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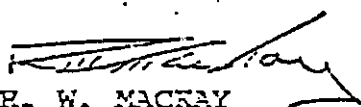
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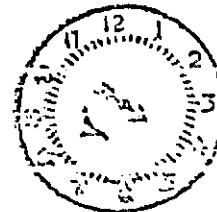
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R. W. MACRAE
LCDR, USN

Mr. Oscar Wood
Vitro Corporation
Building #3
14000 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

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COMMANDER IN CHIEF, ATLANTIC FLEET

VOLUMES II - III

COMMANDER TASK FORCE TWENTY - FOUR

COMMANDER GREENLAND PATROL

FIRST DRAFT NARRATIVE

PREPARED BY THE HISTORICAL SECTION,

COMMANDER IN CHIEF, ATLANTIC FLEET

**ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY OF THE U. S. ATLANTIC FLEET
IN WORLD WAR II**

VOLUME II

Commander Task Force Twenty-Four

**COMMANDER IN CHIEF
UNITED STATES ATLANTIC FLEET
1946**

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY OF THE U.S. ATLANTIC FLEET
IN WORLD WAR II

VOLUME II:
COMMANDER TASK FORCE 24

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CHAPTER I

FORMATION OF THE SUPPORT FORCE

When the harbingers of the European war clouds began to loom over the Atlantic horizon in 1939 and 1940 in the form of expanding Axis submarine operations they found the United States not totally unprepared for the storm. During the summer of 1940 the Germans had made several attempts to establish weather stations in Northeast Greenland and to meet this threat to the Western Hemisphere the United States Government began formulating plans for the establishment of bases in the North Atlantic. Commander E. H. Smith, USCG, who had charge of the Coast Guard ice-berg and weather patrols in the Greenland area, and who knew more about this section of the world than almost anyone else, was instrumental in providing much needed information.

In August of 1940 the Government had under consideration the establishment of United States Bases in Newfoundland, and on the 2nd of September Great Britain granted the United States the use of the Avalon Peninsula for this purpose. Permission was granted in the form of a note from Lord Lothian to Secretary of State, Cordell Hull. The note states, "His Majesty's Government will secure the grant freely, and without consideration of the lease, for entrance thereto, and the operation and protection thereof

on the Avalon Peninsula and on the Southern Coast of Newfoundland."

On 16 September 1940 Admiral Greenslade, as head of a Presidential Investigating Committee, arrived in St. John's Newfoundland aboard the cruiser USS ST. LOUIS, and from there proceeded to a town called Argentia, located on the Western part of the Avalon Peninsula. The Admiral and his party hired a car from a man living in the nearby village of Placentia, and toured the surrounding countryside. Afterwards it was stated by the driver of the car that he believed the Admiral had decided to establish a base at Argentia. In reality, after the initial decision was made to set up a Newfoundland Base, little other deciding was necessary, as Argentia was the only logical spot on the Avalon Peninsula. It was the only location connected to St. John's by both road and rail, having a harbor suitable for a fleet anchorage that was ice free the year around.

During December of 1940 the United States Navy's "brains" in the War Plans Division came out with a plan to meet the Axis more than half way. On the assumption that sooner or later we would go to war against the Axis, and this obviated the fact that we would be sending an increasingly large number of ships and supplies to Great

Britain, Captain H. W. Hill and Commander F. P. Sherman submitted a memorandum to the Director of the War Plans Division outlining an escort-of-convoy system. The Hill-Sherman assumptions provided a basis for preliminary planning and stated that the United States would assume responsibilities for: (1) the protection of all trans-oceanic shipping and (2) the protection of the approaches to Northwest Scotland.¹ They also anticipated the possibility of operating naval forces from advanced bases in Scotland, Ireland, and other localities in the North Atlantic.

The last week in December of 1940 Mr. E. E. Davis, representative of the civilian contractors,² arrived at Argentia to make preliminary arrangements for construction, and work actually started on the 29th of December, 1940. About 9 January, 1941, the SS RICHARD PECK, a former Long Island steamer, arrived in Argentia from New York with contractor's workmen on board. She tied up at a pier and

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1. Memo for Director War Plans Division, Sec.Doc.No. 27432, Op. File No. (SC) A16-1FF13, 6 February, 1941.
 2. George A. Fuller and Merritt-Chapman-Scott Co., operating as a joint venture. Initial work was authorized as an ammendment to contract NOY 4175 for construction of aviation facilities NAS, Quonset, R.I. This expedited work until a new contract could be negotiated---NOY 4631 on 28 January, 1941.

became the central quarters for the workmen and construction work on the Argentia Base really got under way.

On 25 January, 1941, the Marine detachment of the Third Provisional Company arrived at Argentia aboard the USS NIBLACK. This company ³ was quartered on RICHARD PECK until 19 June when their barracks on the base were completed. Records show that some of the Marines even had their families aboard RICHARD PECK, and for quite some time the ship was used to serve as barracks for both service and civilian personnel until more servicable quarters could be built on the beach. Several weeks after their arrival the Marines put up a monument in commemoration of their landing. The inscription on it reads as follows:

"On this site on 13 February, 1941, a detachment of U.S. Marines, under the Command of Major H.E. Dunkelberger, USMC, raised the first U.S. Flag over a Lend-Lease Base acquired from the Government of Great Britain. Argentia was occupied by this detachment on 25 January, 1941.

During the latter part of 1940 and first few months of 1941 the Navy "big-wigs" in Washington mulled over proposed ideas and projected plans, and gradually things began to take shape. In working out a war plan, still on the assumption that the United States was to protect all trans-oceanic shipping and the approaches to Northwest Scotland,

3. This was composed of 108 enlisted men and 3 officers.

the force that was to assume the latter task was referred to as the "British Isles Detachment." However, it was changed for security purposes, and became known instead as the "Support Force."

On 10 February, Admiral Turner, Director of War Plans Division, proposed that as required under War Plan 46 (WPL-46), "If the Navy is to be ready, if required, to despatch promptly an effective force to operate from bases overseas in connection with the protection of shipping, the force must be equipped, assembled, and trained." He recommended that there be established in the Atlantic Fleet, not later than 1 March, 1941, a Task Force⁴ to meet this necessity. Five days later Admiral Stark, Chief of Naval Operations, directed that the necessary steps be taken to establish what was to become known as the Support Force. He said:

For the present, the employment of units of this force will be limited to preparation and training for anti-submarine warfare, the protection of shipping and self defense against submarine and air attack. In order to compensate somewhat for the withdrawal of these units from the neutrality patrols, CinClant will be authorized to use for neutrality patrol duty in the Caribbean, two squadrons from Patrol Wing Three, and all inshore squadrons which may be placed in commission.

On 24 February 1941 Admiral R. E. Ingersoll, USN, sent out a general announcement mentioning Rear Admiral A. L.

4. This Task Force was to include 18 destroyers, 9 1500 ton destroyers, 1 AD, 42 VPBs, 1 AV, 2 AVDs and 1 AK

Bristol, USN, as Commander of the Support Force, and the same day the Chief of Naval Operations sent out a secret letter, saying that as of 1 March, 1941, the Support Force of the Atlantic Fleet was established.

Since this Force may be engaged on distant service beyond the scope of normal supply and maintenance lines, it is desired that it be fully supplied and equipped as is practicable at the earliest practicable date. The special requirements are being studied and will be communicated by the Chief of Naval Operations through normal channels to the various bureaus concerned, as rapidly as they can be determined. Likewise, the location of future bases and points of assembly of materials will be decided upon in the immediate future. The addressees are desired to initiate at once such action as can be foreseen and to confer freely with the Force Commander and his Staff on details. This project is classified as urgent. Priority, as regards personnel, material, and logistic requirements, will be directed by the CNO as necessary.⁵

It is to be noted that the Force was comprised almost entirely of destroyers and patrol planes, that there were no battleships, carriers, or cruisers.

On the 26th of February Admiral Bristol received his orders from the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, and they read as follows:

1. When directed by the Chief of Naval Operations, you will regard yourself detached from duty in Naval Operations, Navy Department, and from such other duty as may have been assigned you; you will proceed to the port in which the Flagship of Commander, Support Force, Atlantic Fleet may be, and on March 1, 1941,
-
5. CNO sec. ltr. ser. 016923 of 24 February, 1941, to all Bureaus and Officers of the Navy Dept., Force Commanders; Admiral Bristol; DesFlot 8; PatWing 5 (VPBs 51,52,55, 56) PRAIRIE, CURTIS, GEORGE E BADGER, BELKNAP.

report to the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, if present, otherwise by despatch, for duty involving flying as Commander, Support Force, Atlantic Fleet.

2. These orders constitute your assignment to duty in part of the Aeronautic Organization of the Navy and your existing detail to duty involving flying continues in effect.

/s/ C.W. NIMITZ.

The same day Admiral King, Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, sent out a letter to all Type Commanders, modifying the existing Task Organization of the Atlantic Fleet as of 1 March, 1941,⁶ and on 28 February Bristol received an official letter from Admiral King which read to the effect that he was designated as Commander Support Force. It further stated:

You will take all necessary steps to ensure at the earliest practicable date the complete material readiness of the Support Force, dealing with the Department where such action will expedite matters in hand. Submarine Squadron Twenty, comprises a group of submarines to be prepared for distant service. By copy of this letter, Commander Submarines is directed to confer with you regarding training operations which will be mutually beneficial to the Support Force and Submarine Squadron Twenty. ⁷

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6. Present Support Group becomes Escort Force and other groups become forces. Constitute Support Force Commanded by Rear Admiral Bristol consisting of destroyers flotilla composed of PRAIRIE, Desrons 30, 31, 7 (less SAMPSON plus PLUNKETT), and nine patrol wings composed of ALBERMARLE, BELKNAP, GEORGE E BADGER, Patrols 51, 52, 55, 56 carry out intensive training for distant service. Rear Admiral Bristol assigned command Northern Patrol to which is detailed SupFor plus THRUSH.
 7. CinCLant conf. ltr. ser. 0132 to RAdm. Bristol, 28 Feb. 1941. SubSquad 20 was composed of SubDivs 11, 43, 41 (less R-18, R-19, R-20.)

As ordered, the Support Force came into being as a part of the United States Atlantic Fleet on the first of March; on the third Admiral Bristol broke his flag as Force Commander on board the USS PRAIRIE in Norfolk, Va. He remained in Norfolk until the latter part of the month and while there he sent out his first Operation Plan, 1-41. In this he lists Commander H.M. Mullinnix as Commander Patrol Wing Support Force. This plan, which in reality is a tentative operation order, stated the "IRIS" shipping in the Fifth Naval District waters should be seized. "Iris" is a collective expression referring to Germany, Italy, Japan, France, and Denmark, and although the seizure of shipping was ordered, the plan was never carried out. Later, on March 18th, the Task Organization of the Atlantic Fleet was promulgated, showing the Task Organization of the Support Force, which was designated as Task Force 6. The Northern Patrol, of which Admiral Bristol was also in charge, is listed here under the Support Force.⁸

8. CinClant conf. ser. 0200 Op Order No. 2-41, 18 March, 1941.

Task Organization:

SUPPORT FORCE - RAdm. Bristol

- 6.1 DesFlot
PRAIRIE
DesRon 7 (less SAMPSON plus PLUNKETT)
DesRons 30, 31.
- 6.2 PatWing
PatRons 51, 52.
PatRons 55, 56.
ALBERMARLE, BELKNAP, GEORGE E BADGER.

The operation order stated that the Support Force was to intensify all practicable readiness for anti-air, anti-submarine warfare, and protection of shipping; also to prepare for distant service in high altitudes. The Northern Patrol was to be ready to investigate reports of potential enemy vessels and other non-American activities in the North Atlantic. Operating bases were designated at Norfolk, Bermuda, Narragansett Bay, and in due course, Argentia, Newfoundland. About the end of the month the Admiral shifted his operating base from Norfolk to Newport, Rhode Island, and began in earnest the intensive training program he had outlined for the Support Force. During the time Bristol was in Washington and Norfolk he had been picking and assembling his Staff,⁹ and that he was a good

Footnote #8 cont'd.

NORTHERN PATROL - RAdm. Bristol

6.3 THRUSH, NOA, HAMILTON, DAHLGREN

6.4 ScoRons 2D1, 5D4

9. SupFor personnel, according to LanFlt.Comp.Roster, Oct., 1941:

RearAdm	A.L.Bristol	Commander Support Force
Capt.	L.E.Denfeld	Aide & Chief of Staff
Capt.	F.W.Pennoyer	Material Officer
Cdr.	R.B.Carney	Operations Officer
Cdr.	L.T.Haugen	Force Constructor(At Navy Dept.)
Cdr.	E.T.Wooldridge	Ass't Operations Officer
Cdr.	S.H.Ingersoll	Ass't Operations Officer
LtCdr.	L.McKee	Ship Maintenance Officer
LtCdr.	J.V.Carney	Aircraft Engineer (NAS Norfolk)
LtCdr.	T.J.Raftery	Aerol.(Albermarle)
LtCdr.	E.W.Rawlins	Communications Officer
LtCdr.	H.B.Miller	Aide & Flag Secretary

judge of people is evidenced by the excellent job they did under him and later on in the war.

The formation of the Support Force was given a high priority, and this gave the Admiral the chance to select a group of very able men to serve on his Staff. Notable among them were Captain Denfeld and Pennoyer, and Commanders Mullinnix, Carney, and Wooldridge. Bristol's Staff, after it was organized, was a very smooth running outfit, and this was largely due to the selection of personnel, the way in which he handled them, and his contacts in Washington. Bristol had friends in Washington with whom he was closely affiliated, and who knew his problems and the way in which he liked them handled. These people were usually in key positions, and a good example of this is the way in which he was able to accomplish things in Naval Operations through Captain Corn and Commander Gallery. He also carried on a great deal of business by personal correspondence, and in this way anticipated his desires for other people, which in turn facilitated the smooth running of his organization.

Bristol says, in a letter written on March 23rd, that

Footnote #9 cont'd

LtCdr.(NR)	R.Wanamaker	Intelligence Officer
LtCdr.	M.B.Gurney	Aircraft Maintenance Officer
Lt.	G.W.Ashford	Aide & Flag Lieutenant
Capt.(MC)	J.W.Vann	Medical Officer (Albermarle)
Cdr.(SC)	A.W.Buck	Supply Officer
Lt.(SC)	J.W.Boundy	Naval Air Station, Quonset
Col.USMC	S.A.Woods Jr.	Marine Officer

Present information leads to the conclusion that in the event of distant operations by this Force from advanced bases, PRAIRIE will base at Belfast, and that additional repair facilities will be required at other points. 'Alongside' facilities are being considered for Londonderry and in the Clyde Area. In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that repair and maintenance facilities equivalent to two tenders of the MELVILLE type be immediately assembled, and at the earliest practicable moment shipped, and installed at the locations finally determined. Finally, it is recommended that the repair and maintenance facilities for Londonderry be approved now, that the second shore repair unit be determined on the return of Captain Denfeld, and that both projects be lumped together under a request for the highest priority.¹⁰

There was not the problem of reconnaissance in connection with the choice of bases in the British Isles that there was in the North Atlantic, but there was still a problem of selection. Admiral Bristol had suggested Loch Erne as the principal base for United States Patrol plane squadrons in Northern Ireland.¹¹ Loch Erne had railroad and road connections with both Belfast and Londonderry, and Bristol said that, although at that time there were no existing base facilities there, the British were building a ramp for seaplanes. The British considered this a good "Big Boat" operating area, but were themselves operating principally from Oban and Loch Ryan at the south end of the Clyde. Admiral Bristol recommended that the United States take as rapid steps as possible in preparing Loch

10. Bristol's sec. ltr. ser. 007 of 23 March, 1941 to CNO. ✓

11. ComSupFor sec. ltr. ser. op-12D-dre of 19 March, 1941 to CNO. ✓

Erne as a base from which to operate a minimum of four patrol squadrons before we became actively engaged in the war. ^{Carney} Bristol's acting Chief of Staff, while Captain Denfield was in the British Isles inspecting advance base sites, advised all possible use of training facilities during a two week period of fleet mobilization in order to facilitate coordination when it came time to move into these bases. Commander Carney also referred to a British despatch (ALUSNA 151700) which noted the following facilities: "minor repair base Londonderry; large tender location Belfast; MELVILLE or shore facilities Londonderry; ODD docking facilities Londonderry; and floating drydock for 1500 tonners at Belfast." Loch Erne was noted as No. 1 location for planes and Loch Foyle as a secondary base to the former. Oban would be available for half of the planes at a later date. He said, "we must bring all ground equipment with us and ground facilities must arrive first. Planes can be hauled out of water now at Oban, but not at Loch Erne. Ample living and eating quarters available at Loch Erne and runway being started."¹²

On the same day, 21 March, 1941, the Chief of Naval Operations sent out a letter in which he assumed that the United States would go to war and, as a result, these bases

12. Memo from C/S Carney (no serial) of 21 March, 1941 to ComSupFor. ✓

would be necessary. He described two bases which are apparently Londonderry and Loch Erne, although he does not mention them by name. He also ordered the assembly of Support Force material and personnel, the latter at Atlantic Coast Air Stations, and the former was to be drawn out of what had already been ordered. Material which could not be drawn was to be contracted for, final contracts deferred until provisions of the lend-lease bill became effective. Finally, he stated that the strictest secrecy must be maintained with regard to this project.¹³

Faced with the problem of operating from advanced bases there were several factors which Admiral Bristol had to take into consideration. One of these was logistics. This was partially taken care of by the Naval Supply Depot at Quonset, Rhode Island, as here were assembled many of the things that he would need, especially for advanced air bases. Here again, is an example of Bristol's putting one of his men in the key position. Lieutenant Boundy, (SC) USN, a member of the Admiral's Staff and who knew the set-up, was on the spot. He retained materials on hand and ordered what would be needed; later, when the Support Force needed them, they were available when they could not be obtained elsewhere on the East Coast. However, despite the

13. CNO sec. ser. 030912 of 21 March, 1941 to all Bureaus.

Quonset arrangement Commander W.A. Buck, Support Force, Supply Officer, informed Admiral Bristol, "it is practically certain that a cargo ship should accompany the Force when proceeding to the area of advanced operation. Special material and aviation material considerably in excess capacity is being requested continually." In this connection, since it became more and more obvious that a great quantity of equipment would need to be transported, Admiral Bristol wrote to the Commander Train, Atlantic Fleet, advising him as to approximately what would be needed in the way of facilities for advanced bases.

Another problem was that of hospitalization for Support Force personnel. Bristol saw fit to write to the Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery,

The Navy Department has accepted the principle of establishing an air base overseas for the use of units of the Support Force and is now lining up material for shipment. Personnel for the base, including the Commanding Officer, are being selected. It also appears probable that one destroyer base will be established, and secondary air bases may become necessary. It is recommended that a comprehensive hospitalization plan be developed, based on the principles of the early establishment of a base hospital or hospitals to care for the sick or battle casualties to be expected in an original force of approximately 7,000 men. 14

Bristol's first mention of Argentia, Newfoundland, comes about 13 March, 1941, in a letter to Admiral King concerning Support Force advanced bases. In it he

14. ComSupFor sec. ltr. ser. 099 of 25 March, 1941, to ChBuMed.

conjectured that if the movement of the Force was ordered after the 1st of May, plane take-off would be on or after the 15th of May. By then the northern route would be available; there would be no difficulties because of plane radius.

The only problem involved is the establishment of an adequate base in the Newfoundland area, presumably Argentia. None of the facilities of this base now under construction will be available before late summer, and all plane services will have to be by tender.

Bristol's studies so far indicated the advisability of having all tenders, namely the ALBERMARLE, BELKNAP, and BADGER available on the other side when the planes arrived. If this was done it would mean tender services from outside the Force. He said:

I will know more concerning this when Denfeld returns from London. It appears that the minimum which will be required to base a squadron at a time in Argentia would be one AVD plus a tanker for additional general service and probably additional gasoline. If it is shown to be practicable to hold one of my own small tenders on this side until after the flight, I will need only a tanker from outside sources. I am discarding entirely the CURTISS from my calculations, as presumably she will be in the Navy Yard by the time any Northern flight is practicable. 15

A mailgram from the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, on 18 April directed the Commander Support Force to make ready a minimum of six patrol planes and one tender to

15. Bristol's personal letter of 13 March, 1941 to Admiral King.

proceed and base at Argentia if called for, and include a plan for effecting transit to Argentia. It assumed that the Task Organization would support certain Task Forces of the Atlantic Fleet or augment the Atlantic Fleet Patrol organization. These planes were to remain in readiness to proceed to Argentia and operate from there as directed.

As far as the Support Force Patrol Wing was concerned, Commander Mullinnix did not have much with which to work at the start because of the four squadrons ordered to the Support Force, only one was available, and this one was "seriously deficient in training and lacking items of equipment." Therefore it was decided by the Chief of Naval Operations that this squadron, VP-52, be concentrated for correcting defects. The Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, was authorized by the former to discontinue the neutrality patrol from Quonset, Rhode Island, until adequate numbers of planes became available. Except for emergencies, the Support Force was to concentrate its efforts on training and preparation.

Admiral Bristol's plans to operate planes from the British Isles obviated the necessity for trans-Atlantic facilities. He informed Admiral King,

Preliminary plans for trans-Atlantic flights by the patrol squadrons of the Support Force include a stop-over at Argentia. It is considered desirable to have

all aircraft tender facilities of this Force stationed in the distant area before planes take off from Argentia. In order to accomplish the foregoing, it will be necessary to have tender facilities and sufficient fuel for stopping off at Argentia, and it is requested that the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet designate the vessel or vessels to provide such facilities. In the event that no additional vessels can be provided, Commander Support Force intends to leave one AVD at Argentia. This alternative plan will necessitate a tanker to be stationed at Argentia for stowage of reserve fuel and to assist in accomodating personnel. 16

Also about this time United States Naval Observers in the British Isles, accompanied by British authorities, were inspecting various sites for United States bases in the United Kingdom. On the 5th of April, 1941, the Chief of Naval Operations wrote the Senior Naval Observer in London concerning the establishment, operation, and maintenance of advanced air and destroyer bases in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

On commencement of operations overseas Commander Support Force proposes to operate destroyers from Londonderry and Belfast in North Ireland, and patrol planes from Loch Erne and Loch Foyle in North Ireland, and from Oban in Scotland.

It is proposed to commence construction immediately of two advance air bases, one at Loch Erne and the other at Loch Ryan (Stranraer); and on two destroyer bases, one at Londonderry, and the other at Gare Loch, Scotland.

As soon as the construction of these bases is sufficiently advanced to permit operations from them, even to a limited extent, it is proposed to operate

16. ComSupFor sec. ltr. ser. 006 of 23 March, 1941, to CinClant.

patrol planes, shore based, from Loch Erne and Loch Ryan and destroyers from Londonderry and Gare Loch.

The 24th of April found Admiral Bristol and the PRAIRIE back in Norfolk again and at this time he sent out his Operation Plan No. 1-41. This is not to be confused with his previous Plan 1-41 which had to do with the seizure of "Iris" shipping in the Fifth Naval District waters. It is to be noted that in this plan the Support Force is now Task Force 4, and is made up of three Task Groups. ¹⁷

17. SupFor Operation Plan No. 1-41 sec. ser. 0019 of 24 April, 1941.

TASK ORGANIZATION:

- 4.1 Destroyer Flotilla - Capt. J.L. Kauffman
- 4.2 Patrol Wing - Commander H.L. Mullinnix
- 4.3 Minesweeps - Lt. Comdr. W.R. McCaleb

The Support Force (TF 4) will intensify all practicable readiness for anti-air, anti-submarine warfare, and protection of shipping. Prepare for distant service in high latitude. Maintain readiness to support Task Force One, Two, Three, Six, and Seven as may be directed.

Destroyer Flotilla continue intensive training with due appreciation to maintenance of satisfactory material readiness. Base Narragansett Area. Devote special effort to training sound operators, A.A. look-outs, and perfecting escort tactics. Normal employment will provide for one-third gunnery, one-third tactical exercises, one-third mutual training exercises, and one-third upkeep.

Patrol Wing intensify training and improvement of material readiness. Tender bases operations in Newport and Argonia areas as prescribed. Emphasize exercises in order of prescribed priority.

Minesweeps devote major effort to improve material readiness. Collaborate with Commander Inshore Patrol, Fifth Naval District, in operational training. Base NOB Norfolk.

About the first of May the Chief of Naval Operations sent a letter to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, which was concerned with protection by the Army of Naval Bases in Ireland and Scotland. In this letter he reminded the Chief of Staff that the Navy was building four bases in Ireland and Scotland. The material that was ready and about 1,000 key men were to be transported about the end of May and the four bases were to be established as follows: Destroyer bases at Londonderry, Ireland, and Gare Loch, Scotland; air bases at Loch Erne, Ireland, and Loch Ryan, Scotland. (These later were referred to as bases 1, 2, A, and B, respectively.) Admiral Stark stated that,

Rear Admiral A.L. Bristol, U.S. Navy, has been assigned to command the naval forces which will use these bases. Recently several members of his staff visited the United Kingdom, and in collaboration with British officials, spent some time in inspecting and selecting the base sites. Captain L.E. Denfeld, USN, Rear Admiral Bristol's Chief of Staff, is now on duty in the Navy Department in connection with the preparation of the expedition and construction of the bases. He is, therefore, available for consultation by Army Officers on questions relating to the defense of the bases. It is assumed that the Army will plan to establish ground and air forces for the protection of these bases. It is recommended that the Army make a study of the necessary defenses and inform the CNO as to what defenses will be provided, and when, in view of the probability that Axis forces would probably attack our Naval Forces as soon as possible after their arrival. Present plans contemplate the dispatch of the Naval Forces to the British Isles on 10 M. It would be very important that the Army Defense Units sail at the same time. 18

18. CNO sec. ltr. ser. p48612 of 2 May, 1941 to C/S USA.

About the middle of May, Bristol, aboard the PRAIRIE and having returned to Newport, sent out Modification No. 2 to Operation Plan 1-41. (Modification No. 1 stated that the Chief of Naval Operations would transmit known location of Axis forces and told Support Force ships to stay clear of British Naval Forces and convoys. It also provided the stationing of Coast Guard weather reporting and ice patrol ships, but in no way changed the Task Organization.)¹⁹ However, Modification No. 2²⁰ was important in that it added to the existing Task Organization by designating an Argentia Group. This was composed of one of Captain Kauffman's destroyer divisions and one of Commander Mullinnix's patrol squadrons and a tender. This was a supplementary order in accordance with the Hemisphere Defense Plan, about which Op Plan 1-41 has this to say:

19. ComSupFor sec. ltr. ser. 0021 to All Holders CTF 4's Op Plan 1-41, 2 May, 1941.

20. ComSupFor sec. ltr. ser. 0027 to All Holders CTF 4's Op Plan 1-41, 15 May, 1941.

4.4 Argentia Group:

One DesDiv from 4.1

One PatRon from 4.2 plus tender.

Argentia Group conduct aircraft patrol and reconnaissance as may be directed. Be ready to take action against potential enemy vessels and other non-American activities in the vicinity of Newfoundland.

The possible early intensification of the limited national emergency requires the maintenance of material and personnel in appropriate readiness. Entrance into the Western Hemisphere by naval vessels and aircraft of belligerent powers, other than of those powers which have sovereignty over Western Hemisphere Territory, is to be viewed as actuated by possible unfriendly intent toward territory or shipping within the Western Hemisphere.

Acting Chief of Staff, Commander Carney, remarked in notes on a trip to Washington, "The Hemisphere Defense Plan is in effect. Under this plan the Support Force remains in readiness to support the operations of other Task Groups, continuing intensive training in the meantime as at present."²¹ Also, about the middle of the month Denfeld wrote the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation and, based on the supposition that the advanced bases would be formed should the national emergency intensify, he deemed it advisable to set up officer complements for them as early as possible.²² Toward the end of the month Bristol, in a secret memo to the Chief of Naval Operations, had this to say:

The project---the coordination, construction, and operation of advanced bases in the British Isles---presents an entirely new departure in the history of our Navy, inasmuch as the construction of the bases is to be started in a belligerent country, while the United States is still at peace. It is anticipated that before the bases are completed, their use in a partial state of readiness will be required for our combatant forces. Four advanced bases, one combined destroyer and submarine, one destroyer, and two aviation are to be constructed at selected sites in the British Isles for the use of U.S. forces upon the entry of the U.S. into war. ²³

21. SupFor sec. memo ser. 0017 of 24 April, 1941 to SupFor.

22. ComSupFor sec. ltr. ser. 055912 of 12 May, 1941 to ChBuNav.

23. SupFor sec. memo of 27 May, 1941 (Chron sec. file) to CNO.

Bases were being constructed prior to the United States' entry into the war for several reasons: British operations in the Northwest Approaches to Scotland for the protection of convoys during the past year suffered by reason of inadequate shore facilities for both planes and ships; United States forces were trained to operate with tenders and this was disadvantageous with regard to heavy modern aerial warfare; and lastly, shore facilities were especially needed during the winter. The indefiniteness of "M" day made long range planning impossible so Bristol suggested that advanced bases be formed of Support Force personnel where possible and these would be replaced at a later date by personnel permanently designated by bureaus concerned.

Provisions were made for the inception of the Northwest Escort Force in WPL-46, better known as Navy Basic War Plan Rainbow No. 5. The original of this was promulgated in May of 1941 in which it stated that the Northwest Escort Force and Submarine Force Three would be under the jurisdiction of the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, until actually operating in Europe, at which time they would be assigned to the Commander of United States Naval Forces, North Europe. The Northwest Escort Force was to proceed from bases in the United States to bases in the United Kingdom,

and British Home Waters Area when directed by the Chief of Naval Operations. Rainbow No. 5 stated that:

Outline operating plans for the employment of the U.S. Naval Forces, North Europe, will be prepared by the prospective Commander of the Northwest Escort Force, and submitted to the prospective Commander in Chief, U.S. Naval Forces, North Europe, for review by the British Commander in Chief, Western Approaches. After review and acceptance, copies of this plan will be furnished the Chief of Naval Operations.²⁴

It also said:

Commencing on M-Day, and before if directed, the SHORE ESTABLISHMENT will prepare for war services those vessels and units of the OPERATING FORCES and SERVICES which are not then in condition of readiness for war service, by placing them in material condition and providing them with personnel to perform their war tasks.²⁵

As previously noted, Admiral Bristol had been given the responsibility for the forces using these bases, and on 29 May he wrote what is apparently his first letter with reference to the Northwest Escort Force to the Chief of Naval Operations.²⁶ He wrote it as Commander Support Force requesting a logistic liaison agency in the States for the Commander in Chief, United States Naval Forces, North Europe, because at that time the agency existed only for Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet and Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet. And on the 3rd day of June Admiral Bristol, then in Norfolk,

24. Rainbow No. 5 Part III, Chapt. IV, Sect. 1, para. 3415 a May, 1941.

25. Rainbow No. 5 Part IV, Chapt. III, Sect. 1, para. 2311 of May, 1941.

26. ComSupFor sec. ltr. ser. 0035 of 29 May, 1941 to CNO.

wrote to Commander Submarines, Atlantic, saying that "reference 'a' (Rainbow No. 5) requires the prospective Commander Northwest Escort Force (Commander Support Force, United States Atlantic Fleet) to prepare outline operating plans for the employment of U.S. Naval Forces, North Europe."²⁷ He enclosed the outline, which incorporated features pertinent to the operations of Submarine Force Three, for the guidance and approval of Commander Submarines, Atlantic, so that they might confer before Bristol wrote his final draft of the plan. On the 27th of June he submitted the outline plan to Admiral King and in the heading of this letter he designated himself as Commander Support Force (PCO Northwest Escort Force.)

This plan was based on the already existing WPL-46 (Rainbow No. 5), and was designated "to accomplish early movement in maximum strength, but has also been drawn to permit accommodation without changes in basic principles, to changes in situations and forces imposed by necessity or by superior authority."

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27. ComSupFor sec. ltr. ser. 0039 of 3 June, 1941, to ComSubLant.
28. Northwest Escort Force Movement Plan (Rainbow No. 5 o-3-A) P. 4 Introduction, June 1941. The following is the task organization by which the Northwest Escort Force Movement Plan was to be executed:
- a. Advanced Detachment under command of Commander Advanced Detachment.

On "M" plus 10 days 7000 troops were to embark from New York for England and 8000 for Ireland.

"The Commander Support Force, as Prospective Commander Northwest Escort Force, commands the movements of the Northwest Escort Force and the LOM convoy to England-Ireland. The Commander support Force reports to Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet until passing longitude 30° west, at which time as Commander Northwest Escort Force, he comes under the command of the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Naval Forces, North Europe." 29

The same day, 9 June 1941, Admiral Bristol, then in Newport, notified his staff in a memo that Admiral Stark had tentatively approved of the idea of having a logistic liaison officer in Washington for the logistic requirements of United States Naval Forces in North Europe after M-Day.³⁰

Footnote #28 cont'd

- b. Main Body under command of Commander Northwest Escort Force.
- c. Overseas Advanced Tender Base Detachments under command of Commanders Advanced Tender Base Detachments.
- d. Argentia Advanced Detachment under command of Commander Argentia Advanced Base.
- e. Trans-Atlantic Flight Detachments under command of Detachment Commanders.
- f. Minesweepers, Northwest Escort Force under command of Commander Minesweepers, Northwest Escort Force.
- g. Augmenting Forces under command of officers designated by the Chief of Naval Operations or other competent authority.
(The Ocean Escort, in accordance with CinClant directive, is not included in the Task Organization).
(Ibid. Part I, Chapt.I, para. 1101, Mod.1 of orig. June 1941).

29. Ibid. Part V, Chapt. II para. 5201, original, June 1941.

30. ComSupFor sec. memo ser. 0045 of 9 June, 1941, to Staff ComSupFor.

Captain William A. Corn, USN, was appointed for the job and the business of the Support Force was to transpire through him.

From the foregoing it can be seen that the job of the Support Force embraced not only its own problems, but the prospective problems of the Northwest Escort Force and at that time they were tentatively intra-acting organizations. This becomes more apparent after studying the proposed composition of the Northwest Escort Force which contained Destroyer Squadrons 7, 30, and 31; Patrol Wing 7 and various other units which belonged to the Support Force. The destroyers and tenders were to proceed to the British Isles on "M" plus 10 Day at which time they would become part of the United States Naval Forces in Northern Europe. These were to be followed by squadrons of patrol planes which were to go to Loch Erne and Loch Foyle followed by transports loaded with Army and Marine personnel and supplies.³¹

On 7 July 1941, Captain Denfeld notified Admiral Bristol in a memorandum that an Advanced Detachment consisting of two DDs from Destroyer Squadron 7 would leave on M-Day, or as soon thereafter as the ships were ready. He proposed a

31. Memo from ComSupFor's C/S Capt. Denfeld sec. ser. 0044 of 10 June, 1941 for Capt. W.A. Corn.

tentative organization of personnel for the Detachment,³²
and stated:

"The detachment will proceed to Londonderry at best speed. All personnel, except the Chief of Staff, Ass't Operations Officer, and the Flag Secretary will remain at Londonderry and prepare Command Headquarters and Advanced Bases 1 and A to receive Force on arrival. The Chief of Staff, Ass't Operations Officer, and the Flag Secretary, after necessary contacts have been made at Londonderry and Loch Erne, will proceed to Liverpool to Headquarters of Western Approaches. Ass't. Operations Officer and Flag Secretary will remain there for necessary indoctrination by British Naval Operations Unit and R.A.F. Coastal Command. Chief of Staff will proceed to London to get any instructions from Admiral Ghormley, returning to Liverpool to pick up Ass't Operations Officer and Flag Secretary, returning to Londonderry via Belfast in sufficient time to arrive well in advance of Support Force.

In a later memorandum to Commander Patrol Wing Support Force (Captain Mullinnix) Bristol said:

32. Secret memo from ComSupFor's C/S, Capt. Denfeld, July 7, 1941 to ComSupFor.

STAFF PERSONNEL

Capt. L.E. Denfeld, USN - Chief of Staff - in command of detachment.
Comdr. F.W. Pennoyer, USN - Material Officer
Comdr. E.T. Wooldridge, USN - Ass't Operations Officer
Lt.Comdr. E.W. Rawlins, USN - Communications Officer
Lt.Comdr. H.B. Miller, USN - Flag Secretary
Lt. J.W. Boundy (SC), USN - Ass't Supply Officer

BASE PERSONNEL

Capt. W.A. Corn, USN - Comdr. DesBase 1) If not al-
Comdr. E.W. Litch, USN - Comdr. Air Base A) ready at bases

(Key Base Personnel)

Base A will be established at Loch Erne with Commander Litch as Commanding Officer and Base B will be established at Loch Ryan with Commander Gallery as Commanding Officer. Each base will have an ultimate capacity of four (4) patrol plane squadrons with all the necessary shore facilities. At present, all priority in accomplishing readiness for operations is being given to the Loch Erne Base; all should be in readiness there by 1 November. . . .

In the event that we are ordered across before the bases are ready we plan to operate some of the planes in a shore based status at Loch Erne, and the others in a tender based status from the Foyle, Loch Ryan, and Oban. Small tenders can anchor nicely in any of these places, and ship moorings for the ALBERMARLE are already laid in the Foyle. Seaplane moorings will be available at all of these points. It is quite probable that one detachment of planes will have to be used in Iceland. . . .

We can expect no assistance from the Army until November at the very earliest; by that time four (4) complete AA regiments should be ready and at least one (1) pursuit group. However, there are 11 RAF fields in North Ireland and air protection for us should be adequate, using the RAF units already established there.³³

Bristol also mentioned repair units and hospitalization facilities that were being prepared for these two bases.

In the light of the foregoing discussion it can be seen that within approximately four and a half months after its inception, Admiral Bristol had the planning and organization of the Support Force well under way. However, it is to be noted that although the Support Force and the Northwest Escort were intra-acting organizations, and Bristol uses the titles interchangeably, a distinction must be drawn between the two. That is, the Northwest Escort Force

33. Memo s/S.H.I. sec. ser. 0063 of 14 July 1941, for ComPatWing SupFor.

was what he was theoretically planning and training for, while the force with which he was actually operating and carrying out immediate orders was the Support Force. After the summer of 1941 there was a considerable lapse in references to the Northwest Escort Force in Support Force correspondence. This was because the operational exigencies of the moment weighed on the actual, pushing the theoretical aside. Although work continued on the bases in the British Isles they are over-shadowed by operations in the North Atlantic until after the cataclysmic attack on Pearl Harbor. The resulting effect on the Northwest Escort Force and advanced bases in the United Kingdom will be considered later on, and in the meanwhile personnel connected with carrying out specific concurrent plans concerned with the Northwest Escort Force and advanced bases worked towards an awaited the uncertain advent of M-Day.

CHAPTER II

DEVELOPMENT OF BASES IN NEWFOUNDLAND, ICELAND
AND GREENLAND

While Admiral Bristol had been concerned with whipping the Support Force into a smoothly operating organization and planning for prospective operations in the British Isles, he was equally concerned with the establishment of the bases in the North Atlantic. This was particularly true of the air bases. Before he could get his planes to the British Isles he had to have some aviational stepping stones. That is also what the United States Government had in mind when it gained access to the territory in Newfoundland from the British on terms of a ninety-nine year lease. It is development and use of the bases in Newfoundland, Iceland, and Greenland, from which units of the Support Force were to operate in increasing numbers, that now became Admiral Bristol's primary interest.

Construction work had been started on the base at Argentia, Newfoundland, early in the year and this work had been progressing all during the time Admiral Bristol had been training the Support Force for the work that he anticipated would take him to the British Isles. However, he found that actually his work was bringing him into much closer contact with the bases in the North Atlantic. Going back to the beginning of May we find that on 6 May, 1941,

the Commanding Officer of the USS GEORGE E. BADGER (AVD 3) made a report on advanced base facilities at Argentia to the Commander Support Force. In it he stated that he talked with Commander R.V. Miller, C.E.C. and Lt.(jg) Silliman, C.E.C. NR, officer in charge of construction and resident officer in charge, respectively. They informed him that temporary facilities for beaching a 12 plane patrol squadron could be constructed at Argentia on six weeks notice without affecting the work on the main project to any great extent.¹ The report continues:

Argentia harbor is 1.8 miles in length and is excellent for landings and take-offs with a southwest, north, or northeast wind. There are hills of varying heights up to 500 feet along the take-off route when taking off the sound in an easterly direction, however, the take off run available can be increased to any distance desired as the area is unlimited to the westward. At the present time there are about thirty fishing vessels in their present location will seriously interfere with seaplane operations.

These boats were being used to lodge men working on the construction project, but the resident officer in charge of construction said that they could be moved elsewhere.

In speaking of the general status of the progress of construction, the report had this to say: "None of the permanent facilities will be ready for use for a number of

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1. CO USS GEORGE E. BADGER ser. 20 of 6 May, 1941 to Com SupFor. Lt.Comdr. H.B. Miller, Bristol's Flag Secretary, had penciled a marginal note which says, "Admiral Bristol has been advised" and on CinClant's copy of this report there is also a note which states, "Has been authorized".

months. Nine shiploads of materials have been delivered. A vast amount of construction equipment is at work building roads, grading land plane runways, and doing general grading." The RICHARD PECK, which had provided the original facilities, had been supplemented by a complete construction camp. At the southeast end of the peninsula a dock for unloading purposes had been built and this was being extended.

About 2,000 men are now employed and the force is being rapidly expanded. There are no housing facilities. The bottom or cargo deck of the steamer RICHARD PECK is largely empty. Resident officer-in-charge of construction advises that this space can be made into staterooms to accommodate more than one hundred men. In addition, the space occupied by the Marine Detachment aboard this vessel will be vacated upon completion of the temporary barracks.

All the officers attached to the base at that time² were quartered on the RICHARD PECK.

An aerological detail under the command of Lieutenant F.B. Stephens, USN had arrived in Argentina on 3 May, 1941. This unit, according to the report was to be functioning in all respects not later than 10 May, 1941. Although no recorded data was available at Argentina, they were able to obtain considerable local information which they felt to be reliable from Mr. I.F. Murphy, who had always lived

2. Besides those already named there were: Lt.(jg) E.G. Plagge, USNR; Lt. Curry, USNR; Lt.(jg) E.J. Quinn, (CEC) NR, and Lt.(jg) A.E. Poole (CEC) NR.

in this area. Lt. Stephens was the first Commanding Officer of the Argentia Base. (Later in the spring it was decided to make Argentia a Naval Operating Base as well as a Naval Air Station, and after the necessary plans and alterations were made, it went into commission as such on 15 July, 1941.)

About this time the Iceland and Greenland operations were underway and Admiral Bristol had been given the responsibility for them. Dropping back a little, we find that on the 7th of March the Director of War Plans Division wrote a memorandum to Admiral Stark concerning the reconnaissance of Iceland:

Although Iceland is a potential light force and air base of importance in connection with the protection of shipping in the northwestern approaches to the British Isles, the information available to the Navy Department with respect to Iceland is not sufficiently complete and reliable for use in planning with respect to the actual use of Iceland as an operating base for destroyers and patrol planes.

It is recommended that a destroyer from the Support Force, Atlantic Fleet, with one or more naval aviators from the patrol squadrons of the same force, be sent to Iceland as soon as practicable to investigate and report on aviation operating conditions, and the problems which may be involved in basing light forces and seaplanes in Iceland.³

A week later Admiral Bristol sent out the following letter to the Commanders of Support Force Destroyers and Support Force Patrol Wing concerning the proposed reconnaissance of Iceland:

3. Director War Plans sec. ser. 025712 of 7 March, 1941, to CNO.

It has been proposed that the U.S. Navy make a reconnaissance of Iceland with a view to its use as a base for destroyers and patrol planes engaged in the protection of shipping in the northwest approaches to the British Isles.

It is expected that a destroyer of DesRon 7 will be used for this purpose, and that a civil engineer and one or more aviators from PatWing SupFor will be detailed for the reconnaissance.

The Force Commander anticipates that the CNO will issue a directive and will furnish for guidance a folder of existing information and war plans studies.

Limited information is now available in the files of the Force Commander for preliminary study by personnel who may be expected to conduct the proposed reconnaissance.

Addressees be prepared to carry out reconnaissance promptly, if ordered; preparations to include selection of ship and personnel and preliminary estimates of logistic requirements.

/s/ Robt. B. Carney
Acting Chief of Staff.⁴

On 5 April the Commander Support Force ordered the NIBLACK to Iceland for a short stay. Enroute she was to stop in at Halifax and consult the British Admiralty as necessary in connection with navigation and convoy routings, weather information, communications, ice conditions, movement of belligerent vessels, logistics, official contacts, currency, and other information pertaining to the success of the mission. The mission was to determine the suitability of Iceland for the operation of air craft and surface vessels and to obtain specific information on

4. ComSupFor 001 of 14 March, 1941 to ComDesSupFor and ComPatWingSupFor.

conditions and facilities existing at that time; also the possibility of increase thereof for immediate operations. It was to be estimated how many destroyers and how many squadrons of tender based planes could operate from Iceland if the United States was to use it as a base under existing war plans. On the 8th of April Admiral Bristol writes from the USS PRAIRIE at Newport, saying that a study of Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet's intentions and plans indicates that the operation of patrol planes from Iceland is to be expected. If this task is assigned to the Support Force, Bristol said he would need a second large aircraft tender in addition to ALBERMARLE. He suggested the USS POCOMOKE. The reason for this request was that existing Support Force plans had committed the use of ALBERMARLE to areas other than Iceland. (That is, Bristol planned on having it in the British Isles for his patrol planes when they were supposed to arrive there.) Towards the end of the month NIBLACK returned from the far north to Newport, arriving on the 28th of April with her mission completed.

On 9 April, 1941, the United States Agreements with Denmark were completed. (Previous to this, the USCGC CAYUGA had landed a party of men for the purposes of survey.) The agreement was signed with the Danish Minister, Henrik de Kauffman, on behalf of the King of German-occupied Denmark.

It gave the United States the right to establish American air bases and other naval and military facilities on Denmark's strategic island possession.

The United States was particularly interested in Greenland for several reasons over and above the fact they wanted to prevent the establishment of Axis weather stations and the threat of possible German occupation. It could be used to our own advantage by setting up United States weather stations and bases for iceberg patrols; airfields located there could be used both for reconnaissance flights and stop over points for trans-Atlantic plane ferry flights; and then there was the cryolite mine at Ivigtut which although Danish controlled, was vitally important to the Allied aluminum industry. This was the only accessible mine of its kind in the world, and without cryolite the rapidly expanding and highly essential aluminum industry in the United States would be greatly crippled.

The Chief of Naval Operations stated that President Roosevelt had approved of joint plans for preventing German operations in Greenland, but at the time no United States garrison was to be established in northeast Greenland. However, survey expeditions and plane patrols were to be conducted under the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet's cognizance. Germany had made numerous attempts to establish

weather stations in Northeast Greenland, and because she might attempt something like this again, Admiral King was ordered to send an expedition to Greenland composed of the Coast Guard vessels NORTHLAND, BEAR, and NORTH STAR. Admiral Stark also wanted King to send a section of patrol planes and tender to Reykjavik, Iceland, as soon as possible, using Iceland as a reconnaissance base to cover the region between MacKenzie Bay and Cape Brewster and the vicinity of Angmagassalik in Greenland to determine possible German activities.⁵

9 May, 1941: Under this date Admiral King informed the Commander Support Force that his despatches of 18 April and the 3rd and 8th of May had to do with the establishment and maintenance of a group at Argentia "to include one destroyer division and not less than six planes, the latter with suitable tender service."⁶ This same letter also directed the Commander Support Force to send a detachment from the Argentia group of not more than four patrol planes and a tender, and at least one destroyer as plane guard, to base in Iceland, near Reykjavik. From there, they were ordered to carry out a reconnaissance to determine the presence or absence of an Axis detachment in the Scoresby Sound area of Greenland.

5. CNO sec. ser. 020638 of 8 May 1941 to CinClant.

6. CinClant sec. ser. 0033 of 9 May, 1941, to ComSupFor.

The Commander Support Force acknowledged, stating his compliance, and he sent Admiral King a contemplated schedule of operations showing the prospective movements of the Argentinia Groups and Greenland Reconnaissance Task Units.⁷

Naval Operations had evidently anticipated this move, for Bristol's acting Chief of Staff, Commander Carney, says in a Support Force memorandum, "there is being issued a directive from CNO covering the procedure for securing permission for ships and planes to visit Halifax. I was instructed to consider this procedure already in effect as far as we are concerned."⁸ This procedure amounted to twenty-four hours previous notification of authorities in Halifax, giving as much information about the ship or plane and its

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7. ComSupFor sec. ltr. ser. 0024 of 11 May, 1941 to CinClant. Prospective Movements of Argentinia Groups and Greenland Reconnaissance Task Units.

Contemplated schedule of operations:

1. ALBERMARLE plus two DD depart Newport 13 May for Argentinia.
2. BELKNAP plus two DD depart Newport for Iceland via Halifax 13 May.
3. ALBERMARLE establish aviation base at Argentinia 16 May.
4. PatRon 52 depart Newport for Argentinia 18 May.
5. BELKNAP plus two DD arrive Iceland 21 May.
6. Four patrol planes of PatRon 52 depart Argentinia for Iceland 24 May.
7. Iceland unit conduct reconnaissance of Greenland 26 May-6 June.
8. Iceland unit depart Iceland for Argentinia 5 June, planes arriving 6 June, DD arriving 11 June.

/s/ A.L. BRISTOL

8. SupFor sec. memo 0017 from acting C/S Carney of 25 April, 1941, to all members of Staff.

intended duration of stay as was practicable. Carney said that he was informed at War Plans that there was no objection to sending ships or planes to Halifax for any reasonable purpose.

It is evident then that the ground work was pretty well planned when on 11 May Admiral King requested Commander Mullinnix to notify Canadian authorities that two seaplane tenders and four destroyers would base at Argentia beginning 16 May, and that VP-52 would skirt the east coast of Nova Scotia about 18 May, enroute to Argentia. On the 12th of May Mullinnix published his Operation Order 14-41, which authorized a "Greenland Reconnaissance Flight".⁹ In it Commander Mullinnix stated that it was suspected that a German controlled weather station was in operation in Greenland, although no definite information was available. The force was to proceed to Iceland, conduct aerial reconnaissance flights over Greenland, and return to Newfoundland at the earliest practicable date. (The flight was actually made from May 31st to June 6th, 1941) On the 15th of May the Chief of Naval Operations sent out a despatch notifying Admiral Bristol that arrangements had been made through the

9. ComPatWingSupFor Op Order 14-41 sec. ser. 001 of 12 May 1941, to PatWingSupFor.

the State Department for the BELKNAP plus two destroyers to visit Halifax for fuel that day. This seems to be the first instance of any Support Force vessel using a belligerent country's port for fueling.

Bristol later received word from London that there might be a German observation station on the East Coast of Greenland, just north of Aggas Island, and that this station might have been visited by German aircraft. Therefore, on 16 May, the Admiral wrote to the Senior Naval Aviator, Iceland Reconnaissance Group, and told him to include the vicinity of Aggas Island in the area to be covered by the aerial reconnaissance patrol planes operating from Iceland.¹⁰

Evidently Admiral Bristol wanted some on-the-spot information with regard to how his northern operations were getting along, for on 20 May two PBV flying boats departed from Newport, Rhode Island, for Argentia with Admiral Towers and Admiral Bristol on board. Under Secretary of the Navy Forrestal had intended to accompany them, but was prevented by complications at the last minute. Apparently this was the first time Admiral Bristol had been in Argentia, and he must have found things to his satisfaction, for later it became his headquarters for operations.

10. ComSupFor sec. ltr. ser. 0028 of 16 May, 1941, to SenNavAviator.

On the same day the Chief of Naval Operations sent out a letter to the effect that operations would be required to support Army expeditions to be sent to Greenland to establish an air base in the vicinity of Julianehaab,¹¹ and to explore the region of Angmagssalik for air field sites. The USS MUNARGO, USCGC COMANCHE and the CG ice-breaking tug RARITAN would be equipped to transport Army personnel and material for that purpose, leaving for Greenland about 12 June. The BOWDOIN, owned by Lt. Comdr. D. B. McMillan, USNR, was expected to be made available to the Navy for operations, although McMillan had not yet been recalled to active duty. MUNARGO and RARITAN were to take the Army to Julianehaab and COMANCHE was to take personnel and material for exploration to the Angmagssalik area. The Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, was to provide a convoy escort group for the expedition.¹²

A directive was sent out to Commander Support Force (CTF 4) from Admiral King on 21 May to take precautionary measures against attacks on southwest Greenland, particularly on Ivigtut and the cryolite mine located there. The NORTHLAND was also directed to make ready an armed force to protect

11. 61°09'N, 45°25'W.

12. CNO sec. ser. 022828 to ComSupFor 20 May, 1941.

this mine with the MODOC standing by during the absence of the NORTHLAND.¹³ (The Chief of Naval Operations had ordered the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, to take precautionary measures against attacks on the mine) The defenses under the Greenland Government consisted of a small detachment of former Coast Guard men with one 3-inch gun, machine guns, rifles, and pistols. These were experienced men, and had purposely been taken out of the Coast Guard so that they might be hired by the Government for the defense of Greenland and, specifically, the cryolite mine at Ivigtut. They remained in the employ of the Greenland Government for several years, and then in 1942, went back into the Coast Guard when their services were no longer required.

1 June, 1941 the Chief of Naval Operations stated that the South Greenland patrol was established as of this date.¹⁴ Furthermore, this Task Force of the South Greenland Patrol was to operate directly under the Chief of Naval Operations.¹⁵

13. CNO sec. ltr. ser. 211946 to CinClant, 21 May, 1941.

14. CNO's confidential ser. 010745, of 1 June, 1941.
South Greenland Patrol - directly under CNO

MODOC (F)
COMANCHE
RARITAN
BOWDOIN
MUNARGO

15. CG HQ ltr. Op. P. 610-64-601 of 12 April 1941.

On the same day the USCGC NORTHLAND was ordered by Admiral Stark to report to Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet for special duty. The same orders were received by NORTH STAR and BEAR, and they reported that they would be ready 10 June and 16 June respectively. Also, on or about June 1st Commander E.H. Smith reported to Admiral King for duty. This was in connection with a Chief of Naval Operations directive which ordered King to send out the Northeast Greenland Patrol as early in the season as ice conditions would permit, and the patrol was to be in the Greenland area until late in the summer.¹⁶ They were to smoke out possible Axis activities, and generally patrol the area of Northeast Greenland.

About this time Admiral Bristol had returned from his trip to Argentina, for on the 29th of June he was back in Norfolk on the PRAIRIE, continuing Support Force exercises, and on 5 June, he departed for Newport, conducting training exercises enroute. He had one destroyer and three planes from VP-53 make raider attacks on him as though he were a convoy, in order that his men and supporting units could simulate battle practice.

Commander Task Force 4 sent out his Operation Plan No. 6-41 on 3 June 1941 which gave the task organization for the

16. CNO sec. ltr. ser. 021738 of 1 June 1941 to CinClant.

Greenland Advanced Base Air Detachment.¹⁷ After he had this plan all made up, using Ivigtut as the area for the base, he sent out a secret despatch, changing it to Narsarssuak. On this operation the Navy was doing reconnaissance work looking for an advanced Army Air Base site in the locality between Narsarssuak and Angmagssalik, where they were to conduct a photographic survey. The Task Group¹⁸ was to remain in Argentia until ice conditions in Greenland were favorable. They were informed that after 22nd of June there would be a Navy tanker with fuel at Argentia.

About a week later, on 11 June, the Chief of Naval Operations wrote the Commander Third Naval District in reference to the order of the USS MUNARGO, stating that MUNARGO would depart from New York 19 June, and was to arrive in Argentia on 23 June.

The following vessels will proceed in company with the MUNARGO from New York to S.W. Greenland; Coast Guard Cutter COMANCHE, and the motorship, NORA. The latter vessel has been chartered by the Army, and will be manned by a crew of Army Transport Service. The CG tug RARITAN will also be directed to rendezvous enroute to Argentia, and will continue with the expedition to Tunugliarfik Fjord. For the information of those concerned, Commander Support Force, Atlantic Fleet, will provide an escort detachment of three destroyers (the Newport Group) to accompany MUNARGO and other vessels of the expedition from New York to Greenland. On departure from Newfoundland, the USS GOLDSBOROUGH (AVD 5) will join the escort group and proceed in company therewith

17. CTF 4 Op Plan 6-41 sec. ser. 0040/A4-3 of 3 June 1941.

18. CNO sec. ltr. ser. 029983 of 11 June 1941 to Com3rdND. (Composed of the USS LAFWING, four patrol planes from PatWingSupFor, 3 DD's from the Newport Group, and 3 DD's from the Argentia Group.)

until arrival off S.W. Greenland, at which time that vessel will then proceed independently to Ivigtut.

By 12 June, Bristol at Newport informed King that he was in a bad way with only seven destroyers available; others were in Navy Yards for overhaul; an Iceland Detail, composed of the BROOME, TRUXTON, and BAINBRIDGE would not be available before 23 June; BAINBRIDGE was acting as a plane guard from Argentia for the Iceland flight scheduled for the 11th of June; COLE and OVERTON were at that time escorting the USAT ALEXANDER from St. John's, Newfoundland, to New York, departing as of 12 June; REUBEN JAMES and SIMPSON were escorting the MUNARGO convoy from St. John's to Ivigtut; and MCCORMICK and TARBELL were scheduled to escort the MUNARGO convoy about 12 June to the vicinity of St. John's and join the Argentia detachment. All four tenders were scattered from Argentia north on various operations, so none were available at the time. Outside of this Bristol had two available mine sweepers, others being overhauled, and a maximum of thirty-three planes on which he could call, most of these being on patrol operations.¹⁹ This gives a good overall picture of how busy on a variety of assignments Commander Task Force 4's ships and planes were, in spite of the fact that the Support Force had only been in existence a little over five months.

¹⁹.

ComUpFor memo (no ser.) of 12 June, 1941 to CinClant.

Also on the 12th of June, Admiral Bristol received a memorandum from his Chief of Staff concerning the Northeast Greenland Patrol.²⁰ Captain Denfeld noted that Commander E. H. Smith, USCG, Prospective Commander of the Northeast Greenland Patrol, had presented the following facts and recommendations at a conference on board the USS AUGUSTA on 10 June 1941. Commander Smith had stated that the Patrol would consist of the NORTHLAND (F), NORTH STAR, and BEAR, and that these ships were preparing for this expedition in Boston, to be ready not later than 20 June. The Commander proposed to be off the Northeast Coast of Greenland about 15 July, the earliest that operations could be undertaken because of ice conditions, and planned to leave about 1 September---approximately as late as the ice would permit his remaining in the vicinity. Captain Denfeld commented:

The entire value of his expedition, in finding and destroying German radio stations, is surprise. Otherwise, the Germans will inform their Government as to ships in the vicinity and they will establish new stations and possibly bomb our ships to prevent them from carrying out their mission.

When asked about the conditions in southwest Greenland, Commander Smith stated that,

Kungnait Bay, in the vicinity of Ivigtut, was the best place for patrol planes to base; that the winds reach as high as 70 knots in gusts at times in the bay, and it would be essential to provide portable runways to haul

20. Conf. memo SupFor C/S Capt. Denfeld (no serial) of 12 June, 1941, to ComSupFor.

out the planes, and means to secure them. Winds of this strength only last for a short time, and occur only occasionally.²¹

He said that an aircraft tender could enter Kungnait Bay in the summer, but might have some delay in entering and leaving at the beginning and end of the summer, respectively, due to drift ice. It was felt that the ice-breaker tug RARITAN could clear ice for ships going in or out any time between July and September. He recommended several sites for the establishment of radio and meteorological stations and the selection of joint Army-Navy-Coast Guard air and seaplane sites along the east coast of Greenland. Finally he remarked upon the lack of fuel supply in Greenland.

The Chief of Naval Operations promulgated the Basic Joint Army and Navy Plan for the defense of Greenland on 13 June, 1941. This was not a war plan. As has been previously noted, on 9 April, 1941, articles of agreement were signed, giving the United States construction rights for military facilities in Greenland which might be used as necessary to protect that country. On 12 April, 1941, the Joint Planning Committee received a directive from the Joint Board, stating that on 9 April, the President had announced the signing of the agreement and directing that a basic joint plan for the defense of Greenland be prepared. This plan was drawn up and approved by the President

21. Conf. memo to ComSupFor from C/S Capt. Denfeld (no ser) 12 June, 1941.

on 7 June 1941. Provision was made for the Greenland Government's requests that Ivigtut be furnished the maximum possible military protection; That the United States leave the existing radio network under the control of Greenland authorities, and set up its own communication system.

The importance of cryolite to the aluminum industries of both the United States and United Kingdom, coupled with the vulnerability of Ivigtut made this mine an attractive and perhaps profitable object of attack. The mine was subject to flooding² in the event of a rupture of the protective seawall through sabotage or hostile action, and at this time it was only protected by a small group of inadequately armed former United States Coast Guardsmen, hired by the Greenland Government.

Tentatively, Kungnait Bay was selected as the best site in Southwest Greenland for operation patrol planes from a tender, and the United States planned to establish one or more landing fields in Greenland for the purpose of staging aircraft to England. A survey was made and a tentative landing field had been selected at the head of Tunugliarfik Fjord, near Julianehaab. Further surveys planned to locate landing fields in the Angmagssalik area on the east coast, and another on the west coast, probably around Sondrestrom Fjord. However, with the exception of airfields, United

States installations requiring defense would be limited to radio and weather stations, and fuel and supply depots.

Word had been received on 17 June from the British Military Mission at Washington that the British Admiralty contemplated establishing an advance base for convoy forces at St. John's; that plans called for 30 DD's, 24 corvettes, and 2 sloops to be in the harbor in the near future.²²

On 21 June 1941 Commander E.H. Smith ordered the Commanding Officers of the NORTH STAR and BEAR to report to him, as Commander of Task Force 11, for duty. Admiral Bristol's Operation Plan No. 8-41 shows on the Task Organization of the Northeast Greenland Patrol.²³ This force, along with the South Greenland Patrol, was standing by from this time on for the patrol and defense of Greenland.

22. CNO sec. ltr. ser. 067512 of 17 June, 1941 to CinCLant.

23. ComSupFor Op Plan No. 8-41 ser 0055, 27 June, 1941.
Northeast Greenland Patrol - Comdr. E.H. Smith, USCG,
Atlantic Fleet.

U.S.C.G.C. NORTHLAND (F)
U.S.C.G.C. NORTH STAR
U.S.S. BEAR

- (a) The Northeast Greenland Patrol has been formed as a Task Force of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet, performing its duties under the direction of Commander Support Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet. . . The Northeast Greenland Patrol has been designated as Task Force 11 of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet. (This designation was later changed to TG 6.5, by ComTaskFor 4's Mailgram 07195 on 4 July, 1941)

On the 24th of June the Chief of Naval Operations sent a letter to the Army Chief of Staff in answer to the latter's memo of 19 June. (This memo was concerned with the location of airfield sites in Labrador, and on Baffin Island.) Admiral Stark said the Navy would cooperate in accomplishing this purpose; that it would require a naval detachment including two patrol planes and one small sea-plane tender. The latter was to be supplied by Admiral King, and the Commanding Officer of the 21st Reconnaissance Squadron was to cooperate with him. Stark further stated that the Navy Department would initiate, through the State Department, the necessary diplomatic arrangements, and would have aviation fuel available in the early part of July at Cartwright, Hebron, and Lade Harbor. Support Force planes were assisting in the survey of the coast of Labrador and Baffin Island.²⁴

23. cont'd.

(b) The South Greenland Patrol operates under the direction of the CNO.

(c) This Force will cooperate with the Government of Greenland in preventing the establishment in North-east Greenland of military, naval or air bases by belligerent powers, other than those powers which have sovereignty over Western Hemisphere Territory; and will assist in preventing the landing of European Nationals except as authorized by the Government of Greenland.

24. CNO sec. ltr. serial 072312 of 24 June, 1941 to Army Chief of Staff.

The Chief of Naval Operations informed the Commander Support Force on the 26th of June that the vicinity of the base airdromes site in Greenland at Narsarssuak was a better base for patrol planes than Kungnait Bay at Ivigtut. It afforded a more sheltered body of water for ship and plane anchorages, a better beach for hauling out planes, and was 100 miles closer to the area of operations for the east coast reconnaissance group. (The change of the advanced air base to Narsarssuak area was authorized in ComSupFor's Operation Plan No. 6-41.) On the following day the GOLDSBOROUGH reported that she had arrived in Reykjavik, and on the same day the Chief of Naval Operations ordered the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, to detail immediately two patrol planes and one bird class tender to cooperate with the Commanding Officer of the 21st Army Air Reconnaissance Squadron at Newfoundland airport. They were to assist in locating airdrome sites in Labrador and Baffin Island for the War Department. This detachment was to be assembled at Argentia as soon as possible, and in the meantime the Royal Canadian Air Force was to make aviation gasoline available at Cartwright, Hebron, and Lake Harbor and in Newfoundland.²⁵ Commander Task Group 4.2 (Captain Mullinix) drew the assignment and reported on the 30th that

25. CNO secret ltr. ser. 271712 of 27 June, 1941 to CinClant.

LAPWING and planes for both the Labrador and the MUNARGO expeditions were ready; that two planes would depart from Argentia for Labrador on the first of July, but that the Commander in Chief of the Labrador party would not use LAPWING until the 15th of July.

Commander Battleship Division 5 (Rear Admiral LeBreton) was told on 1 July 1941 by Admiral Stark to proceed and execute the task report planned in accordance with departure dates and times. This started troops on the final leg of their trip from Argentia to Iceland.²⁶

On 9 July Admiral Bristol in a letter concerned with refueling bases along the Newfoundland and Labrador Coasts says that,

Support Force planes are already assisting in a survey of the coast of Labrador and Baffin Island, with Cartwright and Hebron, Labrador and Lake Harbor, Baffin Land as operating points. It is probable that future operations in this general area will necessitate the use of refueling stations by planes of this Force, since the services of tenders cannot be counted on, due to availability and to the distance involved.²⁷

The 16th of July found LAPWING at Lake Harbor from which place she reported to the Argentia Group that an Eskimo, picked up that morning, had guided the ship past the reefs guarding the entrance to the harbor; that the ship was at that time anchored at the foot of the bay, which was

26. CNO sec. ser. 012003 to ComBatDiv 5 of 1 July, 1941.

27. ComSupFor sec. ltr. ser. 0061 of 9 July, 1941 to CNO.

completely ice free. LAPWING stated that she would be able to handle both party and planes the following morning, and that the site was ideal, being large and well sheltered. The only draw back was that the entire coast was rock bound, and beaching planes was impossible. Admiral Bristol directed LAPWING that on the return of planes to Argentia from Lake Harbor--about 25 July--to proceed to Narsarssuak and report to MUNARGO. After fueling she should establish a base at Kungnait Bay or Narsarssuak if directed by the MUNARGO.

On 18 July, 1941, the Chief of Naval Operations promulgated the "Joint Army and Navy Directive for the reinforcement of the Defenses of Iceland with a United States Army Pursuit Squadron (and Service Detachment)." The short title for this directive was Indigo-1. Previously, on 5 July, the President, in orders given orally to the Chief of Staff and the Chief of Naval Operations, directed that one Army Pursuit Squadron with the necessary detachments for the maintenance and administration be sent to Iceland as soon as practicable to reenforce the defense of Iceland. Based on that directive, the Joint Planning Committee prepared the Joint Army and Navy Directive. According to this, the 33rd Pursuit Squadron with accompanying units was scheduled to be sent to Iceland about 27 July, 1941, designated Task Force 4, First Echelon, the Navy supplying

the necessary sea transportation for troops, supplies, and planes. The Navy would exercise unity of command over all forces during the embarkation, transport and debarkation of the squadron.²⁸

Admiral Bristol stated on 24 July that wide spread patrol plane operations were taxing his limited tender service to capacity, and he requested that the three tenders POCOMOKE, BARNEGAT, and BISCAYNE, then in various stages of construction, be speeded up and their final shake downs be cancelled. Moreover, the operating pace waxed even hotter, for on 30 July the tender USS GOLDSBOROUGH left Newport with ground personnel and material of patrol plane squadrons, arriving at Reykjavik about a week later, to lay moorings and establish a base for 12 patrol planes. GEORGE E. BADGER was to arrive later with additional ground officers and crew.²⁹

Also, on 30 July, Admiral Stark sent out the Joint Army and Navy Directive for the Relief of the United States Marine Forces in Iceland, and for Augmenting the Existing British Defenses with Troops of the United States Army (This was Indigo-2). This plan was cancelled almost immediately by a Presidential Directive which ordered the Marines to be left

28. This included a total of 940 men and 83 officers, composed of Squadron personnel, an Air Base Squadron, a Transportation Section, Weather Squadron, Quarter-master Detachment, Engineers, etc.

29. ComSupFor sec. ltr. ser. 0290 of 24 July, 1941 to CNO.

in Iceland and augmented: this developed into Indigo-3. The latter states that Indigo-2 and supporting plans are cancelled and shall be destroyed, and that for Indigo-3 the following ships have been assigned to the Naval Transportation Service: the AP's HEYWOOD, WM. P. BIDDLE, HARRY LEE, and several others. In other words, more troops would be brought in to reenforce those already in Iceland.

Therefore it can be seen that Admiral Bristol, as Commander Task Force 4, had his fingers in practically all of the North Atlantic pies, and by this time most of the pies were pretty well baked. The Naval Air Station and Operating Base at Argentia had been commissioned during the middle of the month and his ships and planes were, and had been, using it as a base for operations being carried on further to the north. They had been instrumental in the reconnaissance of Iceland and Greenland, and the establishment of bases and fields in those countries such as the ones at Reykjavik, Ivigtut, Narsarssuak, and others. His ships had escorted transports of Marines to Iceland and soldiers to Greenland and both his ships and planes had helped in the establishment of air bases in Labrador and Baffin Land. And finally, the Support Force had a large share of the responsibility in the Joint Army and Navy Defense Plans for both Iceland and Greenland. The United States had been using its time, men, and equipment to good advantage.

CHAPTER III

NEUTRALITY ESCORT POLICY AND BACKGROUND

The tasks of Commander Task Force 4, as they increased and became more diversified during the Spring and Summer of 1941, necessarily required a considerable amount of escort work. During this period there occurred many situations, both tactical and political, out of which there naturally developed concepts concerning escort policy. Let us consider the background and policy of neutrality escort operations and the events from which it grew in this time prior to the United States' entry into the war.

On the 2nd of July 1941 a letter from the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, to the Chief of Naval Operations says that the part of WPL-46 which provided for the sending of certain U.S. Naval Forces to Northern European waters was premised in ABC-1, (U.S.-British Staff Conversations Report) which in turn was predicted on circumstances and expectations already some four months old. While the premises partially anticipated conditions which might require the British to base convoy-escort forces in Iceland, they did not contemplate the circumstances which impelled the basing of British convoy-escort forces in Newfoundland, nor did they anticipate the occupation of Iceland before M-Day. Said Admiral King,

It is a cardinal principle for the successful cooperation of allied armed forces that the force of each country concerned shall each have their own definite spheres of operations in order to remove the difficulties inherent in the coordination of mixed forces, and so to simplify the cooperation of allied powers. Therefore, it is recommended that WPL-46 be revised so that the Western Atlantic area will include Iceland; that the British convoy-escort forces operating from bases in Iceland and in Newfoundland will be replaced by U.S. Naval Forces; that the British Naval Forces thus made available will take over the escort work now allocated in WPL-46 to certain U.S. Naval Forces which were to have aided in the control of Northwestern Approaches; that these U.S. forces be reassigned to Iceland and Newfoundland escort.¹

On the following day Admiral Bristol sent out a directive to the Support Force in an effort to clarify operational policy.. He mentioned that it had come to his attention as Force Commander that there existed some uncertainty as to exactly what procedure to follow in the event of contact with Axis vessels. For clarification he quoted the provisions listed below from the Atlantic Fleet Operation Plan No. 4-41, since they had special bearing on the subject.

- a. Prevent interference with U.S. flag shipping by belligerents by force of arms, if necessary.
- b. Maintain constant and immediate readiness to repel hostile attack.
- c. To the end that untoward incidents may be prevented; when east of longitude 65° West, north of 20° North latitude, also east of 60° West longitude, and south of 20° North latitude, show navigational lights and normal deck and other outboard lights.²

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1. CinClant sec. ltr. ser. 00109 of 2 July, 1941, to CNO.
 2. ComSupFor sec. ltr. ser. 0059 of 3 July, 1941, to SupFor.

Admiral Bristol felt that the practical application, as far as the Support Force was concerned, was that an unprovoked attack on an Axis vessel might very well prove to be the incident leading to the involvement of the United States in simultaneous war on two fronts. Therefore, taking everything into consideration, he issued the following directive:

In the event of contact with an Axis ship, trail and report as required: Protect American shipping by the deterring influence of your presence and physical interposition between American ships and Axis ships; Do not attack unless the Axis ship actually attacks first or attempts physical interference with American shipping; and finally, if an Axis ship attacks, use every weapon at your disposal to destroy the Axis ship.

This, with variations and modifications, remained the policy of the Support Force until it was declared open season on the Atlantic.

"U.S. Navy Western Hemisphere Defense Plan No. 4" (WPL-51), of 11 July, says that by now the naval operating forces of the Atlantic Fleet are said to include Naval Operating Base Bermuda, and Naval Operating Base, Newfoundland. Paragraph four states that the Western Atlantic area (26° West), is under the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, except that the appropriate units of the Iceland Garrison are under direct command of the Chief of Naval Operations and of the Commanding General, General Headquarters of the

United States Army. The general concept of this plan states that entrance into the Western Hemisphere of Axis ships or planes will be viewed as actuated by a possibly unfriendly intent toward territory or shipping within the Western Hemisphere.

The plan quotes President Roosevelt on the occupation of Iceland:

The occupation of Iceland by Germany would constitute a serious threat in three dimensions: (1) the threat against Greenland and the northern portion of North American Continent, including the islands which lie off it. (2) The threat against all shipping in the North Atlantic. (3) The threat against the steady flow of munitions to Britain---which is a matter of broad policy clearly approved by Congress. It is, therefore, imperative that the approaches between the Americas and those strategic outposts, the safety of which this country regards as essential to its national security, and which it must therefore defend, shall remain open and free from all hostile activity or threat thereof. As Commander in Chief, I have consequently issued orders to the Navy that all necessary steps be taken to insure the safety of communications in the approaches between Iceland and the United States, as well as on the seas between the United States and all other strategic points. This Government will insure the adequate defense of Iceland, with full recognition of the independence of Iceland as a sovereign state.

It was to implement this statement that WPL-51 was prepared. The tasks of the Navy were: to insure the safety of communications with United States strategic outposts; insure the adequate defense of Iceland; defend United States and Iceland flag shipping against hostile attack or threat of attack; warn Western Hemisphere powers against possible impending danger. The task of the Atlantic Fleet was to

protect United States and Iceland flag shipping against hostile attack by escorting, covering and patrolling as required by circumstances, and by destroying hostile forces which threaten such shipping. Forces were to be considered hostile if they entered the Western Atlantic area of United States or Canadian Coastal Zone in the Atlantic and Caribbean. The plan also provided for the escort of shipping of any nationality other than United States or Icelandic which happened to join such a convoy, but the Chief of Naval Operations excluded this part when the plan was put into execution on 26 July, 1941.

Admiral King (Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet) premised a new operations plan on WPL-51 and Admiral Stark's, (Chief of Naval Operations) secret letter (080912 of 12 July, 1941, and on the following day he informed the Chief of Naval Operations that initially the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, would handle all ocean escort matters, and that they would be contained in a subsidiary plan separate from the general plan.³ Admiral King said that he would bring these papers to Washington for the Chief of Naval Operations' consideration as soon as they could be put together, because it appeared essential to get started correctly on this complicated situation. In connection with this,

3. CinClant sec. ltr. ser. 131630 of 13 July, 1941 to CNO.

the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, wrote to Commander Task Force 19 (Admiral LeBreton, formerly CTF 1), notifying him that Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, would act as Commander Task Force 1 until further notice, and would take such action as might prove necessary.

Admiral Little, head of the British Naval Staff in Washington, told Admiral Stark on 14 July that submarines had been moving westward as they received "knocks" closer to the United Kingdom. He said that recently they had been working as far as 45° West between Iceland and Newfoundland, and that about the first of the month a pack of them got onto a homeward bound convoy and attacked it persistently for several days. The Admiralty had transferred some of the escorts from two outgoing convoys to this one, and although six ships were sunk, three subs were definitely known to have been destroyed. As a result of this and other similar cases it was his belief that convoys should have from ten to twelve escorts, i.e. eight destroyers and and from four to six corvettes, for the Nazi's had from one hundred to a hundred and fifty submarines in operation, about thirty of which were on station all the time during this period.

On 15 July, Admiral King revised Operation Plan No. 4-41 of 1 July 1941, and in Operation Plan No. 5-41, he defines what he considered a threat to United States and Iceland

flag shipping:

My interpretation of threat to U.S. or Iceland flag shipping, whether escorted or not, is that threat exists when potentially hostile vessels are actually within sight or sound contact of such shipping or its escort. Maintain constant and immediate readiness to repel hostile attack. Operate as under war conditions, including complete darkening of ships when at sea.

That same day King also wrote to Stark telling him that he thought paragraph 7b of WPL-51 should read: "Escort United States or Iceland flag shipping between North American and Iceland ports, including convoys of any nationality, which may join such U.S. or Iceland shipping, to and from their juncture point with the route to and from Iceland in approximate longitude 26° West, as may be directed by the CNO."⁴ (This formerly read: "Escort Convoys of U.S. and Iceland flag shipping including shipping of any nationality which may join such convoys, between U.S. ports or bases and Iceland.") King added that unless he was ordered otherwise, he would use this in his revision of orders for Task Force One. Distribution of the plan began that very day, but was not to be completed until about the 22nd of July when units were to have been allocated to conform, and other measures had been taken preliminary to putting it in effect. King's Operation Plan 5-41 shows a combination of Commander Task Force 4 and Commander Task Force 1. ⁵

4. CinClant sec. ltr. ser. 1503556 of 15 July 1941, to CNO.

5. The task organization is listed as follows without group designations:

A directive in 5-41 states that Task Force 1 will operate as separately directed, basing at Argentia, Iceland, Narragansett Bay, Casco Bay, and Boston.

In answer to Admiral King's letter of 2 July recommending modifications of ABC-1 and WPL-46, Admiral Stark argued that Iceland was directly related to the strategy of Northern Europe; that Iceland and the British Isles together formed a unit that should remain under the same strategic direction. Stark acknowledged some disadvantages and said that a loss of efficiency would occur through the operation of forces of two nations in a common task. However the disadvantages were outweighed by the beneficial effect it would have on the morale of the British people and the intensified interest of the American people in the outcome of the war. "Since the U.S. has a better technique for the coordination of air and surface forces, it is considered that U.S. naval, rather than British naval forces will be more effective in the protection of commerce in that area."⁶

Footnote #5 cont'd

BatDivs 3, 5
CruDiv 7
DesRons 2,8,27 (less DesDiv 54)
DesFlot
PatWing 7 (from TF 4)
MinDiv 5
Other available vessels

6. CNO sec. ltr. ser. 077412 of 16 July 1941, to CinClant.

Operation Plan No. 5-41 had been mailed on 18 July and Operation Plan 6-41 was sent out "first thing in the morning of 21 July." The latter stated that 6-41 would become effective concurrently with 5-41. Operation Plan 6-41 is really an Operation Order to Task Force 1 under the direct charge of Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet. In this he completely takes over Commander Task Force 4's destroyer flotilla, together with Patrol Wing 7. Operation Plan 6-41 was issued from the USS AUGUSTA at Newport, Rhode Island, 19 July, 1941, and is devoted solely to the "separate direction" for Commander Task Force 1.⁷ The plan stated that approximately 8 Canadian destroyers, 19 Canadian corvettes and 3 French corvettes would be engaged in escorting convoys. In addition to these forces, some 5 Canadian destroyers and 8 Canadian corvettes would operate in Canadian Coastal Zones -- 20 Canadian patrol planes and 60 land-type bombers in Canadian Coastal Zone to protect shipping. It further

7. The Task Organization:

- 1.1 TASK GROUP ONE - OCEAN ESCORT
 - 1.1.1 to 1.1.19 Escort detachments made up from time to time from Task Groups 2 and 3 below.
- 1.2 TASK GROUP TWO - RADM LEBRETON
 - BatDivs 3,5
 - CruDiv 7
 - DesRons 2,8
- 1.3 TASK GROUP THREE - RADM BRISTOL
 - DesFlot (TF 4)
 - DesRon 27 less DesDiv 54.
 - PatWing 7 (TF 4)
 - MinDiv 25

stated that this force would,

Escort convoys of U.S. and Iceland flag shipping, including shipping of any nationality which may join such U.S. or Iceland flag convoys, between U.S. ports and bases, and Iceland; be alert to support the defense of Iceland; support the operations of TG 6.5 (Greenland Patrol), and support operations elsewhere in the Labrador-Greenland area; maintain mail service between Boston, Argentia, Reykjavik.

After listing the tasks of Task Groups 1 and 2 the plan says Task Group 3 (Admiral Bristol) would,

provide the light-force escort detachments required for the operations of TGL; maintain appropriate patrol plane escort operations from Iceland and Newfoundland in connection with the operations of group 1; supervise and support the operations of TG 6.5 (Greenland Patrol) and support operations elsewhere in the Labrador-Greenland area;...base primarily at Argentia; in Iceland and at Shelburne (N.S.) as necessary; home bases Casco Bay, Narragansett Bay, and Boston. (The CNO was to route shipping generally, and exchange information with the British, transmitting it as necessary.)

Having issued his Operation Plan 6-41 (Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, signed it not as such but as Commander Task Force 1), he got out an amplifying letter (this time not as Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, not as Commander Task Force 1, but as Commander Task Group 1.1) on 21 July 1941. This was called "Letter of Instruction, My Operations Plan 6-41" and it was issued to all unit Commanders and Commanding Officers of Task Force 1, any of whom might be called upon to command Escort Detachments. The letter stated that LANTFLT 9 would be their "Bible". Respective group commanders were to inform escort commanders as to the com-

position of escort detachments and concerning information as to routing and movements of shipping. In general, Commander Task Group 1.2 would determine the composition and location-in-readiness of heavy escorts; Commander Task Group 1.3 for light-force escorts. The Chief of Naval Operations would furnish meeting points with convoys, the convoy routes and speeds, and the end-point of escort-of-convoys; information to be supplied direct or via task channels. Patrol planes would operate as practicable from Argentia and from Iceland in conformity with Chapter IX of LANTFLT 9. ⁸

July 20th Admiral King pointed out to Admiral Stark that a survey of present and prospective destroyer requirements based on WPL-51, plus troop movements to Iceland and elsewhere, required urgent consideration be given to obtaining large Coast Guard Cutters; also Atlantic Naval District seagoing patrol vessels which could maintain sea speeds of twelve or more knots to be assigned temporarily to the Atlantic Fleet. The following day Commander Task Group 1.3 (Bristol) was told to maintain in readiness at all times at Argentia and at Casco Bay at least one escort unit. This was to be comprised of five or six destroyers. Other ships not employed or in readiness could be at home bases (preferably Casco Bay) for training, upkeep, and recreation. He was

8. CinClant sec. ltr. ser. 00127 of 21 July 1941 to TF 1.

also to maintain a minimum of one patrol plane squadron in Iceland and two at Argentia with appropriate tender services; the remainder of planes and tenders at home bases.

The Chief of Naval Operations gave the order to execute WPL-51 at 1200 GCT on the 26th of July 1941, except for a part of it, which was to be executed at a later date after necessary arrangements had been made.

It is of interest to note the progression of ideas in the following statements: (1) in Op Plan 5-41 of 28 July, it stated "destroy hostile forces which threaten shipping of U.S. and Iceland flag." It also said, "Entrance into the Western Hemisphere by naval vessels and aircraft of belligerent powers is to be viewed as actuated by potential unfriendly intent. . . trail naval vessels and aircraft of belligerent powers. . . met with in executing tasks and broadcast in plain language their movements." (2) On 5 September, Modification 3 to Op Plan 5-41 says, "destroy potentially hostile surface raiders and submarines which attack or threaten. Threat exists when such potentially hostile vessels are found within one hundred miles of U.S. flag shipping or anywhere within proclaimed neutrality zone." (3) On 12 September Op Plan 6-41 says, "destroy potentially hostile forces which are encountered within the Western Atlantic Area." Furthermore, 3 (x)(1) of 5-41 said, "CinClant has announced that his interpretation of threat

to U.S. or Iceland flag shipping, whether escorted or not, is that threat exists when potentially hostile vessels are actually within sight or sound contact of such shipping or of its escort." In Op Plan 6-41, 3(x)(2) says, "threat to U.S. or Iceland shipping, whether escorted or not, exists when potentially hostile forces (surface war vessels, submarines or aircraft) are within the Western Atlantic Area, or United States or Canadian Coastal Zones in the Atlantic or Caribbean."

Admiral Stark forwarded a draft on 29 July to Admiral King in which he said:

You are aware of the fact that, subsequent to the promulgation of WPL-51, discussions were held between representatives of the Office of Naval Operations and British and Canadian naval and air representatives. The purpose of the conference was to arrive at agreements, and to clarify responsibilities, which the U.S., United Kingdom, and Canada would assume, after WPL-51 would be placed in effect.

A copy of the proposed agreement was shown to King at that time, and received the latter's approval. The letter continued:

For reasons which will be apparent to you, the CNO has decided that he is unable to enter into any formal agreements with foreign authorities concerning the operation of U.S. naval forces under present circumstances. Whatever action is undertaken by the U.S. Navy must, therefore, be on its own initiative, and instructions concerning such action must be unilateral. For this reason the CNO is constrained to reject the proposed agreement which was shown you, and to have it redrafted in a form which will be in accordance with instructions received from the President.⁹

9. CNO sec. ltr. ser. 087012 of 29 July 1941, to CinClant.

(The gist of it was that the U.S. would so time the sailing of United States and Iceland flag convoys as to afford protection to vessels of other nationalities which desired to join such a convoy).

Also at this time Commander Support Force put out his Operation Plan 11-41 in which he acknowledges the fact and informs the Support Force that it has been partially taken over by the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet. "The Support Force will remain organized as Task Force 4, and certain units will also be organized as TG 1.3." LANTFLT 9 (Escort-of-convoy Instructions) was to govern. This force was to:

Provide light force escort detachments required for the operation of TG 1.1; maintain appropriate patrol planes escort operations from Iceland and Newfoundland in connection with the operations of TG 1.1; supervise and support the operations of TG 6.5 (Greenland Patrol) and support operations elsewhere in the Greenland-Labrador area; maintain mail service between Boston, Argentia, and Reykjavik; maintain swept and marked channels in Argentia Area.¹⁰

Support Force units that were not assigned to Task Group 1.3 were to continue to operate in accordance with the most recent directives. Commander Task Force 1 (Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet) in AUGUSTA; Commander Task Force 4, and Task Group 1.3 (Commander Support Force) in PRAIRIE.

10. ComSupFor Op Plan 11-41 sec. ser. 0069 of 28 July-2 August, 1941, to SupFor.

This plan was to be effective upon receipt.

Admiral King's letter of 31 July, in answer to an earlier letter from Admiral Stark¹¹ said that no escort unit was available in Iceland, but one unit was standing by at Argentia and another was at Casco Bay starting August 3rd, ready to begin the escort cycle from south of Newfoundland, Northward. He pointed out that a speed of 10 knots required seven days one way from the vicinity of Cape Race to Reykjavik; that allowance of two days at Reykjavik for fuel and leeway made the round trip 16 days. Added to this would be fueling time and layover at Argentia, to make it a minimum average of a 20 day cycle for the escort unit.¹² Also on 31 July Admiral King informed the United States Naval Attache in Ottawa that by direction of the Navy Department he would escort the Iceland ships DETTIFOSS, 11 knots,

11. CNO sec. ltr. ser. 292355 to CinClant. This stated that Iceland had agreed to let the Navy Department control sailing dates of Icelandic flagships; that vessels concerned were DETTIFOSS at New York, soon to leave for Iceland, GODAFOSS, then on the North Coast of Iceland, due to sail for U.S.; that speed of both was between 11-12 knots; LARGERFOSS, going then from Halifax, and SELFOSS, in Halifax and DATLA, at Reykjavik, and EDDA, due to sail from Reykjavik 26 July for Halifax, 9-10 knots. He added that CinClant should make the necessary preparations for escorting only Icelandic or American flag ships in accordance with WPL-51, as modified by his secret letter serial 251600; that exact dates of sailing and ports of departure of vessels in the category would be supplied as soon as information was available; then CinClant was to inform vessels as to when and where they should report for escort.

12. CinClant sec.ltr.ser. 310358 of 31 July 1941, to CNO.

sailing from Louisburg on 4 August, and LARGERFOSS, 8-9 knots, from Halifax on 6 August. He requested that the best routing advice be sent him.

To all intents and purposes by now we can consider that the season was open in the Atlantic and as the result of a natural progression of events, the escort-of-convoy set up was getting into full swing. From the middle of the summer until the United States actually declared war on the Axis in December, there was a period of "armed neutrality" during which time conditions closely approximated those of open but undeclared warfare.

CHAPTER IV

ARMED NEUTRALITY AND THE ESCORT OF CONVOYS

The period from the Summer of 1941 until the end of the year can perhaps best be likened to a multi-ringed circus with several acts in most of the rings, and more acts coming in all the time. The result is increasing activity in an atmosphere of apparent confusion. Out of escort operations and the further development of advanced bases grew problems which brought about many changes and modifications in existing plans. Admiral King, as manager of this show, and Admiral Bristol as ring master, playing before a crowd of rapidly shifting events both had plenty to keep them busy.

Throughout the Spring from the beginning of the Support Force, and undoubtedly before this, Admiral Bristol had been concerned with the problems he knew would arise in connection with convoy escort duty. He anticipated many of these problems and experienced them vicariously through talks with British Naval Officers. Writing Admiral Stark, Bristol said,

On March 20, 1941 Captain A. K. Scott-Moncrieff, R.N., and Lieutenant Commander A. G. Poe, R.N., joined the staff of ComSupFor at his request to serve in an advisory capacity. These Officers have contributed greatly in assisting this Force to develop its training with the view of incorporating the latest methods used overseas. The state of training of the Support Force now is such that the services of the above officers are no longer needed. It is agreeable, therefore, with Commander Support Force that these officers be detached from their present duties. If and when the

international situation changes, and, in the event this Force should operate in the Northwest Approaches, it is probable that Commander Support Force will again ask for the services of these officers to act in a liaison capacity for a short period of time.¹

On 20 August there were eleven escort groups under the Commodore Commanding Newfoundland Force (CCNF) with slow convoys sailing from Sydney every six days and fast convoys sailing from Halifax every six days. These groups, consisting of mixed British and Canadian destroyers and corvettes, were based at St. John's and usually consisted of four ships. Organization and sailing of convoys was carried out by the Commanding Officer Atlantic Coast (COAC) whose headquarters were at Halifax. The ocean escort A.M.C. was allocated by the Rear Admiral of the Third Battle Squadron.

On this same date, 20 August, Admiral Bristol, on board the PRAIRIE in Portland, Maine, wrote a very long analysis of the escort situation. He noted that change No. 2 to WPL-52 lumped the approximate strength of the Ocean Escort as 6 battleships, 5 heavy cruisers, 27 destroyers, 23 old destroyers, and 48 patrol bombers. Atlantic Fleet Operation Plan 6-41, plus King's secret letter serial 00129 places strategic direction of surface light escorts under the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, and charges Commander Task Group 1.3 (Bristol) with maintaining appropriate patrol plane escort operations from Iceland and Newfoundland

1. ComSupFor sec. ltr. ser. 0072 of 4 August, 1941, to CNO.

in connection with the operations of Task Group 1. In this analysis the Admiral said,

The current Type Commander administration of surface craft of this Force through Squadron and Division Commanders should now be absorbed by the Force Commander; Escort Groups will not be based on the Type Organization, and Squadron and Division Commanders will often be separated from their unit type commands for weeks at a time.

He made plans for escort control in the PRAIRIE at Boston, escorts being sent from Boston or Portland to Argentina. On returning they were not to escort west of 55° west unless submarines came in that close. The tenders MELVILLE at Argentina and VULCAN at Reykjavik would ensure necessary voyage repairs and services at intermediate points. Casco Bay was only to be used as a ready station and for such training as the season permitted. Three days later Bristol's Assistant C/S, Commander Carney, remarked in a memorandum that "Admiral King generally approved of Commander Support Force's foregoing memorandum on the escort of convoys."² He stated that the project would probably be in effect by 11 September with sailings every six days; that the Commander in Chief was working out the details on the basis of five ships per escort.

August 31st Commander Task Unit 1.1.3, Captain J.L. Kaufman, escorted or was supposed to escort the Iceland

2. Assist. C/S Carney memo (no serial) of 23 August, 1941, for C/S Denfled.

flag ship SS LAGERFOSS to Reykjavik but never contacted this ship until six hours out of the destination. The merchant ship failed to follow the prescribed course, thereby causing much confusion. As a result of this Captain Kauffman recommended that there be a thorough understanding on the part of merchant captains with regard to prescribed routes and that a severe penalty be inflicted for failure to comply. Returning from Iceland, Kauffman's Task Unit was to escort the SS SELFLOSS back to the States. The latter ship went slowly and carried a small cargo, thus making the escort a more desirable target than the convoy, and the convoy not worth the risk of escort. In view of the impracticability of this type of escort duty, Captain Kauffman suggested that small ships like the SELFLOSS be restricted to inter-island commerce, and let larger, faster ships handle the trips to the States.³

The 3rd of September the Chief of Naval Operations sent out a letter which said that the Naval Operating Base, Argentia, and such district craft and naval local defense forces assigned to this base are hereby assigned as a task group of the United States Atlantic Fleet, as was done in the case of the Naval Operating Base, Bermuda, in WPL-46. This task force was to operate under the immediate command

3. CTU 1.1.3 sec. ltr. ser. 007 of 31 August, 1941, to CinClant.

of the Commandant Naval Operating Base, Argentia, under the orders of Admiral King. The administration of all matters concerning the naval reservations and naval activities in Newfoundland, and affecting the internal organization and administration of the naval district were to continue to be under the control of Commandant of the First Naval District. (Changes in WPL-46, and General Order 142 were accordingly prepared.)⁴

8 September, 1941: Under this date Admiral Bristol as Commander Task Force 4 sent out Op Plan 13-41, which set up his convoy task organization and doctrine.⁵ (Although he sent this out as CTF 4, there had been no word to the effect that he was no longer CTG 1.3. All force, group, and unit designators begin with four.) His flag ship, USS PRAIRIE, was then at Boston. In this plan Admiral Bristol neglected to include Rear Admiral Reichmuth, who was supposedly to serve under him. For this he received a reprimand from Admiral King⁶ and the following day Admiral Bristol wrote Admiral Reichmuth assigning him to Task Force 4, and in his next Operation Plan the latter was in command of the Home

4. CNO's sec. ltr. ser. 099212 of 3 September, 1941.

5. CTF 4 Op Plan 13-41 sec. ser. 0091 of 8 September 1941. See Appendix "A" for Task Organization and most important parts of this Op Plan.

6. CinClant sec. ltr. ser. 00177 of 11 September, 1941, to CTF 4.

Base Group. This letter to Admiral Reichmuth also stated (in compliance with CinClant secret Operation Plan 7-41) that the escort-of-convoy Control Station would be at Argentia and that initially CTF 4 in the PRAIRIE would be at Argentia; that the USS DENEbola was assigned to destroyer flotillas of Task Force 4, but also had certain duties with respect to services for ships of Task Force 1.⁷

Largely through the efforts of Commander E.H. Smith the Northeast Greenland Sledge Patrol came into being about the middle of 1941. The purpose of this patrol consisted of periodic reconnaissance expeditions in the Northeast Greenland area to determine the presence of enemy agents and to collect military intelligence data to further the protection of Greenland. Less than two months after its establishment, on 11 September, 1941, two members of the patrol were hunting musk-ox near the entrance of Young Sound when they sighted an unknown two masted schooner, flying no colors, about five miles off the coast. This information was reported to Commander Smith aboard NORTHLAND and the dragnet was out. A search by units of the Greenland Patrol was started and on the following day, 12 September, 1941, Commander Greenland Patrol in the NORTHLAND caught up to

7. CTF 4 sec. ltr. ser. 0097 of 11 September, 1941, to Rear Admiral R.L. Reichmuth.

and chased this ship into McKenzie Bay, where she was captured at Myggbugta. The ship, a Norwegian sealer named the BUSKOE, "allegedly engaged in subversive activity, was taken into custody." Aboard were nine Norwegian men, a woman, and a German Gestapo agent by the name of Jacob R. Bradley. BUSKOE was towed back to the States along with her prisoners by the USS BEAR. The capture of the BUSKOE expedition by Commander Smith marks the first blow struck by the United States Navy against Germany, and as such was the first violation of the United States Neutrality policy.

On 10 September Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, had sent out the following confidential dispatch:

The actual escort of convoys will begin September 16th, otherwise my Op Plan 7-41 as modified by my 092350 is effective at noon September 10th. Addressed to holders my Op Plan 7-41.⁸

Admiral King's personal letter to Commodore Murray, RCN, (CCNF) of 13 September said that his (King's) instructions concerning escort of convoys in the Western Atlantic were in WFL-51 and the appendix thereto. King said he didn't consider it appropriate to include Murray's force in his Operation Plan nor to send him a formal letter of instructions concerning the escort of convoys, but he inclosed the draft such a letter as an appendix to his personal letter which

Paraphrase of CinClant conf. dispatch of 10 September 1941.

he hoped Murray would find useful in effecting the necessary cooperation between the two forces. This letter stated,

Your forces will, in general, escort slow eastbound (SC) convoys (which may be accompanied by Iceland flag ships) which leave Sydney at six-day intervals commencing September 17, 1941 from the vicinity of the 55 meridian west to mid-ocean meeting points.

Escort units shall consist of at least five ships, preferably six or more.

After escort units for eastbound convoys have been relieved at designated mid-ocean meeting points (MOMP) such units shall then proceed to Iceland with any Iceland flag that may be in convoy.

Westbound convoys will be met at designated mid-ocean meeting points by similar escort units from Iceland, the unit in each case (regardless of nationality) to be that one which has been the longest time in Iceland.

The responsibility of the escort unit with respect to the convoy holds whether U.S. or Iceland flag ships part company for any reason or do not join.

In an emergency, convoys may be diverted by escort unit commanders from prescribed routes without prior approval of CinClant, but only to the minimum extent necessary to avoid immediate danger. Report of any such emergency diversion will be made to CinClant as soon as circumstances permit. Resumption of prescribed track and arrival at the assigned mid-ocean meeting point on schedule will continue to be essential.

The coverage of U.S. and Canadian escort of convoy operations by U.S. patrol planes will be conducted from Argentia and Iceland with particular attention to the times and locations of mid-ocean meeting points for both fast and slow convoys.⁹

9. CinClant personal ltr. of 13 September, 1941 to Commodore Murray, RCN.

The Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, further stated that fuel from United States naval tankers would be available in Iceland for the Canadian escort units and that he would furnish information regarding convoys as necessary. On the 16th, in compliance with Admiral King's dispatch, Commander Task Force 4 began officially to conduct escort operations.

The question of plane operations in Iceland and Argentina came up several days later, and Admiral Bristol felt that during the winter months, icing conditions, short daylight hours, radio ineffectiveness, crowded conditions of planes operating in Iceland (plane and tender moorings in anchorages) created a serious problem. As a partial solution to this problem, Commander Task Force 4 requested Admiral King that PBMs and PBYS in these locations be replaced by PBY-5As to beat the possibility of plane loss due to icing conditions. The Amphibians would be more feasible to handle.¹⁰

About the end of the month Bristol, who had now moved with the PRAIRIE to Argentina, wrote Commander Patrol Wing 7 concerning the aerial escort of convoys. He pointed out to Captain Mullinnix that these operations were no longer training exercises, and that all hands operating in the Western

10. Personal ltr. of 18 September, 1941, from Admiral Bristol to Admiral King.

Atlantic were "playing for keeps". Although he assumed that records were being kept of these flights, the Admiral said in the future he wanted certain specific data written up.¹¹ From this Bristol wanted a weekly report from each advanced base arranged so as to give continuity of operations in respect to each convoy.

The 5th of October Admiral Bristol received a letter commenting on operations of the Iceland Air Detachment. Among other things, he was informed that,

According to information furnished me by Air Commander Primrose, RAF, flying boats are not suitable for winter operations in Iceland, and that it was planned to withdraw and replace them with landplanes about the second of October. . . While it is realized that this unit was operating under adverse conditions, with prevailing bad weather and unsuitable equipment, it is not believed they are accomplishing their major missions of patrolling and escorting convoys. . . The Air Commodore stated that it was difficult, if not impossible for planes to make contact with convoy unless equipped with Radar. He proposed one British and one American plane operate

11. CTF 4 conf. ltr. ser. 0440 to ComPatWing 7, 30 September 1941.

- a. Time and position convoy was met.
- b. Time and position convoy was left.
- c. Visibility, wind and state of sea.
- d. Composition and disposition of the convoy, as for example: - 45 ships, 8 columns.
- e. Whether the convoy was in good order or whether straggling.
- f. Distance at which convoy could be sighted, and whether smoking.
- g. If at night time, whether the convoy was effectively darkened.
- h. Hostile craft contacted and record of action taken.

together until our planes were suitably equipped. No commitments were made.¹²

Admiral King again wrote to Commodore Murray on 9 October discussing the Canadian escort situation. King said he had directed that priority be given to assignment of Canadian Escort Units in Iceland to westbound convoys, regardless of whether slow or fast. It was expected that this would tend to equalize the convoy cycles between United States and Canadian Escort Units, (to the benefit of the latter) and at the same time maintain the ON convoy schedule without interruption. He anticipated that irregularities concerning the routing of Iceland flag shipping would shortly be squared away with the Navy Department, and in the meantime those ships knew that escorts were available for such convoys as their speed permitted them to join. In an effort to avoid confusion Admiral King requested that the Commodore take up any urgent matters concerning Canadian Escorts with SOPA, Iceland, rather than the Senior British Naval officer there.¹³

The following day Admiral Bristol received a memorandum from Captain F.W. Pennoyer, Jr., USN, relative to a joint meeting on board the HMS KING GEORGE V in Hvalfjordur, Iceland. At this meeting were Admiral Tovey, RN (CinC

12. ComBatDiv 3 conf. ltr. ser. 0449 of 5 October, 1941 to CTF 4.

13. CinClant personal ltr. of 9 October, 1941, to Commodore Murray, RCN.

British Home Fleet); Admiral Percy Noble (CinCWA) and quite a few other United States and British Naval Officers concerned with North Atlantic operations. This memorandum is of especial interest because it exposed a glaring weakness in the joint communications setup. The then existing procedure for communicating danger warnings to United States Navy escort commanders is quoted.

- a. CinCWA in Liverpool develops the presence of an emergency from his plot.
- b. He transmits it to the Admiralty, London.
- c. The Admiralty decides upon further transmission and, if so decided, enciphers and sends message to OpNav, Washington.
- d. OpNav deciphers it and decides upon further transmission.
- e. If decided to re-transmit, it is again enciphered in U.S. Navy code, and broadcast on the next Fox schedule.¹⁴

Instances were cited wherein 17 hours or more elapsed between the recognition of an imminent danger and receipt by the United States Navy escort units concerned. The setup adopted to rectify this discrepancy was: "When the British authority sees an immediate danger, a preliminary signal should be sent in the British and American Joint Cipher which can be received by the United States escort, either through Washington or on a direct broadcast."¹⁵

14. Captain F.W. Pennoyer, Jr., sec. ltr. ser. 0165 of 10 October, 1941, to ComSupFor.

15. Ibid.

Also on 10 October Admiral Bristol received a very important letter from Admiral King to the effect that,

Escort of convoy arrangement and procedure have now become so far stabilized that it is practicable to give full effect to your part in the current Op Plan 7-41 and the corresponding letter of instructions to you (my serial 00204).

There is hereby delegated to you all appropriate authority to control and supervise the conduct of trans-Atlantic escort of convoy operations within the N.W. Atlantic area, which are duly assigned to my direction in paragraph 502e of WPL-52.

The said authority embraces not only direct control of U.S. escort units but also coordinating supervision of the operations of Canadian escort units, which later will be effected through and with the Commodore Commanding Newfoundland (now Commodore L.W. Murray, RCN) who will have entire charge of the availability of Canadian escort unit. The same coordinating supervision will be effected through and with the Commanding Officer, Atlantic Coast (headquarters at Halifax) when appropriate.

Continue the arrangements whereby one of your destroyer squadron commanders is always in Iceland where (under SOPA Iceland) he will see to the servicing and other readiness of both U.S. and Canadian escort units.

Increase the number of ships in U.S. escort units from 5 to 6 as soon as practicable, having due regard for the long-range view which must include not only the number of ships, but also their availability for operational requirements.

This directive will be made effective by despatch.¹⁶

This directive did away with Bristol's status as Commander Task Group 1.3 and from now on he is again both

16. CinClant sec. ltr. ser. 00228(A4-3(4)) of 10 October 1941, to ComSupFor.

Commander Support Force and Commander Task Force 4, but as time went on the latter designator became the more common.

Commander Task Force 4 informed Captain Deyo (CTU 4.2.6) on 14 October that CinClant had directed him to continue the arrangements whereby one of his destroyer squadron commanders was always in Iceland. Under the general supervision of SOPA Iceland, he would see to the servicing and other readiness of both United States and Canadian escort units, their appropriate departure and routing and other related matters.

Also on the 14th, SOPA Iceland reported that Rear Admiral Hamilton, RN, had turned over to him for Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, control of all escort units under his command operating westward of MOMP. This was in accordance with Admiral King's directive, and as of 1200 GCT, 15 October, SOPA Iceland said he would turn over control of all escort units in that area to CTU 4.2.6.

Commander Task Force 4's first escort order also came out on 14 October although United States naval vessels had been escorting United States and Icelandic flag shipping previous to this time.¹⁷ Commander Macklin (CTU 4.1.7)

17. See page 84.

with five destroyers,¹⁸ was to escort convoy HX-155 leaving Halifax 16 October, 1941. After escorting the convoy to the MOMP via a prescribed route he was to be relieved by the British Ocean Escort and then proceed to base Cast (Reykjavik) as escort of any Iceland bound ships of the convoy. Further, while he was within 200 miles of base Roger (Argentia), he was to guard that harbor's frequency. The following day, CTF 4 received a report from CTU 4.1.1 saying that he had missed a rendezvous with the British escorts of Convoy ON-22 on 7 October.¹⁹ This was because the British had been unable to obtain navigational fixes for the previous three days. It was subsequently determined by D.F. fix that they had passed 15 miles to the North of the MOMP. No patrol planes were there to assist in search operations. In view of the uncertainty of weather in latitudes of eastern NOMP it was recommended that escort units proceed unhampered by the convoy from bases in Iceland to the MOMP in order to permit a more extended scouting line to offset cases of navigational error of rendezvous. Also that every attempt be made to provide patrol plane coverage in the vicinity of the MOMP even though weather conditions may not be too desirable.

18. TU 4.1.7: MOFFETT (F), STURTEVANT, OVERTON, BAINBRIDGE, and TRUXTON.

19. CTU 4.1.1 sec. ltr. ser. 0174 of 15 Oct., 1941 to CTF 4.

In a letter to Admiral Bristol also written on the 15th of October Captain Deyo says:

CinClant's letter of instructions on Op Plan 7E-41. . . states that U.S. and Canadian Escort Units will consist of five or more destroyers or a mixed force of DDs and escort vessels totalling 6 to 9. Yesterdays CN-25 went out with 6 corvettes and no DDs. Graham told me that they had sometimes been down as low as 4 corvettes and no DDs. That seems pretty thin.²⁰

However, Captain Deyo thought it would be a mistake to mix Canadian and United States escorts and try and run the escort-of-convoy system from Iceland. Besides other reasons, inadequate repair facilities for ships coming into Iceland presented too much of a problem. He thought the greatest present danger to convoys was that they didn't receive the information from Naval Operations concerning routing changes, etc. He suggested that action addressees be more plainly identified in messages concerning convoy routing.

Communications seemed to be one of the major problems in convoy work. Three letters to Admiral Bristol from Commander H. K. Phillips (CTU 4.1.5), Captain Deyo, and SOFA Iceland on the 10th, 15th, and 17th of October point this up. Commander Phillips was Escort Commander of convoy CN-152 which got well out of position and it was necessary to make a 120° turn. In order to make the rendezvous with the British the convoy Commodore decided to make a series of six 20° turns

20. Captain Deyo's personal ltr. of 15 Oct., 1941, to Bristol.

which would bring them back into position in the necessary time. Radio silence had to be maintained as submarines were known to be in the vicinity, one of the ships in the convoy having already been torpedoed. To make matters worse, it was late in the afternoon, and the visibility was very poor. The signal of two red lights was hoisted for the first turn, and at the same time visibility became further reduced so that the ships who saw the signal turned, but the rest of them did not. The result was that in a short while the convoy was completely broken up. The blame for this fiasco was put on poor communications facilities and doctrine. If they had been able to receive earlier messages from Naval Operations they might not have been out of position. Communications had been Commander Phillip's major worry, and even squadron communication personnel in the USS MAYO were unable to copy many of the messages on the Fox schedule due to interference by a German station (DNB) and frequently bad atmospheric conditions. Captain Mayo suggested placing a symbol (letter) in the heading of the message to signify that it had to do with the "routing of convoy", and in the body of the text a serial number, representing the total number of despatches sent out by Naval Operations. The former indicated action for Escort Groups even though the address is garbled and the latter gives information whether a previous despatch has or has not been lost. SOPA Iceland,

(Admiral R.C. Giffen) concurred with this idea.

Earlier, in September the USS GREER had been enroute from Argentina to Reykjavik with mail when she had a submarine sound contact. After trailing the submarine for a while the sub closed and fired a torpedo at the GREER; the GREER countered by dropping depth charges. Evidences of oil on the surface later indicated that the sub had been sunk. This was one of the earlier violations of neutrality. Later, on 20 October, the USS KEARNEY, while escorting a British convoy, was torpedoed, but despite considerable loss of personnel, she managed to limp into Reykjavik. This almost precipitated an international crisis, but evidently the United States decided to bide its time until the country was more completely prepared to go to war. The one good thing about this situation was that it proved conclusively to both officers and men something that they had always strongly suspected: namely, that ships of the United States Navy could "take it."

As a solution to the communication problem the Chief of Naval Operations devised the "Convoy Telegram." Commander Task Force 4 sent out a letter relative to it to his escort units in which he showed the type form.²¹

21. CTF 4 sec. ltr. ser. 00114 of 20 Oct., 1941, to CTUs 4.1.1 -- 4.1.8.

When information was not available at the time the "convoy telegram" was disseminated, the word "nil" was substituted in the paragraph concerned, and as the information became available it was forwarded by despatch referring to the "convoy telegram".²²

The 21st of October the Chief of Naval Operations wrote the Army Chief of Staff stating that work on construction of facilities for an Army plane squadron at the Naval Air Station, Argentia had not yet been undertaken, since no orders had been given. He approximated that it would take about six months to build barracks. Naval barracks then approaching completion would be required for Naval personnel. The seaplane hanger, the only hanger available, was needed for aircraft actively engaged in patrol and escort operations. "While in the construction stage", said Admiral

-
21. (cont'd) "Convoy Telegram"
- | | | | |
|-----------|----|---|---|
| paragraph | 1. | - | Convoy number repeated. |
| " | 2. | - | Approved ocean route. |
| " | 2. | - | Position of MOMP, time (if known) and date of arrival. |
| " | 3. | - | Speed of advance and time passing through lettered position. |
| " | 4. | - | Secret position. |
| " | 5. | - | Senior Officer's ship and total of escort. |
| " | 6. | - | Name of Commodore's ship and total number of ships in convoy. |
| " | 7. | - | Safe route to Reykjavik. |
| " | 8. | - | Number of ships for Reykjavik. |

22. CTF 4 sec. ltr. ser. 00114 of 20 Oct., 1941 to CTUs 4.1.1 --- 4.1.8.

Stark,

Argentia is serving as an operating base not only for naval aircraft, but also for important units of the Atlantic Fleet. It is essential that nothing be done which will unnecessarily handicap the naval use of such facilities as are completed.²³

Captain Deyo, Bristol's Destroyer Squadron Commander in Iceland, again wrote the Admiral concerning convoy problems on 23 October.

On the subject of Canadian Escorts my understanding is that they are to continue with the odd numbered ON convoys, keeping their present cycles. As I understand it, they want to make a quick turn around at this end in order to get more time in home ports. Having only six units, their cycle is 36 days with convoy intervals of 6 days. This gives them 10 to 14 days at home. The pinch comes at this end where they have a maximum of 2 days which is often reduced to 36 hours or less and they are feeling the strain. The voyage out often takes them 11 days. They arrive here tired out and the DDs just barely making it...With winter coming on their problem will be more difficult. They are going to have break downs and ships running out of oil at sea.²⁴

Admiral Bristol was evidently thinking along similar lines, for on the following day he sent a memo to Admiral King outlining his escort situation. He said that he had 42 destroyers and 2 CGs available, excluding KEARNEY; that ST. AUGUSTINE and ZIRCON were not suited for North Atlantic escort duty. He advocated an operational cycle of seven

23. CNO sec. ltr. ser. 0119512 of 21 October, 1941 to Chief of Staff, U.S. Army.

24. Captain Deyo's personal letter of 23 October, 1941, to Admiral Bristol.

6-ship units to make runs with fast East and West convoys from Argentia to Iceland and back to Argentia in 28 days; slow convoys making the same run in 30 days. Round trip to Boston from Argentia, 4-5 days; Argentia time for replenishment and instruction, 2 days. The total cycle available under this organization was 42 days which allowed 5 (slow) or 8 (fast) days for upkeep, training, and liberty.²⁵

Commander Task Force 4's Operation Plan 14-41 came out on the 29th of October (USS PRAIRIE at Argentia) and in many respects it was very similar to his previous one.²⁶

On 8 November Bristol sent King a long, detailed discussion on escort-or-convoy operations. In it he discussed such aspects as routing, diversions, and the strength and composition of escort units, arriving at the following conclusions:

1. The northern routes via Iceland are more advantageous during summer: i.e. better air coverage, more daylight hours, and the short legged DDs can be used, thereby giving maximum protection from limited escort strength. The southern routes are better in winter: better weather, and more daylight. Short legged DDs are no good for out-and-back or trans-oceanic operations, but are best utilized in conjunction with mid-ocean fueling bases on both northern and southern routes.

25. CTF 4 sec. ser. memo 0119 of 24 October, 1941 to CinClant.

26. CTF Op Plan 14-41 sec. ser. 00123 of 29 October, 1941, (For Task organization and pertinent parts of this plan, see appendix "B").

2. Diversions are effective and should be continued within the radius limitations of the escorts employed. note: there appears to have been at times a certain over-enthusiasm in the matter of diversions with consequent serious fuel shortage for some of the escorts.

3. 56-72 DDs (or CGs) are needed to furnish 7-9 ship escort units for the present system or for the trans-oceanic system. A minimum of 63 (mixed DDs and corvettes) would be required by the Canadians for the trans-oceanic system...Escort control stations, similar to that now established in Iceland, should be established in the United Kingdom and Azores if they figure in the escort-of-convoy operations of U.S. and Canadian units. (note: facilities already established for the Northwest Escort Force (SupFor) at Londonderry are available.)...If U.S. and Canadian forces operate in the United Kingdom or Azores, U.S. naval air operations will be inaugurated in those areas. (note: facilities prepared for the Northwest Escort Force are now available at base "A" (Loch Erne). 27

On the same day that Commander Task Force 4 sent Admiral King this discussion, 8 November, the Secretary of the Navy announced the establishment of Naval Operating Base, Iceland, under Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet. Rear Admiral J. L. Kauffman, USN, was named as Commandant of the base.

On 10 November Commander E.H. Smith, promulgated his Operation Plan No. 1-41 for the South Greenland Patrol. This plan is based upon and implements "Basic Joint Army and Navy Plan for the Defense of Greenland", short title "Noah" of 13 June, 1941 and as amended 30 September, 1941. The North-

27. CTF 4 sec. ltr. ser. 00136 of 8 November, 1941, to CinClant.

east Greenland Patrol and South Greenland Patrol had pretty well dropped out of the Operation Plan picture for awhile, but now come back in as a combined force called the South Greenland Patrol under the Command of Commander Smith. The South Greenland Patrol is listed on this date with no designators.²⁸ This force operated directly under the orders of the Chief of Naval Operations.

Admiral Bristol finally indicated on 13 November that he was going to get the PBV-5A planes that were felt necessary for winter operations. Scheduled delivery was supposed to be the first week in December, and in order to maintain the Iceland and Argentina Air Detachments at effective strength a gradual transfer of old types for the new was to be effected. Bristol suggested transporting the new PBV-5As by ship, and replacing the planes in Iceland before those at Argentina. After submitting his plan to the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, he stood by for approval; in the meantime, patrol and escort operations continued as scheduled.

On 19 November Admiral Bristol informed Admiral King that he had conferred with the Air Officer Commanding Eastern Air Command, and with Major General Brant, USAAF, Commanding the Newfoundland Base Command concerning combined

28. NORTH STAR (F), NORTHLAND, HODOC, ALGONQUIN, COLANCHE, BEAR, BOWDCIN, and RARITAN.

air operations in Newfoundland. Responsibility was allocated for air coverage by United States Naval air units in Newfoundland, to a distance of about 500 miles from Argentia in a sector bounded on the north by 48° North, on the west by 55° West and for offensive sweeps as might be appropriate. Royal Canadian Air Force units based in Newfoundland were to cover to the east and north of Newfoundland, north of the 48th parallel to 500 miles from the Newfoundland Air Port (Gander). . . this, plus appropriate shipping. Communications with the Royal Canadian Air Force were to be handled through the facilities of the Royal Canadian Navy with the assistance of the Task Force 4 liaison officer in St. John's. As soon as WFL-52 was issued, Commanding General, Newfoundland Base Command, conferred with Commander Task Force 4 in order to draft a Joint Plan for the Defense of Newfoundland. Admiral Bristol said that one had been prepared on the principle of paramount interest.²⁹

In connection with patrol plane duties Commander Task Force 4 told Commander Patrol Wing 7 (Captain Mullinnix) that commencing 25 November, until further orders, he would conduct offensive aerial sweeps to cover a specified area off the coast of Newfoundland.³⁰ He was to assign one plane

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29. CTF 4 sec. ltr. ser. 00148 of 19 November 1941 to CinClant.
30. The area to be patrolled was from Newfoundland along 48° North to 46° West, thence south to 45° North, thence to a point 42° North, 52° West, thence west to 56° West, thence north to Newfoundland.

to cover the area fifty miles to seaward from St. John's and Conception Bay; further, to maintain continual patrol of Placentia Bay. The Admiralty had said on the 25th that a U-Boat at Wabana Bay was probably paying particular attention to the entrance to Conception Bay, and to patrol the sector between west and northwest of St. Francis.

With Axis subs operating in the waters surrounding the coast of Newfoundland, there was devised a plan to combat the Germans with their own weapon. This was called the Placentia Project which planned on using submarines operating out of Placentia Bay in anti-submarine warfare against the Axis U-Boats. During the latter part of November this project got under way, and on the 30th Admiral Bristol received a letter from Admiral King on the subject. King stated that there was a necessity for a definite procedure with regard to routing convoys to clear United States submarines, and it would be necessary to set up an operating area. He also commented on the method of destroyer and submarine training being conducted at Argentia.³¹

The "Joint Army-Navy Newfoundland Defense Plan 1" was sent to Admiral King by Admiral Bristol on 28 November, and Bristol said that prior to the receipt of King's directive on this subject, the Army representative in Newfoundland had stated that a War Department directive had stipulated that

31. Admiral King sec. ltr. serial 00101 of 30 November 1941 to Admiral Bristol.

such a plan would be required. The proposed plan's assumptions weigh profitable enemy objects: St. John's, Torbay air port, Naval Air Station, Argentia, air port at Stephenville, ships in Argentia, shipping in Conception Bay, and other anchorages in Newfoundland, and the Newfoundland Railroad. The plan outlined the responsibilities of the two forces but despite this there seems to have been some friction as to who was to have the overall responsibility.

On 3 December 1941 Admiral Stark wrote the Commandant of the Coast Guard with reference to stationing weather ships in the North Atlantic. He requested that ships of the HAMILTON and MODOC classes be released to the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet for this purpose. The Navy had several merchant ships that they were converting for this purpose, but they would not be ready until late in December, January, and February of 1942. Also Stark stated that action would be taken by the Navy Department to increase the amount of weather information furnished by naval aircraft returning from offshore flights, and by ships which were compelled to break radio silence for other reasons.³² The Chief of Naval Operations was also concerned about patrol seaplanes operating from Argentia in winter conditions. He felt that they should be replaced by amphibians as soon as the latter were available and he stated that the Naval Air Station, Argentia should make preparations to receive one squadron of PBX-5As

32. CNO conf. ltr. serial 0139312 of 3 December 1941 to Commandant USCG.

not later than January, 1942, and another squadron shortly thereafter.

Commander Task Force 4 was also worried about this problem, for he remarked in a letter to Admiral King 2 December that below-freezing temperatures and formation of ice on the planes at buoys, and while taking off during the past five days indicated that it would not be practicable to operate patrol planes with any degree of regularity from Argentia until spring. He stated that he was reducing the strength of the Argentia air detachment to 12 planes at the first opportunity with further reduction to eight - the number that could be accommodated in a temporary parking area. Complete cessation of operations would shortly become necessary until the arrival of the amphibians. King, by despatch, approved of this idea. On the following day Commander Task Unit 4.3.10 reported that since 24 November, winds of gale force had been passing that base at intervals of 8 to 48 hours; their intensity varying from 30 to 60 knots, with gusts to 75 knots. Operations during the past three weeks had therefore been greatly reduced and he felt that operations could not continue and afford proper security to material due to the rapidity with which the gales came. He strongly recommended securing PBVs on ramps and FBMs at buoys in a non-operational status. The Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, answered on the same day that his mission (Commander Task Force 4's) was to have planes available to

meet an emergency wherever conditions made operations possible; that maintenance and security of material were secondary to operating availability. King wanted to have as many planes in operational status as conditions warranted.

Also about this time there was a lot of correspondence on the subject of Argentia harbor defenses. At that point there were no mines or nets for its protection, and it was feared that some enterprising Axis U-Boat Commander might wake up to the fact that it would not be too difficult to sneak up on the practically unprotected harbor and take a few "pot shots" at the ships located there. Harbor Defense Plan 3 (Hypo-Dog-Prep-3) provided for harbor entrance patrol craft on continuous duty, but this was felt to be inadequate. This plan was in effect only one day at a time. It was recommended that an anti-torpedo net with net tenders be placed all the way across the harbor entrance, and this was eventually carried out.

Between 16 September 1941 and 7 December 1941, Task Force 4 operating from various bases in New England, Newfoundland, and Iceland, protected and escorted United States and certain friendly foreign flag shipping in the Northern Atlantic against Axis efforts to interfere with our announced national policy of Defense Aid or munitions and supplies to friendly nations. Between the above dates escort ships and aircraft of Task Force 4 provided the entire protection for British operated HX and ON convoys and certain other shipping in the Western Atlantic. During this period Commander Task

order, increased coordination, supervision over all areas of activity in the North Atlantic, including operations of independent convoys escorted by a single force in protecting trans-Atlantic supply in the Western Atlantic. On numerous occasions ships and planes of Task Force Four detected and attacked Axis submarines. The attack on convoys in the North Atlantic, which began, and some of the present ships escorted by units of Task Force Four, all testify to the proximity of hostile forces, and to the hazards involved. Although the United States was not at war in the legal sense, Task Force Four and the Axis forces had been mutually engaged in belligerent operations in every practical sense.

After the events occurring between September and December 1941 it now becomes absolutely clear that Admiral Bristol's big operational responsibility had come; not as he had expected, in the British Isles, but in the so-called Western Atlantic Area. His force had never become the Northwest Escort Force for which it ostensibly had been trained; neither had it become, nor was it ever to become the support force in the planned sense of the word. What it really had become might well as best be called a Western Atlantic Escort Force, and it was to continue in much the same status throughout the war.

The effect of 7 December 1941 on Commander Task Force Four and advanced bases connected with his command was marked

to get to Argentina on their own power. Another task assigned will be to continue the base development ready for occupation next spring.³³

On the 16th Captain Corn said that there was even less possibility of the advanced bases being occupied any time in the near future, he considered it important to push their development as long as it did not interfere with current and immediate projects.³⁴ However, Lt. Commander Lettrey had different ideas about the advanced base set-up. He had previously been ordered to form a nucleus detachment for the West Air Base, Iceland, which he had done and assembled them at Quonset for transportation to Iceland. He was also to be executive officer of the base at Iceland and prospective executive officer at Advance Aviation Base "A". Since he did not think he would ever be used at base "A", and felt a lieutenant could take care of the Iceland base, he requested to be released from the support force, and become Commander Patrol Squadron 91, operating in the Pacific. However, he was refused. Captain Corn wrote Benfield again on 19 December, and with reference to the shifting of forces said,

Insofar as Task Force Four is concerned, I expect that not more than one division of destroyers may be involved as a maximum. The outcome of the negotiations with Martinique (which appear to have been successful) may have a considerable bearing on what ships may be diverted . . .

Iceland detachment ---still all set in Quonset, and should set off in the ABRA ship, Lt. Comdr.

33. Captain W. L. Corn sec. memo. C-125-13/12 serial 01321 of 11 December 1941 to Captain E. L. Benfield.

34. Captain W. L. Corn sec. memo. (no serial) of 16 December 1941 for Capt. Benfield. -102-

Battery left yesterday to join them. He has done an excellent job in preparing this unit, and has worked in close conjunction with Admiral Smith and the Bureau

Members of our repair unit have been called for relief. It is my guess that they will be fully occupied from four to six months. During this period we will be in the same position with regard to occupation of an advance destroyer base as we were in April. The only answer, of course, is that the ship accompanying the first wave, and either remain at Belfast acting as a tender, or undergo her entire repair at that port. Personnel at the base, and then, in the interest of safety to the ship, return to the U.S. for reorganization of the repair unit. Under either condition a relief repair ship would necessarily take her place at Argentia.³⁵

These excerpts from Captain Corn's letters reflected fairly well the problems which lay ahead of Task Force Four for the coming year of 1942. The escort-of-convo duties were to continue, but at a stepped up pace in view of the fact that the United States was now actively and openly engaged in fighting a war against the Axis. Also with the increased need for escorts and at the same time destroyers would be vitally needed in the Pacific for defensive actions. With this situation existing there was bound to be an excessive strain on both ships and crews on the United States Navy operating in the Atlantic. Besides this, the availability of patrol planes of all types would necessarily be curtailed to a certain extent. Just how much would remain to be seen. And finally, both personnel and material for advanced bases would be cut down and limited because they were needed more urgently elsewhere. Commander Task Force Four's report set

35. Captain J. J. Corn sec. memo. No serial, of 12 December 1941 for Captain L. A. Gensfeld.

CHAPTER V

MR: BRISTOL'S PLAN, ESCORTS, AND PATROLS

After the flurry of excitement and confusion which naturally accompanied the outbreak of the war in the air, Admiral Bristol found himself faced with an escort problem. During December 1940 it had become increasingly apparent that Canadian escort strength was mostly "on paper" and they were having difficulty in maintaining adequate numbers in each escort group. He pointed out to Admiral King that at that time they (the Canadians) were returning from Iceland to the United Kingdom on all of the even numbered UK convoys which gave them an advantageous break, but on the Iceland end it was often tight. This might have resulted at any time in their missing an even convoy and reverting to the odd numbers. Bristol felt that this difficulty was caused principally by the inadequacy of their maintenance ideas and facilities. Because of it is Bristol advocated using Londonderry as an alternative if it could be worked out smoothly, despite the fact that he foresaw difficulties on the other side. Furthermore, he realized the necessity for the closest understanding between Iceland and Londonderry, as well as being in control on this side.¹

About the first of the year Admiral Bristol had a

1. Admiral Bristol's personal letter (no serial) of 20 December 1941 to Admiral King.

Military Inspection of the Iceland Air Base was conducted. The Commandant is quoted as follows in his report: "In a letter to the main command (see attached report dated 11 November), he stated that the general type of the base was poor. However, he said that because the weather was so bad, he was not able to make a full inspection for the purpose of the maintenance and reverse operating conditions, but in comparison with other bases he felt that it was possible to achieve better results. The Commandant especially failed to measure up to the required standards and the Air Commander was ordered to take immediate corrective action. But there was a recession feature:

As compared with the stated performance of the unit, the flying-hours-per-plane of the Iceland Air Detachment is satisfactory. . . . This detachment maintained a greater percentage of planes ready to fly than was accomplished by either the Army or the Navy operating under the better conditions and with better facilities incident to land plane operations."

On 5 January 1942 a Joint Army-Navy directive was sent out averring that United States Marine and British forces in Iceland and Northern Ireland were to be relieved by United States Army troops. Eight thousand of these troops were to leave for Iceland during January and another force was to leave for Northern Ireland as soon as was practicable to release the First Marine Brigade (Provisional) for service elsewhere. Also on this same date Commander Park ordered that

2. CTF 4 sec. ltr. serial 006 of 2 January 1942 to Commanding 7.

...and the ship's crew, and other personnel, etc. ...
...in accordance with directives and orders ...
...in 1941, ...
...under the command of ...
...to meet the ...
...were suitable for fleet anchorage. In order of ...
...each point ...
...and ...
...ability of laying anti-torpedo nets, etc. ...

On the other hand, Admiral Bristol ...
letter to Admiral Ingersoll, who had relieved ...
as Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet. ...
past he had been writing personal letters to ...
and receiving from him personal letters on various matters
connected with escort-or-convey.

The reason for pursuing Bristol's ...
general discussion of ...
could be foreseen and ...
sufficiently developed to be ...
official correspondence... I ...
ling left his file of such correspondence with you,
but I hope that you will approve the continuation of
the practice.³

This practice, as has been noted before, was one of the
factors which greatly contributed to the smooth running of
Bristol's organization. In order that there might be a
more complete understanding between the two admirals, the
letter continues by explaining Bristol's ideas on such

3. As Admiral Bristol's see. ltr. serial 60401 of ...
1942 to Admiral Ingersoll.

matters related to the escort-of-convoys as: number of escorts, number of ships per group, composition of a group, overhead, escort cycles and weather. In discussing the above subjects he indicated to Admiral Ingersoll that he was operating on a very tight schedule, but he still had an "ace-in-the-hole" that had not been taken into consideration, i.e. the time interval between convoys. At that time he was operating on a six day sailing interval between convoys which were composed of between thirty to fifty ships. By increasing the interval to seven days, a week could be gained over the present escort cycle, and this would only increase the ships in the convoy by approximately eight. Bristol said that although he was not advancing the idea at that moment, he would appreciate it if Admiral Ingersoll would think it over.

This letter was followed three days later, on the 11th, by the issuance of Admiral Bristol's first operation plan of the year. From the task organization of this plan it can be seen that Task Force Four was continuing to expand.⁴

4. CTF 4 Op Plan 1-42 (rev. ser. 001), 11 January, 1942.

- 4.1 ESCORT UNITS --- Escort Commanders
- 4.2 DESTROYER FLOTILLA
- 4.3 AIR GROUP --- Captain Mullinix
- 4.4 HOME BASE GROUP --- Rear Admiral Carpenter
- 4.5 TASK FORCE FOUR ADMINISTRATION
- 4.6 TASK FORCE FOUR ESCORT CONTROL BOARD
- 4.7 TF 4 --- ESCORT CONTROL UNITS SYSTEM
- 4.8 OCEANIC PATROL --- Captain R. L. Smith
- 4.9 U.S. AND CANADIAN ESCORT UNITS AT SEA

This differs from the previous plan 14-41 in that Admiral Reichmuth has been made Commander Task Force 9 and Admiral Carpenter now had the Home Base Group; task groups 4.7 and 4.8, previously reserved, had now become Task Force 4 - Escort Control United Kingdom and The Greenland patrol respectively. (This definitely establishes the latter as no longer being under the Northern patrol, Task Group 6.1, commanded by Admiral Andrews, where it had previously been for several months.) Also, Patrol Squadrons 82 and 83 had replaced Patrol Squadrons 72 and 71, then on temporary duty with Commander Task Force 8, Rear Admiral McWhorter. The Patrol Squadron set up of Patrol wing 7 now were allocated as follows: Commander Patrol Squadron 73 (Iceland), Commander Patrol Squadron 74 (Naval Air Station, Norfolk), Commander Patrol Squadron 81 (Naval Air Station, Argentia), and Commander Patrol Squadron 8 (Naval Air Station, Norfolk). This plan was later cancelled and superseded by Operation Plan 3-42 (Revised).

As was noted on the previous Operation Plan, allowance had been made for an Escort Control Station in the United Kingdom and in connection with this Commander W. L. Buck, Support Force Supply Officer, made the following notation in a memorandum to Commander Task Force 4. He said:

Lacking definite information on a number of questions concerning the use of Base One as a convoy escort terminal complete plans cannot be made now with

respect to the logistics requirements of this project. Assuming as a basic principle that in general all material requirements are to be supplied by U. S. sources and that the MELVILLE is the only tender likely to be available the considerations involved are outlined, etc.⁵

And in a memo to Captain W. A. Corn in Naval Operations on the same subject, Bristol's Chief of Staff, now Captain Carney, had this to say:

The possibility of full occupation of Base One has been discussed. Immediate use of Base A is not contemplated and if American air is to go over in the spring, steps will be initiated by Commander Task Force FOUR early in the game to put Base A on a proper footing to receive our aircraft and to do a creditable job from the time they arrive. No action is required at the moment but the Admiral does not intend to have a haphazard development such as occurred in Iceland and he will demand vigorous action as soon as he knows for certain that our planes are to operate from Loch Erne.

Returning to the subject of Base One - "If the whole Atlantic escort effort is pooled (U. S. and Canadians) there may be upward of 130 ships making Londonderry at the eastern end.⁶

On the 11th of January Captain Carney had written Captain L. H. Thebaud, Commander Task Group 4.6, in Iceland concerning the Londonderry project, stating:

The BigWigs (U. S. and British) are scheduled to commence a palaver on the 20th of January in Washington to work out the details of the Londonderry scheme. I am going to attend as one of the fleet representatives. The trans-oceanic escort idea is one which I worked out in detail last summer including the substitution of U.K. escorts for our short leggers during the last few hundred miles of the East bound trip; the idea did not

5. Comdr. W. A. Buck (SC) (no serial) memo of 12 January 1942 to CTF 4.

6. Bristol's C/S Capt. Carney Sec. ltr. serial 0020 memo of 12 January 1942 to Capt. W. A. Corn.

meet with much favor at the time, but the geometry and arithmetic of the proposition are difficult to contravert, so I think something of the sort will go through.

The degree of U. S. occupation of Londonderry is still a matter of conjecture; however, if the British turn the entire job over to the U. S. and Canadians, they can withdraw for other purposes a sizeable number of ships now employed on escort duty. If such a development should take place Londonderry may assume the importance of its original conception and be occupied by our people in a big way. You will know the answer to that as soon as I do.

I am sending the MELVILLE to the eastward with MX-171 with Iceland as her ostensible destination; if the Londonderry project is suddenly approved, the MELVILLE will be in the right locality and can be diverted there at once. Otherwise she can relieve the VULCAN if the Cinc adheres to his idea of sending 7 the VULCAN back to Philadelphia for a couple of weeks.

Admiral Bristol in writing to Rear Admiral Murray, Royal Canadian Navy, in St. John's, Newfoundland, on 15 January requested permission to use that harbor and Halifax, Nova Scotia, as supply bases for United States weather observation vessels then operating in the North Atlantic. These weather ships were very important because the information that they supplied determined the movement of ships and forces and it was necessary for them to continue operating in a routine manner. Despite this importance Admiral Murray said in his reply of a few days later,

I must say that the prospect appals me, though I do not wish to disappoint an Ally. St. John's harbor at the present time is so full of broken down merchant ships awaiting repairs, that I have been forced to send

7. Capt. Jarney sec. personal ltr. (no serial) of 11 January 1942 to Capt. L. H. Theobald.

some of them to the exposed anchorage of Bay Bulls in order to find room for the more valuable ships and cargoes inside St. John's itself.⁸

He felt that these ships would only add to the already badly congested conditions and he further added that St. John's was "not much on recreation and has very bad liquor."

On the 29th of January the situation regarding the proposed use of Londonderry as an escort terminal was still up in the air and Admiral Bristol says in a letter to Admiral J. H. Towers of the Bureau of Aeronautics, "I recognize that the Support Force situation as originally set up is out. On the other hand, recent indications in change of convoy plans may mean forces, both surface and air in our bases in Ireland and Scotland."⁹ With the exception of this uncertainty of a pending move to the British Isles, the month of January concluded with nothing more unusual to offer than numerous escort orders as the escort-of-convoy tempo livened.

On 2 February Commander Task Unit 4.2.9 pointed out a situation which convoy escort captains might well take into account. Because of poor operational conditions during the winter months there were often many ships that straggled from their convoy. These ships were frequently slow in answering the necessary recognition signals thereby wasting a lot of time. Since merchant type raiders sent out by the enemy had an appearance similar to stragglers from convoys,

8. Admiral Murray, CBI, personal ltr. of 22 January 1942 to Admiral Bristol.

9. Admiral Bristol to Admiral J. H. Towers, personal ltr. of 29 January 1942 to Admiral J. H. Towers.

a real danger existed when a ship did not answer signals promptly. Boarding these vessels in stormy weather was, of course, impractical, and if a ship was not promptly identified, a disguised raider might inadvertently slip through. It was therefore suggested that where doubt existed in the mind of the commanding officer of an escorting vessel he should fire a shot across the bow of the ship dilatory in answering signals. This would put merchantmen on their guard for fear of further attack or would tend to disclose the character of disguised raiders. This eventually became a standard operating procedure and the problems of identification diminished rapidly.

Admiral Ingersoll (Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet) considering the importance of cryolite to the aluminum industry wrote the Chief of Naval Operations on 3 February regarding a proposed plan for its transportation.²⁰ Since the loss of a three thousand ton cargo of cryolite approximately equaled the loss of one hundred and twenty tons of aluminum, and since the possibilities of the loss of such cargoes were increasing due to heightened enemy submarine activity and inadequate numbers of escort vessels to escort cryolite cargoes directly to the States, the Admiral proposed that cryolite ships be routed directly to ports in the Northeast United States. From there their cargoes could be shipped to Philadelphia or other point they had previously been

²⁰ *Atlantic Fleet Log*, Serial 1069 of 3 February 1941 to 1942.

transported by ship. This would cut down on the hazard of a long trip, relieve the strain on necessary escorts, and increase the chances of the safe arrival of the cryolite at its destination.

The escort schedule at this time was apparently presenting a rather grim picture for there are continued references to the need for rehabilitation of both men and ships. On 3 February Bristol, who always had this problem in mind, said in a personal letter to Admiral Carpenter, "The spirit is willing - but they simply have not any physical surplus left to draw on . . . Unless the ships are ready and the crews refreshed and keen to go, they are of no use to me."¹¹ On 5 February a conference was held on board the USS PHAETIC in connection with material and maintenance for the new system of Providing Ocean Escorts. This was intended to alleviate some of the pressure of the extant escort schedules. There was to be a Mid-Ocean group of 143 escorts based on Newfoundland and a Western Local Group of 47 escorts based at Halifax; both of these groups being composed of United States, Royal Navy, and Royal Canadian Navy ships. It was decided to consider the Newfoundland area as a single location, including St. John's and Argentia; other bases at Londonderry and Halifax.¹² Ships based at Newfoundland (only 15 of this

11. Personal ltr. of Adm. Bristol of 3 February, 1943 to Adm. Carpenter.

12. See notes on conference held aboard USS PHAETIC, of 5 February, 1943 (AL-24).

group were U.S. DDs) would be free to enter either at Argentina or St. John's, but for the immediate present only the 15 United States destroyers would be assigned to Argentina. If St. John's was unable to take care of the work load as it developed, ships would be diverted to Argentina---ships which required only straight repairs within the capacity of the PRAIRIE or the other facilities to be made available at Argentina. The British or Canadians were to furnish an officer to the PRAIRIE in connection with work on Royal Navy and Royal Canadian Navy ships.

Londonderry was established by the Secretary of the Navy as a Naval Operating Base on 5 February, 1942. Base One had finally come into its own, but in a rather different status from the one for which it had originally been intended. When Admiral Bristol straightened out the schedule from the MOMP to Londonderry instead of to Iceland it was not the Northwest Escort Force, but just an ordinary escort-of-convoy force that carried it out. After this "unbending" of the escort route Bristol's destroyers used Londonderry as their turn-around, but actually they were based in Canadian and Newfoundland ports, only stopping in Iceland or Londonderry temporarily.

Admiral Bristol's letter of 9 February to Admiral Tagersall indicated one of the few examples of friction within his organization. He complained of what he called his

"Anomalous" position in the Atlantic Fleet Organization. "Under present and prospective conditions, I am actually only a task force commander in a special job. All of my force belongs to someone's else type command. It's working so there is nothing to say, except that there are occasional awkward situations."¹³ He also said in this same letter, drawing a comparison between the British escort units and ours, "We maintain the same coach for the team and they're trying to keep the same team together without a coach." Obviously he felt that the latter was a poor system.

Also on 9 February Commander Task Force 4 sent Commander Greenland Patrol a letter with reference to the operation of the Greenland Patrol in which he said that the latter was definitely to operate under Task Force 4; also to support the basic Joint Plan for the Defense of Greenland. "The escort of shipping to and from Greenland will be provided and arranged by Commander Greenland Patrol keeping Commander Task Force 4 informed; when practicable, Greenland shipping will be escorted by units of the Greenland Patrol in the area between Greenland and Cape Cod."¹⁴ From this last it is evident that to date nothing had been done about shipping cryolite cargoes by rail from Northeast United States Ports.

13. Admiral Bristol sec. ltr. ser. 001984 of 9 February, 1942 to Admiral Ingersoll.

14. CTF 4 sec. ltr. ser. 0056 of 9 February 1942, to ComGreenPat.

11 February found Admiral Bristol writing the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, in connection with escort problems.

The difficulties in making contact with the convoy at WOLF are inherent in long range control of this point. Some of these difficulties should disappear with the establishment of U.S. Escort Control, Londonderry. Basically, however, a chief cause for difficulties in meeting at WOLF lies in the fact that the Admiralty does not always promulgate early information concerning correct position of west-bound convoys, when ahead of or behind schedule. Strong representations should be made to the Admiralty on this point.¹⁵

United States Escort skippers had a strong dislike for sailing out to pick up a convoy before they had been informed as to the location of the WOLF, and this was especially true of those based in Iceland. In further connection with convoy problems Bristol wrote Admiral Murray concerning the loan of the MAC LUNN to his tender for convoy duty.¹⁶ The United States Navy, the Royal Navy and Royal Canadian Navy had always worked on the principle of seniority and since this was universally accepted there were never any problems. However, in this instance Bristol suggested that even if the MAC LUNN'S skipper were the senior escort commander he would rather Murray designate his own Royal Navy or Royal Canadian Navy skipper who was more familiar with the setup. This practice, although somewhat unconventional, undoubtedly went a long way towards preventing confusion.

15. CTF 2 sec. 100, ser. 0001 of 11 February, 1942 to Atlantic.

16. Admiral Bristol personal ltr. signed to serial 1 of 31 February, 1942, to Admiral Murray.

On 19 February Commander Task Force 4 wrote the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, on the outcome of Minesweepers Division 15's exploration of Mal Bay and St. Mary's Harbor. It was found that neither of these places provided protection from winds and swells and even though it was practicable to lay torpedo nets, the anchorages at Argentina were considered far superior. As a result of this investigation neither of these places were recommended as suitable fleet anchorages.¹⁷

The upshot of the meeting in Washington of the United States and British "Bigwigs" on 20 January 1942 was the new ocean escort plan. The organization for this came out one month later in Commander Task Force 4's Operation Plan No. 2-42 for Western North Atlantic Escort-of-Convoys. The task organization is given without designators; Commander Task Force 4 is the PHALFIN at Argentina.¹⁸

On the following day, 21 February, Admiral Bristol sent out the following information to the Commanders Mid-Ocean Groups A1-A5 on the subject of escort training:

Under the new escort-of-convoy system Groups A1-A5 will be composed of U.S. DDs and Canadian corvettes; Groups A6-A8 will be composed of U.S. DDs and British corvettes. . . Group training and indoctrination are of vital importance; the ingenuity, industry, and professional attainments of the group commanders will be taxed to achieve, in a limited time, the necessary team work in these mixed groups. Every opportunity must be seized at Argentina, Londonderry, and at sea, to promote

17. CTF 4 msg. 200. 200. 19.10 or 19 Feb., 1942, to CINCLANT.

18. CTF 4 msg. 200. 19 Feb. 1942, Plan No. 2-42. See especially "The Task Organization and general duties of Task Force 4."

training in escort tactics, A/S and A/A warfare, and communications.

LANTFLT 9A governs: the U.S., British, and Canadian escort and attack methods are basically similar, all being derived from North Atlantic experience. However, thought and energy will be required to weld the different types of ships and different internal procedures into closely-knit combat teams. . . Toward that end that effective joint training methods may be developed, group commanders will confer with CTF 4 and CTG 4.7 on the occasion of each visit to Argentia and to Londonderry respectively.¹⁹

About this time an event occurred which was not only disheartening in itself, but it put a further crimp in an already binding escort system. This was the loss by grounding of the United States destroyers TRUXTON and POLLUX. Admiral Bristol gives a very colorful account of this incident in a letter to Captain . . . L. Kauffman, Commandant of Naval Operating Base, Iceland.

The scene of the accident was on the western shore at the very tip of Newfoundland as you enter Placentia Bay. Two miles further to the south on the course they were on would have taken them clear. It happened at a place called Lawn Head, just around the corner from St. Lawrence, and in as wild a bit of country as Newfoundland has to show. Deep water up to the face of the cliffs and the cliffs are 100 to 200 feet high. I could draw you no better picture than to say that the temperature was around 25, heavy driving snow, and winds up to about 35 and 40. The actual scene was about seven miles cross-country from St. Lawrence and no road. The last of the survivors was not hauled up the cliff until 24 hours after the grounding. Both vessels began to break up quickly and the TRUXTON shortly turned over on her side. The loss of life was appalling - more than half - and the only reason that anyone was saved is due to the magnificently heroic work of the people of St. Lawrence. Our own rescue party reached the spot about 10 hours after the grounding, but could not have done a thing if the St. Lawrence people had not been there already.

¹⁹. CTF 4 sec. ltr. serial 0071 of 21 February 1942 to Commanders Mic-Ocean Groups (A1-A5).

In this letter he also commented on the fact that submarine activity was increasing in the area adjacent to Argentia. Bristol believed that several days previously they had destroyed a submarine about two miles north of ship harbor, which is not very far from Argentia.

One of the destroyers depth charged him four times and there was oil evidence just before night set in. By morning it was blowing six of a kind and we could do little further about it. At about the same time two of our planes each got one a little way off Cape Race. In one case there was no visible result, except that the depth bombs landed accurately just after the periscope had disappeared. In the other case, the bombs landed alongside with the periscope still showing. The conning tower was lifted out of the water by the explosion and then sank... The sub activity is raising hell with us as you have undoubtedly gathered.²⁰

The 26th of February Bristol wrote the Secretary of the Navy and proposed that a memorial hospital be given the people of St. Lawrence, Newfoundland, in memory of the crews of the TRUXTON and POLLUX. His praise for the work done by the people of this town was very high, and he thought it only fitting that some token of gratitude be given them.

Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox replied to Admiral Bristol's letter of a few days before concerning the memorial hospital on the 4th of March. Knox thought it was an excellent idea and said that if he could not find some benefactor he would try to get a Congressional Appropriation.²¹ (Since then, the money for this hospital has been allocated,

20. Admiral Bristol personal ltr. (no serial) of 25 February 1942 to Capt. J. L. Kauffman.

21. SeeNav conf. ltr. serial 010400A of 4 March 1942 to Admiral Bristol.

but because of the shortage of labor and materials it has not as yet been built.)

Also on 4 March Commander Task Force 4 sent out a report on Monvoy 43-169 to Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet. ²² Although this escort-of-convoy operation was conducted without incident it is important in that this was the first unit to enter Base One - Londonderry.

The next day, 5 March, Bristol again wrote the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, making some suggestions on what to do with the advanced bases in the British Isles.

The Support Force was originally formed and organized for the purpose of carrying out the part of Rainbow 5 having to do with the Northwest Escort Force of the U. S. Naval Forces, North Europe... War developments resulted in deviating from the original plans and the position of Commander Support Force appears now to have crystalized as that of the commander of an operating task force of the U. S. Atlantic Fleet with certain special operational responsibilities in connection with North Atlantic escort-of-convoy. As a corollary the status of the projected United Kingdom bases has changed; although Base ONE (Londonderry) is now justifying its existence, and Base A may yet come into the picture, it appears that their place in the Navy scheme will not be different from that of other operating bases...

With reference to the subject of advanced bases, a special instruction exists and a special treatment appears to be indicated; Captain W. A. Corn, USN has from the beginning, been intimately associated with every detail of the development of the Support Force advanced bases, and his experience and knowledge coupled with his ability, will be impossible to replace quickly. For the over-all benefit of the Navy's advanced base problems it would seem logical and most desirable to:

- a. Set up in Opsdiv a section for advanced base projects.
- b. Place special base and supply units, and all advanced base material under that section, and,

²² CTR A 300, 1943, Serial 0003 of 4 March 1943 to Cinclant.

- c. To establish Captain Corn as Director of Advanced Bases in OpNav.²³

In accordance with previous instructions from Admiral Ingersoll on 6 March, 1942, Admiral Bristol sent out a despatch to the effect that he was now Commander Task Force 24 and from now on all Force Group and Unit designators would be accordingly preceded by the correct new numerical designator. Also Operation Plan No. 2-42 was to be changed to agree with these new designations.²⁴ On the 7th of March the Iceland Escort Detachment was organized in accordance with verbal instructions from NOBI. This task unit (24.6.2) was organized for the purpose of escorting shipping from Iceland to join westbound ON3 convoys, and from eastbound SC convoys to Iceland.²⁵

Admiral Bristol's first Operation Plan as Commander Task Force 24 came out on the 10th of March and was numbered 3-42. With the exception of several items and the change in designators, this plan was to all intents and purposes very similar to its predecessor.²⁶

23. CTF 4 sec. ltr. ser. 0099 of 5 March, 1942 to CinClent.

24. CTF 24 conf. despatch ser. 060746 of March, 1942.

25. CTU 24.6.2 sec. ltr. ser. S-15 of 7 March, 1942 to CTF 24.6. This was composed of five DDs, the DECATUR, and DesDiv 53 basing at Base "Cast" (Reykjavik).

26. CTF 24 Op Plan 3-42 sec. ser. 00111 of 10 March, 1942. For Task Organization and related material of this plan see Appendix "D".

Several days later on 12 March Bristol commented in a letter to Ingersoll upon the various allied ships in the harbor at Argentia. Besides the regular U.S., British, and Canadian escort vessels there were also Free French, Polish, and Norwegian manned corvettes. Operations were now really "combined" in a big way. The Admiral also referred to the termination of the Support Force---he said,

The abolition of the Support Force has left several tag ends. I am waiting on the assumption that the Department will do the necessary. If not, I will list and make recommendation. One small item, for example, which I had expected to be caught immediately is the fact that I have no mail address in accordance with instructions that Task Force Commanders will not be addressed as such by mail on the cover envelope.²⁷

On 13 March Admiral Bristol received the following communication:

Sir:

The title of the Task Force Four, Atlantic Fleet, having been changed to Task Force Twenty-four, Atlantic Fleet, your designation dated February 27, 1942, will be considered as modified accordingly. Your present date of precedence as a Vice Admiral will continue in effect.

Respectfully,
/s/ Franklin D. Roosevelt.

This letter from the President was followed several days later on the 17th by a similar letter from Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox. There was now no question in the minds of anyone as to just who Commander Task Force 24 was.

27. Personal ltr. from Admiral Bristol of 12 March, 1942, to Admiral Ingersoll.

In a letter to Admiral Murray dated 27 March Bristol discussed the question of peeling off escorts for the salvage of torpedoed ships. He considered it a serious problem and felt that it was up to the man on the spot to make the decision. "The escort numbers are already at a minimum and if the decision to attempt salvage results in disproportionate future losses, the decision is un sound."²⁸ This letter also shows the excellent attitude of cooperation that existed between the two forces. Bristol said to Murray:

I do not want you to feel that we were thinking along different lines and for God's sake don't hold back on the initiative. If it happens that we work at cross purposes for a moment it is too bad, but we will quickly straighten it out and at least we will be taking action. I believe that I appreciate fully your line of thought and procedure and I assume that you do the same with me. In the final analysis it has been working splendidly and still is. So again I say, don't hold back.

This reference to initiative and holding back had to do both with orders concerning the policy of routing convoys, which had become a little confused at that time, and orders to escorts having had ships of their own torpedoed. The escort of convoys and its ancillary problems were, naturally, Bristol's biggest headaches, and Murray, like the preceding command, had been full of them.

28. Personal letter from Admiral Bristol to 27 March, 1947, to Admiral Murray, ROK.

On the first of April Commander Task Force 24 put out his revised Operation Plan 3-42 in which the over-all task organization remains the same with the exception that Captain Sallada had relieved Captain Mullinnix as Commander Task Group 24.3 (Air Group). However there were several additions and revisions to the main body of the plan.²⁹

In order that there might be no mistakes made, on 3 April Bristol sent out a letter to the Task Force on the subject of Instructions for the Escort-of-Convoys. In this he said:

29. CTF 24 Op Plan No. 3-42 (revised) sec. ser. 00135 of 1 April, 1942. Some of the most important of these are:

Salvage operations in the Atlantic are a responsibility of the Shore Establishment, while rescue operations (for both ships and persons in distress) are a responsibility of the seagoing operating forces. As a general rule, initiation of rescue work in case of vessels more than 500 miles from the land of the Sea Frontiers is the responsibility of the Commandant; at distances of less than 500 miles, it is the responsibility of the Commanders, Sea Frontiers. (This was added).

CinClant will transmit known locations of hostile and friendly forces. (This was formerly done by CNO).

Task Force (Group) Commanders will initiate rescue operations in accordance with the general principles in paragraphs 1 (r) and 3 (x), but Task Unit Commanders and Commanding Officers will promptly take appropriate action in the case of nearby vessels, informing the Force Commander of action taken. (This was added).

In an emergency, convoys may be diverted by escort unit commanders from prescribed routes without prior approval of the Chief of Naval Operations, but only to the minimum extent necessary to avoid immediate danger. Report of any such emergency diversions will be made to the CNO in the WESTERN ATLANTIC and to CINCLANT in the EASTERN ATLANTIC, as soon as circumstances permit. Resumption of prescribed track and arrival of the scheduled meeting points in convoys will continue to be essential. (This was not so completely stated in the previous draft.)

In the conduct of escort of convoys in the North Atlantic, it has been necessary to issue certain operational instructions to implement my current Operating Plan. In order that these may be readily identified and that there be a standard method for reference purposes, all such instructions of permanent or semi-permanent nature will here-after be assigned serial numbers and will be referred to as Task Force TWENTY-FOUR Operational Instructions (Short title F.O.I.). . . In order to insure ready reference to these instructions, all units of this force will maintain a separate F.O.I. file. 30

As had been noted earlier, there had been some friction in the command set up of the Plan for the Defense of Newfoundland between the five forces that were supposed to carry it out. This was mainly because the commanders of the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Canadian Army in Newfoundland did not have the complete authority to make on-the-spot decision without having first consulted higher authority located elsewhere outside of Newfoundland. Admiral Bristol offered some suggestions on this point and on the 4th of April received a letter referring to this from Admiral Ingersoll.

It appears that your statement before the 'Coordinating Committee for the Defense of Newfoundland' points the way toward enabling the 'pentagon' you described to effect closer cooperation, particularly if the Commanders listed in paragraph 12 of ABC-22, who are not present in Newfoundland, will designate 'duly authorized representatives' in Newfoundland to act for them.

I am concerned over the situation - not with respect to your ability to obtain continued support and cooperation which may be necessary for the proper execution of your major tasks - but as to the general situation. As you know, the closest cooperation between the various services, with elimination of needless duplication of effort is essential.

30. CTF 12 msg. Mr. msg. 101 of 3 April, 1951 in 24 10.
31. Personal msg. from Admiral Ingersoll (no serial) of 4 April, 1951 to Admiral Bristol.

This situation hung fire for quite some time and was not completely squared away until some time later on in the year.

On 9 April Bristol wrote a letter to Admiral Murray in St. John's explaining why he had ordered some of the Western Local Escorts in to Argentina instead of sending them to St. John's as they were accustomed. There were two reasons for this: one was that when there were no British escorts at Argentina there was not enough work for the tender PRATIR to do -- Bristol wanted to keep them busy; besides availing themselves of the maintenance facilities at Argentina, the other was that he wanted them to make contact with his operations office. And of course when the British groups were there, there was nothing that could be done for the Western Locals, but four out of every ten weeks they were out and the PRATIR was available. The mutual benefit derived by both the Western Locals and the PRATIR, plus relief of the congestion of St. John's harbor, made the proposition well worthwhile. Admiral Bristol also stated in this letter:

I note with considerable concern that I am going to have to sail two of the B-units with a total of one destroyer and three corvettes each; I am not going to be able to augment those units as I did in the case of the first turn-around, and will so inform CINCPAC. I realize that CINCPAC must be very hard pressed in view of the ships that he is sending to our Atlantic seaboard, so I am reluctant to put on any further pressure for additional ships. Nevertheless, what is a very real escort and I will be relieved when they have passed through the danger zone.²²

²² Document 110, from Admiral Bristol (no serial) 10 April 1942, to Admiral Murray.

In a letter to Captain Thebaud in Londonderry written on the 10th of April Admiral Bristol stated that it was his conviction that the very minimum escort for a trans-Atlantic convoy must be the equivalent of two destroyers and four corvettes. This had been accepted in Washington and apparently in England, and in other despatches preceding the final agreement two destroyers and five corvettes had been specified. Bristol said, "So far, all of the British groups have been shy and, as you know, we beefed up the first eastward-bound sailing with American and Canadian ships." It was his belief that the British were having a difficult time because of the sudden starting of the system, but he had assumed that on the second cycle the British would be able to bring up their units to the required strength. Although the British had been hard pressed, he could not understand how this early in the game they could have made the commitments which they did and completely fail to keep up with them. "Without going into figures or checking, I doubt that we have heard the names of more than half of the Royal Navy corvettes, and also, destroyers which are supposed to be in the pool."¹³

This was one of Admiral Bristol's very last letters, for shortly thereafter he was taken critically ill and eventually died. Three days before his death he received

¹³ Personal file, Rear Admiral Bristol (no serial) of 10 April, 1942, to Captain Thebaud.

from Admiral King what must have been a very gratifying despatch which read:

Since the organization of 3 March 1941 of the force you command it has accomplished

- (a) conduct of an anti submarine training program
- (b) completion of advanced base projects
- (c) control of North Atlantic Escort of Convoy operations. Conduct of Cast has resulted in the escort of 60 odd trade convoys by United States forces with an average of about 40 ships per convoy and a total loss of 8 ships. All of above has been accomplished from small beginning and with much of the work done under arduous conditions with no complaints and wholly cheerful attitude. To you and your people well done and carry on.34

Vice Admiral Bristol died aboard his flagship, the USS PRAIRIE, at Argentia, Newfoundland on 20 April, 1942. He was later buried in his home town of Charlestown, South Carolina. For his services as Commander Support Force up through and after the time it became Task Force Twenty-Four he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal posthumously.

34. Cominch sec. despatch ser. 3115 of 17 April, 1942, to CTF 24.

CHAPTER VI

CTF 24: ADMIRAL BRAINARD (PART I)

The loss of Admiral Bristol came as something of a shock and a surprise, but apparently the higher Naval authorities had been able to read the handwriting on the wall. Two days before the death of Admiral Bristol, Naval Operations sent out the following despatch to Rear Admiral R. M. Brainard:

Designation Admiral Rolland M Brainard
as Vice Admiral signed by President
under date April 18 being forwarded
by air mail.¹

and on the same date Admiral Brainard received a letter from the President---

SIR:

In accordance with the provisions of an Act of Congress approved May 22, 1917 as extended by an Act of Congress approved July 17, 1941, you are hereby designated as Commander of a Task Force, Atlantic Fleet, with the rank of Vice Admiral, effective on assuming command.

Respectfully,
/s/FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT.

On the 24th of April Admiral Brainard received his orders from the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox. They read to the effect that:

You are hereby detached from duty as Commander Amphibious Force, Atlantic Fleet, and from such other duty as may have been assigned you; you will proceed

1. BuNav despatch of 18 April 1942 to CTF 24.

immediately to the port in which the flagship of Task Force Twenty-Four, Atlantic Fleet, may be, and report to the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, if present, otherwise by despatch, for duty as Commander, Task Force Twenty-Four, assuming the rank and hoisting the flag of Vice Admiral in accordance with the designation by the President.²

and shortly thereafter he broke his flag aboard the USS POCOMOKE at Argentia as Commander Task Force 24. His problems were, of course, not entirely the same as Bristol's but were necessarily similar; they were still concerned with bases, escort-of-convoy, and the usual run of incidental ramifications. However, there was one item that seemed to loom larger than the others --- the Plan for the Defense of Newfoundland. It has entered the picture before at various times, but under Brainard's regime it really came into full flower.

Earlier during the year vessels fishing on the Grand Banks had been suspected of furnishing supplies and information to Axis submarines. Also some of these fishing boats had been attacked and during the month of February there had been a Canadian Conference on the defense of the Grand Banks Fishing Fleet. Brainard's first Operation Plan, No. 4-42, as Commander Task Force 24 implemented many of the ideas of this conference.³

2. SecNav ltr. ser. 32056 of 24 April 1942 to Adm. Brainard.

3. CTF 24 Op Plan 4-42 sec. ser. 00160 of 4 May 1942. The Task Organization, without designators, is as follows:

- a. Argentia Aircraft Detachment -- Senior Officer
- b. Ocean Escort Vessels -- Senior Officer
- c. Greenland Patrol Vessels -- Senior Officer

The plan stated that Axis submarines, surface craft, or aircraft might attempt to disrupt fishing on the Grand Banks by the destruction of the fishing fleets of the United States, Canada, and Newfoundland, but submarines were considered the greatest potential threat. It was also felt that the Axis might employ ships, disguised as neutral fishing vessels, to "obtain information regarding convoys and other shipping, to obtain weather information, to act as submarine supply ships, to transport espionage agents, or to act as transports for raiding and sabotage parties." Though no United States forces were available for the specific purpose of protecting the fishing fleet, the Canadian Government was to maintain a limited patrol of the fishing areas, using trawlers and Fairmales for this purpose. Task Force 24 was to furnish assistance and protection to the fishing fleet by destroying enemy forces while on their primary mission of escort-of-convoy operations and protection of Greenland. The Ocean Escort Vessels were to do much the same thing; this also held for the Greenland Patrol. The Air Detachment was to furnish coverage of Placentia Bay and the Grand Banks Area consistent with their primary mission of protection of convoys.

On 19 May Admiral Brainard wrote the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, concerning the Joint Plan for the Defense of Newfoundland. It had been approved by Commander Task Force 24, the Commanding General, Newfoundland Base Command, and

the Flag Officer Commanding the Newfoundland Force (RCN) subject to final action by higher authority. However, it was only recommended for approval by the senior officer of the Royal Canadian Army forces stationed in Newfoundland, and by the Air Officer Commanding No. 1 Group (RCAF) because the latter two officers stated that they lacked the authority to approve a Joint Plan. "But", said Brainard,

Regardless of the technicalities involved in securing unanimous approval, the Joint Plan is understood by and agreeable to all of the several Commanders, and will provide the basis for joint action pending final action by higher authority.⁴

From this it would appear that the situation was pretty well in hand, but as it turned out there were later repercussions.

The 25th of May found Admiral Brainard in something of a quandry. Since becoming Commander Task Force 24 he had been digging into the workings of the organization in order to familiarize himself more completely with the job. In places he found the going a little rough and some of the things which he would like to have known unavailable on the spot. He therefore wrote Captain Tully, Shelley, USN, in Naval Operations requesting information he needed. In this letter Brainard said,

I find this job plenty interesting, active, and with much for me to learn about...Would you be good enough to

4. CTF 24 sec. 132. ser. 00175 of 19 May 1942 to Cinclant.

scrape together the latest issues of the following and send them along by registered mail, addressed to me personally...(He then requested some pamphlets and publications)...The above is of course a very small package but I find myself in want of the dope they contain even though some of them have probably not been given so wide a distribution, and this office is admittedly a bit remote.⁵

Another "M" Day possibility had evidently been brewing, for on 2 June Commander Task Force 24 received a combined letter from the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, and the Army Chief of Staff which stated:

The U.S. Army will exercise unity of command over the U.S. Forces involved during the joint phases of the planning, the preparations and the military operations respecting the movement to, the reception and the maintenance of U.S. Forces in the United Kingdom

The control and protection of convoys for the trans-ocean movements will remain under the command of the U. S. Navy.

The U. S. Army will make the necessary arrangements with the British respecting command over combined operations of U. S. and British forces in Western Europe. In the final movement to the continent, should U. S. Naval Surface, sub-surface, or air forces participate, they would operate under naval command.⁶

However the mobilization for the "Second Front" was still a long way in the future and obviously nothing happened with regard to the letter at this particular time.

On 5 June Commander Task Force 24 sent a letter to the Commandant, Naval Operating Base, Argentia, requesting

5. Personal ltr. from Admiral Brainard of 25 May 1942 to Captain Tully Shelly.

6. CinCLant sec. ltr. serial 00447 of 2 June 1942 to All U. S. Forces concerned with Operations in W. Europe.

information on instructions issued him by the Chief of Naval Operations governing the control of shipping of associated powers calling at this port.⁷ This information was incorporated in Brainard's letter to All Ships Present, Argentina, concerning the temporary procedure for Argentina Port Control. This stated that pending completion of the HBCP at the Naval Operating Base, radio communication would be handled by SOPA in the POCOROE (Flagship) and visual signals of incoming vessels by the Harbor Approaches Patrol Vessel or the Outer Anchorage Patrol Vessel.⁸ By this time they finally had a double anti-torpedo net across the inner harbor and through this there would be allowed to go one vessel at a time, outgoing ships having the right of way. Gate vessels would notify ships when the gate was open. The gate was to be opened from sunrise as required for vessels entering having been previously identified. It was opened for outgoing vessels at 0800, 1200, and 1600 and a half an hour before sunset LCT in order to keep wear and tear to a minimum. At all other times it was opened by special permission of the SOPA.

June 20th, Admiral Brainard issued his Operation Plan No. 5-42 which was ostensibly the same as previous plans implementing most of their ideas, but, as always, there were

7. CTF 24 sec. ltr. serial 00184 of 5 June 1942 to Comdt. NCB, Argentina.

8. SOPA Argentina (CTF 24) sec. ltr. serial 00195 of 11 June 1942 to All Ships Present, Argentina.

a few variations and changes. Probably most noticeable was the change in some of the names of the task groups, even though their designators and composition remained the same. 9

Task Group 24.9 was an innovation; Commander Mundt had relieved Captain Gallada as Commander of the Air Group; and Rear Admiral Jones was designated in charge of the Western Locals. The Greenland Patrol, besides its previous responsibility, was to assist Army Aircraft Ferry operations by maintaining weather broadcast and flight security ships as specially directed. The Naval Operating Base, Argentina, was to control merchant shipping of Associated Powers calling at Argentina in accordance with instructions issued by the Chief of Naval Operations and as directed by Force Commander in separate letter of instructions; maintain and operate

9. CTF 24 Op Plan No. 5-42 sec. serial 00202 of 20 June 1942.

24.1 ALLIED MID-OCEAN TRADE CONVOY ESCORT GROUP*

24.2 U.S. NAVY TRADE CONVOY GROUP*

24.3 AIR GROUP - Commander L. T. Mundt.

24.4 HOME BASE GROUP

24.5 TASK FORCE TWENTY-FOUR ADMINISTRATION

24.6 TASK FORCE TWENTY-FOUR ESCORT CONTROL, ICELAND
- Comdt. NOB

24.7 TASK FORCE TWENTY-FOUR ESCORT CONTROL, UNITED KINGDOM (LONDONDERRY) - Captain L. H. Thebaud.

24.8 GREENLAND PATROL - Captain E. H. Smith.

24.9 NAVAL OPERATING BASE, ARGENTINA - Captain Gail Morgan.

24.11 ASSIGNED TO CANADIAN MID-OCEAN ESCORT FORCE -
Rear Admiral Murray, RCR.

24.18 ASSIGNED TO CANADIAN WESTERN LOCAL ESCORT FORCE -
Rear Admiral Jones, RCN.

24.19 MID-OCEAN ESCORT UNITS AT SEA

* Group name changed.

Naval Air Station; and provide all practicable services to forces afloat. Commander Task Force 24 was to provide limited protection incidental to escort-of-convoy and other operations for fishing vessels in the vicinity of the Grand Banks. Other than these changes and additions the body of the plan contained much the same material as stated by previous plans. 5-42 was effective upon receipt and other plans were to be destroyed, with the exception of 2-42 (revised) and 4-42 which were to remain in effect.

The lack of action concerning the final approval of the combined Plan for the Defense of Newfoundland was evidently beginning to try Admiral Brainard's patience for the 16th of June he sent out a secret memorandum reviewing the Synoptic Precis of a meeting held by the Joint Services Committee, Atlantic Coast (Halifax). The memorandum was prepared for file and for distribution to the commanders forming the military Committee of Newfoundland as a basis for discussion at a meeting of the Military Committee scheduled to be held June 17, 1942, or as soon thereafter as practicable.

The comments and observations in this memorandum refer to a synoptic precis submitted by Major W.E. Baxter, secretary, Joint Services Committee Newfoundland to Major General G.C. Brant, Commanding General Newfoundland Base Command, for further routing to Vice Admiral Brainard, CTF 24, and SOPA, Argentia.

Then for eighteen pages he "worked" over the precis giving his opinion on practically every paragraph. He concluded by saying:

Without being able to forecast the trend of the meeting of the Newfoundland Committee scheduled June 17, 1942, CTF 24 must assume the tenor of the remarks quoted in the precis that the General Officer Commanding the Newfoundland defenses and the Air Officer Commanding Number One Group may not be inclined nor empowered to express concurrence with some opinions set forth above by CTF 24. There would seem to be a possibility that the Newfoundland Committee may be unable to draft a plan which will be acceptable to all concerned. Should such a situation develop through no fault and no lack of willingness on the part of the several commanders, CTF 24 suggests that the situation be acknowledged in a frank and friendly spirit in order that the next step may be initiated without delay.

The next step would be for CTF 24 to lay before the Atlantic Coast Committee his own views and the views of such other commanders as may wish to express themselves on the points discussed herein before. This is too vital a subject to permit further delay and CTF 24 intends to prosecute the matter vigorously in order to obtain a clear-cut decision on which some sort of plan can be drawn.

In the meantime CTF 24 wishes to point out that he considers paragraph 0102 to be in effect.¹⁰

This paragraph stated that the plan, by mutual agreement of the commanders concerned, would serve as a basis for joint action from the date of its execution until modified or suspended by higher authority, or until superseded by another plan unanimously adopted by those commanders. This was Admiral Brainard's politic way of saying that he was tired of "fooling around".

On the 18th of June 1942 a meeting was held in St. John's Newfoundland, to consider proposed amendments to the Joint Defense Plan of Newfoundland. With reference to a memorandum

10. CTF 24 sec. memo 00199 of 16 June 1942.

made of these amendments Admiral Brainard wrote the General Officer Commanding Canadian Troops in Newfoundland on the 21st of June. In this letter Brainard states that he considers the amendments acceptable with a few minor exceptions which he listed.¹¹ He further remarked that a Secretary of the Navy letter¹² required that military collaboration between two or more of the United Nations be referred to as "combined". Therefore, throughout the entire plan for the Defense of Newfoundland the word "combined" should be substituted for the word "joint" wherever it appeared. Also Admiral Ingersoll authorized Commander Task Force 24 to use the combined plan as originally submitted, as a basis for combined action pending final approval of the plan. When the points now under discussion were settled to the agreement of all concerned he would forward the amended plan to the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, and in the meantime Brainard urged the General Officer Commanding Canadian Troops in Newfoundland to lay this matter before the Atlantic Coast Committee at the earliest possible moment.

On June 23rd, Admiral Brainard put out his Operational

11. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 60205 of 21 June 1942 to General Officer Commanding Canadian Troops in Newfoundland.

12. SecNav ltr. ser. 65213 of 26 February 1942.

Plan No. 2-42 (Revised).¹³ This plan, like 2-42, was a Plan for Western North Atlantic Escort-of-Convoy but it was eventually cancelled and superseded by a later plan.

The subject of routing instructions and general orders for Greenland convoys came up on 14 July.¹⁴ Admiral Brainard pointed out to the Naval Control Service Officer at Sydney, that in order to provide the maximum anti-submarine protection with the small number of escorts available, it was essential that merchant ships (when not in excess of three) of the convoy be formed in column rather than in line, as was indicated in the control officer's orders. Also the

13. CTF 24 Op Plan No. 2-42 (Revised) for Western Atlantic Escort of Convoy sec. ser. 00206 of 23 June, 1942.

TASK ORGANIZATION:

- a. United States Mid-Ocean Escort Group. U.S. DDs and CGCs, plus RCN corvettes as assigned.
- b. Royal Navy Mid-Ocean Escort Group - CINCPAC Escort Units "B-1" to "B-4" inclusive, plus "B-6", "B-7", RN DDs and corvettes as assigned.
- c. Royal Canadian Navy Mid-Ocean Escort Group - FCMF Escort Units "C-1" to "C-4" inclusive, RCN DDs and corvettes as assigned.
- d. Western Local Escort Group - COAG. Escort Units "W-1" to "W-8" inclusive, RN and RCN DDs, RCN corvettes and minesweepers, Free French corvettes plus other vessels assigned.
- e. Iceland Escort Group - Senior Officer in Group U.S. DDs and CGCs.
- f. United States Escort Control, United Kingdom (Londonberry) - CTF 21 Representative.
- g. United States Escort Control, Iceland - Comdt. NCH.

14. CTF 21 sec. ltr. ser. 00281 of 14 July 1942 to Naval Control Service Officer, N.M.C. Dockyard, Sydney, N.S.W.

Admiral said that escorts assigned to the convoy must, unless directed otherwise by Commander Task Force 24, continue the voyage to Greenland regardless of stragglers; otherwise it would be impossible to maintain the southbound schedule. Admiral Brainard on 18 July sent Admiral Stark a memorandum on minutes of a meeting at CinCWA Headquarters, Liverpool, May 21, 1942. In this Admiral Brainard said:

CINCF 24 in the past has provided CinCWA with copies of his current operation plan which covers the combined escort operations of North Atlantic Trade Convoys. The formulation of the mutually-accepted governing agreements for these escort operations was consummated in Washington in January. All parties concerned were notified by the Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, as to the substance of these agreements. Since that time some changes in the original plan have been made after mutual agreement. The major changes involved resulted in: (1) Opening out sailing of convoys to seven days; (2) Reduction of mid-ocean escort groups from fourteen to eleven; (3) Extending convoy system to Boston-Cape Cod area.

The foregoing changes necessitated slight rearrangement of Western Local Escorts to meet the new situation. The number of Western Local Escort Groups were increased from seven to eight. Westomp was changed from approximately 45° W. to approximately 52° W. for westbound convoys and 50° W. for eastbound convoys.

Exact number and type of ships employed by the Canadians in the Western Local Escort Force is variable. Four, and in some instances, five ships compose the actual operating escort unit for the HX, SC, ON, and ONS. To meet actual danger the Canadians have established a number of local convoy systems between Halifax-Sydney, Halifax-St. John's, Sydney-St. John's, Sydney-Cornerbrook, and Sydney-St. Lawrence. These are usually escorted by one or two ships, depending on ships available in COAC's Force. . . In Connection with the foregoing, conversation with a former member of CinCWA's Staff indicates that CinCWA is principally interested in whether the Canadians are making best use of all escorts available to them. This matter of distribution of all Canadian escorts to the various problems of

shipping protection is a matter not entirely within the province of CTF 24, but is checked as a matter related to Canadian Western Local Commitments.

Aircraft coverage from Newfoundland is provided by U.S. Navy and RCAF planes. As a general policy RCAF planes from Torbay and Gander provide coverage for shipping north of 48° N. and east of Newfoundland, U.S. Navy planes from Argentia provide coverage south of 48° N. to 55° W. RCAF planes from Sydney-Halifax-Yarmouth provide coverage west of 55° W. to within Canadian Coastal Zone to Boston-Cape-Cod.¹⁵

The items discussed in this memorandum provide a clarifying picture on several points concerning the escort-of-convoy operations which up until this time had been more or less hanging fire.

On the same day, 18 July, Admiral Brainard also wrote the Commander in Chief Western Approaches concerning some comments he (CTF 24) had made on the tentative draft of Atlantic Convoy Instructions (ACI).¹⁶ Brainard recommended that there be but one agency for preparation and distribution of the final draft of the Convoy Instructions. In order to expedite distribution of future changes or additions he considered that British authorities should disseminate those matters or detailed operating procedure in which general agreement is known to already exist between the authorities concerned. Matter affecting policy should be

15. Secret memo from Admiral Brainard for Admiral Stark (no serial) 18 July 1942.

16. CTF 24 sec. 1st. sec. 10000 of 18 July 1942 to CINCPAC.

issued only after there is mutual agreement between British and United States authorities on such matters. In order that officers engaged in escort operations may have knowledge as to the cognizant United States Naval Authorities in connection with convoy operations, Brainard submitted the following:

- a. CinCUS (Cominch) (Convoy and Routing Section) exercises direction of all matters pertaining to merchant ships.
- b. CinClant exercises operational control of escorts for troop convoys.
- c. CTF 24 exercises operational supervision and control of escorts for trade convoys in the Eastern North Atlantic.¹⁷

While discussing convoy instructions through the day, Admiral Brainard concluded by saying that to expedite the revision of Atlantic Convoy Instructions and future changes and additions, copies consigned to Commander Task Force 24 for distribution to escort ships should be delivered via American escorts direct to Argentina. He also requested that copies consigned to the individual ships (British, Canadian, and U.S.) be delivered to the Eastern terminals, namely, Londonderry, Greenock, etc.

Just about this time and before Admiral Brainard had Force operations to the point of refinement he desired his Chief of Staff, Captain Lantry, was ordered to a ship. Commander Woolbridge, operations officer, was the obvious man to "fill up" as Chief of Staff, but there was no one to

17. CTF 24 was the only U.S. command in July 1943 to CINCWA

take his place in operations and this was essential. Brainard therefore wrote Admiral Jacobs in the Bureau of Personnel requesting that Carney might be held until one month before he was to go to his ship and in the meantime to send him someone to complete his quota of experienced operations personnel. This letter was more of an appeal than a request for with escort operations at their present pitch Admiral Brainard felt that it would be impossible to carry on if his key personnel were taken away.

Returning to the "Combined Plan for the Defense of Newfoundland", on 25 July Commander Task Force 24 outlined developments to date on that subject. The plan had been submitted to the Joint Services Committee in Halifax for consideration with a recommendation for approval and, pending further action by higher authority, the commanders of the five services in Newfoundland adopted the plan for their own guidance. The Joint Services Committee at Halifax took exception to numerous articles in the original plan and returned lengthy comments which were transmitted to Commander Task Force 24 in the form of a synoptic precis prepared by the General Officer Commanding Canadian Troops in Newfoundland. At a subsequent meeting of the commanders of the several services in Newfoundland, strong objections were registered by the United States Navy and United States Army concerning many of the points raised by the Joint Services Committee in Halifax. Assimilation into the attitude of the Halifax

Committee brought to light the following points which

Brainerd summarized:

- a. Any suggestion of unity of command is abhorrent to CCAF.
- b. The idea of flexibility in defense planning did not agree with the Canadian Army's idea of fixed defense forces within fixed areas.
- c. The RCN representative expressed little or no objection to the original plan.
- d. The review by the Halifax Committee was narrow in that it concerned itself only with Canadian Army and RCAF matters and completely lost sight of the fact that the U.S. Navy, U.S. Army (including Army Air Corps) and RCN were concerned and are involved with commitments beyond the scope of the Halifax Committee's jurisdiction.¹⁸

Admiral Brainerd stated that a strong stand was taken by the U.S. representatives of the Newfoundland Committee toward ending dilatory tactics in connection with this plan, and the General Officer Commanding Canadian Troops in Newfoundland presented these views to the Halifax Committee with the urgent recommendation that they not further delay their approval by continued discussion of minor matters. The chief stumbling-block - unity of command - was overcome by adoption of the expression "operational control" which in the understanding of all the members would give a satisfactory degree of unity of command without relinquishing the autonomy which was the chief concern of the Royal Canadian Air Force. All of the other services were in favor

18. CCAF 44-50-1, 1st. Ser. 6077 of 14 June 1944 to Director

of, and prepared to practice, unity of Command. The Halifax Committee agree and their approval was forwarded.

On August 16 Commander E.T. Wooldridge submitted a memorandum on a trip to Washington to the Admiral which contained some interesting points on the escort-of-convoys. Wooldridge said, "The conference held in Washington on August 1st, in connection with rearrangements of present convoy system and the establishment of additional convoy routes had as its main objective reduction of dead-loss time of merchant ships." This dead-loss at various wayports had become particularly serious in the case of important material such as oil and bauxite. It was not expected that any reduction in escorts would be accomplished by the projected convoy system and the only point that was of direct concern to Commander Task Force 24 was that Western Local Groups were going to be required to escort between New York and WESTOMP and vice versa. It was intended to route both east and westbound convoys sufficiently close to Halifax and Sydney to permit shipping from those places to join up and break off. The eight escort units of the Western Locals could meet their part of the task by having four units escort between New York and the Junction off Halifax and four to escort between the junction off Halifax and WESTOMP. The Chief of Staff at Halifax assured Commander Wooldridge that they could do this without any particular difficulty, and this was eventually carried out.

In a convoy escort meeting held in St. John's on 22 August it was noted the schedule for these two groups had become sufficiently tight to warrant either adding a 9th group or opening the sailing interval from 7 to 8 days. Also brought to light was the fact that during winter weather conditions the distance between WestOMP (52° W) and Londonderry appeared to be excessive for DDs of the Mid-Ocean Groups. Therefore it would be necessary either to have relief DDs at an EastOMP or move WestOMP eastward to 47° W., the latter appearing the better. If either of these were not done the Mid-Ocean Escort then operating with 11 groups would have to add a 12th. However, if the cycle of convoys was opened out to 8 days, the Western Local Escort Force could work in 8 groups and the Mid-Ocean Escort Force could work in 11 groups with the WestOMP in 47° W.¹⁹

The 3rd of September finds the focus of attention shifted back to the plan for the Defense of Newfoundland and, strangely enough, this time with no problems. The General Officer Commanding Canadian Troops in Newfoundland had sent Admiral Brainard a memorandum on combined operations on July 30th, and after having studied it thoroughly, Admiral Brainard sent him a reply. The Admiral concurred with the

19. Minutes on Conference held at St. John's to discuss Escort Arrangements for Trade Convoys during the winter months, 22 August, 1942.

desirability for an exercise to train the Services and Forces in solving the communication and intelligence problems that would inevitably arise in the conduct of combined operations in Newfoundland. He further stated that in this connection the General Officer might count on the wholehearted cooperation of the United States Naval Forces under Brainard's command. "The Combined Communication Plan which has recently gained the approval of the Senior Officers of the five services concerned should", remarked the Admiral, "afford a simple and reliable means of serving to pass intelligence and operational signals with acceptable accuracy and rapidity."²⁰ Apparently there was now a sound basis for a working agreement and future problems would be largely limited to changes and additions.

About the middle of September a Greenland Patrol escorted convoy SC-6, was attacked and several ships sunk or damaged. Concerning the incident Commander Task Force 24 pointed out some flagrant violations of escort-of-convoy doctrine and some lessons that could be learned from them. The escorts USCGCs MOJAVE, ALCONQUIN, and MOHAWK, were provided to escort Convoy SC-6, consisting of five merchant ships and the United States Navy tanker LARAMIE. One of these merchant ships, the CHATAHAM, was a transport capable of a speed of 12-13-knots. At the sailing conference prior

20. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 00265 of 3 September 1942 to General Officer Commanding Canadian Troops, Newfoundland.

to the departure from Sydney, a decision was made to divide the convoy into two sections after clearing the swept channel from Sydney. The MOJAVE was to escort CHATHAM independently at 12 knots; ALCONQUIN and MOHAWK to escort the remaining five ships at a speed of 7 knots. It is not clear as to who made this decision, but the escort commander must have been in agreement on the matter. The division of the convoy into two parts was definitely contrary to the accepted principles of the most effective utilization of the available escorts for protection of ships involved. A single low-speed escort could not provide adequate protection for a ship of the CHATHAM class. Furthermore, by this division of the convoy and escorts, the protection for the remainder of the convoy was unwarrantably reduced. Later, when CHATHAM was torpedoed, MOJAVE did not communicate the fact to the Force Commander or other United States Naval authority. The only information received by Commander Task Force 24 was a plain language message relayed by Belle Isle Radio Station to the effect that CHATHAM had been torpedoed, or mined with the inference that the latter was more probable.

The failure to provide Commander Task Force 24 the information, both as to the splitting of the convoy and later as to the nature and position of attack prevented his taking such action as the circumstances warranted. He naturally assumed that MOJAVE (escort Commander) was with the entire convoy and hoped that with the knowledge of the sit-

uation at the scene of action the escort commander would divert the convoy as necessary for its protection. However, receiving no further information, Commander Task Force 24 directed MOJAVE to return the convoy to Sydney; the only answer received from MOJAVE in this matter indicated that at the time of the receipt of the directive he was not with the convoy. However, subsequent information confirmed that he did not issue any directive to ALCONQUIN to divert the convoy in accordance with Commander Task Force 24's orders as addressed to MOJAVE. Due to the slowness in communications and lack of necessary information, Commander Task Force 24 did not know that the convoy had been diverted nor turned toward Sydney until receiving a plain language report, again from Belle Isle, that ARLYN, another ship of the convoy had been torpedoed and sunk. ALCONQUIN, then acting as escort commander failed to notify Commander Task Force 24 of the attack position of the convoy, and it was not until approximately 24 hours later that it was even known by the Force Commander that LARAMIE had been torpedoed. When ARLYN was sunk and LARAMIE torpedoed, ALCONQUIN was directed by the Force Commander to proceed with the remainder of the convoy to Sandwich Bay. A report some 48 hours later revealed that instead of proceeding to Sandwich Bay ALCONQUIN, with BISCAYA and ALCOA GUARD, was enroute to Greenland. ALCONQUIN had displayed sound judgment in not proceeding to Sandwich Bay in view of the fact that he was far from the

position visualized by the Force Commander. However, his failure to promulgate information to the Force Commander by high frequency radio that he was not proceeding to Sandwich Bay indicated a lack of appreciation as to the necessity of keeping proper authorities advised when it had become advisable to deviate from definite orders.

The lessons to be learned by all Greenland Patrol vessels engaged in escort operations and anti-submarine warfare from the foregoing are hereby summarized:

- a. The absolute necessity for keeping operation authorities promptly informed.
- b. In general, maximum protection is afforded by keeping all the convoy together under the protection of all available escorts.
- c. The necessity for prompt origination of despatches to the Force Commander in the event of attack. The enemy contact despatch should be brief and should include a definite position of attack or contact. Within a reasonable length of time after origination of the foregoing despatch another amplifying despatch should be sent to the Force Commander giving the details of the attack.
- d. Radio silence on low frequency is of utmost importance. However, radio silence on high frequency to the extent that the operational authorities are deprived of information which is essential in coordinating operations is not desirable and furthermore, hazards the success of the operation. Despatches from senior authority requiring breaking of radio silence do not permit discretion in the matter of answering.
- e. Ships making over nine knots should adhere to scheduled zig-zag plans; ships making under nine knots should steer evasive courses as directed by the escort commander. Speed is one of merchant ships' best safeguards.

- f. Escorts maintaining positions 500 - 1,000 yards from a convoy are not in proper position for providing protection against submarines owing to limits of asdic effectiveness with relation to torpedo firing range of submarines.²¹

Commander Greenland Patrol was ordered to take the necessary steps to see that other ships of his command were appropriately indoctrinated to avoid such an unfortunate chain of events as illustrated by the escort of Convoy SG-6.

On the 1st of October Commander Task Force 24 wrote the Commanding General, Newfoundland Base Command concerning possible enemy activities in the Labrador-Greenland area.²² Admiral Brainard pointed out that many local fishing vessels operated off the Grand Banks, and in addition, a large Portuguese fishing fleet moved up into the Davis Strait area during the course of the summer. Many of these vessels had been boarded and searched in detail during the summer, but to date none of them had been in any way implicated in enemy activities. However, there were distinct possibilities that some of these vessels in the Newfoundland-Davis Strait area had been engaged in aiding submarines either by delivering or transmitting enemy information. Ships engaged in escort operations and aircraft on patrol had orders to investigate all suspicious craft, for sub-

21. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 00280 of 31 September 1944 to ComGreenPat.

22. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 00284 of 1 October 1944 to Commanding General, Newfoundland Base Command.

marines had been in the Davis Strait area as was evidenced by sightings in the vicinity of Greenland in the region extending to northward of Goose Bay. In the light of the foregoing Admiral Brainard requested that the Commanding General, Newfoundland Base Command arrange coastal flights for patrol-reconnaissance and the protection of shipping along the Labrador Coast, north of 53° N. The Admiral invited attention to the fact that the value of information obtained from such flights was governed by its accuracy and rapidity of receipt; that numerous uninvestigated and unevaluated reports would lead to loss of confidence in all reports received under similar circumstances.

Commander E.T. Wooldridge, now Admiral Brainard's Chief of Staff, sent out a letter for Commander Task Force 24 on 21 October stating,

Information has been received from the General Commanding Canadian Troops in Newfoundland that the Combined Plan for the Defense of Newfoundland had been given final approval by the Joint Services Committee, Atlantic Coast, and that the respective Chiefs of Staff of the services concerned have concurred in the action taken by the above committee.²³

This was something of a moral victory for Admiral Brainard, for he was largely responsible for expediting matters.

In writing to the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, on 13 November Admiral Brainard remarked upon a tendency

23. CTF 24, War. Dir. Ser. 06577 of 21 October 1962 to Chief of Staff.

of those engaged in escort operations to consider the "defensive" to the neglect of the "offensive" attitude and action. Whereas he considered the most important task of the escort that of getting the convoy safely to port, when too many ships are not getting safely to port the supplementary task becomes one of destruction of the enemy.

Those engaged in escort work have a highly developed inherent offensive spirit. . . The thrill of the chase and the beckoning lure of the kill are emotions that we can well assume to exist. . . and the escort commander who doesn't succumb to the lure, has sincerely and regrettably believed that accomplishment of his first task, safe arrival of his convoy, could best be carried out by remaining with the convoy, rather than with the hunt. Escort of convoy operations are strategically offensive in that they move forward through territory whose control is challenged by the enemy. Therefore, any defensive attitude of mind in connection with them must necessarily end in unsuccessful completion of the task.²⁴

Admiral Rauffman and Captain Thebaud had both commented on this lack of "offensive" attitude earlier in the escort game, but they would have undoubtedly agreed with Admiral Brainard in feeling that the adoption of a dogmatic line of action with regard to either of the two tasks would be a bad policy. Brainard said that consideration for the above leads to the conclusion that extreme care must be exercised in the issuance of directives to escort personnel in order that the proper balance between the importance of the two tasks be maintained. In general, the Admiral felt that escort forces in the North Atlantic had maintained a very satisfactory

24. OPD 2L Sec. 1, Ser. 60307 of 12 November 1943 to Cincant.

balance.

November 20th Admiral Brainard ran into a different type of escort problem. The Commanding General, Newfoundland Base Command, wrote him requesting escorts for transport vessels. Brainard replied, however, that with his limited number of escorts and priority commitments he could not handle such an assignment on any set date. Something might come up at the last moment causing a delay and thereby tying up the shipping involved. He therefore suggested that the General sail his transports from St. John's with the regularly established escort groups.²⁵

On 15 December Admiral Brainard wrote Admiral Ingersoll informing him of the inadequacy of the ships in the Greenland Patrol for escort duty due to their small size and slow speed and the problems encountered in winter weather conditions. Information had indicated that the United States had acquired some single screw corvettes and that in the near future they expected to acquire some more of this type ship from Canada. This type of ship, with additional ice protection, was most desirable for escort work in the Greenland Labrador area, and while the present volume of shipping was then small it would undoubtedly increase with the opening of the season in the late spring. To take care of this anticipated increase in shipping Admiral Brainard requested that

25. SOFA Argentina (ATW24) sec. 1 par. 30732 of 20 November 1962 to the Commanding General, Newfoundland Base Command.

six of this type ship be assigned to the Greenland Patrol prior to the 1st of April, 1943.²⁶

CTF 24 officially concluded his escort operations and problems for the year of 1942 on the 22nd of December when he published that year's last escort order No. 63-42. However, this was only a temporary conclusion and the new year held new problems as the war progressed.

26. CTF 24 Dec. Inr. per. 00431 of 15 December 1942 to CincPac.

CHAPTER VII

CITE 24: ADMIRAL BRAINARD (PART II)

The latter part of Admiral Brainard's tour of duty as Commander Task Force 24, from January until May of 1943 was almost wholly concerned with convoy escort operations and matters related thereto. On January 7, 1943 he started the ball rolling with his first escort order of the year. Four days later he wrote the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, requesting more ships for escort duty with the Greenland Patrol. Captain Smith, Commander Greenland Patrol had 35 ships to carry out his assigned jobs but he felt that 52 would be necessary. His duties consisted of defending Greenland and its surrounding waters, furnishing weather information to Army aircraft ferry operations, and supporting operations in the Greenland-Labrador area. Although Admiral Brainard felt that operations could be conducted with the present force, the additions requested would serve to improve the effectiveness of operations in that area, and therefore he submitted to the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, a list of the type ships which would be required.

Operations Plan No. 1-43 was issued by Commander Task Force 24 on 28 January and, as usual, there were changes. Task Group 24.2 had been changed from the United States Navy Trade Convoy Group to the Service Group, composed of the PRAMIE and KWEAH. Captain Baker had relieved Commander

Hundt of the Air Group; the Home Base Group had given way to an Auxiliary Carrier Group containing CVEs BOGUE and CARD. Task Group 24.5 had lost its administrative status and had become the first Weather Patrol Group officially under Brainard's Task Organization. Captain Fitz had relieved Captain Thebaud in Londonderry; Commander Greenland Patrol had gone from Captain to Rear Admiral E.H. Smith; and Captain Nelson was now in command of Naval Operating Base, Argentia. Task Group 24.11 was out and Rear Admiral Murray, RCN, now commanded the Canadian Western Local Escort Force, now 24.18.¹

But evidently some changes were necessary, for during the past six months things had been happening to make the convoy escort picture appear considerably on the sombre side. Although the average number of merchant vessels escorted each month had remained fairly constant at about 600 with an approximate average of 40 ships per convoy, the average number of U-boats operating in the North Atlantic area had undergone a steady increase from about 5 in July 1942 to about 31 in December 1942. Moreover, indications pointed toward an increasing number of U-boats operating in this area. Merchant ships sunk in the area had increased from 4 to 26 per month over the same period of time, an

1. CTF 24 Op Plan No. 1-43 sec. ser. 0017 of 28 January 1943. For Task Organization and related material of this plan see Appendix "E".

approximate increase in percentage from 0.74 to 4.44.

About 85 percent of the attacks occurred between 25° West and 45° West which, on both northern and southern (Africa and South America bound shipping) routes, was practically without air coverage. It therefore appeared to Commander Task Force 24 that one of the most promising ways of improving the protection, or at least partially closing these gaps, was by using long range planes to provide air coverage. After studying the situation carefully he came to the conclusion that although,

The weather conditions in both Newfoundland and Greenland are such that aircraft operations are continuously hampered regardless of type of aircraft provided . . . However, long range aircraft operating from these bases will, when weather permits, insure more effective and extensive coverage than is the case at present.²

Furthermore, in cases of unfavorable weather conditions at their regular base it would make it possible for planes to return to some more distant alternate base.

Admiral Brainard had written Admiral Ingersoll about this matter of the need for long range aircraft and Ingersoll had concurred. Brainard said that he trusted his hopes would be realized in the very near future in regard to this matter, since he felt that the Western Support Force (Task Force 24's escorts) had not produced an excessive amount of "support". This was because they needed more ships and

2. Conf. memo from Brainard's C/S Woodbridge to CTF 24 (no serial no date) included as enclosure in personal letter from CTF 24 to CinClant, 3 February, 1943.

had been handicapped by the slowness of the destroyer escort building program. "The present escort groups are very thin protection and will prove even thinner as the menace increases---which it bids fair to do,"³ stated the Admiral.

New proposals for convoy sailing intervals and convoy route diversions were in the air at the beginning of the year, and to Brainard with only eight groups of escorts operating under him, they looked rather impractical. Previously, on the 22nd of January, he had received a letter from Rear Admiral W.S. Delany on Admiral King's staff in Washington, and this had cleared matters up. In his reply of 8 February Admiral Brainard stated the reason why this matter had bothered him so much:

These radical diversions had caused me some concern due to the ever-present critical fuel situation facing escorts particularly during this season of heavy weather when fueling from the convoy is quite often impractical. Undoubtedly diversions based on the information which you apparently have should pay over-all dividends.

It has been my intention to write you personally on a few matters pertaining to the Northwest Atlantic situation, however, I am now refraining from so doing in view of the prospective conference in Washington with the many implications inferred therein.⁴

(This conference to which Brainard refers was to work out a reorganization of the convoy escort system in the Atlantic and was scheduled for 1 March.)

3. Sec. personal ltr. from VAdm. Brainard of 3 Feb. 1943 to Adm. Tengerdall.

4. Sec. personal ltr. from VAdm. Brainard of 8 Feb. 1943 to Rear. W.S. Delany

The Atlantic Convoy Conference convened on the 1st of March and lasted for the next twelve days. It came about through the suggestion of the Canadian Naval Service Headquarters, via Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, to the Admiralty. The proposal was accepted to talk over the Western Atlantic Trade Convoy Escort Forces and other convoy problems. At the meeting were representatives of the United States Navy, Army, and War Shipping Administration; Royal Navy, and Royal Air Force, Royal Canadian Navy, and Royal Canadian Air Force. When the conference adjourned on the 12th the face of the escort of convoy situation had been radically revamped. The reallocation of forces during the past several months, incident to opening additional convoy routes and activities in the Mediterranean, caused the withdrawal of most of the United States escort vessels from Task Force 24. (They were being used to escort convoys of supplies to the United States forces in Africa). Therefore it became appropriate for Great Britain and Canada to take complete charge of the Northern Atlantic convoy system, with primary responsibility assumed by Great Britain. The United Kingdom and Canada were to take charge of trade convoys between the British Isles and New York and ports north thereof (HX, SC, and ON convoys), with the understanding that the United States retained strategic authority and responsibility throughout the Western Atlantic Area, and

that all existing arrangements and agreements were to remain in effect except as specially modified in the instructions put out by the conference. However the United States was far from being divested of all responsibility---

Greenland convoys to be operated by the CinClant through a U.S. Naval Commander designated by him who will provide the escort and local air coverage within the range of Greenland based aircraft and supplement the coverage prescribed in paragraph 6 (a). Routings and diversions to be controlled by CinC, C.N.W.A.C., in the Canadian Coastal Zone; elsewhere by the CinClant or U.S. Naval Commander designated by him.

Iceland shuttle (if maintained) to be operated by the CinClant through a U.S. Naval Commander designated by him, who will provide the escorts, provide a local air cover, and route shuttle convoys to and from meeting points with trade convoys to be designated by the Admiralty. Diversions are controlled by the Admiralty.

United States retain Argentia and Londonderry as bases for U.S. Naval Forces, making excess facilities for maintenance of RN and RCN escort vessels.⁵

This last paragraph seems to have thrown Admiral Brainard for a temporary loss, because he requested a clarification of the mission of Naval Operating Base, Argentia. The confusion arose from the fact that a letter of 3 April sent the Commandant had listed certain definite commitments concerning the maintenance of vessels assigned to escort duty, yet this rather loose statement of A.C.C.-1 seemed to be the controlling policy. Commander Task Force 24 noted that by 1 July 1943 the only United States Naval vessels which would regularly require Argentia as a base were about

5. Atlantic Convoy Conference-1 Report, Appendix "A", P.4, 1-12 March, 1943.

six vessels of the Greenland Patrol which would visit Argentina approximately every three weeks. However, large task forces of the Atlantic Fleet would unquestionably use the Base from time to time. Also vessels proceeding to and from Greenland, vessels escorting between Argentina and the United States, and other miscellaneous craft, including approximately twenty local defense and harbor craft, would require intermittent basing. Since there was a marked discrepancy in commitments, Commander Task Force 24 did not feel that he could make any accurate analysis of present and future requirements of the base. This being the case, a restatement of commitments would be necessary.

Rear Admiral Murray had been made Commander in Chief, Canadian Northwest Atlantic Command (CinC, CNWAC) and as such came to Argentina on 16 April to discuss with Admiral Brainard the proposed change in Command Relations and Responsibility for the protection of shipping in the Northwestern Atlantic. The latter had prepared a letter, the purpose of which was to implement, supplement, and confirm some of the points outlined in Appendix "A" of A.C.C.-1 in connection with the change in command relations, etc. Admiral Brainard pointed out that the plan for the Defense of Newfoundland was in no way affected; that St. John's was still a terminal for Greenland convoys, and that it was understood that Admiral Murray would maintain a liaison officer between Royal Navy and Royal Canadian Navy vessels

and SOPA Argentina. Admiral Brainard went on to elucidate upon the use of Naval Operating Base, Argentina, the discrepancies connected with that matter having been cleared up. With reference to the paragraph previously quoted from A.C.C.-1, Brainard said,

In carrying out this directive, the SOPA will make every effort to render maximum service to the RN and RCN forces and at the same time to interfere in no way with the operational control of these vessels. . .

Due to the limited excess repair facilities and the uneven work load placed upon them, it will be necessary for the operational authority to obtain availability for repairs in each specific instance. To effect this, SOPA Argentina must be informed as to the desired repair services as far in advance as possible together with the limiting date of readiness for sea. Based on present facilities, only one trade convoy escort group (carrier support or mid-ocean group) can normally be provided repair services at any one time.⁶

The SOPA is to exercise general supervision over the servicing of such forces by the tender and the Base; also to exercise the usual functions of SOPA, including operational control of vessels while in Placentia Bay for "emergency purposes only." The Commandant of the Naval Operating Base, was to continue rendering services as in the past.

Admiral Murray stated that all the commitments, arrangements, and assumptions as outlined in Admiral Brainard's letter were satisfactory and would be adhered to by him. He further said, "I am ready to assume command of

6. CTF 24 sec. 107, ser. 0059 of 16 April 1943 to CINC CNAU.

Naval surface forces involved in accordance with the provisions of Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, despatch 301251 of March 1943 at 2400 Zebra April 30, 1943,"⁷ and endorsed the letter to that effect.

In accordance with agreements arrived at by the Washington Atlantic Convoy Conference, the task of protecting merchant shipping in the North Atlantic, except Greenland convoys and local Greenland-Labrador shipping, was assumed by British-Canadian authorities. "The main features of this agreement", said Brainard to Commander Greenland Patrol on 22 April, "affecting your Greenland operations are as follows:

- a. Greenland shipping between southern ports and St. John's will continue to be handled as at present.
- b. Convoys between Greenland and St. John's will continue as at present with certain exceptions, which are hereinafter set forth, as to air protection.
- c. The operational authority in Newfoundland, FONF, will provide air coverage for Greenland convoys within air range of the Newfoundland airports. In this connection, U.S. Navy, U.S. Army, and RCAF planes in the Newfoundland area will be under operational direction of FONF.
- d. U.S. Navy continues to furnish air coverage for the Greenland convoys from the Greenland terminal.
- e. The U.S. Navy is not obligated to provide any air coverage from Greenland for the North Atlantic Trade Convoys.
- f. The airfields in Greenland are available to British and Canadian aircraft in case of an emergency.⁸

7. CFF 24 11c. sec. 0053 of 16 April 1943 to CINC PACAF.

8. CFF 24 sec. 11c. sec. 0064 of 22 April 1943 to ComGreen-Int.

At that time it was anticipated that only sufficient United States Navy aircraft would be maintained in Greenland to meet the commitment of providing air protection to Greenland convoys, miscellaneous Greenland shipping, and incidental local anti-submarine protection. It was felt that four United States Navy planes could handle the job and three Venturas (PV-1s) and one PBV-5A were accordingly to be based in Greenland. The United States Navy had not assumed any commitments regarding Army rescue operations during the coming season, and in the event that such a task should be assigned, additional planes were to be provided to meet the circumstances. Brainard also told Admiral Smith,

Your air operations in relation to Army air operations by Army aircraft permanently stationed in Greenland will be on a basis of mutual cooperation as in the past. Any Army aircraft of the Anti-Submarine Command which may be stationed temporarily in Greenland to meet a threatening submarine situation will be under the operational control of these commands from whence the planes are temporarily transferred.⁹

Therefore, in the light of what has gone before it was not considered that it would be necessary to enlarge the Naval Aircraft establishment in Greenland, as Admiral Smith had recommended. About a week later Commander Greenland Patrol was informed that he had full authority for the operation of United States Navy aircraft in Greenland, and since four amphibians which had been guarding the Army ferry route

9. CTF 22 comm. log, Nov. 1944 to December 31, 1944.

were authorized to be withdrawn on 15 September, and as the Navy had no commitments regarding Army rescue operations, Commander Task Force 24 told him to inform the necessary Army authorities accordingly.¹⁰

Although no mention had been made of it, Admiral Brainard must have been for some time in poor health and then have taken a turn for the worse, for on 2 May he was relieved by Rear Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf and ordered to the Naval Medical Center at Bethesda, Md. for treatment and medical survey. The responsibilities of Commander Task Force 24 were now to rest temporarily for an interim period of seven months on the shoulders of Admiral Oldendorf, until he was relieved late in November by Rear Admiral E.H. Smith.

10. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 0073 to ComGreenPat 28 April 1943.

CHAPTER VIII

CTF 24: ADMIRAL OLDENDORF

The events which transpired during Admiral Oldendorf's time as Commander Task Force 24 might best be described as comparatively nondescript. However despite the fact that two days before he had relieved Admiral Brainard the British and Canadians had taken over the escort of convoy responsibilities in the Western North Atlantic, Admiral Oldendorf was not without a few convoy problems. But for the most part his problems were concerned with Greenland and the establishment of minor bases, but these, compared to previous patrol and base problems, were relatively unimportant.

About the 1st of May the Commanding Officer, Greenland Base Command, had discussed informally with the Commander of the Greenland Patrol, Admiral E.H. Smith, possibilities of stationing an Army defense garrison at the Minor Naval Operating Base, Grondal, Greenland. But Smith, backed up by Commander Task Force 24, felt that since Grondal was located behind the Army defenses of Ivigtut, no additional Army defense was needed there. If there was any defense of the area occupied by the Naval Operating Base, it should be assumed by the Navy and carried out by the regularly assigned personnel of the base. With this in mind Commander Task Force 24 recommended that the policies in this matter be defined for the Chief of Staff of the Army.¹

1. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 0088 of 8 (May 1943) to Vice CNO.

On the 8th of May Admiral Oldendorf had compiled statistics on convoy escort operations covering the period from 20 April 1942 to 2 May 1943. These statistics were for trans-Atlantic trade convoys escorted by Allied Escort Forces while west of the CHOP line, convoys escorted only by vessels of Task Force 24, and for Greenland convoys (HX, SC, ON, and ONS), averaging 40 ships per convoy. During the past year, he showed, 186 ships were sunk of those escorted by all the allied escorts. Of the twenty convoys escorted only by Task Force 24's ships--39.4 ships per convoy--only 41 were sunk over the same period. The 43 Greenland convoys of 3.6 ships per convoy only lost 3 ships over the same length of time.²

These figures are standing evidence of the good job which escorts of Task Force 24 had been doing.

On 13 May Admiral Oldendorf promulgated his first Operations Plan as Commander Task Force 24; it was also the first Operation Plan that had been put out since the British and Canadians had taken over the escort responsibilities in the North Atlantic.³ As might be expected the size of the

2. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 0069 of 8 May 1943 to CinClant.

3. CTF 24 Op Plan No. 2-43 sec. ser. 0096.

TASK ORGANIZATION:

24.2 Service Group

24.3 Air Group - Captain Hamilton, U.S.N.

24.5 Weather Patrol Group - DCGO, Boston.

24.8 Greenland Patrol - Rear Admiral Smith, USCG.

24.9 ROF, Argentina - Captain Nelson, USN.

task organization was considerably diminished, and there were now five task groups where before there had been twelve. The main body of the plan remained practically the same. This plan, No. 2-43, was later cancelled by change No. 2 on 29 June.

Although Commander Task Force 24 thought that the Navy in Greenland had no commitments for that season with regard to rescue work and the Army Ferry Command, he received information to the effect that part of the previous year's commitments still held. This said:

The Navy has arranged to provide the following assistance to the Army Ferry Command:

Two PBV-5As in Greenland (one at Blue West-1 and one at Blue West-8) held in readiness to assist each flight to the proper fjord for the landing field and to search for and rescue Army personnel as may be practicable in cooperation with the local Army Ferry Command.⁴

Admiral Oldendorf notified the Commander Fleet Air Wing 7 of this on May 22nd, stating in his letter, "Commander Greenland Patrol and Senior Officer Present Afloat, Greenland, have been informed."⁵ He also told the Commander of Fleet Air Wing 7, Captain Hamilton, that if he had not already done so, to make available to SOPA, Greenland the necessary facilities for carrying out the above quoted directive, and to keep him (CTF 24) informed of all pertinent

4. Cominch sec. memo ser. 00445 of 1 June 1943.

5. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 0098 of 22 May 1943 to ComFlt AirWing.

measures taken.

About the middle of June there was a proposed movement to use Argentia, Newfoundland, as a troop transport terminal. The reason for this was because it had been implied that enemy agents could ascertain too easily the prospective movements of transports bound for Greenland from St. John's. These agents would then transmit such intelligence to enemy forces with the result that submarines waited for the transports off the coast of Greenland and attacked when feasible. This could easily have been true, because ship sailings, no matter how secret, somehow became household conversation before the ships stood out. And in one case, two American sailors ashore in St. John's met a girl who had detailed information on the subject. They proceeded to get her drunk and in the course of her conversation she revealed several security leaks.

However, Admiral Oldendorf said that he had investigated the implications on numerous occasions but had never been able to dig up conclusive evidence that enemy agents had carried out any such procedure. He further stated that there was no secrecy of movement of ships at Argentia.

The thousands of Navy workmen on the Naval Base alone can readily hide among them any number of enemy agents. The shore line of Placentia Bay offers a ready opportunity for all who care to watch. The composition of convoys bound for Greenland must be well known to enemy forces if they have cared to take the trouble to find out. Accordingly, departure of a troop transport escorted by Coast Guard Cutters would unquestionably give

to any serious enemy agent just as valuable information as would be obtainable in St. John's.⁶

Because of this, and because knowledge of the Base and forces present would necessarily be given much wider distribution by having transports call and wait there, it was decided that it would not be practical to use Argentia for a transport terminal.

On June 29th Admiral Oldendorf issued Change No. 2 to Operation Plan 2-43. This did not affect the over-all task organization, but there were a good many additions within the task groups and several additions within the body of the plan. Task Group 24.2, the Service Group, now had besides its tenders, Minesweeper Division 25, and a Harbor Defense Unit made up of patrol craft. The Air Group added Patrol Squadron 63 and the Canadian Arctic Fleet Air Group to its units, as well as the tender SANDPIPER. And the Naval Operating Base, Argentia, Task Group 24.9 added units of Harbor craft, Net Defense, and Fleet Repair. Also the plan now read to the effect that,

For the purpose of air coverage of North Atlantic Trade Convoys to the limit of aircraft range from bases in Iceland, make available to the Air Officer Commanding Iceland, U.S. Naval Anti-Submarine Warfare Aviation established in Iceland, as directed by him.⁷

6. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 00107 of 14 June 1943 to CinClant.

7. CTF 24 Op Plan No. 2-43, change No. 2, sec. ser. 00112 of 29 June 1943.

This was in accordance with the provisions of Admiral Ingersoll's Operation Plan 3-42.

The Commander Fleet Air Wing 7 (CFAW-7) submitted a report of a visit to Iceland and Greenland to Commander Task Force 24 on the same day, 29 June 1943. In this he made quite a few recommendations, only several of which met with approval. One was that if additional hanger facilities were not made available, Naval Aviation Facilities be withdrawn from Iceland between 15 October and 15 March with the exception of six land planes. Another was that no seaplane operations be made from Iceland between the previously mentioned dates. With regard to Greenland, Captain Hamilton recommended that six PBX-5A aircraft be turned over to the Coast Guard for rescue and ice reconnaissance missions. Commander Task Force 24 forwarded these along with the other recommendations which he had carefully annotated to the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, on 12 July.

Admiral Oldendorf writes on the 5th of August that his command had been advised of the ultimate withdrawal of the United States Army Air Force from anti-submarine operations in Newfoundland. As a part of the general plan, the squadron of Army P24s, then currently operating from Gander Airport were to be relieved by the 1st of September by a similar type of Navy squadron. Because of the military considerations, it was planned to operate this squadron from

Gander with no change in the existing operational control exercised in Newfoundland. The Admiral said in connection with the above: "This command has informed its immediate superior, the Commander in Chief, United States Atlantic Fleet, that local arrangements for the procurement of such facilities as necessary will be made insofar as is practicable."⁸ (This had to do with facilities at Gander for berthing, messing, hangar, shop, and communications.) In writing to the Commanding General, Newfoundland Base Command, on this subject, Admiral Oldendorf stated,

If the plan is approved in principle by you, it is suggested that a representative of this Command (Commander Fleet Air Wing SEVEN) confer with the appropriate authority at Gander relative to the availability and utilization of the facilities. . . . Your advice and comment will be greatly appreciated.⁹

During 1943 Commander Greenland Patrol had obtained ten converted trawlers for the Greenland Patrol. Although they performed difficult duties, the original design, their hurried conversion, and the detached type of duty---with little or no repair facilities---materially affected the efficiency of their operation in the Canadian Arctic--Greenland-Iceland area. He desired that these be replaced by a standard type Navy ship with a single screw, and pointed out,

As a start on such a program, the LSC force cutter, tender class, is a vessel ideally fitted to carry out operations in Greenland coastal waters. These cutters could perform good service in northern waters, replacing an equal number of trawlers now assigned to the

8. CTF 24 sec. ltr. por. 00134 of 5 August 1943 to Commanding General, NBC.

9. Ibid.

Greenland Patrol. The trawlers so relieved might then be returned to their former owners and resume fishing.¹⁰

Admiral Smith wanted the IRONWOOD when it was completed and another cutter of the same class to be assigned to the Greenland Patrol. Admiral Oldendorf was in sympathy with this request although the assignment of these ships rested ultimately with the Commandant of the United States Coast Guard. However Oldendorf remarked, "Provided the exigencies of our global war permit the advantageous diversion of two additional cutters, approval of the basic request is recommended."¹¹

Operation Plan 3-43 came out on the 14th of September and varied only slightly from 2-43 as reorganized by Change No. 2. However in this latest plan, Commander Task Force 24 made provision for the coordination of logistic support for certain of the various military forces in the Newfoundland-Greenland Area. There was also some slight shuffling around of ships within task units; especially within the Greenland Patrol, but none of these changes amounted to very much.

Now that the Tasks of Commander Task Force 24 had been cut down to such an extent there was more personnel, especially at Naval Operating Base, Argentina, than needed

10. ComGreenPat sec. 1. r. ser. 00411 of 25 August 1943 via CTF 24 to C4 Jamb.

11. CTF 24 sec. 1. r. ser. 00153 of 14 September 1943 to CINCPAC.

and a program of reduction was initiated. Admiral Oldendorf had a conference with the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet and together they decided to cancel certain non-essential construction projects. On 17 September Admiral Oldendorf informed Admiral Ingersoll that this construction work had been either cancelled or the mechanics therefor had been undertaken. Work had actually ceased. This left only the question of the reduction of personnel. No specific directives as to the future mission of the Naval Operating Base, Argentia had been issued, so Admiral Oldendorf assigned one of his own. This was,

- a. To complete construction of authorized construction projects.
- b. To furnish direct support to a task force consisting of two major ships (BB, CV, CA) plus six destroyers and an average force of four ocean escort vessels (DD or smaller.)
- c. To furnish support to one squadron of large patrol planes operating on combat missions.¹²

Then on the basis of this, Commander Task Force 24 sent the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, a complete breakdown on officer and enlisted personnel attached to Naval Operating Base, Argentia, showing what percentage of them could be reduced. He further informed the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, that every effort would be made to increase the reduction of assigned personnel as experience showed the possibility.

12. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 00157 of 17 September 1943 to CinClnet.

During the Spring and early summer of 1943 Task Unit 24.8.5 of the Greenland Patrol composed of the NORTHLAND, commanded by Captain C.C. von Paulsen, USCG and the NORTH STAR, commanded by Lieutenant Commander H.T. Diehl, USCG, went on an expedition to the Northeast Greenland area. This task unit, under Captain von Paulsen was directed to search out and eliminate any German installations in Northwest Greenland and establish a station of the so-called "Sledge-Patrol"¹³ as a site selected at Myggbugta. Evidence of German occupation was found at several places despite attempts to cover up traces, and the NORTH STAR had a brush with a German plane, possibly having damaged it. On the 8th of October after the return of the expedition, Commander Greenland Patrol recommended the establishment of a high frequency direction finding station on Jan Mayen Island to locate the position of transmitting enemy weather stations. Because of a scarcity of materials Admiral King rejected this idea at first, but reconsidered later on, and on 22 October authorized its establishment.¹⁴ On 1 November permission was granted to the United States Government by

13. This Sledge Patrol was initiated and organized by the Commander of the Greenland Patrol, Admiral E.A. Smith, during the summer of 1941. It ultimately came under U.S. Army sponsorship and filled a very obvious need. Its personnel consists of Danes, for the most part trappers, who have lived in the country.

14. Cominch sec. despatch Ser. 181836 of October 1943 to ComGreenPat.

the Norwegian Government in London to build this radio direction finder station on Jan Mayen Island. There were certain legal stipulations but they were eventually worked out to the agreement of all parties concerned. Official permission was granted Admiral Smith through the Chief of Naval Operations on 6 November to proceed with his plans on this project. This northernmost Naval activity would make the process of smoking the Germans out of Greenland during the summer season a much more easy and sure fire process.

The problem of additional ships for the Greenland Patrol was still adrift, and on 9 November we find Admiral Oldendorf again writing the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet. Commander Greenland Patrol was to have submitted a comment on present and prospective needs of ships for the Greenland Patrol, via Oldendorf, to Ingersoll. However Admiral Oldendorf considered that Admiral Smith's basic letter, plus his own endorsement, would be sufficient since all the necessary information was in the basic letter. Commander Task Force 24 pointed out that "In view of the prospective assumption of command of Task Force TWENTY-FOUR by Admiral Smith, his recommendations as contained in the basic letter warrant more than customary consideration."¹⁵ However Admiral Oldendorf recommended against any radical increase in the Greenland Patrol for the following reasons:

15. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 0018) of 9 November 1943 to CinClant.

The strategic situation in the Northwest Atlantic area is one of rapidly decreasing enemy strength. No appreciable change in this condition can reasonably be foreseen.

The strategic situation in several other theatres of war would appear to call for every bit of naval strength which can be spared from the Northwest Atlantic.

For two years the Greenland Patrol has operated efficiently and effectively with vessels as assigned. There is every reason to believe that it will be able to continue to do so with the vessels currently assigned.

Accordingly, Admiral Oldendorf made the following recommendations:

That replacement be made as found necessary and that such decision be based on the merits of each individual case. The only replacements at present recommended are:

1. Three WAP class cutters be substituted for the NORTHLAND, NORTH STAR, and BEAR.
2. The converted trawlers be replaced only if their return to fishing operations is called for by higher authority.¹⁶

The last Operations Plan to be put out by Admiral Oldendorf, No. 4-43, came out on 15 November, 1943. The Iceland Group under Commodore Wentworth, which had been designated 26.6 since the British and Canadians took over Northwestern Atlantic convoy responsibilities, had now returned to the fold of CTF 34. This group was to "defend Iceland in cooperation with the United States Army and with

16. CTF 34, sec. 110, 1301, 00123 of 9 November 1943 to CincPac.

The strategic situation in the Northwest Atlantic area is one of rapidly decreasing enemy strength. No appreciable change in this condition can reasonably be foreseen.

The strategic situation in several other theatres of war would appear to call for every bit of naval strength which can be spared from the Northwest Atlantic.

For two years the Greenland Patrol has operated efficiently and effectively with vessels as assigned. There is every reason to believe that it will be able to continue to do so with the vessels currently assigned.

Accordingly, Admiral Oldendorf made the following recommendations:

That replacement be made as found necessary and that such decision be based on the merits of each individual case. The only replacements at present recommended are:

1. Three WMEC class cutters be substituted for the NORTHLAND, NORTH STAR, and BEAR.
2. The converted trawlers be replaced only if their return to fishing operations is called for by higher authority.¹⁶

The last Operations Plan to be put out by Admiral Oldendorf, No. 4-42, came out on 15 November, 1943. The Iceland Group under Commodore Montworth, which had been designated 16.6 since the British and Canadians took over Northwestern Atlantic convey responsibilities, had now returned to the fold of CTF 11. This group was to "defend Iceland in cooperation with the United States Army and with

16. CTF 24 Dec. 1943. For 1943, of 2 November 1943 to 15 November.

The strategic situation in the Northwest Atlantic area is one of rapidly decreasing enemy strength. No appreciable change in this condition can reasonably be foreseen.

The strategic situation in several other theatres of war would appear to call for every bit of naval strength which can be spared from the Northwest Atlantic.

For two years the Greenland Patrol has operated efficiently and effectively with vessels as assigned. There is every reason to believe that it will be able to continue to do so with the vessels currently assigned.

Accordingly, Admiral Oldendorf made the following recommendations:

That replacement be made as found necessary and that such decision be based on the merits of each individual case. The only replacements at present recommended are:

1. Three WMEC class cutters be substituted for the NORTHLAND, NORTH STAR, and SHAN.
2. The converted trawlers be replaced only if their return to fishing operations is called for by higher authority.¹⁶

The Last Operations Plan to be put out by Admiral Oldendorf, No. 4-43, came out on 15 November, 1943. The Iceland Group under Commander Wentworth, which had been designated 16.6 since the British and Canadians took over Northwestern Atlantic convoy responsibilities, had now returned to the role of GFR 24. This group was to "perform Iceland in cooperation with the United States Army and with

16. GFR 24 was later used as the basis for the Iceland Group, 1943 to 1944.

the British and Allied Forces in accordance with approved agreements"; also to "employ the Naval Operating Base and Naval Air Facility in accordance with current directives".¹⁷

On 25 November 1943 Rear Admiral J.B. Oldendorf was detached and relieved of command of Task Force TWENTY-FOUR by Rear Admiral E.H. Smith, USCG, and the command of Task Force TWENTY-FOUR moved on into its fourth generation of Admirals.

17. CTF 24 Op Plan 4-43 sec. ser. 00188 of 15 November 1943.

24.4 Iceland Group:

- 24.4.1 NOB, Iceland.
- 24.4.3 28th Construction Battalion.
- 24.4.6 Naval Air Facility.
- 24.4.7 Iceland Fleet Air Group.

CHAPTER IX

CTF 24: ADMIRAL SMITH

Admiral "Iceberg" Smith, in taking over the command of Task Force TWENTY-FOUR, had a definite advantage over his predecessors because he had a first hand knowledge and understanding of the work that lay ahead of him. That is, he was not an "outsider" to the Task Force. He had worked up to the "top of the pile" from within the organization and for this reason was undoubtedly the most logical man to "fleet up" to the command. Although he has intermittently crossed the pages of this story from its beginning, his familiarity with the North Atlantic antedates it by some years. His study of oceanography and ice conditions, and his expeditions in and around the Arctic Circle, Iceland, and Greenland made him well qualified to take command of the Greenland Patrol early in 1941. From that time, as commander until he became Rear Admiral three years later, he built the Greenland Patrol into a smooth running, efficient, and continuously expanding organization. Now being thoroughly familiar with the background and workings of North Atlantic escort, expeditionary, and weather patrol duty, it was only logical that he became Commander Task Force TWENTY-FOUR.

On the 3rd of December 1943 Admiral Smith had a few comments to make with regard to his having become Commander Task Force 24:

After having seen so many officers come and go here in the Flag Headquarters, and now to arrive here myself, you can imagine how it feels. I relieved Admiral Oldendorf a week ago today and have been spending most of the time getting acquainted. There is, of course, not so much work in operations as there was¹. . .

My new station has brought a lot more work, as a new assignment usually does. It is pleasant to have a change of scene after being associated for two years or more with ice and snow. This place has never been known for its climate, but it is a great improvement over what has been left.²

By the 26th of the month the Admiral seems to have found his bearings, for at this time, among other things, he had straightened out one of the periodic tangles in the Revised Combined Plan for the Defense of Newfoundland, and suggested that the Senior Allied Commander in Newfoundland call a meeting to discuss the subject changes as soon as practicable. And on the 30th he requested special outfitting for ships of the EVERGREEN class assigned to the Greenland Patrol---but there was really nothing new about this procedure for him, except that now he was one step closer to getting it done.

The War Diary for December 1943 stated that Commander Task Force 24's duties fell under the following headings:

- a. Duties in connection with North Atlantic Trade Convoys.
- b. Duties in connection with operations in the Greenland-Iceland-Labrador-Canadian Arctic Area.

-
1. Admiral Smith's personal letter of 3 December 1943 to Captain Wooldridge.
 2. Admiral Smith's personal letter of 3 December 1943 to Admiral J.F. Farley, Jr., USCG.

- c. Duties in connection with miscellaneous operations in the Newfoundland Area and escort operations between Newfoundland and the United States.³

Task Force 24 at this time was operating under Atlantic Fleet Operation Plan No. 1-43 and Commander Task Force 24's Operation Plan No. 4-43. Admiral Smith made his first change in the latter plan on 10 January 1944, when he published Modification No. 1, which caused a number of shifts and alterations. The Jan Mayen HF/DF Station was added to the Iceland Group as Task Unit 24.4.2. Two new Task Groups were created: 24.6, Ocean Escort Group, under Commander R.L. Horne, USCG; and the Ice Information Detachment, 24.7, under Lieutenant C.A. Barnes, USCGR. The Greenland Patrol, now under the command of Commodore E.G. Rose, USCG, lost her escort units and gained four others: Plane Guard Stations A, and B, Aids to Navigation and Hydrographic Survey. And finally, as far as the task organization was concerned, Naval Operating Base, Argentia now controlled Minesweep Division 25 and Harbor Approaches Patrol Unit. The former job of the Greenland Patrol providing escorts for the protection of shipping to and from the Greenland Area went to the Ocean Escort Group under the operational control of Commander Task Force 24. The Greenland Patrol, besides its other previous jobs, now was used with such other forces as were required in "boarding and examining Spanish and Portuguese fishing

3. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 002 of 4 January 1944 to CinClant.

vessels in Davis Strait and Greenland waters to prevent subversive activities and espionage.⁴

Although the opportunities for neutral vessels to aid the enemy in Task Force 24 area were few, enemy agents might be expected to use the convenient means of Spanish and Portuguese fishing fleets to obtain information on the movements of United Nations vessels. It was for this reason that the above statement was included in the Operation Plan. Also, on one occasion a radio telephone conversation in Portuguese between two fishing vessels had been monitored. It referred to the sighting of a convoy by one of the fishermen, but the vessels could not be located or identified. Admiral Smith said that, "It was a result of this, and a subsequent warning to a Portuguese fishing vessel inside Greenland territorial waters, that I have had conferences with the Defense Security Officer, St. John's, Newfoundland."⁵ However he felt that local counter-espionage would be of little avail unless connected with a wide spread service.

On 22 January Commander Task Force 24 wrote the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, with regard to the possibilities of the Island of Jan Mayen. High Frequency Direction Finding station had been established there in November 1943, primarily for the Defense of Greenland. The purpose

4. CTF 24 sec. ser. 0010 Modification No. 1 to Op Plan 4-43
10 January 1944.

5. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 0013 of 11 January 1944 to CinClant.

of this station was to detect transmissions of possible enemy radio stations in eastern Greenland. It was hoped by the use of this station that they could prevent a repetition of the previous year's incident when a German weather station operated, unknown to our forces, for several months in Eastern Greenland. In considering the other possibilities of the Island Admiral Smith said,

Oceanic islands, even if relatively small like Jan Mayen, often have great military value. The U.S. is already committed to the defense of Iceland, Greenland, and Newfoundland, and Jan Mayen (like these others) belongs geographically to the American continent rather than to the European. The Group Jan Mayen, Iceland, Greenland, and Newfoundland, forms a rampart of natural defenses along the North Atlantic mid-channel line.⁶

Therefore, it was planned to conduct further surveys of Jan Mayen and recommended that consideration be given to bring it ultimately under United States leased jurisdiction.

Back in June of 1942, the United States Army Air Forces, preparing for the "Bolero" Movement (Trans-Atlantic plane ferrying), requested the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, to furnish flight security ships in the Davis and Denmark Straits. Admiral Ingersoll complied through Commander Task Force 24, and since then these ships furnished not only routine weather information but also monitored planes in flight and stood by as rescue craft in case of emergencies. Because Task Force 24 established and operated stations A and B (in the above straits) officials of the North Atlantic

6. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 0021 of 22 Jan. 1944 to CinClant.

Wing requested during the early part of February of 1944 that the weather service already being carried out should be expanded and the number of stations be increased. In view of their proved value and the fact that it was a logical assignment for Task Force 24, Admiral Smith recommended that "Commander Task Force TWENTY-FOUR be authorized to provide additional weather stations with the ships now available, or that may become available under present directives."⁷

During the first week of March Admiral Smith recommended Captain C.W. Thomas, USCG, for a commendation in connection with the installation of the radio and D/F station on Jan Mayen. The suggested commendation read to the effect that,

As Commanding Officer of the USCGC NORTHLAND, you were called upon to accomplish a mission of installing technical equipment on an isolated island in the far North in the month of November, 1943. On account of stormy seas and biting winds, you were confronted with a task that tested your resourcefulness and ingenuity as well as your seamanship. Largely through your dogged determination and inspiring leadership, the Station was installed in the limited time available, and you were able to return with your ship from the island on the first of December 1943 in safety. By your untiring efforts under adverse conditions, and your energetic performance of duty on this occasion, you have made an outstanding contribution to the war effort in the North Atlantic.⁸

From this it can be seen that the establishment of this station on Jan Mayen was a difficult undertaking and one worthy of commendation, and from later results, one that

7. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 0033 of about 6 Feb. 1944 to CinClant.

8. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 0063 of 3 March 1944 to CinClant.

paid dividends.

About 10 March Admiral Smith conceived a plan by which he could help out both the training and escort situations. After having assigned the TAHOMA and MOHAWK to the Greenland Patrol Commander Task Group 24.6, Ocean Escort Group, was to assign any available units of his group to Commander Task Force 24's Service Group on temporary duty for operation and training. There had been some criticism of Task Force 24's ships spending too much time in "Stateside" ports and, besides helping Argentina, this would tend to counteract that criticism. Besides, at that time there were no ocean going ships in Argentina "since the KIOWA has been temporarily detached".⁹ Admiral Smith stated that he wanted to use this type of ship to board Spanish and Portuguese fishing vessels in the Grand Banks area, and also to use them in case of an emergency, as for rescue work.

By the 24th of March Admiral Smith was able to inform the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, that the Canadian Joint Service Committee had approved the Combined Plan for the Defense of Newfoundland dated 22 January 1944. (I.E., this was the latest plan to date with all changes and additions approved.) There was however one change not approved when the plan was submitted to him, but this was considered minor and approved by Commander Task Force 24 upon receipt.¹⁰

9. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 0073 of 10 March 1944 to CTG 24.6 (c/o DCCO LND).

10. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 0084 of 24 March 1944 to CinClant.

The Admiral expected the plan, as signed by all the Allied Commanders, to be forwarded to him at an early date and at that time he said he would send the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, a copy of this current plan.

It was apparent that the war in the North Atlantic had, in many respects, reached a "tapering off" stage. On the 5th of April Commander Task Force 24 was concerned with the reduction of material and personnel of Task Force 24 bases in order that they might be transferred to more active theatres of the war. Of course, reductions were being considered in the light of the present minimum operational commitments, and the Admiral was keeping up to date on the combined plans for the Defense of Newfoundland, Iceland, and Greenland as they were modified to fit the changing aspects of the war. He notified the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, and the Chief of Naval Operations that:

At Iceland, further reductions in personnel to an enlisted force of approximately 200 are anticipated. In Greenland, no reduction in facilities and personnel is recommended. The installations are relatively minor and never have reached strength to meet operational commitments. . . In Newfoundland, a larger reduction is planned. When the surveys are completed, the recommendations resulting therefrom will be forwarded through the chain of command.¹¹

10. (cont'd) This was paragraph 401 which read:

The Senior Naval Officer permanently stationed in Newfoundland will exercise the operational direction of all Allied Naval Forces and Air Forces cooperating with Naval Forces for off-shore defense operations.

11. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 0096 to CINCUS, CNO, 5 April 1944.

The latter would necessarily cut down on Royal Navy and Royal Canadian Navy availability at Argentia, since they had been only receiving excess repair facilities. Admiral Smith told Admiral King that unless directed otherwise he would inform the necessary British and Canadian authorities of the plans for the reduction in repair facilities. Since the Canadians now had improved facilities at St. John's and Bay Bulls, Newfoundland, a considerable amount of the excess formerly handled at Argentia could now be taken care of in these places.

The Commanders of the Greenland Base Command, the Army Air Forces in Newfoundland, and in Labrador all notified Admiral Smith during the spring that they needed weather information prior to the time they got it from Washington. Also, the two most important operational controls of the North Atlantic Air Wing in Newfoundland asked him to arrange locally to get this much needed information, which at the time they needed it, was unavailable because they lacked the cipher for the weather code. The Admiral felt that if they, and certain Escort Carriers operating in the North Atlantic, could intercept and decipher the weather messages it would greatly facilitate operations. Furthermore, he felt that "the value of earlier reception of the reports is more important than the possible greater security of the reports."¹²

12. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 00104 of 14 April 1944 to CNO.

For this reason he requested the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, and the Chief of Naval Operations to initiate action with the Chief of the United States Weather Bureau so that weather ships would carry a code "held in common by need-to-know United States Forces normally operating in the Northwestern Atlantic Area."¹³ This cipher was eventually changed and made available.

When Admiral Smith was Commander Greenland Patrol he had suggested that the converted fishing trawlers operating under his command be decommissioned and returned to their owners, and that they be replaced by a standard Navy type ship with a single screw. The Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, eventually made provision for the decommissioning of some of these ships in his letter of 15 April. This stated that four of these trawlers were to be decommissioned before the first of July 1944, and by the end of April Commodore Rose had the operation well under way.

About the first of May there was considerable scuttlebutt to the effect that British and Canadian Forces at Argentia were to be withdrawn. Rear Admiral Murray, RCN, had visited Admiral Smith about the middle of April and had indicated that upon the discontinuance of the SC convoys the British and Canadian escort groups would no longer have occasion to use Argentia. He conveyed the impression that this would also lead to the detachment of the British Naval

13. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 00104 of 14 April 1944 to CNO

liaison officer and the Maintenance Unit which he commanded.

Relative to this, Smith said,

The anticipated departure of the British units at Argentina in the near future has raised the question of support of the Free French at St. Pierre, M.I. The task involves minor repairs to a total of 7 small craft. It is planned, therefore, to continue this support and cooperation with the Flag Officer Newfoundland Forces, if and when the British depart Argentina.¹⁴

The French would be no great problem and if the British and Canadians withdrew from Argentina then there would be almost no problem presented by tapering off in their repair facilities. This fitted in very nicely with the Admiral's plan to reduce personnel and material at the Naval Operating Base, Argentina.

On 4 May 1944, Admiral Smith promulgated his first operational plan as Task Force Commander, and it is particularly notable for its simplicity. This was due largely to the waning operational demands of the war and, as an ancillary reason, the accompanying program of reduction of personnel and material. The Service and Air Groups remained the same as in the past except for the latter's skipper who was now Lieutenant Commander W.I. Swanston, USCG. However, the Iceland Group and the Naval Operating Base, Argentina, both showed definite signs of the cut, the former losing three out of five units, and the latter combining two to form the PLACENTIA BAY Patrol Unit (24.9.7 and 24.9.8 of

14. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 00114 to CincUS, CNO 2 May 1944.

4-43) which was designated 24.9.7. However, the biggest cut, despite Smith's statement that there would be no reduction of facilities in Greenland, was taken by the Greenland Patrol, which lost five out of nine units. The rest of the Task Organization remained about the same, except for the ATLANTIC WEATHER PATROL, which was expanding all the time. The material contained in the body of the plan was similar to previous plans except for the tasks of units that had been eliminated. These, of course, were excluded. The PLACENTIA BAY Patrol was to patrol the bay and "approaches to Argentia Harbor, and operate minesweepers and other units connected with port control; cooperate with United States Army and combined military forces and in the joint defense of Argentia."¹⁵

On 10 May Commander Task Force 24 sent one signed and one unsigned copy of the Combined Plan for the Defense of Newfoundland to the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, and Chief of Naval Operations. The Senior Canadian Commander, Newfoundland, had stated that the plan had been approved by higher authorities and that it was effective as of 24 April 1944.

The same day Admiral Smith informed Admiral King that the North Atlantic Wing of the A.T.C. which had previously requested additional weather stations in the Atlantic had recently told him that the British Navy planned to establish

15. CTF 24 sec. ser. 00115 Op Plan No. 1-44 of 4 May 1944.

two Atlantic weather stations. One of these stations was within the Western Atlantic area and the other just to the eastward of it. Since the Atlantic Weather Patrol had been assigned to the Atlantic Fleet,¹⁶ and in view of the significance this Patrol had in connection with post-war aviation and international agreements, it was recommended that all weather stations in the Western Atlantic Area be established and maintained by the United States Atlantic Fleet. Therefore, Admiral Smith suggested that "this subject be referred to the Joint Meteorological Committee and that it reconsider its decision not to establish weather stations recommended."¹⁷ in an earlier letter of his on this subject.¹⁸

Commander Task Force 24's Operation Order No. 1-44 came out on 19 May and this provided for the establishment of two additional weather stations.¹⁹ It also provided for the use of a standard eight-group International Ship Code in conjunction with the regular weather code. Under this order the USS NUCLEUS and USS PALISADE were to establish one station and the USS NOTABLE, by Operation Order 2-44 of two

16. Cominch ser. 00860 of 15 March 1944.

17. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 00125 of 10 May 1944 to CinCUS.

18. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 0033 of about 6 February 1944 to CinClant.

19. One at 58° North, 37° West, and the other at 50° North 37° West.

days later, was to relieve the ASTERION at another.

During June Admiral Smith seemed to be having difficulties continuously maintaining the Weather Patrol because of the small size and short endurance of the vessels. He anticipated that before the advent of stormy weather in November it would be advisable to relieve these small ships with larger, more seaworthy ones of greater range. About the end of the month he pointed this out to Admiral King, and stated,

If it is considered impracticable to assign frigates of sufficient number to maintain the total of 8 stations, it is requested. . . to permit the retention of the MANHASSETT, BIG HORN and SEA CLOUD. With these three, and additional vessels drawn from escort and Greenland operations, and converted to weather duty, it is hoped to be able to remedy the present unsatisfactory conditions surrounding stations ABLE, BAKER and CHARLIE.²⁰

As was planned early in May, and on the authority of Commander in Chief, United States Fleet directive of 9 June, Smith directed the Commandant of Naval Operating Base, Argentia, on 6 July to use the base as necessary for the support of French Naval Craft at St. Pierre, M.I. The Flag Officer, Newfoundland Forces, was to be the liaison officer regarding operations with the French and requisitions were to go through him. The French were to be treated as if they were a Canadian unit and repairs were to be effected by Royal Navy or Royal Canadian Navy personnel from St.

20. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 00160 of 29 June 1944 to CinClant.

John's. Admiral Smith told the Commandant that, "In this connection, whenever matters pertaining to policy arise with Flag Officer, Newfoundland Force, it is desired that they be handled via this command."²¹

Earlier in the spring of 1944 the Canadians had established a system of classifying the sea areas adjacent to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland in respect to the relative hazard connected with routing shipping in these areas. Due to this method of control the hazard factor was reduced to a minimum. Admiral Smith's operations section had been unofficially using the reports of Canadian authorities concerning the status of these areas in connection with the routing of shipping, and since the Davis Strait Area had been particularly cleared out, the Admiral asked Commander Greenland Patrol's opinion as to the advisability of discontinuing escort operations on the West Coast of Greenland. It was felt that there was so little shipping on the West Coast and the hazard so slight that this would be advisable, so escorts in this area were discontinued.

On 9 July the Chief of Naval Operations received word from Commander Task Force 24 that as of the 4th of June 1944 the Office of Captain "D", Senior British Naval Officer, Argentina, had been discontinued, and that on the 5th of July 1944 the Royal Naval Air Station had also been dis-

21. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 00168 of 16 July 1944 to Comdt. NOB, Argentina.

continued at Argentia.

Greenland Patrol's Operation Order 1-44 had limited the date for the STORIS and NORTHLAND to clear the pack ice of Northeast Greenland to 1 September 1944. Admiral Smith accordingly notified Commodore Rose that,

Enemy operations, in previous seasons, in Northeast Greenland have indicated that the enemy has postponed his arrival in Northeast Greenland to establish stations as late in the season as feasible. . . . Our own vessels should be sent into the area each year as early as ice conditions permit, and should remain as late as practicable. No calendar date can be set due to the wide fluctuations in ice conditions from year to year. The limiting date to depart Northeast Greenland should depend upon the experience and ability of the respective officers on the spot.²²

It was therefore recommended that the subject operation be amended in order to accord with the above policy before the summer "smoking-cut" operations got under way.

In connection with the Naval reduction program Admiral Smith pointed out to the Chief of Naval Operations about the last of July that on 15 June Allied Forces in Newfoundland numbered approximately 25,000. Of these, combined United States Forces numbered about 10,000, and the Navy made up 10 percent of the total. Although none of the other Allied Commanders expected any reduction in strength, Commander Task Force 24 stated that by 1 September that the United States Navy would be cut to 5 percent of the total, despite the fact that the Royal Canadian Navy expected an increase

22. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 00184 of 17 July 1944 to ComGreenPat.

in their present strength.²³

Change No. 1 to Operation Plan 1-44 was sent out on 7 August by Commander Task Force 24 and was mainly concerned with the Weather Patrol. There were no marked changes to the plan, most of them being of a minor nature.

On the 8th of August Commander Task Force 24 notified the Chief of the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts that the British unit which had formerly handled supplies for the French Forces putting into Argentia had been withdrawn, and there was no longer an agency there to which supplies could be charged. The question had been taken up with a member of the staff of the Flag Officer Newfoundland Forces who had stated definitely that FONF would not accept the responsibility for materials issued to the French, as it had been anticipated he would. Admiral Smith took measures to rectify this situation.

October of 1944 seems to have been a month of somewhat heightened German activity and excitement in and around Greenland. By reconnaissance and other military activity, personnel of Coast Guard Cutter EASTWIND discovered an enemy weather unit preparing to establish a weather station on Little Koldeway Island, Greenland. As the result of prompt action the Officers and men of the EASTWIND effected a successful capture of the German party on the 4th of

23. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 00196 of 29 July 1944 to CNO.

October. There were no casualties on either side, and the element of surprise was such that almost all documents and equipment of the enemy were captured intact. There were twelve prisoners taken in all.

Twenty more prisoners of war were captured on 16 October, when the German trawler EXTERNSTEINE, upon which they were the crew, while stuck in floe ice off Shannon Island, Greenland, was captured by EASTWIND and SOUTHWIND. The ship's mission when it left Norway was to establish a weather expedition on Isle de France, Greenland, if possible, and if not, on the next most suitable site, and then return to Norway. As it turned out Isle de France was out of the question because of ice conditions and she had to land the party on Little Koldeway Island, where as stated above it was captured. After EXTERNSTEINE left the weather party it became stuck in the ice where it was spotted by the EASTWIND's plane, and later captured. In his report on interrogation of the prisoners, Major R.A. Kendall, CAC, noted that, "The Captain's failure to scuttle his ship when capture was eminent seemed odd when the Captain of the KEHDINGEN from the previous captured expedition did such a thorough job." He suggested, "The reason might be a growing realization on the part of the officers in the merchant marine that the cause has been lost and nothing would be gained."²⁴

24. Comdt. NOB Iceland sec. ltr. ser. 0097 of 24 November 1944 to ComGreenPat.

On the 19th of October Commander Task Force 24 wrote the Chief of Naval Operations concerning the continuation of the watch on Jan Mayen. Because of the enemy activity in Northeast Greenland at this time, it was considered desirable to continue the use of the HF/DF station on Jan Mayen. However, on the cessation of European hostilities the stations equipment was to be returned to the United States unless there was use for it in connection with safeguarding postwar airplane traffic. Also it was expected that the Norwegian Government in London was going to put in an early request for the buildings which the Navy had put up there. Although the Germans were still attempting to send out weather information from Greenland, the fact that securing the watch had been contemplated was an indication that the tempo of the Atlantic war had slowed down quite appreciably. They had even contemplated taking down the anti-submarine net at Argentia, but it was decided to leave it up until the absolute cessation of submarine activities in the Atlantic.

Also about this time the Air-Sea-Rescue Program was getting under way. Sinkings from U-boats had practically disappeared and a need for the provision of a rescue service for aircraft, which were flying air routes between Newfoundland and Europe in increasing numbers, was becoming apparent. This need grew directly out of the loss of an Army C-54 between Newfoundland and Iceland and a C-47 between Iceland

and Greenland. All hands on both these planes were lost and the results of attempted rescue operations revealed the need of establishing more effective air-sea rescue facilities. Commander Task Force 24 informed Admiral King that, "Unless directed otherwise, it is planned to coordinate air-sea rescue operations with United States Army air activities and facilities in Newfoundland, Greenland, and Iceland."²⁵

They were not long in getting started. The first meeting of the Air-Sea Rescue program was held at Argentia on 28 October 1944. Admiral Smith and the Commanding General, North Atlantic Division, Air Transport Command, met in an attempt to reach a mutually satisfactory plan or coordination by which rescue of aircraft casualties in the North Atlantic could be effected. Although conclusive results were not obtained, it was felt that some progress had been made. It was agreed that a rescue organizational plan be drawn up by Commander Task Force 24 and submitted at a meeting held at the Headquarters of the Commanding General, North Atlantic Division, Army Transport Command, in Manchester, New Hampshire. This was to be done as soon as practicable.

On 29 October the Commanding General, North Atlantic Division of Army Transport Command wrote Admiral Smith submitting details of plans and procedures for a Rescue Control Center. The Commanding General had previously

25. CTF 24 conf. ltr. ser. 01047 of 12 October 1944 to CINCUS.

requested the assistance of Task Force 24 in cases of his aircraft in distress, and indicated that the volume of North Atlantic Air traffic was sizeable, probably continuing at such proportions indefinitely. Admiral Smith felt that the frigates then reporting for weather and plane guard duty, and the present squadron of VPB-6 at the Naval Air Station, constituted a potential rescue organization.

By 10 November Commander Task Force 24 had enough ships to maintain six full weather stations and two stations as plane guard and rescue ships operating from Iceland and Greenland. These latter two stations were to become full weather stations on the reporting of another ship in the coming month of January. Under the existing system of rotating the duty of weather ships Admiral Smith devised a plan whereby some of the ships that had been on weather duty could be returned to escort duty. If this plan met with the approval of Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet,²⁶ he intended to release some of the smaller and inadequate cutters at the earliest possible date. The question was to be further taken up with the Atlantic Fleet Weather Central in Norfolk, Virginia.

Atlantic Fleet Operation Plan 1-44 provided for the escorting of Greenland convoys by Task Force 24. During the past months Task Force 24 had often expedited movements of vessels with cargoes destined for United States

26. Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll was relieved as Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, by Admiral Jonas H. Ingram on 23 November 1944.

Forces in Newfoundland and Greenland by furnishing escorts from Boston to Argentia and return; also from Boston to Greenland and return. The more direct routing under Task Force 24 escorts resulted in shorter time spent at sea. When escorts were not available, ships proceeded in Canadian convoys from Boston to St. John's via Halifax and Sydney, with ships for Argentia detaching off Placentia Bay. In such instances, ships for Greenland were picked up at St. John's. The reverse was often resorted to when vessels were delivered at St. John's for onward routing under British or Canadian escorts. On 1 December Admiral Smith notified the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, that "Insofar as possible escorts of this Task Force will continue the above practice, unless otherwise directed."²⁷ However, due to priority directives, escorts might not always be available, so the Admiral said, "As soon as information is received from Port Director, Boston, or Commander Service Force, Atlantic Fleet, of proposed sailings to Newfoundland or Greenland from Boston they will be informed as to whether escorts can be made available."²⁸

On 4 December Commander Task Force 24 wrote the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, in connection with the assignment of Greenland Patrol vessels and his letter brings out

27. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 00306 of 1 December 1944 to CINCUS.

28. Ibid.

a point of interest concerning the ultimate fate of the German trawler EXTERNSTEINE. He said, "In other correspondence the captured German trawler EXTERNSTEINE has been recommended assigned to the Greenland Patrol. The Commander Greenland Patrol informs me that this does not affect his request for four AGLs contained in basic letter."²⁹

On 11 December Army and Navy representatives came together in Manchester, New Hampshire, for another meeting on Air-Sea Rescue operations. At this time they discussed equipment and procedure and eventually arrived at a basic operating agreement.

The remainder of December and 1944 were concerned with routine matters and this gave Admiral Smith an opportunity to take a few bearings on past, present, and future before starting the new and final year of the war in the Atlantic.

Commander Task Force 24 started the year of 1945 off with weather patrol and escort problems. Two corvettes had to be taken from his Escort Group so that he could maintain continuously weather stations six and seven in the Denmark and Davis Straits. (These were formerly Plane Guard Stations A and B). Another ship on weather patrol was soon to have a period of yard availability, and this would necessitate taking a corvette to replace it. This left a total of five escort vessels instead of the eight that were authorized and required. Bearing on this, the Admiral commented, "The

29. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 00308 of 4 Dec. 1944 to CinClant.

U-boat situation in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland waters is apparently on the increase at a time when our escorts are decreasing in number."³⁰ Eighteen frigates had been assigned to the weather patrol but 3 January not all of them had yet reported, and since it really required twenty to man all eight weather stations continuously, Admiral Smith requested that he be permitted to retain two minesweepers still in the weather patrol which were to have been taken off.

Admiral Ingram's comment of 6 January on the Air-Sea Rescue Program indicated further probable reduction of Commander Task Force 24's ships. The Admiral said,

While the fullest cooperation with the U.S. Army and Canadian forces is desired, Air-Sea Rescue by forces other than those of the Greenland Patrol is not a responsibility of the Atlantic Fleet. Assignment of forces to Task Force TWENTY-FOUR is not based upon the need for this service, and commitments should be limited to those within the capacity of the forces presently under your command, with the understanding that they may be further reduced upon the defeat of Germany.³¹

Toward the latter part of January the scene shifted to Jan Mayen, from which some civilians sought to collect timber. Commander Task Force 24 thought that since the Admiral Commanding the Iceland Command (ACIC) had in the past denied access to "mercantile and civil traffic" on the Island, it would seem to be consistent and desirable to continue to do so, until Germany had been defeated. He thought, "To permit landing in any part of the island by other than authorized military units would . . . compromise the security of the

30. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 009 of 3 Jan. 1945 to CinClant.

31. CinClant conf. ltr. ser. 058 of 6 Jan. 1945 to CTF 24.

HF/DF station of the United States Navy."³² He therefore wrote the Commandant of the Naval Operating Base, Iceland, and told him to inform the military authority having custody of Jan Mayen accordingly.

During the recent past months Task Force 24 had often been requested to assist in the search and rescue of ditched or missing Allied planes within the ocean areas of its command. However, despite the fact that these requests had been acted on with all available facilities, Admiral Smith felt that efforts had "often fallen short of the desired goal of maximum efficiency with minimum delay, due to a lack of coordination and planning."³³ He felt the chief deficiency had been a certain slowness in the exchange of necessary information between the Army and Navy. However, something had been done about this and on 12 February he wrote Commander Greenland Patrol that Commander Task Force 24 and the Commanding General of the North Atlantic Division of the Army Transport Command had formulated plans for closer liaison, improved communications, and coordination of their respective forces for search and rescue operations. He said, "The success of these plans is dependent on well integrated, efficient, sector Rescue Groups."³⁴

32. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 0022 of 25 Jan. 1945 to Comdt. NOB, Iceland.

33. CTF 24 conf. ltr. ser. 0170 of 12 Feb. 1945 to ComGreen-Pat.

34. Ibid.

As a coordinated movement the Atlantic Weather Patrol ships were continuously patrolling the northern ocean air routes and had been strategically located to effect emergency rescue. "Prompt search by aircraft offers the most promising action, closely supported by the nearest weather station vessel or vessels, to make the actual recovery of survivors."³⁵ The Atlantic Weather Patrol plus the International Ice Patrol both constituted important features in the Air-Sea Rescue Program. Furthermore, they would be almost equally important in the post-war world.

On 20 March Commander Task Force 24 pointed out:

The current operation plan of CTF 24 and the new operation plan now being prepared designate the Jan Mayen HF/DF Station as Task Unit 24.4.2. In view of this, fact, it is requested that Commandant, Naval Operating Base, Iceland, formulate and place in effect an operation plan for said unit based on the current situation.³⁶

Shortly thereafter the orders of the Admiral were carried out.

About the end of March the question of the vulnerability of the Naval Operating Facility, Grondal, Greenland to submarine attack was brought up. With regard to this, it was felt that the possibility of enemy attack at Grondol, in the present phase of the war, was considered so small that the risk could be borne without putting up a proposed gun

35. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 0164 of 12 Feb. 1945 to Comdt. USCG.

36. CTF 24 sec. ltr. ser. 0071 to Comdt. NOBI, 20 March 1945.

installation. Previously, an Army garrison had been charged with the defense of Ivigtut and Grondal, but it had been discontinued in November of 1944 on directive from higher authority. From this it was assumed that the question of defense was maturely considered before the withdrawal of the Army forces. Also from this it can be seen that the war in the Atlantic was in the latter stages of culmination.

April 1st Commander Task Force 24 put out his first operation plan for 1945. About the only difference between 1-44 and 1-45 was that the latter had added Task Group 24.8.18 (Greenland Patrol Survey Unit) to the Greenland Patrol, and that the Naval Air Station under Naval Operating Base, Argentia, had become a Naval Air Facility--no longer being large enough to warrant being called a station.

On 23 April Admiral Smith was still worried about the potentialities of enemy agents aboard foreign fishing vessels. He informed the Chief of Naval Operations that he intended to have the Spanish and Portuguese fishing vessels on the Newfoundland Banks boarded as soon as a vessel was available. However, after 7 May and V-E day this action was no longer necessary.

After the termination of the war in Europe the Air-Sea Rescue program loomed more important than ever. The thousands of tactical planes in Europe had to return to the United States bringing with them all the personnel they could carry. This meant that weather patrol and reports were most

important as they determined the scheduling and routing of flights from Europe to America. It also meant that the responsibilities of the Air Sea Rescue program continued as before, and the actual work involved had a tendency to increase. Since the beginning of the program only one of the many thousands of planes returning home has gone down with no survivors. That more lives have not been lost is largely attributable to the excellent work of the Atlantic Weather Patrol and the Air-Sea Rescue Program. The spring and summer of 1945 were mainly taken up with the operations of these two programs.

It appears that Admiral Smith established some sort of precedent by following the stepping stone of the Greenland Patrol to the command of Commander Task Force 24, for on 6 August 1945 former Commander Greenland Patrol and now Rear Admiral E.G. Rose, USCG, relieved Admiral Smith as Commander Task Force TWENTY-FOUR so the latter might take over his duties as District Coast Guard Officer of the Third Naval District. Commander Task Force 24 had its fifth generation of Admirals with a happier and far less complicated outlook towards the future.

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX "A"

Task Organization and revelant material from
CTF 4 Op Plan 13-41 of 8 September, 1941.

TASK ORGANIZATION:

- (a) 4.1 ESCORT UNITS - Escort Commanders, 4.1.1
et. seq. - Composition to be desig.
- (b) 4.2 DESTROYER FLOTILLAS
PRAIRIE, DENEbola, VULCAN
DesFlot 3 less DesRon 9, DesDiv 22
DesFlot 8 less DesDiv 54
ST AUGUSTINE, ZIRCON, CORAL, EAGLES 48,55
GEORGE E. CAMPBELL
4.2.1. Destaskforcefour-Casco Bay.
4.2.2. Destaskforcefour-Boston
4.2.3. Destaskforcefour-Iceland
4.2.4. Destaskforcefour-Argentia
4.2.5. Comdeslant
4.2.6. Destaskforcefour-U.S. waters
4.2.7. OIC Destaskforcefour-Training
4.2.8. Destaskforcefour-Training Group
4.2.9.---4.2.19 (Reserved for assignment
by CTF 4)
- (c) 4.3 PATROL WING SEVEN plus POCOMOKE - Captain
H.M. Mullinnix
4.3.1---4.3.4 Patrons 71,72,73,74
4.3.5 Argentia Air Detachment
4.3.6---4.3.8 (Assigned by ComArgentia
AirDetach)
4.3.9 Senav Sportfor Staff NAS Norfolk
4.3.10 Iceland Air Detachment
4.3.11---4.3.13 (Res. for assign by Com-
IcelandAirDetach)
4.3.14 Quonset Air Detachment
4.3.15 Squantum Air Detachment
4.3.16---4.3.19 (Res. for assign by CTF 4)
- (d) 4.4 TASK FORCE FOUR ADMINISTRATION
4.4.1 Convey Control Station (if shore based)
4.4.2. TF 4 Liaison Officer, St. John's Nfld.
1.(a) This plan implements CinClant secret Op Plan
7-41, and CinClant secret serial no. (00166)
of 2 September, 1941 addressed to ComTaskFor 4.

- (b) CinClant's Op Plan 7-41 has not yet been made effective but necessary preliminary dispositions are being made.
 - (c) A Neutrality Zone described in the Declaration of Panama, and duly proclaimed, comprises all waters within the limits set forth hereafter except the territorial waters of Canada and of the undisputed colonies and possessions of European countries within these limits, namely beginning at the terminus of the U.S. boundary in Passamaquoddy Bay in lat. $44^{\circ}-46'-36''N.$, long $66^{\circ}-54'-11''W.$, thence due east along the said parallel to a point 60 degrees N. Lat., thence by a rhumb line to a point in 58 degrees S. Lat. 57 degrees W. Long. This zone may be referred to by the short title "Proclaimed Neutrality Zone".
 - (d) Entrance into the W. Hemisphere by naval vessels and aircraft of belligerent powers, other than those Powers which have sovereignty over Western Hemisphere territory, is to be viewed as actuated by a potential unfriendly intent toward territory or shipping within the Western Hemisphere. . .
 - (f) The Western Atlantic Area lies west of Longitude 26 degrees W. as far W. as the continental land areas, excluding Naval Coastal Frontier and Naval District land and water areas and Canadian Coastal zone, but including Iceland and the surrounding waters and its southerly and westerly approaches.
 - (g) The existence of an unlimited emergency was duly proclaimed by the President on 27 May, 1941 . .
 - (j) Task Force One - BBs, Cruisers and DDs under Rear Admiral LeBreton - will, from bases at Argentia, in Iceland, and in home waters, provide BB and Cruiser escort for convoys. . .
 - (k) Task Force Two - the CVs, Cruisers and DDs under Rear Admiral Cook - based at Hampton Roads and Bermuda, has been directed to be ready to support TF 1.
2. This Force (TF 4) will maintain full readiness to meet the requirements of the unlimited emergency, and will, in cooperation with other Atlantic Fleet units, and, if appropriate, in cooperation with the Army, and within the North Atlantic Area:
- (a) Give warning against potential impending danger to W. Hemisphere Powers.

- (b) Defend U.S. and Iceland flag shipping against hostile attack, or threat of attack.
- (c) Escort U.S. and Iceland flag shipping and provide patrol plane coverage in the North Atlantic Ocean.
- (d) Escort U.S. and Iceland flag ships that may be accompanied by fast (10 knots) convoys, including shipping of any nationality which may join such U.S. and Iceland flag convoys, between North American ports and bases in Iceland, East and West bound.
- (e) Destroy hostile forces that threaten shipping named in (b), (c), and (d).
- (f) Be prepared to support the defense of Iceland.
- (g) When units are available, provide hunting groups to operate in connection with reported submarine concentrations;
- (h) Support operations in the Greenland-Labrador area;
- (i) Operate mail service between Boston (Portland), Argentia, and Reykjavik; . . .
- (k) Continue preparations for distant service in high latitudes.
- (l) Be prepared to provide protection for overseas transportation in support of U.S. overseas garrisons.

 (uu) U.S. or Iceland Flag ships accompanied by fast convoys (10 knots) and Iceland flag ships accompanied by slow convoy (7½ knots) will depart from Halifax and Sydney respectively at about 6 day intervals.

(ww) The meridian of 55 degrees West marks the western limit of escort-of-convoy operations until circumstances require change.

(uuu-xxx) Between rendezvous off Newfoundland and MOMP's (and vice versa) escort units will normally comprise five ships; between MOMP's and Iceland two ships. The method of implementing this general policy will be prescribed in operation orders. The coverage of escort of convoy operations by patrol planes shall be conducted from Argentia and Iceland with particular attention to the times and locations of MOMP's for both fast and slow convoys. Aerial coverage will be initiated by Air Detachment Commander, Argentia and Iceland, based on information of convoy positions, routes and speeds, without further orders. Keeping appropriate local authorities informed. Greenland-Labrador operations will be

supported by suitable detachments from units available in Iceland and at Argentia as ordered by CTF 4.

(uuuu-www) U.S. and Iceland flag convoys, whether escorted by U.S. or Canadian escort groups, will be covered by U.S. and Canadian aircraft as may be necessary for their protection. Canadian ocean escorts will not escort U.S. flag convoys. U.S. ocean escorts groups will not escort British or Canadian troop convoys. Canadian and U.S. light escort forces, normally, will not be placed in same escort group. In the Canadian Coastal Zone, U.S. and Iceland flag convoys will be escorted as necessary by Canadian local escort forces.

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX "B"

Task Organization and revelant material from
CTF 4 Op Plan 14-41 of 29 October, 1941.

TASK ORGANIZATION:

- 4.1 ESCORT UNITS
 - 4.1.1 to 4.1.19 U.S. Navy units
 - 4.1.11 to 4.1.19 R.C. Navy units
 - 4.2 DESTROYER FLOTILLAS
 - 4.3 AIR GROUP - Captain Mullinnix
ALBERMARLE, BELKNAP, BADGER, POCOMOKE
Patron 71-74, 82
Argentia Air Detachment, Iceland Air
Detachment.
 - 4.4 HOME BASE GROUP - Rear Admiral Reichmuth
 - 4.5 TASK FORCE FOUR ADMINISTRATION
 - 4.6 TASK FORCE FOUR, ESCORT CONTROL, ICELAND
 - 4.7 and 4.8 reserved.
 - 4.11 NEWFOUNDLAND ESCORT FORCE - Commodore
Murray, R.C.N.
 - 4.19 U.S. AND CANADIAN ESCORT UNITS AT SEA
1. (a) This plan implements CinClant sec. Op Plan no. 7c-41 and CinClant sec. directive serial (00228) 10 October, 1941, addressed only to CTF 4 Rear Admiral Bristol.
 - (b) CinClant sec. directive serial (00228) delegates to CTF 4 (Rear Admiral Bristol) all appropriate authority to control and supervise the conduct of trans-Atlantic escort of convoy operations within the N.W. Atlantic area, including coordinating supervision of the operations of Canadian escort units which latter is effected through Commodore Commanding Newfoundland (CCNF) and who will have entire charge of the availability of Canadian escort units.
 - (c) The same coordinating supervision will be effected through and with Commanding Officer Atlantic Coast (COAC) (Headquarters at Halifax) when appropriate.
 - (d) Air coverage by RCAF and RAF is arranged on a cooperative basis.

- (e) A DesRonCom will be maintained in Iceland where-under the general supervision of SOPA Iceland - he will perform duties set forth in paragraph 3f of this plan and when the distribution of this plan is completed will be addressed and referred to as (CTG 4.6) Task Force Four Escort Control (Iceland) (Short Title ECI).
 - (f) THE WESTERN ATLANTIC AREA lies west of a line along the meridian of 100° West longitude 65° North, thence by rhumb line to position 53° North Latitude, 26° West Longitude thence south along the meridian of 26° West Longitude. The area extends as far west as the continental land masses but does not include the NAVAL COASTAL FRONTIER and NAVAL DISTRICT land and water areas, the CANADIAN COASTAL ZONES, and the territorial waters of LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES.
2. This force (TF 4) will:
- (a) Escort convoys and other shipping and provide patrol plane coverage in the NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN.
 - (b) Destroy German and Italian naval, land, and air forces encountered.
 - (c) - - - - -
 - (d) Support the defense of U.S. territory and bases, Iceland and Greenland (applicable only to U.S. units of TF 4).
 - (e) When available, provide hunting groups to operate in connection with reported sub concentrations.
 - (f) Operate BOSTON (PORTLAND) - ARGENTIA - ICELAND mail service.
 - (g) Continue preparations for distant service in high latitudes (U.S. only - includes all Support Force). . .
5. This plan effective on receipt and supercedes my OpPlan 13-41 which will be destroyed.

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX "C"

Task Organization and relevant material from
CTF 4 Op Plan 2-42 of 20 February, 1942.

TASK ORGANIZATION:

United States Mid-Ocean Escort Group --- CTF 4
Escort Units A-1 to A-5 inclusive. (15 U.S.
DDs, 16 RCN corvettes, and 20 RN corvettes.)
Royal Navy Mid-Ocean Escort Group --- CinCWA
Escort Units B-1 to B-5 inclusive (15 RN DDs,
36 RN corvettes.)
Royal Canadian Navy Mid-Ocean Escort Group---FONF
Escort Units C-1 to C-4 inclusive (12 RCN DDs,
29 RCN corvettes.)
Western Local Escort Group --- COAC
Escorts W-1 to W-7 inclusive (12 RN DDs, 5 RCN
DDs, 27 RCN corvettes and minesweepers, 3 Free
French corvettes.)
Iceland Escort Group --- Senior Officer in Group.
5 U.S. DDs.
United States Escort Control United Kingdom (London-
derry) --- Squadron Commander.
Iceland Escort Control --- Commandant, NOB, Iceland.

1. (a) The United States Navy, Royal Navy, and Royal Canadian Navy are operating jointly in the protection of trans-Atlantic convoys in the NORTH ATLANTIC.

(b) Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, and the British Admiralty exercise strategic direction of convoy escorts in the Western NORTH ATLANTIC and Eastern NORTH ATLANTIC, respectively. Governing agreements have been promulgated to necessary commands.

(c) Commander Task Force Four arranges direct with Commander in Chief, Western Approaches, on matters of operational detail.

(d) Air coverage is provided for convoys in the Western NORTH ATLANTIC by UNITED STATES Navy aircraft basing in NEWFOUNDLAND, and by Canadian aircraft basing in NEWFOUNDLAND and CANADA; aircraft coverage in Eastern NORTH ATLANTIC is provided by UNITED STATES Navy aircraft basing in ICELAND and British aircraft basing in ICELAND and BRITISH ISLES.

2. This Force will:

- (a) Escort convoys in the NORTH ATLANTIC.
- (b) Conduct anti-submarine hunting operations as available forces permit and circumstances dictate.

3. (a) United States Mid-Ocean Escort Group

- (b) Royal Navy Mid-Ocean Escort Group

- (c) Royal Canadian Navy Mid-Ocean Escort Group
Escort Eastbound and Westbound convoys as assigned.

- (d) Western Local Escort Group escort assigned Eastbound convoys between Maritime Provinces and WESTOMP, and assigned Westbound convoys between WESTOMP and dispersal points.

- (e) Iceland Escort Group escort shipping from alternate SC convoys to ICELAND and from ICELAND to junction with alternate ONS convoys.

- (f) United States Escort Control, United Kingdom (Londonderry) sail A and C units; initiate measures for maintenance and readiness of ships in these units.

- (g) United States Escort Control, Iceland sail ships of ICELAND Escort Group; initiate measures for maintenance and readiness of ships in these units.

- (x) (1) Mid-Ocean Escort Units will normally escort convoys between longitude forty-five degrees West and BRITISH ISLES. British Eastern Local Escort will function for Eastbound and Westbound convoys between EASTOMP and BRITISH ISLES as relief for ships of Mid-Ocean Escort Units when steaming radius of latter renders such relief necessary. WESTOMP is forty-five degrees West longitude; EASTOMP twenty-two degrees West Longitude.

- (2) Commander Task Force Four sails all Mid-Ocean Escort Units departing from ARGENTIA.

- (3) Commanding Officer, ATLANTIC COAST, sails all Western Local Escort Units departing from HALIFAX.
 - (4) Flag Officer, NEWFOUNDLAND Forces, sails all Mid-Ocean Escort Units departing from ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND.
 - (5) Commander Task Force Four arranges junction of Eastbound A-and-B Escort Units with W Escort Units.
 - (6) Flag Officer, NEWFOUNDLAND Forces, arranges junction of Eastbound C. Escort Units with W. Escort Units.
 - (7) Flag Officer, NEWFOUNDLAND Forces, arranges junction of W Escort Units with Westbound convoys.
4. (a) U.S. Destroyers assigned to A Escort Units base BOSTON --- CASCO AREA --- ARGENTIA.
- (b) Canadian Corvettes assigned to A Escort Units base ST. JOHN'S.
- (c) British Corvettes assigned to A Escort Units base ST. JOHN'S.
- (d) B Escort Units base ARGENTIA.
- (e) C Escort Units base ST. JOHN'S.
- (f) W Escort Units base HALIFAX.
- (g) ICELAND Group base HVALFJORDUR.
- (h) Maintenance facilities for B Escort Units at ARGENTIA as set forth in ANNEX BAKER
- (i) U.S. facilities at Naval Operating Base and Destroyer Base, LONDONDERRY, available to UNITED STATES and CANADIAN ships and, in emergency, to British ships.
- (j) Maintenance facilities at LONDONDERRY as set forth in ANNEX CAST.
5. (a) Commander Task Force Four will coordinate operations of convoy escorts in the Western NORTH ATLANTIC.

(b) Commander in Chief, Western Approaches, exercises strategic direction and will coordinate operations of convoy escort in the Eastern NORTH ATLANTIC, including strategic direction of ICELAND Escort Group.

(c) Commanding Officer, ATLANTIC COAST, commands the forces assigned to Western Local Group (V-Units).

(d) Flag Officer, NEWFOUNDLAND Forces, Commands forces assigned to Canadian Mid-Ocean Group (C-Units.)

(e) Command of escorts in mixed units is vested in the senior officer in the destroyers present. When no destroyer is present, the command is vested in the senior officer present.

(f) The Commander of the U.S. Escort Control, ICELAND, operates under the strategic direction of Commander in Chief, Western Approaches, in matters pertaining to escort-of-convoy operations.

(g) The Senior Officer, ICELAND Escort Group, commands that Group and determines availability of ships for escort assignments.

(h) The Commander of the U.S. Escort Control, UNITED KINGDOM (LONDONDERRY), operates under the strategic direction of Commander in Chief Western Approaches, in matters pertaining to escort-of-convoy operations.

(i) Shift of operational control between Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, and Admiralty takes place at a time at which it is predicted that an escort unit will cross a predetermined line of demarkation between Western ATLANTIC area and UNITED KINGDOM and BRITISH HOME WATER AREA.

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX "D"

Task Organization and revelant material from
CTF 4 Op Plan 3-42 of 10 March, 1942.

TASK ORGANIZATION:

- 24.1 MID-OCEAN ESCORT GROUPS
 - A. 24.1.1 -- 24.1.5 Escort Units A-1 to A-5, inclusive, 15 U.S. DDs and CGCs (augmented by RN and RCN corvettes)
 - B. 24.1.11 -- 24.1.14 Assigned Canadian Escort Units, C-1 to C-4 inclusive --Canadian Escort Commanders.
 - C. 24.1.15 -- 24.1.19 Assigned British Escort Units B-1 to B-5 inclusive --British Escort Commanders.
- 24.2 DESTROYER FLOTILLAS
- 24.3 AIR GROUP -- Captain Mullinnix
- 24.4 HOME BASE GROUP -- Rear Admiral Carpenter
- 24.5 TASK FORCE TWENTY FOUR ADMINISTRATION
- 24.6 TASK FORCE TWENTY FOUR ESCORT CONTROL, ICELAND -- Commandant NOBI
- 24.7 TASK FORCE TWENTY FOUR ESCORT CONTROL, UNITED KINGDOM (LONDONDERRY) -- Capt. Thebaud.
- 24.8 GREENLAND PATROL - Captain E.H. Smith
- 24.11 ASSIGNED CANADIAN MID-OCEAN ESCORT GROUP
24.18.1--24.18.7 Assigned to Western Local Escort Units (W-1 to W-7 inclusive)
- 24.19 MID-OCEAN ESCORT UNITS AT SEA
 - 24.19.1 All A-1 to A-5, inclusive, escort units at sea.
 - 24.19.2 All C-1 to C-4, inclusive, escort units at sea.
 - 24.19.3 All B-1 to B-4, inclusive, escort units at sea.

1. (a) The UNITED STATES and Associated Powers are at war with GERMANY, ITALY, AND JAPAN. The United States Navy, Royal Navy, and Royal Canadian Navy are operating jointly in the protection of trans-Atlantic convoys in the NORTH ATLANTIC. Commander Task Force FOUR Operation Plan No. 2-42 (distributed to appropriate Commands) provides for these joint operations.

(b) This Plan implements CinClant Secret Op Plan No. 8-41, and CinClant Secret Directive, serial (00228) of October 10, 1941.

(c) CinClant Secret Directive Serial (00228) delegated to Vice Admiral A.L. Bristol the conduct of trans-Atlantic escort-of-convoy operations within the Western NORTH ATLANTIC, including coordinating supervision of the operations of Canadian escort units which latter is effected through Flag Officer, Newfoundland Force (FONF), ST. JOHN's, and Commanding Officer, Atlantic Coast (COAC), at HALIFAX. These officers will have entire charge of the availability of ships assigned their commands. Commander in Chief, Western Approaches, exercises strategic direction and coordinating supervision of operations of the joint forces engaged in escort-of-convoy operations in the Eastern NORTH ATLANTIC.

(d) Air coverage by RCAF and RAF is arranged on a cooperative basis.

(e) A Destroyer Squadron Commander, or other designated officer, will be maintained in LONDONDERRY where, under the strategic direction of Commander in Chief, Western Approaches, he will perform duties set forth in paragraph 3(g) and will be addressed and referred to as Commander Task Group 24.7, Task Force Twenty-Four Escort Control, UNITED KINGDOM (LONDON-DERRY) (short ECUK). . . .

(f) United States Naval forces are authorized to use SYDNEY, HALIFAX, and SHELBURNE as operating bases with rights to use ST. JOHN's, ST. MARY's HARBOR, and MAL BAY (NEWFOUNDLAND). HALIFAX and ST. JOHN's should not be used to such an extent as to interfere with the assembling of convoys, or the operation of Canadian and United Kingdom naval forces. It is preferred that SHELBURNE be used principally by patrol planes, and that SYDNEY be used only by ships. The NEWFOUNDLAND Government has granted permission for U.S. war vessels to use any NEWFOUNDLAND waters for anchorages without advance notification

(q) The Coast Guard maintains weather reporting ships on station at approximately latitude 39° North, longitude 50° West and latitude 52° North, longitude 42° 30' West, which are assigned the additional tasks of destroying enemy submarines and aircraft reported within a reasonable distance of assigned stations.

2. This Force will:

(a) Escort convoys and other shipping in conjunction with the Royal Navy and Royal Canadian Navy and in cooperation with RAF and RCAF provide patrol plane coverage therefor in the NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN.

(b) Destroy Axis naval, land, and air forces encountered.

(c) When available, provide hunting groups to operate in connection with reported submarine concentrations.

(d) Prevent access to the territory and territorial waters of GREENLAND by any hostile elements of any enemy nationals or agents.

(e) Support U.S. Government operations and policies in GREENLAND

3. (v) Vessels met at sea which are suspected of aiding the enemy in any manner whatsoever shall be boarded for examination. If examination establishes prima facie evidence of such activity, the vessel shall be seized or sunk.

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX "E"

Task Organization and relevant material from
CTF 24 Op Plan 1-43 of 28 January, 1943.

TASK ORGANIZATION:

- 24.1 ALLIED MID-OCEAN TRADE CONVOY ESCORT GROUP
 - 24.2 SERVICE GROUP
 - 24.3 AIR GROUP - Captain Baker, U.S.N.
 - 24.4 AUXILIARY CARRIER GROUP - Senior Commanding Officer.
BOGUE, CARD
 - 24.5 WEATHER PATROL GROUP - District Coast Guard Officer, Boston.
 - 24.6 TASK FORCE TWENTY-FOUR ESCORT CONTROL, ICELAND - Comdt., NOB, Iceland.
 - 24.7 TASK FORCE TWENTY-FOUR ESCORT CONTROL, UNITED KINGDOM - Captain Fitz, U.S.N.
 - 24.8 GREENLAND PATROL - Rear Admiral Smith, USCG. Three 215' Cutters; five 165' Cutters; nine Trawlers; six SC's, and nine miscellaneous vessels.
 - 24.9 NAVAL OPERATING BASE, ARGENTIA - Captain Nelson, U.S.N.
 - 24.12 ALLIED WESTERN SUPPORT FORCE - Commodore Reid, R.C.N.
 - 24.18 CANADIAN WESTERN LOCAL ESCORT FORCE - Rear Admiral Murray, RCN.
 - 24.19 MID-OCEAN ESCORT UNITS AT SEA
1. (a) Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet Operation Plan 3-42 assigns to Commander Task Force TWENTY FOUR duties which fall under the following three general headings:
- (1) Duties in connection with North Atlantic Trade Convoys.
 - (2) Duties in connection with operations in the Greenland-Labrador-Canadian Arctic Area.
 - (3) Duties in connection with miscellaneous operations in the NEWFOUNDLAND AREA and escort operations between NEWFOUNDLAND and the UNITED STATES. . . .

are: Some variations in the body of the plan worth noting

2. (j) Maintain service of ice information in the North Atlantic and, insofar as practicable, provide limited surface protection and air coverage for fishing vessels in the vicinity of the GRAND BANKS.

(k) Assume operational control of weather patrol vessels while at sea enroute to, from, and on stations. . . .

3. (c) AIR GROUP

- (1) Provide patrol plane coverage in the coastal and off-shore waters of NEW-FOUNDLAND, GREENLAND, and ICELAND as directed.
- (2) Be prepared to maximum extent practicable for special submarine hunting operations and rescue work.
- (3) Maintain a training organization to further the efficiency of the Group.

- (d) AUXILIARY CARRIER GROUP

- (1) Provide air support in escort or convoy operations as directed.

- (e) WEATHER PATROL GROUP

- (1) While proceeding to and from and while on station perform designated services in connection with the reporting of weather in the Western Atlantic in accordance with the provisions of Annex "CHARLIE". . .

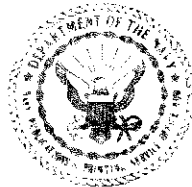
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