



Radar Picket Ships Stand Watch

The radar picket ship has two missions. The first is to spot any aircraft, submarines, or surface vessels headed for continental United States. A secondary mission is to take weather observations and submit reports to the Navy's Fleet Weather Central in San Francisco.

Whenever a radar operator picks up an aircraft in his scope, the position of the plane is plotted immediately in the ship's combat-information center and is reported to the combat-control center of the 25th Air Division (Defense) at McChord Air Force Base.

This report, if of critical significance, is relayed to the Western Air Defense Force at Hamilton Air Force Base, Calif., and to the Continental Air Defense Command at Colorado Springs, Colo.

Should the plane be unidentifiable, the commander of the joint air-defense division would give orders for intercepting it. Brig. Gen. Romulus W. Puryear, commander of the 25th, could "scramble" fighter-interceptors or he could have Nike guided missiles launched. He might send out delta-wing Convair F-102's from McChord Air Force Base, or Northrop F-89D

Scorpions or F-89H's from Paine Air Force Base, or other all-weather aircraft from Portland Air Force Base.

Control of the interceptors could be taken over by a radar picket ship, which navigates by loran (long-range navigation) and can give the planes a target's position at any moment.

Besides being watchful for aircraft and surface vessels, the radar picket ship must be on the alert for submarines. It carries sonar equipment for detecting subs and also modern weapons for destroying them.

THE Haverfield was the first DER on duty in the Pacific. Escort Squadron 5 was commissioned July 30, 1955, in Seattle. That day the Haverfield went to her station, then only a short distance off Cape Flattery. She was relieved by the Savage, which, in turn, was relieved by the Wilhoite.

These ships were joined October 20, 1955, by the Falgout and in mid-December by the Koiner and the Lowe.

Since then two more distant stations have been patrolled by DER's out of Seattle. Latest to join the squadron were the Finch, which arrived last December, and the Vance and the Forster in March.

Squadron 5, of which Comdr. John C. Spencer is commodore, has headquarters at Pier 91. It is part of the Cruiser-Destroyer Force, Pacific Fleet, commanded by Rear Adm. Chester C. Wood, with headquarters at San Diego.

WHEN on picket station these ships are under operational control of the commander of Naval Forces, Western Air Defense Region, Continental Air Defense Command. All saw service as destroyer escorts in the Second World War.

First use of radar picket ships was made off Okinawa near the end of the war.

CONVERSION of these destroyer escorts was done in 1954 at a cost of approximately \$4,000,000 each. Present value of a radar picket ship is placed at nearly \$25,000,000.

Combat-information centers—nerve centers of the ships—were made larger to take care of additional information from electronic detection devices, such as the new air-search, surface-search radar and height-finder.

More communications equipment was installed, much of it in space formerly used for mess and for berths. Consequently, to provide adequate living quarters for 161 enlisted

men and 12 officers, the main deck was inclosed amidships and a superstructure was added.

AFTER being at sea 17 days, the ships of Squadron 5 spend two weeks at maintenance and repair work at Pier 91. Then they devote a week to various exercises on Puget Sound and at sea, conducting firing practice, working with submarines and engaging in many individual ship exercises to improve over-all battle readiness.

Every two years the DER's enter Bremerton Naval Shipyard for three months of overhauling. Then they go to San Diego, where they undergo four weeks of intensive refresher training.

"Radar picket ships are the country's most advanced line of early warning against surprise attack from seaward and as such fulfill a wartime mission when patrolling their stations," Commander Spencer said.

"Perhaps residents of the Pacific Northwest may sleep more securely knowing that these ships are con-

tinuously on guard far at sea in the interest of their safety."