

HELICOPTERS USED IN U-BOAT PATROLS

Capt. L. P. Lovett, Navy Public Relations Chief, Sees Them as 'Secret of Success'

CRAFT BASED ON SHIPS

Newspaper Promotion Group Hears Expert Tell of Fight Against Submarines

Captain Leland P. Lovett, Director of Public Relations of the Navy, revealed here last night that the 500-mile "gap" in mid-Atlantic where the German submarines have taken their biggest toll, was now being patrolled by ship-based helicopters. "We think they will be the secret of success against the submarine," he said.

This is the "gap" that has remained beyond the effective submarine patrol limits even of such long-range planes as the Catalinas, Flying Fortresses and Liberators. Up to the present it could not be patrolled adequately either from the British or the American shore.

Captain Lovett told the National Newspaper Promotion Association, meeting at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in connection with the annual convention of the American Newspaper Publishers Association, that "the aircraft best fitted to do this job is the helicopter."

In agreement with the findings of the British Admiralty, which has indicated its interest in the helicopter, Captain Lovett described this aircraft as the one already fairly well known for its capacity to lift itself vertically by rotating blades which can then be tilted to fly it in any direction.

Usefulness Is Stressed

The usefulness of the helicopter in the midocean "gap," he explained, arises from the fact that it can rise from the deck of a merchantman and return to it; it can hover in midair over a submarine or follow its evolutions easily, with a manoeuvrability that enables it to dodge gunfire. It can drop depth charges and it can fly, if need be, at 100 miles an hour, in making its outboard patrol from the merchant ship it is protecting.

Beyond this unveiling of the helicopter as a war plane, Captain Lovett said he was unable to reveal to what extent helicopters were in use in the mid-Atlantic "gap."

"At the present time we are much more than holding our own in the greatest naval task of all," he said, "and that is the battle of the Atlantic.

"The High Command knows that if Britain is to live and fight efficiently the United States and Great Britain must convoy a minimum of 700 to 800 ships across the Atlantic each month. They know full well that in elevating Admiral Doenitz Hitler has indicated that he is risking the last throw of the dice on the slim hope that the German submarine will prove decisive in the war at sea, thereby halting the ever-growing flood of men, munitions and supplies across the four or five routes of the North Atlantic.

"To lick the sub is certainly one of the most important jobs ahead of us—a job that must be successfully accomplished before this war can be won.

"Today it is estimated that the Germans have in the vicinity of 400 to 500 submarines, of which about one-third is on patrol night and day. Each is many times more powerful than the underwater fleet which wrought such damage in the First World War.

U-Boat Has Double Hull

"The modern German submarine can make port in some instances after its entire conning tower is shot away. It is constructed with a double hull, with oil compartments placed between two hulls, so as to absorb the shock of depth charges exploding outside twenty feet from the hull. The fact that a depth charge brings up a patch of oil is no longer incontrovertible evidence that an enemy submarine has been finished. Often these wounded submarines simply limp back to port for repairs, and soon are again at sea.

"We know that Germany is building submarines at top rate. We think at times that they are turning out from twenty to thirty a month.

"They are sizable craft, better than 220 feet over-all, with a submerged displacement of 882 tons, and carry a crew of forty-five men. They have a surface cruising speed of 17½ knots, which can be pushed up to twenty knots.

"They have an economical cruising radius of 14,520 miles. They can come out from Germany or France, stay on patrol a few weeks and go home without refueling. Each carries a dozen or thirteen torpedoes, as well as a quick-firing bow gun of better than four-inch caliber to pick off stragglers or lone ships, economizing torpedoes."

As to the Aleutians, all that Captain Lovett would say was that "we consider that area most important" and that the box score of Japanese ships sunk and planes destroyed "is most impressive and proves that on the part of Japan this has been their greatest failure in the way of amphibious warfare."

He said there were other theatres of operation in which our main effort must be directed at present, citing Midway as a compensating "great victory for our arms," and reminding his hearers that "the war in the Pacific is a matter of supply lines—cargo transported over long distances, escorted by men-of-war."

Captain Lovett said the Navy never withheld news because of its psychological effect. The casualty lists of the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard at the present time, he added, approximate 25,000 and "they will grow."

"We are the winner," he declared, "but the day is not yet in sight."