Secret and Confidential
Correspondence of the
Office of the Chief
of Naval Operations
and the
Office of the Secretary of the Navy
1919-1927



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General Records of the

Department of the Navy, 1798-1947

Record Group 80

SECRET AND CONFIDENTIAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS AND THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY 1919-1927

On the 117 rolls of this microfilm publication is reproduced the "secret and confidential" correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV) and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, August 1919-July 1927. These records are part of General Records of the Department of the Navy, 1798-1947, Record Group (RG) 80.

From 1917 to 1919, OPNAV maintained its own confidential files and those of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy. In August 1919, the newly created OPNAV Planning Division was given the responsibility for keeping the secret and confidential files of these two offices and established the series reproduced in this publication. Many of the documents in the series originated with the Planning Division. Also incorporated into the series, however, were documents of the various OPNAV planning committees that had existed prior to the creation of the Planning Division; thus, many of these documents predate August 1919. About July 1922, OPNAV established a separate office entitled Secret and Confidential (SC) File Room to maintain securityclassified correspondence files, thereby relieving the Planning Division of the duty it had assumed 3 years earlier. The records reproduced herein include those of the period when the Planning Division kept the files, as well as of the period during which the SC File Room maintained them.

Background

The Department of the Navy was established by an act of April 30, 1798 (1 Stat. 553). That act also provided for appointment by the President of a Secretary of the Navy, who would have the following responsibilities: definition of naval policy; procurement of naval stores and materials; and construction, armament, equipment, and deployment of war vessels. During the 19th century, the establishment of eight bureaus and several offices within the Department gradually reduced the Secretary's direct role in routine administration and naval operations. The growing complexity of naval warfare led to the establishment in 1900 of the General Board to advise the Secretary on naval strategy and policy. Subsequent Navy regulations expanded the Board's duties to include administrative matters.

Created by an act of March 3, 1915 (38 Stat. 929), OPNAV, headed by the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), took over many

of the duties of the General Board, which then reverted to its original advisory capacity. The primary duties of OPNAV concerned "the operations of the fleet" and "the preparations and readiness of plans for its use in war." An act of August 29, 1916, greatly enlarged the OPNAV staff and empowered it to issue orders carrying the same force as those of the Secretary of the Navy. By 1918, OPNAV included the following offices: Aviation, Material, Naval Districts, and Operating Forces Divisions; Armed Guard Section; Board of Inspection and Survey; Naval Communication Service; Office of Gunnery Exercises and Engineering Performances; and Office of Naval Intelligence. In addition to these larger administrative entities, OPNAV had earlier established a number of ad hoc planning committees to consider changes in naval policy, plan future operations, and study naval require-Officers serving on such committees usually came from that permanent section of OPNAV having responsibility for the matter to be studied.

During World War I, most of the U.S. naval planning was not done in OPNAV, despite its organizational orders, which provided for the creation of a Planning Division to deliberate changes in policy and to prepare naval plans consistent with that policy. Because the bulk of U.S. naval strength was employed to secure the Atlantic sealanes in conjunction with the British Royal Navy, wartime naval planning emanated instead from the London offices of the American Naval Planning Section, Headquarters, U.S. Naval Forces Operating in European Waters.

Experience during World War I and requirements of rapidly evolving naval technology demonstrated the need for a number of changes in the organization of OPNAV. In 1923, as a result of revised organizational orders and Navy regulations, OPNAV was reorganized into 10 divisions: War Plans, Naval War College, Intelligence, Material, Ships Movements, Naval Districts, Fleet Training, Inspection, Communication, and Secretarial. Despite these organizational changes, the essential duties and the purpose of the Office remained unchanged. The CNO, under direction of the Secretary of the Navy, retained responsibility for the readiness of the fleet and preparation of strategic plans for its utilization. Once the Secretary approved these plans, the CNO acted as the Secretary's agent in their implementation. In addition, the CNO continued to supervise all Navy activities ashore and afloat.

Records Description

Arrangement

This series of secret and confidential correspondence is arranged numerically by assigned master number in a single sequence (100-243). The Navy Department assigned one of 143

master numbers to each of a variety of geographical and organizational entities, technological areas, and conceptual matters as the need arose, rather than according to a preconceived scheme. No subject was assigned to master number 187, and no documents are presently filed under 230, Naval Overseas Transportation Service. The files for each master number vary in size from one page to several thousand pages and consist of many types of documents--letters, memorandums, reports, endorsements, cablegrams, radio messages, transcripts, maps, hydrographic charts, organization charts, and photographs.

The assignment of master numbers to particular subjects was not consistent. For instance, there are two master numbers for Defensive Sea Areas (118 and 152), two for Panama Canal (119 and 197), and two for Philippine Islands (101 and 200); while British (225) and Great Britain (239) were assigned separate numbers. Moreover, documents filed under a master number at times bear only a tenuous relation to the subject that the number represents or to other documents filed under that same number. For example, Armor (133) consists of two documents, one describing toxic fillers for naval armor-piercing shells and the other armor for the turrets of battleships under construction. Similarly, the master file for Building Program (Aviation) (136) contains a memorandum describing H.M.S. Argus, a British aircraft carrier completed in 1918, as well as a 1919 newspaper article comparing the U.S.S. California with the latest British and Japanese battleships. The master file for the Virgin Islands (125) includes a chart listing 176 enemy submarines sunk before October 15, 1918, by Allied naval and air forces.

In its most comprehensive form, the file number assigned to a document consists of the master number representing the principal subject of the document (198, War Plans), followed by a subnumber representing the subordinate subject (198-5, Readiness for War Data), and a second subnumber assigned to individual items filed under the first subnumber (198-5:1, Readiness for War Data for Naval Ordnance). A hyphen separates the master number and the first subnumber, and a colon separates the first and second subnumbers. For many files, however, the file designation consists of master and first subnumber only; for these files, the individual documents are arranged chronologically within each subnumber. Finally, some of the files have no subnumbers; in such cases, individual documents bear only the master number and are arranged chronologically.

As a piece of correspondence passed through the naval chain of command, each office usually added an endorsement, which frequently reflected its views on the subject. The Navy Department kept endorsements with the original correspondence and filed them in reverse numerical order, i.e., endorsement 10, followed by 9, followed by 8, and so forth, with the original piece of correspondence filed last. In preparing these records for

microfilming, the staff of the National Archives and Records Service (NARS) has arranged endorsements numerically following the original correspondence to which they refer.

Nearly all documents in this series bear file numbers written in pen, pencil, or crayon at the bottom of the first page of the document; but some are typed in the upper left corner. Because the Planning Division of OPNAV initially maintained these records, the file numbers on the pre-July 1922 documents are preceded by PD. After July 1922, the file numbers are preceded by SC.

Indexes and Register

The Navy Department prepared three indexes and one register, on 5- by 8-inch cards, as finding aids to this secret and confidential correspondence. The two name indexes (incoming and outgoing correspondence) are arranged alphabetically by sender or receiver of the communication; the third index, an overall subject ("general") index, is arranged by subject of the communication. Each entry in the register provides an abstract of the communication posted. The register is arranged in the same manner as the correspondence. The indexes and register have been reproduced as NARS Microfilm Publication Indexes and Register to the Secret and Confidential Correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, 1919-1927, M1141.

File Contents

This series of secret and confidential correspondence reflects the many facets of U.S. naval activity during World War I, the immediate postwar years, and the first years of the era of the Treaty Navy (post-Washington Naval Conference). The records document U.S. naval involvement with foreign countries, application of technology to naval matters, establishment of overseas bases, appropriations, tactical doctrine, naval strategy, peacetime naval maneuvers, and wartime naval operations. The communications were exchanged among a number of principals, but mainly within OPNAV and between that office and the bureaus, fleet units, and shore commands of the Navy Department. Other sources of communications include the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, the War Department, the State Department, and foreign governments.

Aspects of U.S. naval organization and operations in World War I are documented in the master files entitled Northern Barrage (134), Convoys (147), and Cooperation with Allies (149). The file designations Peace Treaty (Germany) (102), Demobilization (130), and German Ships Taken Over by U.S. Navy (157) include information on naval activities in the immediate

post-Armistice period. The several master files relating to naval building programs (129 and 136 through 139) contain proposals made shortly after the war to increase naval construction, but also they show the effects of the treaties emanating from the 1921-22 Washington Naval Conference in curtailing those plans. A lecture presented in 1923 at the Army War College by Capt. F. H. Schofield (USN) also outlines "Some Effects of the Washington Conference on Naval Strategy" (210-2).

Documents on evolving naval technology during this period can be found in the master files on Aviation (111), Guns (156), Submarines (166 through 171), and Mines (184 and 185). two files also contain considerable information on minelaying and minesweeping operations during World War I. The U.S. Navy's relations with foreign navies, its involvement in the internal political affairs of other countries, and its role in "showing the flag" are documented in master files bearing such geographic headings as Turkey (103), China (108), Central America (117), Russia (132), Santo Domingo (159), Japan (178), South America (215), Adriatic (220), Peru (235), and Haiti (238). master files with geographic headings contain records that reflect the intentions of the Navy to establish and defend bases in the Caribbean and the Pacific in order to project its These include Philippine Islands (101 and 200), power there. Hawaiian Islands (121), Virgin Islands (125), Puerto Rico (126), Guam (127), Cuba (150), Culebra (151), Panama (119 and 197), and Samoa (231). Other master files contain information on Ships (162), Fleet Organization (122), Organization of Naval Forces (195), Destroyers (232), and Battleships (237). Documents relating to U.S. naval strategy and war plans can be found among the reports of the Planning Committee (100), and the master files on the Naval War College (112), Army General Staff College (115), and War Plans (198).

A list of the content titles of all the master numbers (appendix A) follows this introduction, as does a more detailed description of a selection of 23 of these files (appendix B).

Security Classification

Nearly all of the documents filmed in this microfilm publication were classified as secret or confidential at the time of their creation and had those classification markings stamped, typed, or written on them. NARS and the Department of the Navy have reviewed and declassified all of the records reproduced herein; none of these documents is presently security-classified. A document from file 108-22 and another from 231-6 were withdrawn from this series, and are not reproduced in this publication, because the Navy Department determined that they require continued security protection.

Related Records

Related records that have been reproduced as NARS Microfilm Publications are Annual Reports of the Governors of Guam, 1901-1941, M181; Records Relating to United States Navy Fleet Problems I to XXII, 1923-1941, M964; Annual Reports of Fleets and Task Forces of the U.S. Navy, 1920-1941, M971; Navy Department General Orders, 1863-1948, M984; General and Special Indexes to the General Correspondence of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, July 1897-August 1926, M1052; and Indexes and Subject Cards to the "Secret and Confidential" Correspondence of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, March 1917-July 1919, M1092.

This introductory material was written by Timothy K. Nenninger. Mary Swann and Robert Aquilina arranged the records.

APPENDIXES

A. List of Master Number Files

- 100 Reports (Planning Committee)
- 101 Philippine Islands (Navy Yards)
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- 157 German Ships Taken Over by U.S. Navy
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- 195 Naval Forces, Organization of
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- 242 France
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B. Descriptions of Contents of 23 Select Master Number Files

100 - Reports (Planning Committee)

This file consists mainly of reports of the Planning Committee (100-1 to 100-114), prepared for the CNO, on such matters naval patrol of the Great Lakes; recruitment of naval personnel; destruction of derelict vessels; dispostion of surplus vessels; transfer of the Coast Guard to the Department of the Navy; abolition of submarine warfare; organization, development, and mission of the Atlantic and Pacific fleets; and reorganizations of the Navy Department. At the beginning of the file are minutes of conferences of heads of OPNAV divisions (July 30, 1918-Dec. 22, 1925) and minutes of meetings of the Secretary's Council (Mar. 24, 1921-Feb. 7, 1924). Minutes sometimes include announcements of the meetings and verbatim statements of people who addressed the meetings. The last item in the file is the diary of the Planning Committee (Aug. 1919-Dec. 1920, 100-115), which explains its organization and records its major accomplishments. A report by the board of observers of the bombing tests held in June-July 1921 off the Virginia capes is filed here (100-21:1), although the Planning Committee had no connection with the tests.

102 - Peace Treaty (Germany)

Contained in this file are processed and printed documents from the proceedings of the Paris Peace Conference (102-16), weekly progress reports of the U.S. member of the Allied Armistice Commission, minutes of the meetings of the Allied Maritime Transportation Council (102-34), and memorandums prepared by the U.S. Naval Advisory Staff in Paris (102-35). These records relate to such naval aspects of the Armistice and peace treaty as the use and disposition of ex-German naval vessels (102-21). Also included are reports on the 1921 aerial bombing tests conducted against the Ostfriesland and other ships of the former Imperial German Navy (102-21:1). There is also some correspondence relating to visits of U.S. naval officers to Germany and to the visit of German naval training ships to U.S. ports.

104 - Personnel

Included are documents relating to the following matters: exchange of officers between the Army and Navy (104-54); recruitment, retention, morale, and efficiency of the enlisted force; annual operating force personnel and replacement plans (104-32:1); and the personnel requirements needed to meet the

force structure outlined in the Basic War Plans (104-51). This master file contains a complete transcript of the 1925 court-martial of Brig. Gen. William Mitchell (104-47) and correspondence concerning the disappearance in 1923 of Lt. Col. Earl H. Ellis (USMC) in the Caroline Islands (104-52).

109 - Appropriations

This file contains correspondence on specific naval appropriations bills, estimates of naval appropriations, and annual estimates of the situation. These last estimates are general statements of U.S. naval policy, containing contemporary analyses of the international situation and its impact on the U.S. Navy.

111 - Air Service (Aviation)

Documents in this file reflect the growing importance of military aviation in the early 1920's and the impact of the development of aerial bombardment on naval doctrine and technology. Included are the proceedings and final report, dated January 17, 1925, of a board of officers under Adm. E. W. Eberle, which studied "policy with reference to upkeep of the Navy in its various branches," with particular attention to aviation and its effect on fleet operations (111-1). The report of the Naval Board on Bombing Tests, concerning tests conducted on the U.S.S. Alabama, September 23-26, 1921 (111-67:3), addresses similar questions, while the report of the Lassiter Board, April 24, 1923 (111-95:1), examines the question of military aviation from the perspective of the War Department. This file also contains a number of reports and construction drawings relating to the conversion of two battle cruisers to the aircraft carriers Lexington and Saratoga (111-58), as well as correspondence on a proposed around-the-world flight by naval aviators (111-99:1), arctic exploration flights (111-99:1), and the operations and crash of the airship Shenandoah (111-98).

112 - Naval War College

This master file includes correspondence exchanged between the Army War College and the Naval War College relating largely to such strategic subjects as coast defense policy and U.S. strategy in the Atlantic. It also contains copies of studies, prepared by the Naval War College, of the following subjects: relative fleet strengths of the major naval powers (112-33, 112-44); battleship force tactics, naval doctrine, and strategy for a central Pacific offensive (112-33); and suggestions for improving U.S. tactical readiness for war (112-49). Some correspondence relating to the proper location, activities, and functions of the Naval War College (112-13) is also included.

117 - Central America

Much of this file consists of reports and dispatches received from the Special Service Squadron on conditions in Latin American countries, many of which describe the 1921 Panama-Costa Rica boundary dispute (117-45) and political conditions in Nicaragua (117-24) during 1926-27. A number of letters and dispatches relate to visits of U.S. ships to Central American ports and to requests for such visits.

121 - Hawaiian Islands

Most of these documents relate to the development of Pearl Harbor as a major naval base. Other records concern the defenses of the island from aerial and naval attack (121-21) and from sabotage (121-20) and the policy of the Navy Department regarding employment of U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry (121-16).

127 - Guam

The two major topics documented in this file are the proposed development of Guam as a naval base and of the logistical and personnel requirements of the Marine garrison stationed there (127-2, 127-4, and 127-27). Other topics include the immigration of Chamorro people to Guam from islands in the Marianas under Japanese control (127-10), foreign residents (127-23), and the relationship of the Catholic Church on Guam to the naval government and to the people of the island (127-23:1). The annual reports of the naval station for 1921-24 (127-26) are also included.

131 - Fuel and Fuel Stations (Coal, Oil, and Gas)

This file consists of the following documents: correspondence relating to acquisition of bunkering and fuel storage stations and to the administration of the Naval Petroleum Reserves; a study prepared by the General Board in 1920 on petroleum reserves throughout the world; and reports on refueling experiments, engineering performance of certain vessels, and estimates of the annual fuel consumption of the U.S. Fleet.

162 - Ships

The contents of this file are largely correspondence and dispatches on individual ship movements, schedules of fleet deployments, inspections of vessels, and changes in ship equipment, armor, and armament. Specific subjects include the following: the 1920 "battle bill" for the U.S.S.

Tennessee, outlining tactical procedures to be followed in battle by all crewmembers (162-41:1); operations and movements of the Special Service Squadron (162-45:1); proper organization and distribution of the U.S. Fleet in light of the 1921 strategic situation (162-73:1); Fleet Problems II through IV (1923-24) and VI (1926) (198-78:4/1 and 198-78:13), joint Army-Navy exercises, and fleet tactical exercises (162-78); improvements to the U.S.S. Langley (162-131); and organization, equipment, and armament of the aircraft carriers Lexington and Saratoga (162-164).

177 - Communications

Many of the documents filed under this master number concern codes and ciphers, including the development and use of the Hepburn electric code machine (177-26), the compromise of U.S. Navy codes (177-17 and 177-21), and the activities of decoding units operating during Fleet Problem VII (177-21:1). This file also covers ownership and operation of communications facilities in Europe and Latin America, plans for wartime communications in the Pacific (177-27), and fleet radio and visual signaling competitions. Copies of quarterly reports (1925-27) of the Director of Naval Communications (177-1 and 177-35) are included.

178 - Japan

This master file consists almost entirely of correspondence relating to exchanges of visits between Japanese and American naval personnel, ORANGE (Japan) war plans (178-6), and interception and decoding of Japanese messages (178-13).

190 - Naval Bases (Naval Districts)

Correspondence in this file relates to the acquisition, development, utilization, expansion, and abandonment of naval bases. Included are recommendations on development of West Coast naval bases (190-1), bases required to support a U.S. naval campaign in the Pacific (190-6:1), and the plans, budget, and legislation necessary for the naval base development program (190-10). Also included are documents on plans to develop naval bases at San Diego (190-10:11), San Francisco (190-10:12), Puget Sound (190-10:13), Pearl Harbor (190-10:14), Coco Solo (190-10:15), and Cavite (190-10:16).

196 - Pacific (Strategic)

This file consists of the following items: reports on a number of studies on U.S. strategy in a future Pacific war (196-1 and 196-7), reports on the potential use of floating dry docks in a central Pacific naval offensive (196-12), topographic and hydrographic surveys of Pacific islands

(196-3), and reports on the 1920 naval maneuvers off Los Angeles harbor (196-6).

197 - Panama Canal

Included are correspondence and reports relating to the organization of naval activities in the Canal Zone, construction needed at Coco Solo, aerial defense of the Canal (197-10), the 1927 Joint Cooperative Plan for the Defense of the Panama Canal (197-22), and the 1923 estimate by the 15th Naval District of the situation concerning potential U.S. conflicts with ORANGE, RED (Great Britain), and RED-ORANGE (197-19).

198 - War Plans

This file mostly contains correspondence relating to war plans, their distribution, and revision. No copies of the formal, strategic color code name plans are included, but the file does contain some operating plans, contributory plans, and basic readiness plans required to implement the color plans. Specific subjects covered are the following: naval district staffing patterns, naval building, and the functions of the Marine Corps as all three relate to war plans (198-1:1); the authority of OPNAV to prepare war plans and the principles followed in their preparation; the relation between basic war plans and contributory plans (198-1:2); the role of the Navy in Special Plan GREEN (Mexico) (198-12:2); the wartime organization of the 14th Naval District (198-24); and Fleet Problems I, V, VI, and VII (198-35:1, 5, 6, 7).

200 - Philippine Islands

These documents mostly relate to proposals for the development of a major naval base in the Philippines, specific examples of which include the transfer of the floating drydock *Dewey* to Manila Bay (200-1:3), the development of Cavite and Olongapo Naval Stations (200-1), and the modernization of the port of Manila (200-8). The master file also contains documents on antiaircraft defenses of Cavite (200-8), 1925 naval maneuvers against Corregidor (200-7:1), and the retention of naval and military bases in the islands in the event of Philippine independence (200-22).

211 - Radio

Many of the documents in this file relate to technological developments in the field of naval communications, such as undersea radio reception, radio interference (jamming) exercises, and radio-controlled vessels. The file also contains records relating to acquisition of naval radio stations (as in Liberia, 211-9), joint Army and Navy radio procedures (211-17), merchant

ship cipher and communications instructions (211-24), and plans for the wartime organization and utilization of radio intelligence (211-27).

212 - Reports

This file consists of the following types of reports: monthly and quarterly surveys of the Naval Establishment (July 1918-Dec. 1926), showing the status of personnel, equipment, and supplies; annual reports of the U.S. Fleet and its components (212-6); secret annual reports on the activities of the Office of Naval Intelligence for 1922-23 and 1925-26 (212-2); and 1916 memorandums on the wartime organization of the fleet (212-1).

216 - Charts, Maps, and Publications

Substantive documents in this file include the following: 1920 drafts of a manual on torpedo fire from destroyers (216-9), and of a "war manual," with comments (216-20); correspondence on the preparation of a minesweeping manual (216-12); an analysis of the Battle of Jutland (216-18); and a copy of the 1923 "Operating and Tactical Doctrine" for Aircraft Squadrons Scouting Fleet (216-53). Most of the file, however, consists of memorandums relating to the acquisition of hydrographic and topographic information on Pacific islands, requests and receipts for publications, distribution lists of publications, and correspondence relating to changes and corrections in publications.

226 - Miscellaneous

This master file contains correspondence on a variety of topics, including: changes in naval regulations (226-6); organization of destroyer squadrons (226-7); U.S. war dead buried overseas (226-17); U.S. merchant vessels lost in World War I (226-21); 1920-21 operations of U.S. Naval Forces Operating in European Waters (226-30:1); an analysis by Chester W. Nimitz and other members of the 1923 Naval War College class on the organization of OPNAV (226-33); a prospective visit to the United States, in 1920, of the Prince of Wales aboard H.M.S. Renown (226-43); the visit in 1920 of the U.S.S. Chattanooga to Liberia (226-62); vice conditions in San Diego (226-92); capital ship construction within treaty limitations (226-103); and deliberations of the 1923 Hague Commission on revising the rules of warfare (226-110).

233 - Joint Board

Documents in this file generally relate to matters discussed by the Joint Army-Navy Board that particularly concerned the Navy, including the defense of naval stations (233-6), the mission of U.S. Forces in Hawaii (233-7), and joint action of the Army and Navy in coast defense (233-13). It also includes that part of the 1927 Census of Manufacturers that lists facilities relevant to naval needs (233-15).

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