed its training in the Singapore Area, was dispatched to the Rabaul Area in the latter part of January 1944. Both Air Flotillas lost the major part of their joint air strength in this area. In any case, surface operations for them as carrier units was impossible.

Because of this, the 1 Air Fleet was reinforced with new planes and was sent to the Singapore Area for training. Taking advantage of the enemy's task force raid on TRUK on 17 Feb 44, the 2 Air Flotilla was ordered to retreat on the basis of the grave decision that the air battle in the Rabaul Area was to be totally abandoned. After quickly replenishing them with personnel and planes, they were sent to the homeland for training. The result was that, although the 2 Air Flotilla had many veteran crew members, their planes were old-type Model 99 Carrier Bombers.

Although the planes in the 1 Air Flotilla were of a newer model (JUDY), the crewmen were inexperienced. From the standpoint of displaying all-around strength, an extremely unorthodox organization was inevitable.

Moreover, the 3 Air Flotilla was organized with only small-type, carriers. At an initial test, flying units equipped ZERO-Type fighter planes with bombs. (Each carried one 250 kg bomb). These flying units consisted of a total of 45 fighter-bombers (15 planes to a carrier).

2. Although the 3 Fleet, with carriers as its main strength, was organized in June 1942 after the MIDWAY Operation, the organization of the 2 Fleet, which did not possess any carrier unit, remained the same. Therefore, taking advantage of a decisive surface battle, the 1 Task Force was organized on 1 March 1944 with the 2 and 3 fleets (Vice Admiral OZAWA, Jisaburo ( ), Commander-in-Chief) for the

purpose of exploiting the all-around strength of the surface units in the Combined Fleet. The 3 Fleet, a carrier unit, was put under the direct control of the Commander-in-Chief of the 1 Task Force.

The organization of the 1 Task Force, as of 1 March 1944, is as follows: (TN See charts on following pages).

Chapter III. The Organizations of the Central Pacific Fleet  
and the 14 Air Fleet

In order to defend the Inner South Pacific Area, the 14 Air Fleet was organized on 4 April 1944. Later, The Central Pacific Area Fleet was organized with this fleet and the 4 Fleet, (Commander-in-chief, Vice Admiral NAGUMO, Tadaichi (                      )). The 14 Air Fleet was put under the direct control of the Central Pacific Area Fleet Commander.

The organizations of both fleets are as follows. However, along with the strength increase of the 1 Air Fleet on 5 May, the 14 Air Fleet became an air fleet without any attacking power. (TN See chart on following page.)

## Chapter IV. Preparation of

## Land Plane Bases

The rapid preparation of land plane bases in the MARIANAS and CAROLINE Areas was begun after the middle part of 1943. The air bases which could possibly be used at the time of Operation A were as follows: (the figures in the parenthesis show the number of bases before 1943).

IWOJIMA	-	1	(1)
SAIPAN	-	2	(1)
GUAM	-	2	(0)
TINIAN	-	3	(1)
ROTA	-	1	(0)
YAP	-	1	(0)
PALAU	-	2	(1)

## Chapter V. Preparation of

## Surface Craft

After the South Pacific sea battle of 26 Oct 42, carrier-based air units were frequently employed; they were dispersed to the various areas. Consequently there were no opportunities to give combined operations training to elements to be used as task forces, and the result was that efficiency decreased conspicuously as compared to the time of the first stage of the operations. As the scarcity in the number of aircraft carriers with operational potentials was also one of the reasons for this, the utmost efforts were devoted to preparations and new construction. As a result, Operation A saw the construction of the TAIHO, a large-type aircraft carrier, and small-type converted aircraft carriers, the CHITOSE and the CHIYODA. Finally, after October 1943, as well as having one newly-built light cruiser and ten newly-built destroyers participate, we succeeded in having all ships of the Imperial Navy above the cruiser class participating in the front lines.

Part Four. Operations Directed by  
the Combined Fleet

In March 1944, Admiral KOGA, Mineichi (古賀峰一), the Commander-in-chief of the Combined Fleet, moved his headquarters onto land when an enemy task force attacked PALAU on 29 March while he was conducting the overall operations from the MUSASHI, the flag-ship of the combined fleet, which was anchored in PALAU. On 31 March, while the command station was being moved to DAVAO, most of the key personnel (including the commander-in-chief and his subordinates) of the combined fleet headquarters were killed, except Vice Admiral FUKUDOME (福留), the chief of staff, when the transport planes met with disaster in the foul weather; therefore Vice Admiral TAKASU, Shiro (高須四郎) (vice commander-in-chief of the combined fleet), the commander-in-chief of the Southwest Area Fleet, took command of the Combined Fleet for about a month at SURABAYA.

On 2 May a new commander-in-chief, Admiral TOYOTA, Soemu (豊田副武), was appointed and he raised his flag on the ŌEDO in Tokyo Bay.

When the enemy landed on HOLLANDIA, on 22 Apr 44, the 23 Air Flotilla was placed under the command of the 1 Air Fleet and was ordered to attack in that area. Simultaneously, the air unit stationed in the MARIANA - CAROLINE Area was assigned to guard and reconnoiter the main part of the enemy task force in the Majuro area of the Marshall Archipelago. (The existence of the enemy in this area which was indicated in the communications and intelligence reports.)

An Imperial General Headquarters, Navy Section order concerning Operation A, dated 3 May, was issued; the strength of the combined fleet was stationed according to the said operational plans, which were as follows:

1. The 1 Task Force was ordered to assemble in the TAWITAWI Anchorage.

At that time, the main element of the 1 Task Force was in training and awaiting orders at the Singapore and Lingayen Anchorage Areas and one portion of the force was in the zone of interior, also in training

and awaiting orders. Then it was ordered that the entire 1 Task Force assemble at the TAWITAWI Anchorage in the Southwestern Philippines and complete its operational preparations.

The 1 Task Force moved to a point west of the inland waters on 16 May. There it joined with the 3 Fleet, which assembled at that point on 15 May, and the 2 Fleet, which assembled on 14 May. The 2 and 3 Fleets formed the nuclei of their respective units. With the arrival to this anchorage on the 16th of the unit which had as its main elements the 2 and 3 Air Flotillas, the assembling of the 1 Task Force was completed.

2. On 17 May 44, the enemy began landing operations in the Wakle and Sarmi area in Northwestern NEW GUINEA, so the Air Force stationed in the area to the north of AUSTRALIA was ordered to attack this enemy.

3. Deployment order of the Navy Base Air Force.

In view of the imminence of this phase of combat, an order was issued on 18 May to execute the deployment according to Operation A of the Air Unit of the 1 Air Flotilla. On the 26th, this Unit completed, in general, its prearranged deployment.

4. The order to begin Operation A.

On 20 May, the enemy task force attacked the MARCUS Islands. From the communications, intelligence reports etc., it was concluded that an all-out attack by the enemy was imminent; at 0000 hours on 20 May, an order was issued to "execute Operation A."

5. The transfer of the Combined Fleet Headquarters to the western part of the inner sea.

Since his appointment, Admiral TOYOTA, the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet, was directing the operations from his flagship, OHEDO, in Tokyo Bay, but on 22 May he left Tokyo Bay and moved this headquarters to the Hashirajima Anchorage, because of the completion of liaison with the central area and because of the communication with the Southern Area (at that time, the Tokyo Bay reception of the radio telephone from the southern area was poor).



6. Tactical command at the time the enemy landed on BIAK.

On 26 May the enemy occupational forces attacked BIAK so an order, dated 27 May, was issued for a portion of the Navy Base Air Force which was stationed in the Mariana - Caroline Area and for a part of the forces which were to be stationed in that same area (a combined force of 70 carrier-based fighter planes, four land-based reconnaissance planes, and 16 carrier-based bombers) to advance to the Western New Guinea Area. Simultaneously, the enemy on BIAK was attacked by our air force, stationed in the SORONG area.

7. A suicide reconnaissance of the enemy strategic area.

a. On 27 May, reconnaissance planes of the 1 Air Fleet, which were on TRUK, reconnoitered the Tulagi area via the Buin\* air field and discovered, anchored in the various harbors of the FLORIDA Islands and off LUNGA, the following:

Aircraft carrier - one (SARATOGA Class); escort carriers - two; battleships - four; cruisers - five; destroyers - three; unknown - one; small ships and boats - 50; transports, large - seven; transports, medium - 16; transports, small - 23; sea trucks - 40.

b. On 29 May, through a reconnaissance made by an Army plane, it was discovered that there were four Cruisers, two Submarines, three Destroyers, nine medium transports and 10 small transports anchored in Humboldt Harbor, and that five Destroyers, and nine transports were cruising outside the harbor.

c. On 30 May, MAJURO Island (via NAURU Island) and Finshhafen Bay were reconnoitered by the reconnaissance planes of the 22 Air Flotilla stationed on TRUK.

(1) Five Carriers (certain), two Flying boats, three battleships, three Cruisers, 10 Destroyers, two Transports and six Tankers, a total of 31 vessels, were anchored in Majuro Harbor.

Two Carriers (certain), three battle-cruisers, eight destroyers, a total of 13 vessels, were outside the harbor.

- (2) Five large transports, six medium transports, five small transports, three destroyers, a total of 19 vessels, were anchored in Finshhafen Harbor.

d. On 31 May, KWAJALEIN and the Admiralty Archipelago were reconnoitered by the reconnaissance planes based on TRUK.

- (1) KWAJALEIN Island: The following were in the Kwajalein Anchorage - eight destroyers, nine small type ships, one ship tender, 18 transports, one tanker and 20 others. One B24, seven medium aircraft, three small aircraft, one transport aircraft were at the Kwajalein Air Base. Two destroyers and two transports were at the Ruot Anchorage.

Five medium aircraft, 84 small aircraft, two destroyers and two transports were at the Ruot Airfield.

- (2) ADMIRALTY Archipelago: One aircraft carrier (SARATOGA Class), one battleship, one cruiser, 40 small type ships, and one transport anchored in this anchorage. Approximately 150 large and small planes were on this airfield.

e. On 2 June, BROWN Island was reconnoitered by the reconnaissance planes based on TRUK.

There were two cruisers, one destroyer, 17 transports, one coaler, 20 small aircraft, 10 medium aircraft and 30 large aircraft in the Eniwetok Area. There were three large transports, 10 small aircraft and 10 medium aircraft in the ENCHABI Area.

f. On 5 June, MAJURO Island was again reconnoitered.

There were five carriers (certain) - all were either of the "ESSEX" or "ENTERPRISE" Class. There were eight escort carriers, (among these, two were of the "INDEPENDENCE" class), six battleships, eight cruisers, 16 destroyers, 10 coalers and many others.

On the same day, the Admiralty Archipelago was reconnoitered and one carrier, two battleships or battle cruisers and five destroyers were

discovered in the ADORA\* Harbor.

Through the above information, it was confirmed that the main elements of the enemy task force were anchored at MAJURO.

8. Plan and execution of Operation KON ( 潭 ).

As for the battle situation on BIAK Island, the Combined Fleet, with one portion of its force, hastily transported the 2 Amphibious Brigade, which was in ZAMBOANGA, to BIAK Island to ensure the security of this Island. The enemy task force was lured out by this operation and plans were made to commence Operation A. This operation was called the KON Operation and this unit was called the KON Unit.

The gist of operation No 102, ordered by the Combined Fleet, which was based on Wireless Report No 292342 Secret, of the Combined Fleet, concerning this operation, is as follows:

a. The day (x day) to attack BIAK was 3 June, (to assemble in DAVAO by 31 May).

b. The Commander of the 16 Division became the commanding officer for the Transport Division (AOBA, KIDO, URANAMI, SHIKINAMI and ITSUKUSHIMA), the patrol unit (5 Division, four cruisers) and the Escort Unit (FUSO and two cruisers).

c. The 3 Air Force is to give neutralizing support to the northern shores of NEW GUINEA.

d. The Southwestern Area Fleet is to quickly transport the Army Unit stationed on SORONG to the Manokwari area.

e. The Units in Operation A must give necessary co-operation to the KON Operation and, at the same time, must closely observe the progress of the KON Operation.

f. For the "preparation of the decisive battle", the patrol unit and the escort unit will return to their original unit.

The KON Operation was executed according to this plan on 8 June. However, during the operation, we encountered both the enemy fleet and her planes, with the resultant loss of one cruiser and inability of realizing our objective.

9. The third reconnaissance of the Majuro anchorage.

On 9 June, the second Suicide Reconnaissance of MAJURO was made, but there was no sign of a powerful enemy fleet, as it had already left the harbor; so it was concluded that the enemy attack was imminent.

10. An order to prepare Operation A for decisive battle.

In view of the foregoing situation and in line with the communications and intelligence reports, an order was issued, on 10 June, for Operation A to make preparations for a decisive battle. Simultaneously, an order to prepare for a decisive battle was issued to the 1 and 2 Attack Groups (units based in the Mariana and Caroline Archipelagos) of the Base Air Force.

11. The Second KON Operation was planned.

With the aim of attacking enemy ships in the Biak Waters, shelling the land, and transporting land troops to BIAK if an opportunity presented itself, the Second KON Operation was planned by adding the 1 Division and others to the initial force. Orders for this were issued early on the morning of 10 June.

The gist of this order is as follows:

"Dispatch Operational Order No 127 of the Combined Fleet" (Summary)

a. 1S (YAMATO, MUSASHI), and the 2 sd (NOSHIRO, two destroyers) will be included in the KON Unit and the Commanding Officer of this unit will be designated as the 1S Commander.

b. The KON Unit will continue the KON Operation, according to the following:

- (1) The annihilation of the enemy reinforcements in the Biak Area and the enemy task force; and the bombardment and annihilation of the enemy landing force on BIAK and MAUI\* Islands.
- (2) If there is an opportunity, transport the 2 Mobile Brigade to BIAK Island. Although there is an order to make preparations for a decisive battle of Operation A, continue the KON Operation as long as there are no special orders. According to the enemy situation, carry

on such activities as will lure the enemy KMS into the decisive battlefield (100013).

According to the above, the Commanding Officer of the KON Unit selected BACHAN\* Anchorage on HALMAHERA Island as the assembly point for this unit and, at 1600 hours 10 June, he left TAWITAWI leading the 1s and 2nd. At 0800 hours 12 June, he arrived at the BACHAN\* Anchorage. Assembling the greater part of the KON Unit, he made operational preparations, according to the new plan.

12. Operations at the time the enemy task force attacked MARIANA.

At 1215 hours 15 June, the enemy task force appeared at a point 90 degrees, i.e. 170 nautical miles from GUAM, and at 1330 hours of the same day, it commenced an air attack on SAIPAN, TINIAN, ROFA, and GUAM. The great air attack was resumed in that same area again on the following day, the 16th (TN Presumably the 16th, although the document says the 12th).

At that time, the Combined Fleet estimated that the main force of the enemy strength was based on 10 or 15 carriers, but according to the plan of Operation A, it tried to reconnoiter the enemy situation. Except for the surprise attacks made with planes on hand, no positive attacks were made until the enemy intentions became clear.

On the 13th, the enemy was still carrying on his fullfledged air attack in the MARIANA Area so his intentions were, on the whole, clarified; consequently, on that same day, "alert order for a decisive battle of Operation A" was ordered and, at the same time, "temporary cessation of the KON Operation" was ordered. In the other areas, the 2 and 3 Attack Groups of the Base Air Force, which were in the midst of deploying in and reinforcing the Halmahera area, were ordered to move up to the area to the west of the CAROLINES and to take the disposition for a decisive battle. The remaining force of the 23 Air Flotilla was assigned to the Southwestern Area Unit and, with this Southwestern Area Unit, the operations in the western New Guinea Area was continued.

13. The operation at the time the enemy landed on SAIPAN.

On 15 June, the enemy occupational forces appeared off shore of SAIPAN so, on this same day, an order to "commence the decisive battle of Operation A" was issued and, at the same time, an order to begin the attack was issued to the 5 Base Air Force (centered around the 1 Air Fleet).

At that time, the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet, while making suicidal attacks with the Base Air Force, awaited the appearance of the task forces. Except for those forces disposed in HOKKAIDO and CHISHIMA, he combined the 7 Base Air Force (centered around the 3 Air Fleet) with the YOKOSUKA Air Force; thus with the entire strength of the task forces and the Base Air Force, he planned for an all-out decisive battle against the enemy task force. During this period, approximately 20 submarines were assembled in the Mariana Area. Then, on 19 May, he ordered the Base Air Force to send all available planes to GUAM by the 20th, in order to co-operate with the 1 Task Force in carrying the battle against the enemy task force.

Instead of inflicting great damages on the enemy in the air and sea battle of the 19th and 20th, we lost three large type carriers. The remaining carrier force and supply force were ordered to retire to Nakagusuku Harbor and the diversion attack force was ordered to retire to the Philippines Area. Simultaneously, the enemy task force was attacked with the YAWATA Unit (approximately 120 planes) based on IWOJIMA, but instead of any great accomplishments, this unit lost the greater portion of its planes. Thus, Operation A was a failure, so there was no alternative but to retreat. On 25 June, the Task Force, which had entered Nakagusuku Harbor, was sent back to the home waters. Then the 2 Fleet was sent to the Singapore Area and the 3 Fleet was ordered to train and equip in the home waters and to get into readiness for future operations.

Part Five. The Plans  
of the Task Force

1. The operational policies of the task force.

With the close co-operation of the friendly forces, especially the Base Air Forces, the forces will maneuver to take advantage of all opportunities and engage in a fierce attack, utilizing all forces by co-operating with the attacks of our Base Air Force and annihilating the enemy attack power, that is, the enemy task force, with one blow, thus shattering the enemy counter-attack plans.

a. The Task Force is to complete its preparations for a decisive battle on 20 May at the alert anchorage in the southern PHILIPPINES.

The Decoy Force will move up to the Ululssi or the Palau area according to orders, and, in co-operation with friendly forces, will endeavor to induce the enemy to come out into the sea in which the decisive battle will be fought.

b. The Task Force will, according to orders, sortie, and while endeavoring as much as possible to conceal our plans, move up to the waters to the east of the PHILIPPINES, and at the opportune time absorb the Decoy Force.

c. Make all enemy situations clear with the close observation of such units as the Base Air Forces and the Spearhead Unit, and at the same time, advance while observing strict security, to the desired waters at the opportune time. Make this into a decisive battle and annihilate the enemy by making neutralizing attacks against his task force, in co-operation with the Base Air Forces Operations.

In the air battle, the pattern will be strong daytime attacks and the primary objective will be to attack the enemy from the flank.

d. When the task force advances and engages the enemy in battle, strict caution must be paid to the enemy's tactic of a flank attack or trap. In the event base-air strength cannot afford close escort and our carrier strength is small, one element of the attack force (generally 2sf) may be reserved until the moves of the enemy become more definite.

e. As the battle moves into the stage of close-range fighting, overcomes all difficulties; approach and annihilate the enemy by means of repeated attacks.

In the event that surface battle is advantageous, the operation will be continued. According to the situation, the air forces will be deployed to the land bases or the carrier-fighters be launched to bring about favorable battle results.

## 2. Distribution of 1 Fleet

After 15 May, the distribution of the 1 Fleet without orders will be as follows:

### Note.

#### Strategy Number One

This carrier unit will be divided into a main force and a vanguard force and deployed in "defense in depth" order.

#### Strategy Number Two

This carrier force will break up into three groups and form in dispersal in depth order.

#### Strategy Number Three

Concentrate the carrier units. (TN See charts on following pages)



Remarks:


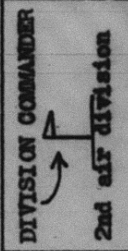
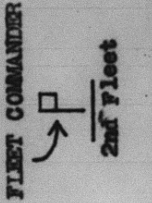
1. Organizations listed under Supply are as shown in Distribution
- 2 1 Carrier Unit.
2. Will be used mainly for Strategy Number Two.

c. (3) Distribution of

3 Carrier Unit

Omitted

a. Distribution of 1 Carrier Unit

Unit	Commander	Strength	Mission	
Main Unit	Unit A	(TN) illegible 	1Sf (4 destroyer group) 5S (except HAMAKAZE) 10S	1. To annihilate the enemy fleet. 2. To annihilate the enemy force.
	Unit B		4 destroyer group 27 " " 2Sf NAGATO FUSO MOGAMI HAYASHIMO	
		2 Fleet (NAGATO 5-Submarine 27-Destroyer group except HAYASHIMO)	1. To reconnoiter the enemy fleet and attack. 2. To annihilate the enemy fleet. 3. To annihilate the enemy attack force.	
1st Supply force	Senior Commander	HIEI MARU, TATEKAWA MARU, HIKUNI MARU, AZUSA MARU, 6 - Destroyer group HAMAKAZE		
2nd Supply force	" "	GENYO MARU, KORIYO MARU, SEIYO MARU, AKISHIMO, HAYASHIMO 1 - Coast defense vessel	Supply	
3rd Supply force	" "	YUHO MARU, KAMOGAWA MARU SUZAKI 1-Destroyer 3-rd 1-Coast defense vessel		

<b>4th Supply force</b>	<b>Senior Commander</b>	<b>Other supply ship</b> <b>1-Coast defense vessel</b>	
<b>Reserve Unit</b>	" "	<b>Located at advance base and awaiting orders and performing maintenance.</b>	<b>Conducting maintenance while awaiting orders.</b>
<b>Maintenance Unit</b>		<b>Conducting maintenance in home waters or at rear bases.</b>	<b>Maintenance training.</b>

**Remarks:**

1. To be used mainly in Strategy Number One.
2. Assignment of destroyers subject to change.

b. (2) Distribution of 2 Carrier Units

Unit	Commander		Strength	Mission
A Unit	<p style="text-align: center;">Fleet Commander</p> <p style="text-align: center;">P — 1 RBF</p>		<p>1 sf</p> <p>1s (-3)</p> <p>5 s</p> <p>1s (-2 DIVISION)</p> <p>10s (-dg (HAMAKAZE)</p>	<p>Mission</p> <p>1. Annihilation of enemy fleet.</p> <p>2. To annihilate the enemy attacking force.</p>
B Unit	<p style="text-align: center;">Division Commander</p> <p style="text-align: center;">P — 2 sf</p>	<p>MOGAMI 2 sf</p> <p>NAGATO</p> <p>FUSO</p> <p>4 DESTROYER GROUP</p> <p>27                      2</p> <p>DESTROYER DIVISION</p> <p>GROUP                      7 S</p>		
C Unit	<p style="text-align: center;">P — 2 F</p>		<p>(1 S</p> <p>(5 S</p> <p>(7 S</p> <p>2 FLEET (-27 DES-TROYER GROUP</p> <p>(HAYASHIMO</p> <p>3 sf</p>	

Translation of Part Six. "Plans of Base Air Unit" is missing from the original.

Part Seven Outline of Developments

Chapter I. General Progress.

Anticipating that Operation "A", which employs the entire surface and air strength of the Imperial Navy Combined Fleet, would be the final decisive surface battle of this war, the preparations for the operation were carried out with the maximum effort and full use of the nations resources. However, the objectives of Operation "A" were not accomplished, for the following reasons:

1. Because the enemy attack came sooner than expected.
2. While preparing for this vital Operation "A", it was necessary to appoint a new Commander-in-Chief, to take the place of the former, who had died in line of duty.
3. Training of air forces was insufficient, and especially was impossible to train and prepare carrier-based air units. Moreover, at the advanced bases, the various forces were alerted, which necessitated an almost complete suspension of training for about one month.
4. Surface craft were insufficiently trained because of the shortage of supply ships and the lack of anchorages for alerted surface craft.
5. On the first day of the decisive battle, the 1 Task Force committed the blunder of planning a long-range attack.

Moreover: a. The base air forces lost approximately half of the 2nd and 3rd attack groups during the BIAK Island Area Operation in the latter part of May and in several air engagements in the BIAK Area while advancing to the North of AUSTRALIA and the western Caroline area, and while returning to the Operation "A" decisive battle deployment area. In addition, just before the decisive battle with the enemy task force, the 1st attack group suffered heavy losses in the attack made by the enemy on the Mariana, Caroline, and Iwo Island Area bases. Beside this, the operation became impossible due to malaria suffered by a great number of air crew members. Poor facilities at the West CAROLINE Area bases was the cause for the heavy toll taken by malaria.

Because of the above and various other factors, only about 20 percent of the 1 Air Fleet's 1644 planes actually participated in Operation "A".

b. The carrier-based air units of the 1 Task Force were equipped with up-to-date aircraft (Model 52 Zero Fighter, JUDY for carrier-bombers, JILL for carrier-attack planes, and ZERO-Type Fighters used as fighter-bombers). However, the carriers were obsolete and thus unable to efficiently accommodate late-type aircraft (HAYATAKA and HITAKA - maximum speed 25 knots); also, the crews lacked sufficient training. Not only were the opportunities for carrying out training extremely limited, due to the shortage of fuel for the vessels and planes, but on the other hand, losses were heavy and replenishments from the homeland were not able to meet replacement demands. As a result, just prior to the decisive battle, only about 80 percent of the designated 450 planes were in readiness for combat.

c. In the beginning, there were, among the combat vessels, a minimum number of required destroyers; but seven of them were lost during the training and alert periods and skirmishes prior to the decisive battle. As a result, plans of Operation "A" were upset by the above losses.

On May 29, while our Combined Fleet was in the aforementioned condition, the enemy carried out reconnaissance attacks on all strategic points in the Central Pacific. Concurrently, on 11 June, the main elements of the enemy's task force started their raids on the Mariana area. Since an attack by the enemy's landing force was imminent, the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet alerted Operation "A" on 13 June and, on 15 June, ordered Operation "A" to commence the decisive battle.

Each Unit acted in accordance with the Pre-arranged Plan of operation. However, because of an attack by the enemy task force, the main elements of the base air force, which was to have been deployed in the Mariana Area, was lost. For this reason, the base air force was not even able to carry out reconnaissance which should have been conducted in co-operation with the task force by taking advantage of the opportune battle conditions. As a result, the task force had no alternative but to dispatch its own reconnaissance. Consequently, the enemy discovered the reconnaissance planes and perceived the existence of our task force. The base air force sent its entire mobile strength, which was stationed in the Truk Area, to the Mariana area.

In conjunction with the mobile strength despatched from TRUK and with the aid of the YAMATA Unit stationed at (TN Place name illegible), the task force planned to attack the enemy. However, on the 19th when the all-out attack was made by the task force, it ended by each Unit making its own attack.

The air units, which should have been the nucleus of the task force attacking the enemy task force, were all inexperienced. As a result, the first attacking wave of the 1 Air Flotilla lost several planes in friendly fire when passing heedlessly over the advanced guard on their attack mission against the enemy. The greater part of the 2 Air Flotilla and the second attacking wave of the 1 Air Flotilla did not find their objectives. Those who accomplished their missions were only the 1 Air Flotilla and the first attacking wave of the 3 Air Flotilla. During this time the TAIHŌ and SHŌKAKU were sunk by enemy submarines, which necessitated a change of flagships by the task force commander. Consequently, the aims of the decisive battle were completely disrupted.

The reason for the success of our attack is that the enemy ceased his attack because of the great distance between his and our forces. Also, it lies in the fact that he utilized the greater part of his fighter planes for interception.

On the 20th, our task force reorganized and replenished its strength, and at the time a second attempt to engage the enemy was being planned the enemy task force attacked. As a result the HIDAKA was sunk, and the greater part of the Air Unit was lost. Thus, abandonment of this operation was inevitable.

The general progress of Operation "A" is as indicated in the separate Chart, Development of Operation "A", and in the separate volume, The Daily War Record of Operation "A". The details of each Unit are as follows:

## Chapter II. Task Force

1. From the time it was concentrated at the advance base to the time the attack was launched.

On 16 May the Task Force, based upon the order of Operation "A" of the Combined Fleet, completed its concentration at the Faxitawi anchorage, southwest of the Philippine Islands. On 20 May, it completed battle preparations.

On 22 May, the 1 Supply Unit was ordered to advance to DAVAO, and on 24 May one part of the 3 Supply Unit was ordered to advance to MAJAU.

With the above situation, the deployment of strength to be carried out prior to the pre-arranged attack, was completed.

On 27 May, the enemy launched attacks on the western parts of NEW GUINEA and BIAK. Therefore, the FUSO of the 5 Squadron and also the 27 destroyer division and the 10 destroyer division were ordered, on 29 May by the Combined Fleet, to participate in the KON Operation (to increase the strength of BIAK island). However, because the "KON" Operation was ordered to be suspended on 8 June, the 5 Squadron and other units were ordered to wait in readiness at DAVAO.

In conjunction with the commencement of the "KON" Operation on 2 June, it was recognized that there existed an opportunity to decoy the enemy carrier Unit, located north of HOLLANDIA, and to capture it. Thus, on 3 June, the 2 Supply Unit was ordered to advance to the east of the PHILIPPINE Islands. However, because of the events which followed, it was ordered to sail to GUIMARAS and wait in readiness.

During this period through the use of various intelligence reports and resorting to suicide reconnaissance over the Marshall Area, an attempt was made by the 5 Air Force to ascertain the enemy's movements, but conditions were such that it was difficult to detect the main course of the enemy attack.

It seemed that the enemy had detected our task force at TANTAWI and, since the latter part of May, enemy submarines swarmed the seas southwest of the PHILIPPINE Islands. Although mopping-up operations were conducted against enemy submarines with the aid of combat vessels and aircraft, and in co-operation with the Southwest Area Fleet, four destroyers were damaged in succession by the enemy submarines during the period from 6 June to 9 June. Thus, the destroyer strength was reduced to the extent that it barely met the minimum strength requirement for the decisive battle. As a result, it was deemed necessary to move the fleet anchorages and to temporarily neutralize the effects of enemy submarine activities.

On the other hand, due to the inadequacy of the nearby anchorages and air bases, along with delays in schedules from the time the units advanced from the southern part of the Philippine Islands, it was extremely difficult to



execute training of the air units. As a result, each air flotilla was able to conduct attack training but once or twice. Consequently, because the standard of proficiency of crews dropped, it became necessary to undergo training by utilizing the airfield in the Central part of the PHILIPPINE Islands.

This, suffering from deficiencies in intelligence reports and in defense, the Task Force moved into the Central PHILIPPINES, and, with due consideration to the line of supplies, it was decided on the 13th that the Task Force would move its anchorages to GUIMARAS.

During this period, the Biak Area battle did not develop to our advantage and, as a result, it greatly affected our subsequent operations. It was feared that the increasing and strengthening of our forces in this area would tend to draw the enemy into the open and the decisive battle would take place prematurely, instead of on schedule with plans of Operation "A". In consideration of these facts, it was recommended to higher echelons that it would be all right to send the 2 Air Flotilla to reinforce that area, as long as this would not hamper the decisive battle of the Task Force.

On 10 June there was an order to revive the KON Operation with the commander of the 1 Division as its commanding officer. According to the orders the 1 Division (less NAGATO), the 5 Division, the 2 Destroyer Squadron (less one portion) and a portion of the destroyers of the 10 Division were dispatched from the Task Force to take part in the Operation.

On 11 and 12 June, the enemy launched an attack in the Mariana Archipelago Area, with a task force which had, as its core, the entire strength of the regular aircraft carriers and converted cruiser carriers.

The enemy air attack was on an especially large scale on the 12th, so there were some who thought that the enemy might invade the Saipan Area; however, at 0900 on the 13th, the Task Force left TAWITAWI for GUIMARAS as planned, because it was necessary to train the air units and to assemble the reserve planes which were already in DAVAO at that time and, furthermore, because our advance to GUIMARAS would be advantageous from the standpoint of immediate tactical counter-action, even if the enemy operations in the MARIANAS were to develop into an operation of invasion.

Part Six Base Air Unit Plans

The base air force devised a plan for Operation "A", based upon the following assumption:

1. Operational Plan

a. At least one-third of the enemy task force carrier unit must be destroyed by our base air force prior to the decisive battle. Then the remainder of the enemy fleet shall be destroyed in co-operation with our task forces and other friendly units.

b. Suicide reconnaissance of the enemy advanced base must be carried out in order to secure accurate information of enemy movements.

c. Strength of the base air force will be organized into three attack groups and various type of planes will be assigned to each group, thus facilitating the movement and concentration of forces.

d. When the main elements of the enemy force launches its attack, each attack group will be deployed as follows, in order to intensify concentration of attacking power.

1 Attack Group

Saipan, Tinian, Guam, and Truk Areas

2 Attack Group

Palau, Yap, and Davao Areas

3 Attack Group

North Australia, and Celebes Areas

In the event the objective of the enemy attack is perceived, the attack forces deployed in that area shall leave a force of reconnaissance planes and withdraw to bases where other attack groups are deployed. In this manner, the enemy attack shall be avoided, enabling us to carry out a concentrated attack against the enemy from the base to which we have withdrawn.

2. Distribution of respective Units is as shown in the following map. (TN No map).

2. Accounts of the Move from TAWITAWI to GUIMARAS.

After the task force left TAWITAWI there were reports that the enemy shelled the Saipan coast position and began sweeping the sea; thus an enemy invasion of SAIPAN became imminent, so at 1614 on the 13th, the 1 and 2 Supply Units were ordered to be alternately on the alert for 30 minute intervals and, at 1704, the 1 Supply Unit was ordered to advance to point A and there be on the alert.

At 1724, an alert order for Operation "A" was issued through operations order No 146 of the Combined Fleet. Through operation order No 147 of the Combined Fleet, the KON Operation was temporarily suspended and the 1 Division (less NAGATO), the 5 Division, the 2 Destroyer Squadron (NOSHIRO, SHIMAKAZE, OKINAMI), and the 10 Destroyer Division (YAMAGUMO, NOWAKE) were sent back to their original unit.

At 1744, the 3 Supply Unit was ordered to advance to Point J and there alerted. The plans for the tactical command, while enroute to GUIMARAS, were as follows:

- a. Following plans GF and FdB of Operation A, bombard the enemy regular carrier group with day planes by closely co-operating with the friendly Base Air Force and the Advance Force. Then the entire force is to close in on the enemy and destroy its task force. The 19th was tentatively set as the day to commence the daylight air battle. However, it was decided that if the arrival of the YAWATA Unit (the unit composed of the YOKOSUKA Air Force, which was to proceed to IWO Island) were delayed, the plans for the tentative day for the decisive battle would be made accordingly.

b. The problem was whether or not to have a great portion of the task force stop at GUIMARAS to replenish supplies, prior to engaging in the decisive battle. It was decided that it would be beneficial to anchor at GUIMARAS, even though we should run the risk (While we were anchored at TAMITAWI, our location and general plans were probably known to the enemy.) of having our full strength discovered by the enemy, because we considered it more important that our supply lines function easily and dependably.

The task force arrived at GUIMARAS on the afternoon of 14 June. From 1700 hours on that day until 0700 hours on the fifteenth the entire task force took on supplies. The amount supplied came to 10,800 tons.

It was reported that early on the morning of 15 June, thirty enemy transports began to appear in the seas off the west coast of SAIPAN and that the enemy's landings had begun. Further word was received that one group of a large task force attacked the BONIN Islands and IWO JIMA. Thereafter, it seemed that they continued to carry on operations in this same area.

At 0717 hours on the fifteenth came the order for Operation A, which was to set out for the decisive battle. At 0800 hours the main body of the task force (excluding those units which had engaged in Operation KON) put out from GUIMARAS.

3. From the time of the departure from GUIMARAS until the meeting with the enemy.

At 1730 hours on 15 June our task force passed through San Bernardino Straits in the central part of the PHILIPPINE Islands. At 2038 hours, while we were advancing, we found out by intercepting enemy signals that an enemy submarine had discovered the movements of our task force and had sent back a radio message to that effect.

a. The determination of battle conditions on the evening of 15 June:

(1) The strength of the enemy:

(a) In the area of the MARIANA Islands:

The enemy is divided into approximately five groups, centered around fifteen aircraft carriers, seven of which are the regular type and eight of which are the type converted from cruisers. It is believed that practically all of the American task force strength has come to make an attack.

At present a group of supply ships are located in an area four hundred nautical miles east of the Archipelago and one group of LST's has been observed to be commencing landing operations in the vicinity of the Archipelago. The arrival of a large-scale invasion fleet within the near future is almost inevitable. We have only observed part of the CVE's or escort carriers which are east of the Archipelago, but there is a very good possibility that they will come in extremely large numbers to attack, both before and after the decisive battle in the vicinity of the Archipelago.

(b) In the area around the ADMIRALTY Islands:

We cannot rely too heavily on this report because it was made by a fighter plane, but approximately eight carriers and all other types of ships, including battleships and transports, are said to be lying in wait in this area.

(2) Our calculations of the strategy of the enemy:

The objective of the strategy of the enemy is to accomplish one or more of the following:

(a) The invasion and occupation of strategic bases in the MARIANA Archipelago.

(b) Together with the above operation, to strengthen invasion operations in western NEW GUINEA and to invade and occupy strategic areas in the western CAROLINE Islands.

(c) To draw out our task force strength for a decisive battle.

(3) An estimated study of the distribution of enemy forces in the region around the Mariana Archipelago both before and after the decisive battle between task forces:

(a) It was quite possible that the enemy knew the plans of our task force. (Reason: Because of the interception of signals by enemy submarines they know about our departure from TAMITANI on the thirteenth and our departure from GUIMARAS on the fifteenth, and it would not have been difficult for them to assume what our intentions were. Therefore, judging from the strategic speed employed by the Americans formerly, they probably know that our task force is going to attack in the vicinity of the Archipelago between the eighteenth and the nineteenth.)

(b) From looking at the distribution of enemy forces up to the fifteenth we see that most of the task force striking power has been distributed along the Archipelago. However, one force is always maintained in the rear for purposes of supply or as a reserve force. In attacking and occupying an Archipelago it is necessary to maintain re-enforcements. So it is thought that the distribution of the enemy is in general as follows:

i. In the vicinity of the Archipelago: At the most they will probably distribute their forces so as to be centered around two-thirds, or ten, of their aircraft carriers.

Moreover, judging from the present conditions of the invasion battle, the distance traveled west by them will not be great but it is presumed to be, at the most, 300 nautical miles.

ii. They will probably station between one-third and one-half of their forces to the west of the Archipelago, and the remainder will aid in the land fighting and act as reserve strength.

iii. From the present battle conditions there is very little possibility that they will remove all of their forces away from the invasion battle line and deploy them temporarily to the east of the Archipelago.

iv. It is very improbable that they intend to send part of their task force far to the west to make a flank attack on our advancing task force, or to make a surprise attack, because they would be entering an area within the limits patrolled by our land-based aircraft.

v. Our air bases extend far to the southwest part of the Archipelago; however, since we are weak in the north, the enemy will probably attack the southern islands and try to cut aircraft and other supply lines while, at the same time, they will employ one element of the task force to attack in the north.

vi. It is very possible that the enemy will employ a great number of escort carriers in the vicinity of the Archipelago to reinforce the battle on land.

b. Things which should be considered in the tactical directions of task forces.

(1) From the standpoint of the maneuverability of a task force and, especially from the standpoint of fuel supplies, great delays in time schedules are not to be permitted.

(2) It is necessary to choose a time when the distribution of those of our fighting power which can participate in a decisive battle in the battle area has the most potentialities and, especially, when our land-based air power has great potentialities. This necessitates a consideration of present fighting strength and of the capacity of reinforcements.

(3) The strength of endurance of the forces defending the MARIANA Archipelago:

From the above considerations, we see that it is not possible to delay the engagement of our task force in a decisive battle beyond the nineteenth, we must, rather, consider how we can hasten the engagement.

c. Decision.

Tactical policies which should be adopted by the task force: As previously planned, the main, tactical objective will be to shell the enemy task force in the vicinity of the Mariana Archipelago on the nineteenth and, thereafter, to carry out Operation "A", launch into a battle of pursuit and completely annihilate the enemy.

(1) We must be on guard against any surprise movements of the enemy after the sixteenth and must maintain the required observation of the enemy. In the south, the scouting of the enemy will be

left to our land-based air power. Their main objective shall be to watch for a northerly frontal attack.

Especially, when one considers how the enemy is deployed, it is quite possible that the eighteenth shall be the day of the decisive battle. Therefore, we must sufficiently patrol and search out the enemy.

(2) At dawn on the nineteenth we shall arrive at a point three hundred miles west of the Archipelago and, while taking in aircraft, we shall make tactical moves, so that we shall be able to attack the enemy task force power (regular aircraft carriers) in the vicinity to the east of the Archipelago.

(3) Our attack will consist of battle plan one, which depends on a long, longitudinal array of forces, and battle plan two, for daylight aerial warfare. We shall reserve the 2 Air Flotilla as reinforcements against surprise attacks of the enemy and it shall carry out strict patrols in the north.

(4) We shall strengthen the reconnaissance of the enemy by our land-based aircraft, both the day before and the day of the battle, and we shall strengthen our defensive contacts with the enemy. We shall distinguish between regular aircraft carriers and escort carriers, and we shall demand that each unit concerned put forth its utmost strength in the decisive battle.

(5) The disposal of aircraft in accordance with the results of the battle: Based, in general, on the plan for directing combined fleet tactics.

(a) When we have obtained very good results, the entire force shall pursue and annihilate the enemy.

(b) If results are not good, we shall retreat temporarily, reorganize our forces, and resume the attack.

Through the communication from the Central Pacific Area Fleet on 16 June, the general conditions of the enemy task force were made known to us.

In addition to the above, the enemy has been continuing the attack, begun yesterday, on IWO JIMA. Therefore, it has been decided



that there will be no aircraft carrier groups raiding from the west, so we shall stop the scheduled reconnaissance of the enemy in the east. We endeavored to search out the enemy west of PALAU by intercepting their wireless messages, however, we were not able to obtain any information about the enemy.

Today, at 1530 hours, we joined forces with the First Supply Unit and the Operations KON Unit (1 Squadron (excluding the NAGATO); the 5 Squadron; the 2 Destroyer Squadron (NOSHIRO, SHIMAKAZE, and OKINAMI); the 10 Destroyer Division and the 4 Destroyer Division (excluding the MICHISHIO).) After we had joined forces, all ships of the main unit and of the vanguard which were smaller than cruisers took on supplies at sea.

On 17 June we continued this supplying operation. On this day we dispatched an operational plane to PALAU so that telegraphic communications could be relayed to the combined fleet and to other places.

The gist of top secret Message No 170845 from the 1 Task Force was as follows:

"From: Chief of Staff of the 1 Task Force

To: Headquarters of the Combined Fleet, the 5 Land-based Air Unit, and the Central Pacific Fleet.

Text: The 1 Task Force, being at location "E" on the evening of the seventeenth and having finished supplying operations, will advance to a general location west of SAIPAN by dawn of the nineteenth, going via point "O" (TN May be point "C") at 15.0 degrees north latitude and 136.0 degrees east longitude. In the meantime, this fleet shall guard against westerly advances of the enemy and their movements from the north. The objective is first to shell regular aircraft carrier groups and then, by employing all fighting power, to annihilate the enemy task force and their invading forces."

The following are the requests made of land-based air units:

- (1) It is requested that, from the evening preceding the decisive battle, you shall maintain a constant reconnaissance of the regular aircraft carriers of the enemy in the vicinity of the MARIANA

Islands. If this is impossible, notify us immediately of the condition and deployment of regular aircraft carriers as of noon.

(2) We request intensified patrolling of the area west of the MARIANAS by each base on the day previous to the decisive battle. Special attention shall be paid to carry on reconnaissance in the sector from 160 degrees to 210 degrees from IWO JIMA.

(3) If the forces of the YAWATA Unit are not deployed on time, it is believed that we shall be forced to delay the decisive battle by one day. Please notify us of such a probability.

Since we had completed supplying operations at 1530 hours, the first disposition of forces was ordered, and we prepared ourselves for battle.

4. The battle on 18 June

a. Discovery of enemy planes:

We began reconnaissance of the enemy at 0500 hours, in accordance with Strategy Two and Three (concentrated air attacks on aircraft carriers,) for daylight air warfare. The course of advance was 60 degrees at a speed of 20 knots.

The above mentioned reconnaissance revealed one enemy plane at 73 degrees and 410 nautical miles moving east, and three planes of unknown nationality at 60 degrees and 425 nautical miles.

b. Discovery of the enemy fleet.

At 1100 hours the second group of reconnaissance planes were dispatched at 14 degrees 40 minutes north latitude and 135 degrees 40 minutes east longitude. (Scope of reconnaissance, 100 to 340 degrees). One plane of the above group discovered the following three enemy aircraft carrier groups between 1425 hours and 1540 hours.

First Group

Location: u, i, 2, chi (T.N. ウイ=チ)

Two regular aircraft carriers

10 to 15 destroyers

Second Group

Location: u, ra, 4, e (T.N. ウラ=エ)

Two ships, presumably regular aircraft carriers

Ten and some odd other vessels

Third Group

Location: u, ra, l, a (T.N.  $\text{ヲチ}$  -  $\text{ア}$ )

Two ships, presumably aircraft carriers

Ten and some odd other vessels.

All were heading west and were 380 nautical miles from their main unit.

Attack planes of the 3 Air Flotilla were sent out to attack the above objectives with intentions of landing on GUAM. However, due to the cancelling of the alert for the attack by the commander of the task force, the attack was discontinued.

The decisions regarding the disposition of pertinent matters, as of the afternoon of the 18th, are as follows:

(1) Decision concerning enemy conditions: The three enemy aircraft carrier groups are advancing forward, west of the MARIANA Islands. There are no indications of the feared flank attack by enemy units from the north. (It was discovered that the reports of the morning reconnaissance, to the effect that enemy fighter planes were in the direction of 0 degrees, were false). It is decided that the range of the enemy reconnaissance and attack planes is approximately 300 nautical miles. Also, in regard to the battle conditions in the Saipan area, it is improbable that most of the enemy task force will advance to an extreme eastern position. However, it is necessary to consider that the enemy will advance approximately 300 nautical miles east of the archipelago.

(2) Disposal: As the attack on the eighteenth is impossible without the transferring of airplane units to land bases, the attack was discontinued and we firmly resolved to use our utmost strength on the nineteenth, the day of the decisive battle. The plan is to annihilate the enemy's regular aircraft carrier groups advancing on the western side of the archipelago in the coming air battle of the nineteenth.

In order to do this the plans are that the attack will commence from a southern direction. The distance between our fleet and the enemy aircraft carrier groups and the distance from the archipelago will be 300 and approximately 580 nautical miles, respectively. Plans have been made to attack the enemy ships in the vicinity of the archipelago in case there are no enemy aircraft carrier groups. It has also been planned that in case it is possible for our reconnaissance plans to keep in constant contact with the enemy task force on the night of the eighteenth, reconnaissance and attacks shall be carried out simultaneously.

Following the above plans, at 2000 hours the vanguard left the carriers and deployed for our battle.

5. The battle on 19 June

The task force took the position about 100 nautical miles distant from the vanguard main unit. The 2 Air Flotilla took a position 15 kilometers north of the 1 Air Flotilla. The air battle began with our planes flying in a column formation. Our course was 50 degrees and the relative bearing of the enemy was 50 degrees. The position of the main force was 12 degrees 20 minutes north latitude and 136 degrees 25 minutes east longitude on 0430 hours. Sunrise on the nineteenth was at 0522 hours.

0330 hours: Departure of the forward first wave of reconnaissance planes (16 reconnaissance seaplanes from the Second Fleet).

0415 hours: Departure of the forward second wave (13 carrier-borne attack planes from the 3 Carrier Division, and one reconnaissance seaplane from the CHIKUMA) and forward third wave (11 SUISEI's (TN Dive Bombers) from the 1 Carrier Division and two carrier-borne reconnaissance seaplanes from the MOGAMI.)

0634 hours: Number 7 of the forward first wave reconnaissance planes reported that it had discovered, at 264 degrees and 160 nautical miles off SAIPAN (Location: na, so, 4 te (ナソ四テ)) two large aircraft carriers, four battleships and ten and some odd other vessels (objective name 7 1 (TN 7 1) heading west. Afterward, a report

came in that there were four additional large aircraft carriers.

0820 hours: A reconnaissance plane of the 3 Carrier Division reported that a large unit, including battleships, was spotted at point re, 1 3 tsu (TW V イ エ ツ) at this time. (This report was made after the plane had returned to its carrier.) At 1245 hours two carrier-borne attack planes made a report to the effect that they had not sighted anything in their search, which covered a radius of 75 nautical miles around their base of departure.

0845 hours: Plane 15 of the forward third wave of reconnaissance planes reported the discovery of three large enemy aircraft carriers, five enemy battleships and ten and some odd other enemy craft, approximately 70 nautical miles southwest of GUAM (Location: Ko, Ki, 3 u (TW フ キ ミ ウ)). (Objective Name: 15 ri (TW 十五 リ)) Their courses was 240 degrees.

0900 hours: Plane three of the forward third wave of reconnaissance planes discovered one large aircraft carrier, one converted aircraft carrier, one battleship and five destroyers (objective name: 3, ri (TW 三 リ)) 50 nautical miles north of point 7 i. (TW 七 イ)

We considered that with the use of the abovementioned three waves of reconnaissance planes, we were able to ascertain in general the overall condition of the enemy task forces operating in the vicinity.

The distances from our vanguard and main unit to the enemy, were approximately 300 and 380 nautical miles, respectively.

a. General outline of measures taken by the commander of our task force.

(1) After the discovery of objective 7 i, the A unit put about temporarily to maintain a distance of approximately 400 nautical miles from the enemy. However, following the departure of the attack force, it again changed its course by 120 degrees.

(2) At 0730 hours, upon receiving notice that the first wave of reconnaissance planes, after reconnoitering to their maximum range, had not spotted other aircraft carriers, the 1 Carrier Division of the first attacking force was sent out.

Strength: 48 land based attack planes, 54 bombers, 27 attack planes.

Object of Attack: 7 1

Attack Course: 64 degrees

Maximum Advancing Distance: Approximately 380 nautical miles.

0730 hours: Departure of the 3 Carrier Division of the first attacking force - 14 fighters, eight attack planes, 46 land based attack planes.

Object of Attack: 7 1

(3) 0900 hours: With the discovery of objective 3 r1, the 2 Carrier Division of the first attacking force (26 land-based fighters, 16 fighters and seven attack planes), which was heading for objective 7 1, was ordered, at 0930 hours, to change its course.

(4) At 1000 hours, planes for keeping in contact with objective 15 r1 were dispatched. The order was given for the 1 and 2 Carrier Divisions of the second attacking force to head towards this objective.

(5) Attacks.

0945 hours: The 2 Carrier Division of the first attacking force attacks objective 7 1.

1045 hours: The Carrier Divisions of the first attacking force attacked objective 7 1.

However, there are indications that part of the above units attacked objective 3 r1.

Moreover, our 1 Carrier Division of the first attacking unit, while flying towards its objective, flew over our vanguard, which opened fire. There were several casualties. A thorough search by the 2 Carrier Division of the first attacking force for objective 3 r1 ended in failure. Objective 15 r1 was also searched for in vain by both the 1 Carrier Division of the second attacking force (10 land-based fighter planes, four carrier attack planes, four carrier bombers - time of departure 1230 hours) and the 2 Carrier Division of the second attacking force (26 fighter planes, 36 carrier bombers, two carrier bombers, time of departure: 1000 hours).

All three divisions abandoned attempts to continue the search. The 2 Carrier Division of the first attacking force and the 1 Carrier Division of the second attacking force returned to their respective

carriers. The 2 Carrier Division of the second attacking force headed for GUAM. This division, (approximately 50 planes) at 1511 hours, met and fought with a large number of enemy fighter planes above the first airfield on GUAM and consequently received considerable damage. The number of planes landing at the second airfield on GUAM were nine fighter-planes, seven carrier bombers and one carrier bomber, all of which were damaged beyond repair. The reports going to the headquarters of the task force, notifying them of this loss, were delayed considerably. Also the fact that the 2 Carrier Division of the first attacking force was unable to attack its objective was known to the Commander of the task force only after he had transferred to the HAGURO. Moreover, the 3 Carrier Division of the second attacking force lost its opportunity and cancelled its departure because of the arrival and accommodation of planes from other carriers.

(6) If the 1 Carrier Division of the first attacking force is to be used for an attack again, we must anticipate a landing at night, as the landing and accommodations for the above planes returning from the second attack should commence at approximately 1500 hours. Therefore, preparations were made for the attacking of objective 15 ri by part of the second attacking force. However, because of the sinking of the TAIHO as the result of an explosion, this was not carried out. Despite this, most of the planes of the second attacking force on the TAIHO were transferred to the ZUIKAKU before the former sank.

b. The decision of the task force commander after the attack by the first attacking force.

In the event that the enemy losses are heavy, we shall advance to the area around the archipelago on the following day, the dawn of the 20th, and resume the air battle, and while destroying the enemy aircraft carrier groups, dispatch diversion attack forces and annihilate the enemy.

In the event that the losses inflicted by the first attacking wave on the enemy are not great, the task force will temporarily retreat to the west and attempt a decisive battle again, after reorganizing our forces and taking on additional supplies.

c. The sinking of the TAIHO.

At 0810 hours on the 19th, the TAIHO, immediately after dispatching the first attacking force, was attacked by enemy submarines. (It was one direct torpedo hit.) (Location: 12 degrees 24 minutes north latitude and 137 degrees 20 minutes east longitude). A terrific explosion occurred within the ship at 1432 hours and at 1628 hours it sank (location: 12 degrees five minutes north latitude and 138 degrees 12 minutes east longitude).

d. Sinking of the SHOKAKU.

The SHOKAKU was also attacked by enemy submarines at 1120 hours on the same day (four direct torpedo hits). As a result, fire broke out and at 1401 hours it also sank. (Location: 12.0 degrees north latitude and 137 degrees 46 minutes east longitude).

e. The strategy after the flagship had been changed.

When the TAIHO exploded at 1432 hours, we were in the midst of a raging air battle. As a result, it was decided that the flagship should be a vessel capable of communication and that the transferring should be done immediately. Utilizing the WAKATSUKI, which was in the field of vision, the commander transferred to the HAGURO at 1606 hours. After the arrangement of necessary emergency matters, he continued directing operations. At 1200 hours on the next day the ZUIKAKU became the flagship.

After the commander of the task force had boarded the HAGURO, he received notice of the battle results, despite the fact that the communications system of the above ship was incapable of completely handling the directing of air battle strategy. As the results of the air attacks were insufficient, it was decided that we should carry out another attack on the enemy task force. However, as there were only 100 planes capable of combat (the number of planes accommodated in aircraft carriers only), the necessity for reorganizing the forces was recognized.

Thus, it was decided that we should attack the enemy only after reorganizing our forces and obtaining the support of our land-based air strength. Consequently, the following orders concerning



the assembling of our forces were issued:

1800 hours:

From: Commander of the Task Force

To: Task Force

"Take a position at 0700 hours tomorrow, the 20th, as indicated in Battle Order No 3. Location of Unit "A": he, chi, chi, 00 (TN

14400) Course: 90 degrees. Speed: 16 knots."

2000 hours:

From: Commander of the Task Force

To: 1 and 2 Supply Units.

"The First and Second Supply Units will proceed to point he, chi, chi 00."

2245 hours:

From: Commander of the Task Force.

To: Task Force.

"The task force shall immediately proceed in a north-westerly direction and maneuver in such a way as to be able to receive supplies on the 21st."

Due to the above conditions, the following telegram was received from the Headquarters of the combined Fleet.

(1) "It has been planned to direct a running battle after reorganizing our forces and in accordance with the battle conditions."

(a) "On the twenty-first, the task force shall reorganize its strength and take on supplies. Disabled vessels shall proceed to the homeland. Also, part of the aircraft carriers shall proceed to the training base (LINGA)."

(b) On the twenty-second, according to the situation, you shall advance and direct your attacks against the enemy task force, co-operating with the land-based air units. After this has been done, you shall dispatch your air units to land bases. Thereafter, operations shall be carried on under the commander of

the 5 Base Air Unit. The aircraft carriers shall proceed to their training base.

- (c) After the twenty-second, according to the conditions, you shall engage most of your craft in mopping up operations around SAIPAN.

6. The battle on 20 June

At 0400 hours, units were sent out to reconnoiter the area east of the point where we were to take on supplies, as designated by the commander of the diversion attack force.

0700 hours: Upon combining the 1 and 2 Supply Units, we started taking on supplies.

In the morning, we received no reports as to the enemy conditions.

At 1130 hours, a patrol plane from PALAU reported seeing a task force 20 degrees and 540 nautical miles off WELELIU. This report had already been decided to be a mistake - the task force was Japanese. This was confirmed later when it revised its course by 5 degrees.

1200 hours: We dispatched one group (three carrier attack planes of the 3 Carrier Division) of reconnaissance planes and three more reconnaissance planes from the 1 Carrier Division to reconnoiter the enemy, discovered by the patrol plane near WELELIU.

In the afternoon, we received one notice after another from the first wave of reconnaissance planes of the diversion attack force that they had discovered airplanes of unknown origin, approximately 240 nautical miles east of the point where the supplies were being taken on. Also, at 1515 hours, the ATAGO reported that it had picked up enemy radio signals and thus it became clear that enemy seaplanes had discovered us. So, disregarding the taking on of supplies, we decided on an immediate retreat in the direction of 320 degrees.

At 1505 hours, we intercepted an enemy wire. Judging from the wire, it seemed that enemy planes had given their main unit a complete description of our task force.

Because of the above circumstances, at 1520 hours we ordered the 1 and 2 Supply Units to retreat immediately towards the west. At 1610

hours, a group of what seemed to be enemy carrier-borne planes were discovered flying west, approximately 200 nautical miles east of the flagship of our task force. At 1615 hours, our reconnaissance planes discovered an enemy unit, including aircraft carriers, (Centered around two aircraft carriers and two battleships) heading west. (Position: 14 degrees 20 minutes north latitude and 138 degrees 30 minutes east longitude).

We decided to attack this enemy unit with aerial torpedoes at dusk (with the intention of having the planes return to a land base). 1655 hours: We ordered the vanguard to keep in constant contact with this enemy.

1700 hours: Commenced the fourth disposition of forces and ordered practically all our vessels to enter the night battle as diversion attack forces.

1707 hours: The MOGAMI was included in the vanguard.

1720 hours: The torpedo bomber plane unit (three planes for keeping in contact with enemy and seven torpedo bomber planes) set out. The attacking of the enemy at night by the diversion attack forces was decided upon by considering the following points: first, the results of the torpedo unit and the possibility of air support the following morning; second, the reconnaissance of enemy units by land based aircraft; third, the fact that no enemy units existed in the vicinity other than the ones discovered. However, due to the fact that our torpedo bomber units could not locate the enemy and also because of the air-raid on our task force and supply units at about 1530 hours, which resulted in the loss of most of our carrier-borne airforce and thus obliterated any hopes for air support, the following order was issued to the diversion attack unit at 2100 hours:

"In the event that there is little opportunity for a battle at night, immediately retreat to the northwest."

On the twentieth, the 1 Carrier Division, the 2 Carrier Division and the diversion attack force were subjected to an air attack, starting at 1730 hours and lasting approximately one hour. The results were as follows:

a. Number of attacking planes: approximately 130 to 150 planes.

The following approximate number of planes attacked the 1 Carrier Division, the 2 Carrier Division the diversion attack force and the Supply Unit respectively: 50 planes, 40 planes, 20 planes and 35 planes.

b. Planes shot down:

More than 40 planes were shot down as a result of the air battle (results obtained by those of our planes which have not returned have not been recorded).

Approximately 70 planes were shot down as a result of anti-aircraft fire.

c. Damage (Refer to appended section):

1945 hours: Because of the prevailing circumstances, the task force was ordered by the commander of the combined fleet to break away from the enemy at opportune moments and act as directed by the commander.

1950 hours: Received a wire from the chief of staff of the combined fleet, stating that it was their intention to temporarily postpone pursuit action and, upon taking into consideration the prevailing circumstances, attempt a renewed attack.

2015 hours: We ordered the 1 and 2 Supply Units to immediately retreat towards the west and then head for NAKAGUSUKU harbor.

7. Actions after 21 June

21 June: The 3 Carrier Division was ordered to reconnoiter in the direction of 90 to 180 degrees from the fleet, within a radius of 350 nautical miles. However, the enemy was not sighted.

0715 hours: The "A" and "B" units were ordered to proceed to NAKAGUSUKU Bay and the diversion forces were ordered to GUIMARAS.

0818 hours: In the event that we discovered the enemy task force on this day, we were to commence the final attack using the entire strength of our air flotillas. Therefore, we gave orders to anticipate and make preparations for such.

	Explosions (destroyed by fire)	Not Returned	Crash Landed (Hit by enemy fire)	Died in Battle	Whereabouts unknown	Wounded
1 Air Flotilla	29	122	12	18	215	1
2 Air Flotilla	6	47	(15)	14	65	6
3 Air Flotilla	65		( 1)	93		
T O T A L	100	169	12 (16)	115	280	7

In the afternoon, we dispatched all the carrier attack planes of the 3 Carrier Division as the rear second wave of reconnaissance planes in search of the enemy but in vain.

On or about 1030 hours, it was decided that we had drawn away far enough from the enemy task force which was pursuing us.

1030 hours: Due to fuel conditions, the ASAGIRI was ordered to proceed to NAKAGUSUKU harbor alone, at a speed of 16 knots.

1545 hours: We ordered all units of the main force to enter NAKAGUSUKU harbor the next morning and the diversion attack force to cruise about the central and southern part of the PHILIPPINE Islands and wait in readiness. Also, the FUSO and the 1 and 2 Supply Units were transferred and included in the diversion attack force.

Later it was decided that, because of the enemy and the difficulties of refueling at sea, the diversion attack force would temporarily drop anchor at NAKAGUSUKU harbor, refuel, and then set out for GUIMARAS.

22 June: The diversion attack force and the main unit arrived at and entered NAKAGUSUKU harbor at 1300 and 1500 hours, respectively. Then the transferring of personnel was put into effect for the following vessels: TAIHO (ZUIKAKU), SHOKAKU (MAYA), HITAKA (HAYATAKA), Aircraft Carrier Number 601 (ZUIKAKU).

2303 hours: The Task Force was ordered by the commander of the combined fleet to proceed to and cruise in the vicinity of the western part of the inner sea (Excluding the FUSO and the NATORI).

23 June

0330 hours: All supply units were ordered to cruise in the vicinity of the western part of the inner sea.

0515 hours: The disposition of forces was changed as follows

Main Unit - Third Fleet

Diversion attack force - Second Fleet

1100 hours: Departure of task force from NAKAGUSUKU harbor

24 June

1800 hours: Arrival of task force at the western part of the inner sea

The operational outline of the 1 Task Force from 13 June to 24 is as follows:

### 8 Results

#### a. Battle results.

(1) The results of the first attack force were not definite and could not be verified, due to the great number of our planes which did not return and also due to our inability to view the damages inflicted because of enemy fighter plane interference. However, estimated damages inflicted on the enemy are as follows:

- (a) The attack planes of the 3 Carrier Division made direct hits on one battleship (TN Abbreviated letters not clear) and one light cruiser.
- (b) After the planes of the 1 Carrier Division had attacked, they saw smoke rising from four aircraft carriers.
- (c) The condition of the enemy just prior to the attack by the 1 Carrier Division

(1) One aircraft carrier burning.

One battleship emitting white smoke.

#### (2) Decision

- (a) The attack of the 3 Carrier Division had caused fires aboard one aircraft carrier and one battleship or cruiser.
- (b) The attack of the 1 Carrier Division caused fires aboard three or four aircraft carriers. (Delete one in the event that one carrier was the vessel set afire by the 3 Carrier Division). The final results are that four or five aircraft carriers and one battleship or heavy cruiser were sunk or damaged.

#### (3) Number of enemy planes shot down

- (a) Although the results were not clear on account of our numerous casualties, we had shot down at least 50 enemy planes on the nineteenth, judging from the statements of the pilots who returned (they had shot down 14 planes with nine of their own) and from the number of planes involved in the battle.

- (b) We had shot down at least 40 planes in air battle on the twentieth.

The number of enemy planes shot down by our anti-aircraft fire was approximately 70.

In the final results, at least 160 of the enemy aircraft had been definitely shot down.

(Note) According to the battle reports of the American side:

There was some damage inflicted to their aircraft carriers by near misses. The number of planes lost was nine.

Moreover, it seems that our airplane units were attacked by enemy fighters while in cruising formation, and practically all our planes were attacked and shot down before our fighter planes could protect them.

b. Damage.

(1) Damaged Surface Craft:

Battle of 19 June. TAIHO, SHOKAKU sunk.

Battle of 20 June.

- (a) ZUIYAKU--One direct hit to the rear of the bridge and six near misses; no trouble while cruising under combat conditions.
- (b) HITAKA--Subjected to joint attack by torpedoes and aircraft; steering impossible due to one direct aerial torpedo hit; suffered submarine attack while drifting and one hit caused a large fire aboard ship; finally sank at 1932 hours.
- (c) HAYATAKA--Two direct hits near the smoke stack and total of six near misses; take-off and landing of aircraft difficult; no trouble in cruising.
- (d) RYUHO--Small damage due to near miss; no trouble in cruising or participating in combat.
- (e) CHIYODA--One direct hit aft the flight deck; small damage; no difficulty in cruising or participating in combat.
- (f) HARUNA--One direct hit on the after deck and near misses; seepage into powder magazines; in need of repair at dry docks; for the time being, no trouble in cruising or participating in combat.



- (g) MAYA—Fire in left torpedo chamber caused by near miss.  
In need of repair at drydocks. For the time being, no difficulty in cruising or participating in combat.
  - (h) GENYŌ MARU—Great damage to machinery by three near misses; navigation impossible because of heavy leakage; abandoned ship (ship disposed of by gunfire from UZUKI).
  - (i) SEIYŌ MARU—Large fire due to enemy bombing; abandoned ship (ship disposed of by torpedoes from YUKIKAZE).
  - (j) HAYANAMI—One direct hit, two near misses; small damage; no difficulty in cruising or participating in combat.
- (2) Damage to Flying Units: (TH See chart on following page)

## Chapter III. Base Air Units

The commander of the 5 Base Air Force (Commander-in-Chief of the 1 Air Fleet), Vice-Adm SUMIDA, Kakiji took direct command of the 61 Air Flotilla with headquarters located on TINIAN Island. The Commander of the 22 Air Flotilla and the commander of the 26 Air Flotilla, their headquarters respectively located at TRUK and PAIAU, conducted operations in the CAROLINE and MARIANA Areas, while the Commander of the 23 Air Flotilla, his headquarters located on KESDARI\*, conducted operations in the Area north of AUSTRALIA.

Furthermore, as of 15 June, the main force of the YOKOSUKA Navy Air Unit had been placed under the command of the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet by a navy directive of Imperial General Headquarters; the YAWATA Unit was organized with this unit and ordered to proceed to IWOJIMA, where it was placed under the command of the commander of the 5 Base Air Force.

As a result of the foregoing, practically all of the decisive strength of our naval land-based air units at that time were to have participated in Operation A under the command of the commander of the 5 Base Air Unit.

However, prior to the beginning of the decisive battle, approximately one half the strength of the 5 Base Air Force (The 2 and 3 Attack Groups) was ordered to transfer operations to the area north of AUSTRALIA in order to participate in the operations there, particularly in the BIAK Operation. The major part of the strength ordered to participate in these operations was lost while being transferred, and in frequent small-scale attacks.

The reasons for this were, basically, the incompleteness of base facilities, the personnel's being unaccustomed to the newer planes (land-bombers, SUISEI, etc.) and the poor health of the crewmen (Malaria and other illnesses). Aside from these, it was difficult to expect a decisive strength in view of the operational waste.

The remaining strength in the other Marianas Areas was largely exhausted by attacks of the enemy task force after 11 June. Until the beginning of the decisive battle, around 18 June, it was difficult to even organize a systematic attack force. In the end, only the 2 Air Attack Force and the YAWATA Unit of the IWO Area remained. At the time the decisive battle started, the nucleus of the 2 Air Attack Force was to be dispatched to the GUAM Area to participate

in the decisive battle. However, air battles were fought with enemy fighter craft in the skies over GUAM, whereby many enemy planes were shot down but we also suffered considerable damage. Later, with a small force, all they did was to carry out attacks on enemy vessels in the SAIPAN vicinity.

The YAWATA Unit again engaged the enemy task force in battle, but their potential as a decisive force was lost before they were able to strike the death blow.

Thus, even the 5 Base Air Force, which was organized out of practically the entire strength of our base air units, was disbanded because, from the very beginning, it could not make an effective assault in the decisive battle of operation A or even provide suitable reconnaissance in obtaining enemy information for our task force.

The reason for the failure and near self-destruction of the 5 Base Air Force was the tactical shortcomings of the command, the inadequate training of crew members and the lack of base facilities in the Mariana and Caroline Areas (either in time or material).

#### Chapter IV. Submarine Force

The commander of the Advanced Forces (Commander-in-Chief of the 6 Fleet) Vice-Adm TAKAKI, Takeo (高木武雄), with headquarters on SAIPAN, directed the entire operation.

The total number of submarines used in this operation was 20, which was practically all that our navy could use in the decisive battle at that time.

As reconnaissance of enemy bases in this operation was principally conducted by aircraft, and as the submarines were mainly concentrated and used in the neighboring waters of the MARIANA Islands, no submarine warfare which had any direct influence on Operation A was conducted. Furthermore, this subject is fully explained in the history of submarine warfare.