

TASK GROUP



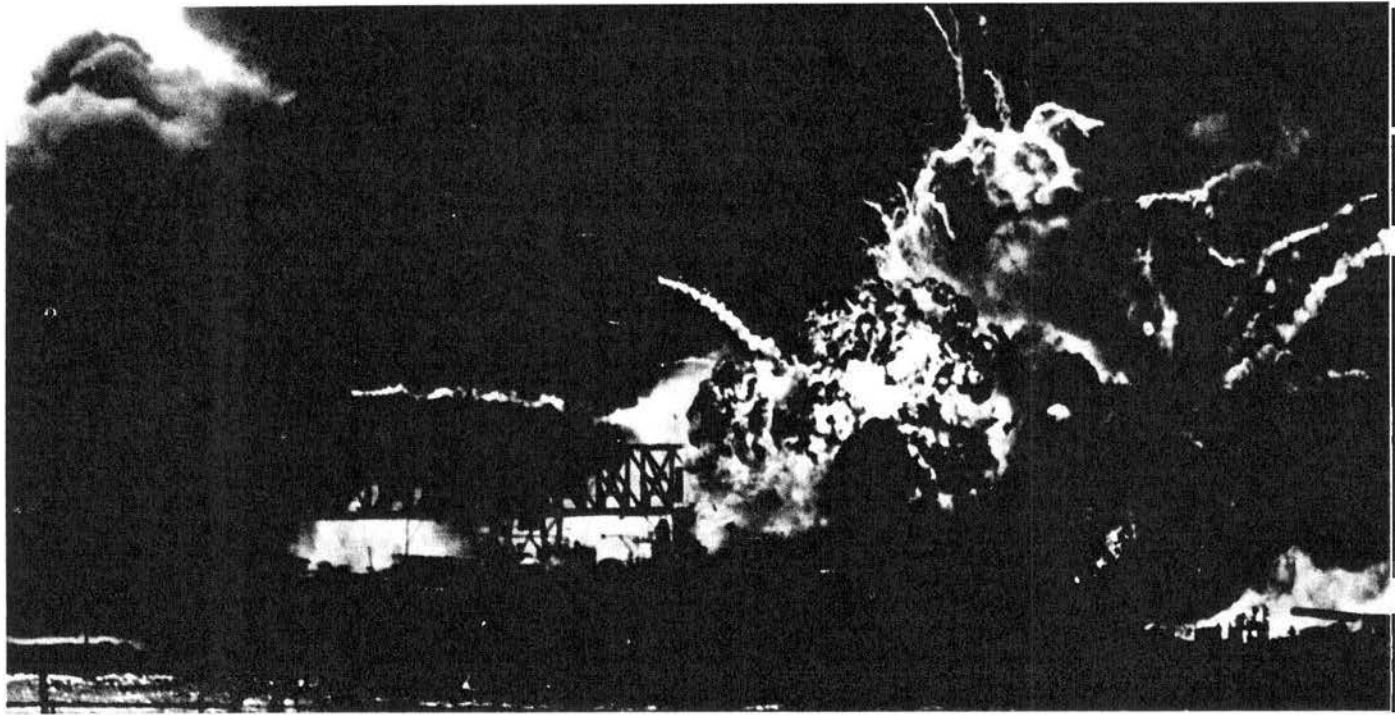
ALFA



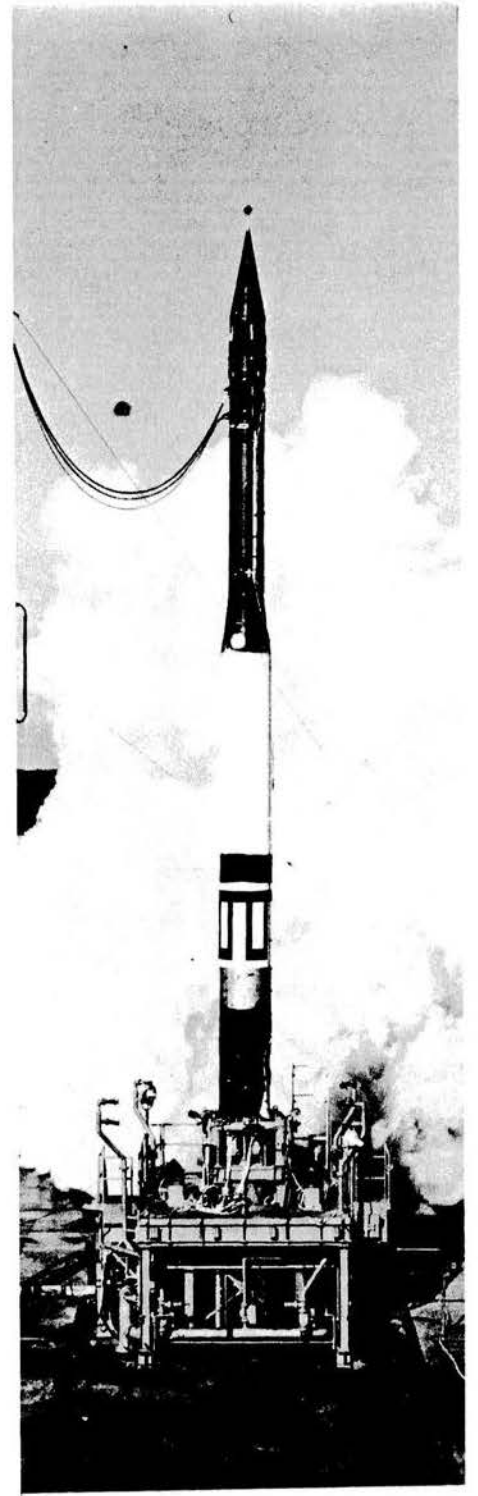
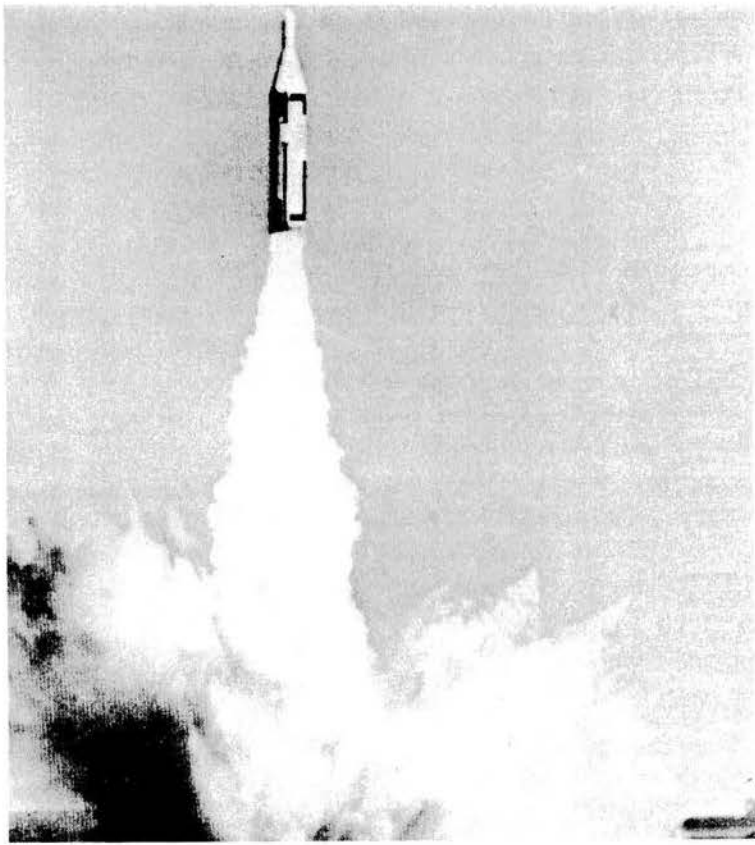
NINETEEN SIXTY

**I**n the tension filled world  
that is 1960, our increasing  
responsibility is a constant vigil  
...a watch on ourselves, our  
friends, and those who are not  
always our friends,  
a watch that sees and understands  
what our joint and separate actions  
mean to the future of the  
world community...

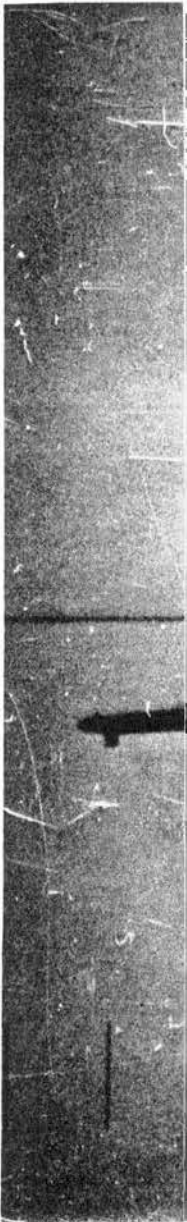
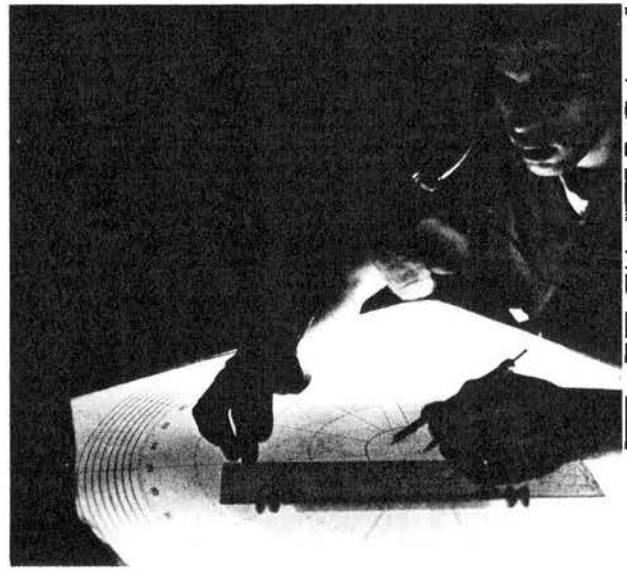
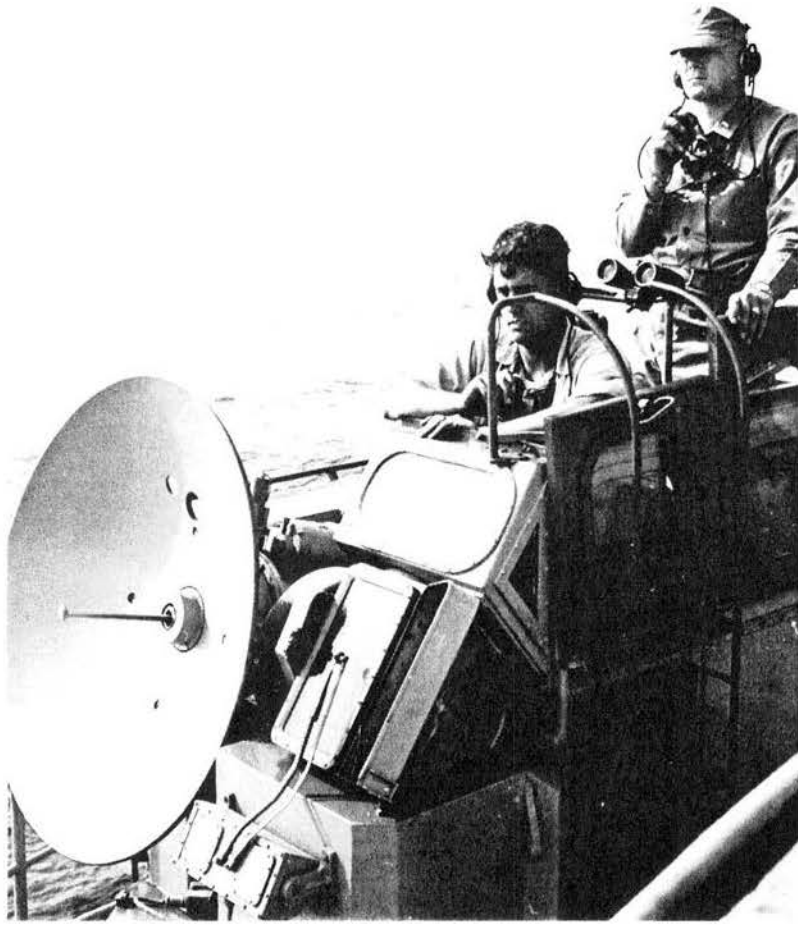
*if there is to be a future.*



*This is 1960...  
a threat to peace may come  
at any time,  
from any direction*

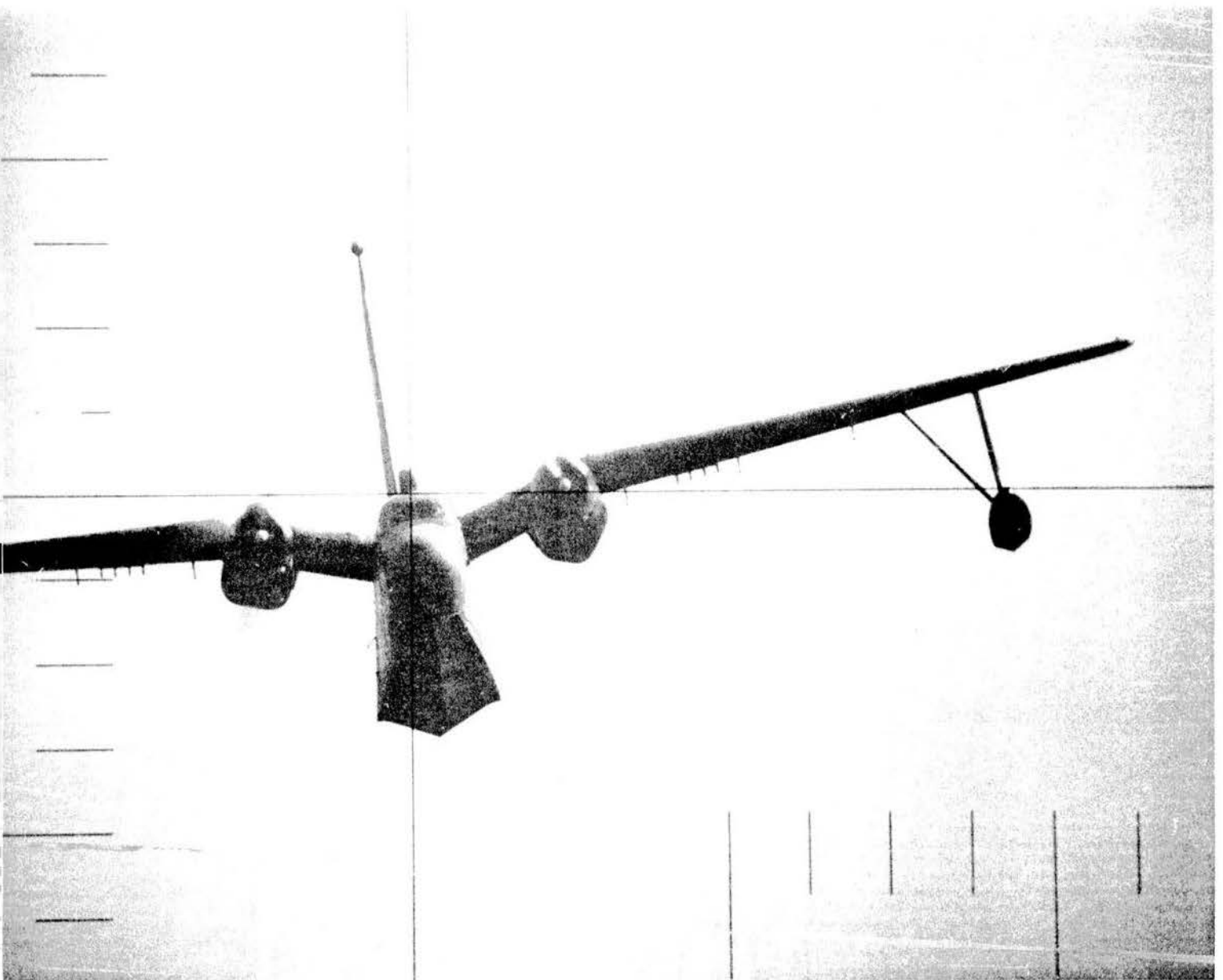


*from the sky, from the sea.*






*It is for the threat from the sea  
that we in Alfa listen and we watch,  
round the clock, radar, sonar, the human mind  
...our eyes and our ears are used...  
the enemy effective use of his submarines.*

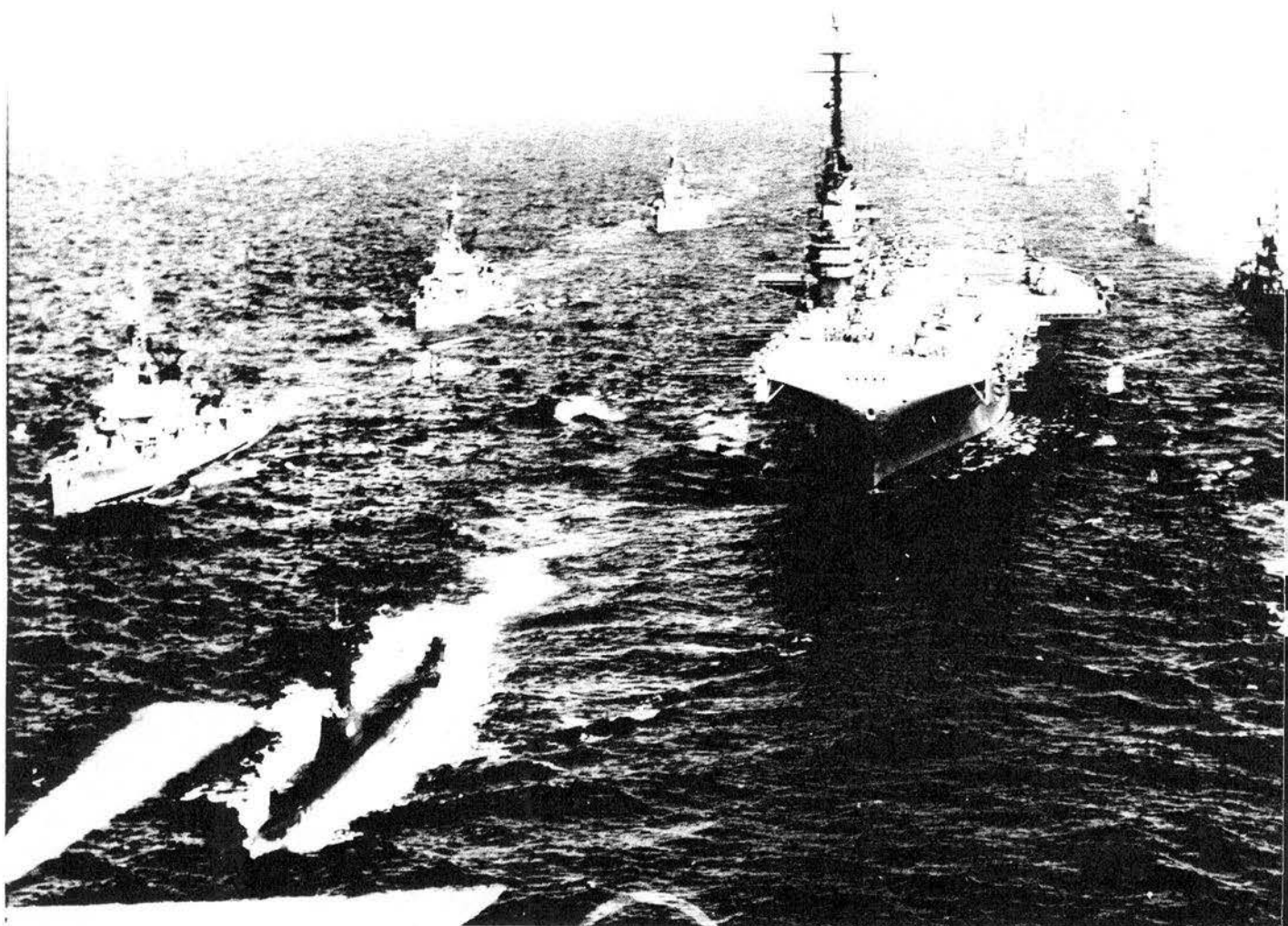


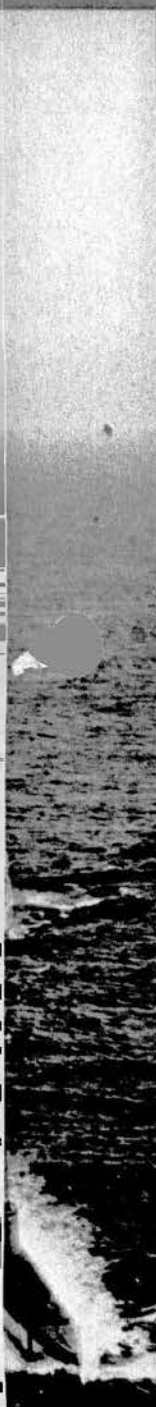




*To keep vast areas of  
the ocean under constant  
surveillance, to counter the  
threat of surprise attack by  
submarine launched missiles...  
to protect the security and  
integrity of our shores and our  
alliances with the free nations  
of the world...this  
is the challenging role of  
Task Group Alfa...*







*...one of four  
mobile carrier task groups  
designed to improve  
the ASW readiness  
of the Atlantic Fleet*



*This  
is  
the story  
of*

THE ALFA

# THE CARRIER

## USS RANDOLPH CVS-15

AIR ANTISUBMARINE SQUADRON THIRTY-SIX

AIR ANTISUBMARINE SQUADRON TWENTY-SIX

CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON TWELVE (DET 36)

HELICOPTER ANTI-SUBMARINE SQUADRON SEVEN

PATROL SQUADRON TWENTY-FOUR

# THE DESTROYERS

## DESTROYER SQUADRON TWENTY-EIGHT

USS WALLER/DDE-466 • USS EATON/DDE-510 •

USS CONWAY/DDE-507 • USS BACHE/DDE-470 • USS CONY/DDE-508 •

USS MURRAY/DDE-576 • USS BEALE/DDE-471

# THE SUBMARINES

USS SEA LEOPARD/SS-483

USS COBBLER/SS-344

AND TEMPORARY ASW TEAMMATES

# TEAM

*as recorded by*

LCDR M. A. Michael  
ENS L. Travers  
ENS B. Huberman  
ENS J. Corey  
ENS P. Nelson  
ENS T. Bond  
LT A. Pattee  
ENS W. Smoot  
ENS J. Dalton  
LTJG R. Muilenburg  
ENS W. DeLude

Task Group ALFA  
USS RANDOLPH  
USS BACHE  
USS BACHE  
USS BEALE  
USS CONWAY  
USS CONY  
USS EATON  
USS MURRAY  
USS WALLER  
USS WALLER



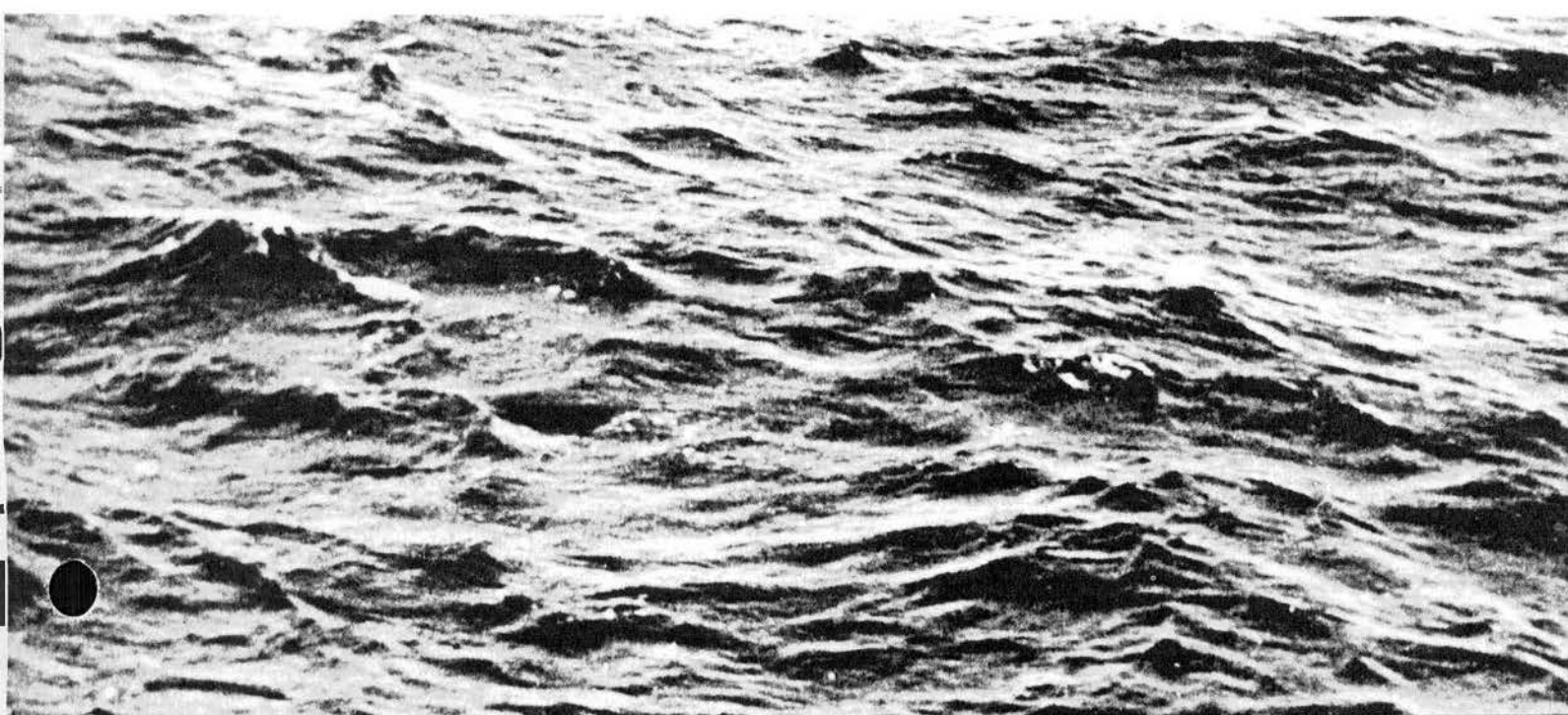
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WILLIAM B. FRANKE







CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
ADMIRAL ARLEIGH BURKE





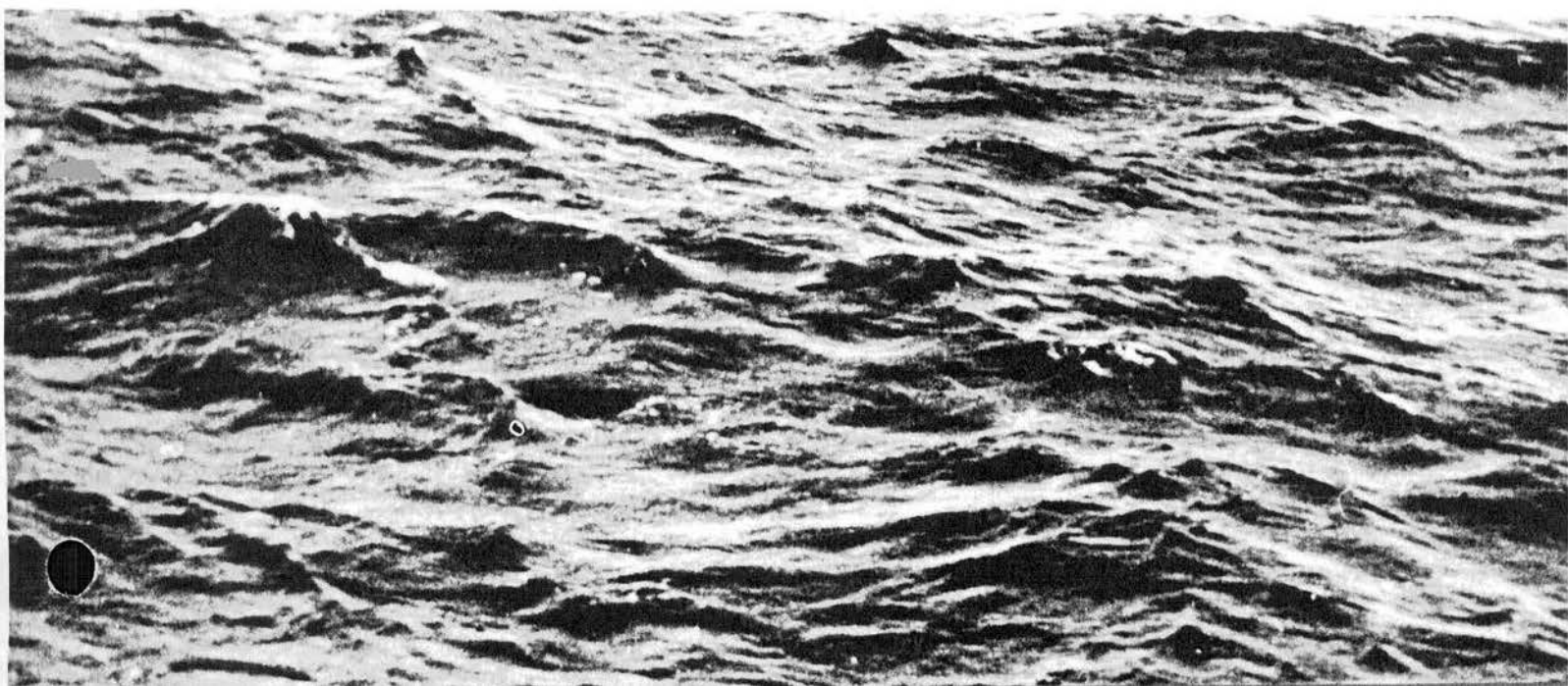
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF,  
UNITED STATES ATLANTIC FLEET

ADMIRAL ROBERT E. DENNISON





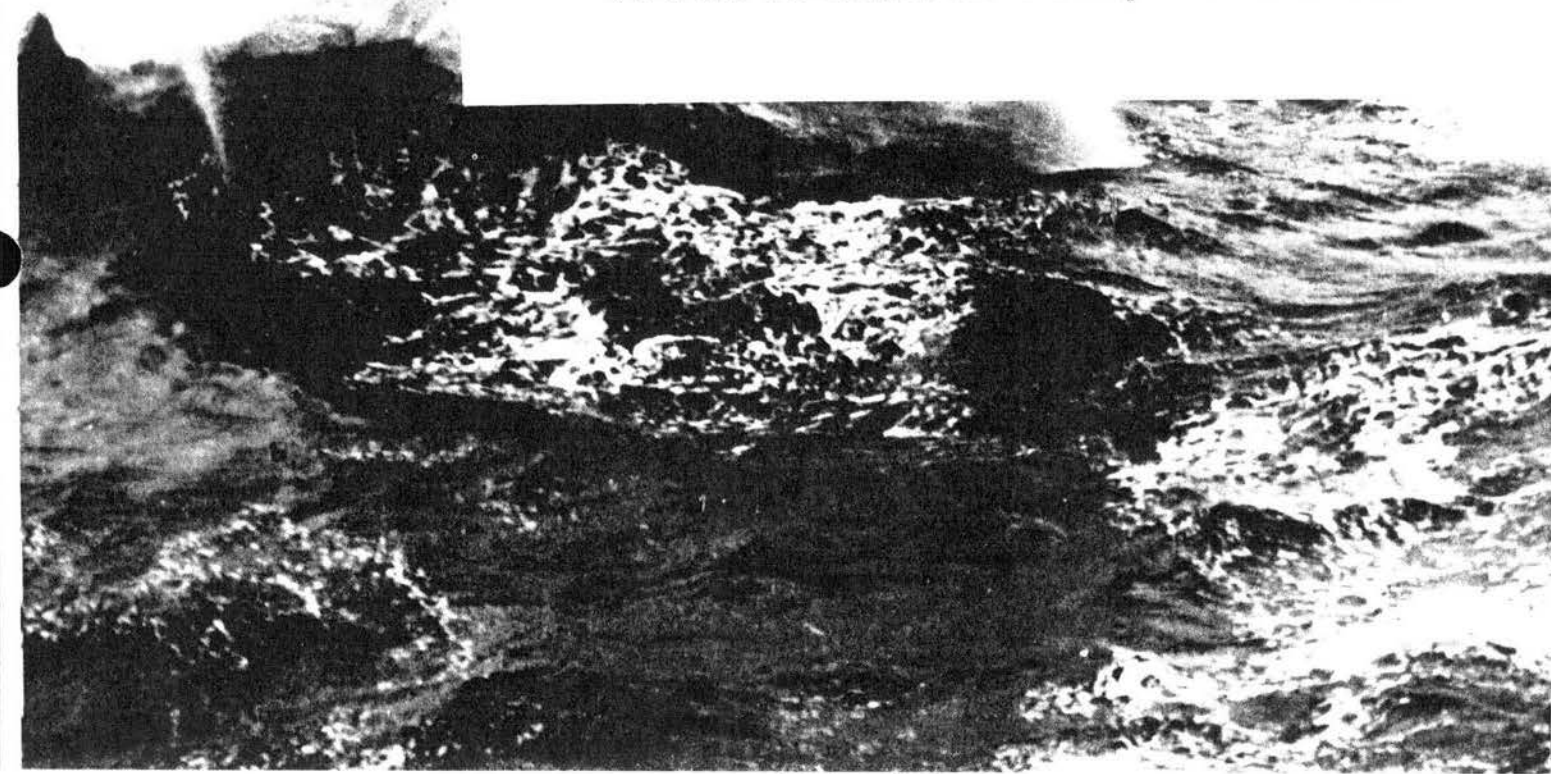
COMMANDER ANTISUBMARINE DEFENSE FORCE  
UNITED STATES ATLANTIC FLEET  
VICE-ADMIRAL EDMUND B. TAYLOR







COMMANDER TASK GROUP ALFA  
REAR ADMIRAL JOHN E. CLARK

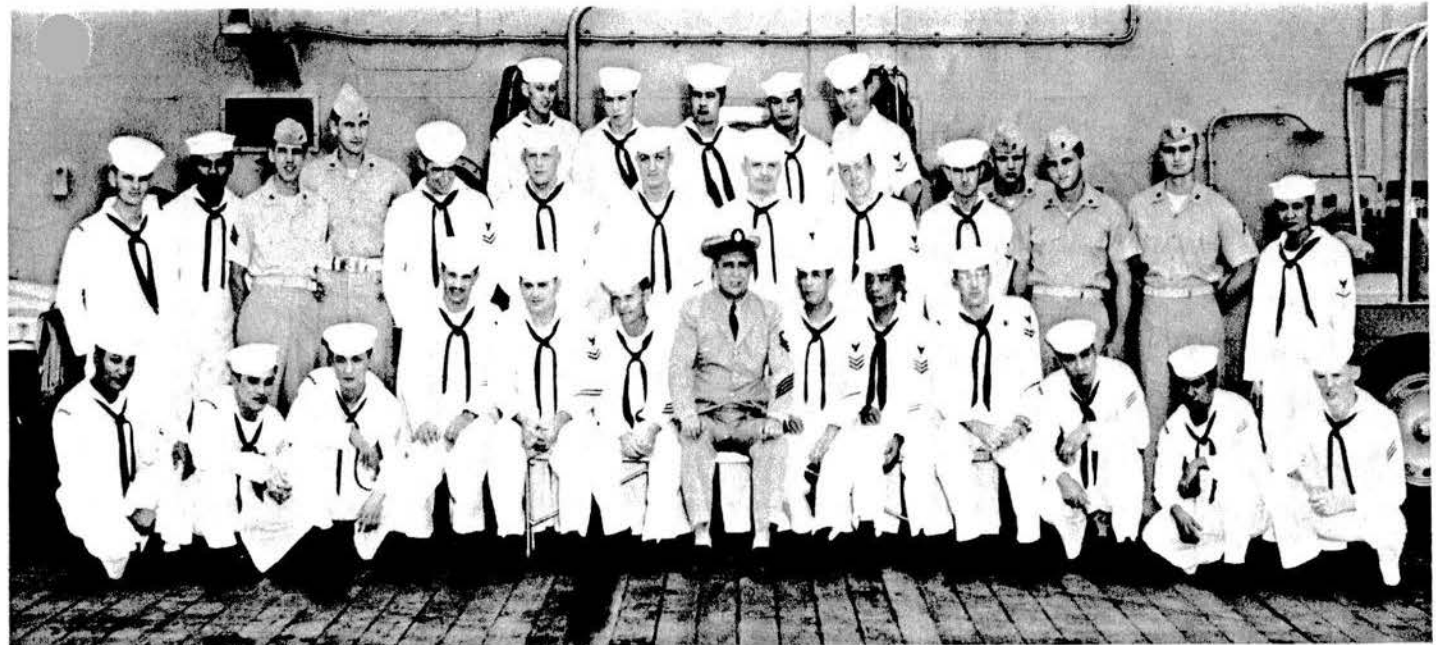


**Officers of Commander Antisubmarine Defense Group ALFA  
Commander Hunter Killer Force  
U.S. Atlantic Fleet and Commander Carrier Division SIXTEEN**



Top row (l to r); LT H. K. Cook, LCDR W. T. Mitchell, LCDR M. A. Martin (RCN), LCDR M. A. Michael, LCDR P. E. Le Blanc, CDR V. B. RINK, LCDR R. F. Wheeler, LCDR W. V. Garrison, LCDR P. W. Johnson, LT R. A. Costigan. Bottom row (l to r);

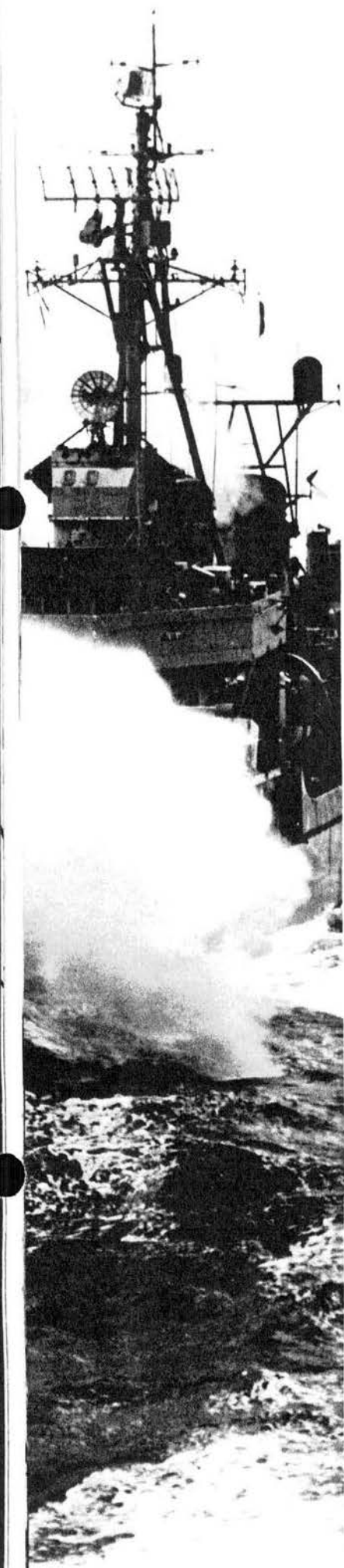
CDR W. R. Sams, CAPT W. M. Sessums, CAPT P. N. Shamer, RADM J. E. Clark, CAPT E. R. Fickenscher, CDR G. A. Kelley, CDR R. M. Clark.



Left to right: row 1; Magalona E. B. SD2, Quirante J. A. TN, Dominisac J. C. TN, Rees L. E. SM2, Livingston T. T. YN2, White J. A. YN1, Hibbs J. E. YNC, Rivero A. (N) RM1, Boncato E. L. SD1, Brace G. A. YN2, Gavani A. C. TN, Garcia F. I. Jr. TN, Snlyer S. R. YNSA, row 2; Young R. R. BMSN, Bombase A. A. TA, Berry C. L. A/SGT, Gerber L. A. III. L/CP. Northcutt L. D. YN2, Synder R. D. YNSN, Dezwaan T. J. SN,

Lenahan W. T. JO3, MrKnight T. J. QM3, Springer C. B. QM3, Morris G. W. PFC, Goldberg J. (N) FRC, Keel R. E. PFC, Gonzales F. (N) SD3, row 3; DeHessa D. M. SN, Morales J. L. RMSM, Golligan F. (N) SD3, Balatabat O. E. TN, Howard W. O. RM3, Absent when picture was taken: Burge R. D. RM2, Clay A. E. EN3, Loetscher L. A. BM2, Sullivan J. L. Jr. SA, Willkomm B (N) SN, Girard G. (N) L/CPL.





COMMANDER DESTROYER SQUADRON 28  
CAPTAIN GILVEN M. SLONIM  
COMMODORE



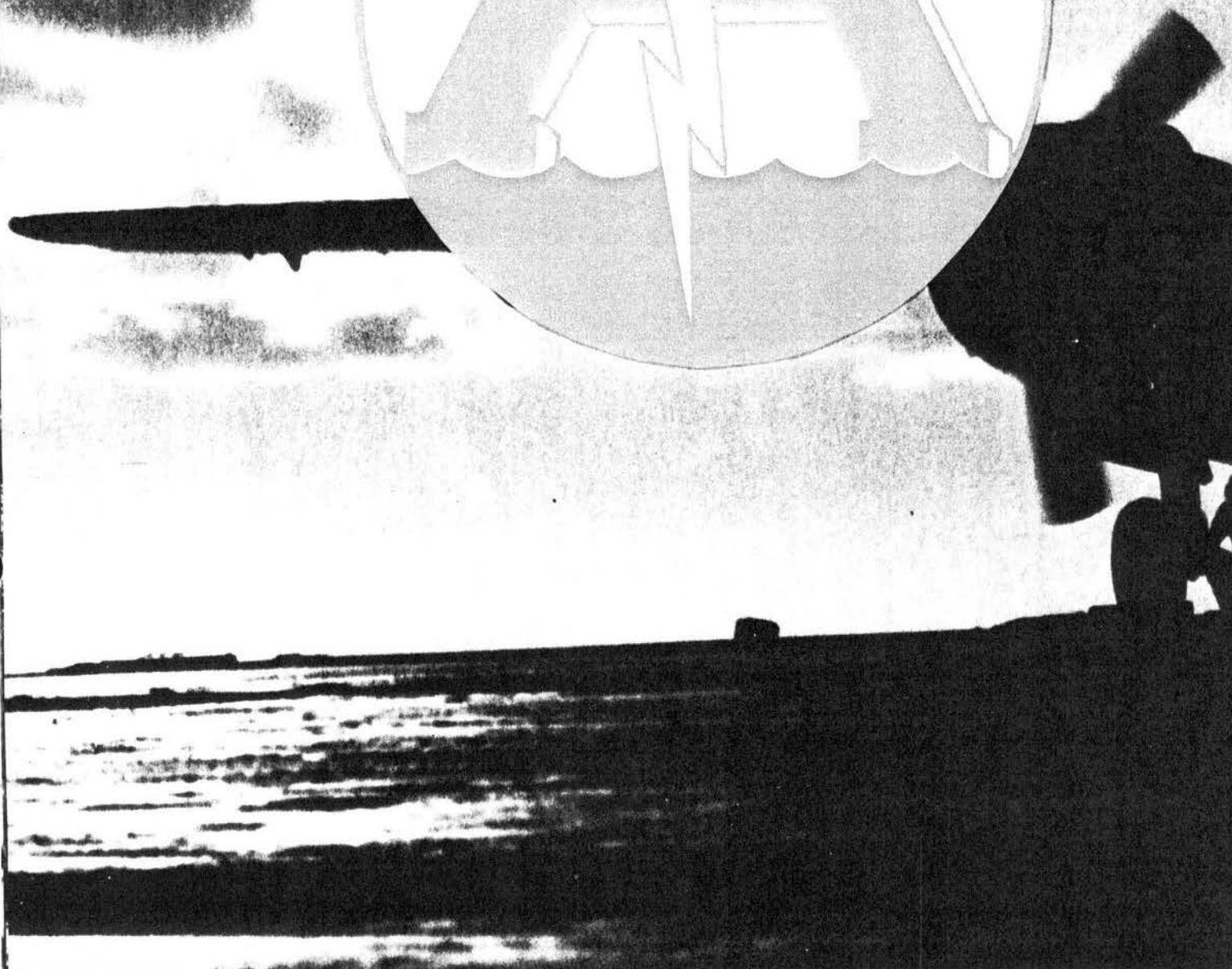
The story of Task Group ALFA which is recorded here . . . its history, its present activities, its future . . . is only part of what has happened, one tense incident among thousands, a sketch of the daily routine that is our lives, a glimpse of moments of fun we have shared. It is a story that has rarely made headlines . . . and yet, it is the story of our job—to protect the Atlantic Coast of our country from undersea invaders. This job places us in an important position, and a difficult one.

It is our responsibility to utilize our resources in the development of new techniques to meet the future threats of the submarine, as it becomes a more sophisticated weapon, with greater potential for destruction. It is our responsibility to strive each day to be a strong answer to the provocative questions asked of our country by those who would have the free world enslaved. If our answer remains strong, if our abilities remain keen and our readiness complete, if our minds continually search new ways of effectively combatting both the enemy and the mysteries of the ocean itself . . . and if our belief in the ideals of freedom and democracy stand inviolate and strong, then we have done our job.

Let us continue our work, not defeated by boredom and routine, but challenged by it. Let us go through days of empty sky and silent waters, through endless drills and alerts, for the one moment which will justify our existence and test our strength. Let us wait for that moment for that sound, for that sighting, with all the skill and courage we possess. And in that moment, let us act as Americans, and remember our purpose and our cause.

There is a time when this story will be history and a memory to those who lived it . . . someday half forgotten, obscured by greater moments, more obvious glories, perhaps more challenging problems. When the time comes that this is past, and we have been recorded, let our record be written with honor, and remembered with pride.

But that time is in the future, and our job is now.







*The Alfa story began in April, 1958...*

On 1 April 1958, Antisubmarine Defense Group ALFA was established by the Commander in Chief of the Atlantic Fleet under the operational control of Commander Antisubmarine Defense Force, Atlantic. It was commanded by RADM J.S. Thach with additional duties as Commander Carrier Division SIXTEEN and Commander Hunter-Killer Force. It consisted of an augmented Hunter-Killer Group and had a primary mission of advancing antisubmarine defense readiness in the Atlantic Fleet. Forces were assigned to operate with the Group on a semi-permanent basis. Under the original directive, the group was set up for an eighteen month period, although present indications are that it will be continued for an indefinite period.

Logically, the first step in accelerating antisubmarine defense was the establishment of a group with a single mission and forces assigned for a long enough period to permit determination of the full potential of the anti-submarine vehicles and equipment available. From such a group might be determined a standard of antisubmarine performance for all fleet units.

In addition to the forces normally comprising a Hunter-Killer Group, a carrier, destroyers, carrier fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, Task Group ALFA was augmented by two anti-submarine submarines, and a patrol plane squadron. All were placed under the operational control of the Task Group Commander.

Task Group ALFA consisted, on its establishment, of the carrier VALLEY FORGE CVS-45, with Air Antisubmarine Squadron 36 and Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron 7, embarked; Destroyer Squadron 28, Patrol Squadron 8, and the submarines SEA LEOPARD and CUBERA. Later, a detachment of AD-5W aircraft was added, Detachment 52 of VAW-12.

Since its establishment, ALFA's permanence of assigned forces has been only relative, due to Naval Shipyard overhauls and other considerations. Changes in units have resulted in some slowing down of tactical development, but have offered other advantages. Units detached and returned to the Group have newer equipment installed, bringing increased technical capability to the group. Also, methods of achieving maximum continuity during change-over periods have been developed, and these should be of great value to the fleet as a whole, which experiences continual change of units. Also, by temporary operations with nuclear submarines, it has been possible to gain experience against the ultimate opponent: nuclear powered, missile launching submarines.

Since the original, formal objective was too broad in concept for operational assignments, it was broken down into three major missions, including Team Development, Tactical Development and Equipment Improvement.

### **TEAM DEVELOPMENT**

In initial operations, major efforts were concentrated on bringing all units up to high levels of individual competence and performance. Then, it was necessary to train all units in working together towards their common



objectives. This required first, that each crew of each vehicle learn the capabilities and limitations of all other vehicles; second, it required the provision of the necessary communications devices and techniques between the units, and third, all types had to learn to work together in increasingly greater combinations until all units were employed simultaneously on a single problem. This progressive team development resulted in the formation of a coordinated team with a greater cumulative capability than the sum of the individual capabilities of the units involved.

## **TACTICAL DEVELOPMENT**

No burglar alarm ever caught a burglar. Thus, no matter how complex and effective future warning systems may become, they will need to be backed up by ready mobile forces capable of contacting, holding and if necessary, destroying any submarine not known to be friendly, within the defense perimeter. Determination of how best to utilize these mobile forces was the first objective of Task Group ALFA Tactical Development.

The result has been the formulation of doctrine and procedure for area search, for control of forces over a wide area, for necessary communications and coordination on an area basis, and for concentration of all these forces in the contact area. Tactics such as these required that forces be utilized in a new way: the carrier serving as a mobile air base, logistics center and command post of the group, controlling and supplying forces throughout the operating area. At most times, it must remain outside the actual area to avoid interference with investigative forces and for its own safety. The destroyers, except for serving minimum requirements as carrier screening and plane guard elements, must be dispersed where they can be near probable contacts, conduct searches and be used for deception. Fixed wing aircraft cover the area visually and by radar. VW aircraft keep track of surface contacts, furnish radar and vital communications links, and guide aircraft to investigate contacts. Helicopters are utilized in search and localization of contact.

## **EQUIPMENT IMPROVEMENT**

No matter how great the improvement resulting from better tactics and coordination, eventually there must be a point beyond which further progress can come only from improved equipment. Task Group ALFA by its nature has been able to make only limited efforts in equipment improvement. It has obtained existing equipment that would give an immediate increase in capability to any vehicle. It has adapted existing equipment to meet obvious needs, such as placing aircraft communication devices in destroyers. It has gone to laboratories and manufacturers to determine how to obtain highest performance for installed equipment. This has resulted in obtaining, in many cases, greater than designed performance and better reliability from much of its equipment. Beyond this Task Group ALFA has been able to follow closely research and development programs and has attempted to maintain a compatible direction of its own tactical development with the direction of equipment improvement programs throughout the fleet.

ALFA's operations have repeatedly demonstrated that no equipment or unit can do the job alone. To gain a significant capability for effective area surveillance in the near future, every piece of equipment existing and every known technique must be exploited to the utmost. As each new piece of equipment becomes available it must now be integrated into the weapons system in the same way in which the Task Group itself became an integrated force: first by establishing maximum effectiveness of the equipment by itself, then in combination, and finally through tactical application.

ALFA's more than two years of operation have led to many conclusions about its effectiveness as a highly specialized anti-submarine force.

It has become increasingly clear, first of all, that anti-submarine defense is as big a problem as continental air defense and must be approached on as broad a basis. Until both are equally effective, the defense of the United States will not be complete.

Then, it has been established that anti-submarine defense must be approached on an area basis. Whether the area is fixed or moving, will not affect the validity of tactics involved. If surveillance of a fixed area can be successfully accomplished many of the methods developed will be equally applicable to a moving area.

It has become apparent, third of all, that the success of an antisubmarine force is not limited to a carrier group alone. The important factor is that it be an effective combination of vehicles whose primary mission is antisubmarine warfare. The vehicles comprising the group must be tailored to forces available, the area of operations, availability of intelligence systems, weather and the overall situation. The group must be operated as an integrated unit to gain the fullest potential of the vehicles and equipment used.

Another apparent conclusion is that the antisubmarine group, whether a carrier group, an escort group, or a support group, must be considered as a completely integrated weapons system. At present, ALFA gains this integration through coordination and teamwork, but in the future it will undoubtedly be necessary to integrate through automatic systems to provide precise navigation, adequate communications and means of data presentation and analysis. Every unit must know where it is, where every other unit is and the command center must know the location of all units. The commander of the group must have quick, reliable means of gaining needed information and transmitting orders and permitting rapid decisions. ALFA is working towards such automatic systems at present, by developing best forms for data to make it adaptable for automatic transmission and processing, by recommending best configurations for command centers and by determining the information required at various command levels for evaluating the situation to direct and control forces.

ALFA's short history then, has been an interesting one. The Task Group has accepted the challenge inherent in its very objective. It has accomplished the difficult tasks of coordinating many working units into a single, thinking

team. It has tested, as a sea-going laboratory, many ideas, impulses and carefully calculated tactics. Its work has served as a model for the formation of other coordinated weapons systems with the common objective of antisubmarine defense, and its own accomplishments have set the pattern and the standard for the operation of these companion groups.

But those in ALFA by no means consider their job accomplished or their history written and ended. Their job becomes increasingly more difficult each day. Each challenge accepted, each defeat conquered, each victory hard-won brings with it new knowledge and new challenge. Each operation brings with it a greater understanding of the immensity of the problem, and too, a more intensive knowledge of how to overcome the problems large areas, tricky oceans and the revolutionary improvements of the nuclear submarine.

This book will record a part of that history only. It will show some of the operation of the Task Group from September 1959 until September, 1960. It could not begin to tell all of the stories or record all of the events. It will serve instead to indicate some of the scope of the problems that face the Task Group, be it a contact which must be identified, or the recreation which must be planned to keep the men's spirits high for the job they must do during long and trying days at sea.

It is the story of the ALFA Team, her men, that has written the past history of defeats and accomplishments. And it is the men who man her ships and planes who will continue to write the history of this antisubmarine defense group—write it in boredom or hard work, in a plane, from a submarine, on the pitching deck of a destroyer, in the noisy excitement of a launch from a carrier deck. Her men have written her past...

*...but the real story is  
being written  
today...*

*...by the men  
who wait and watch  
somewhere  
in the Atlantic*



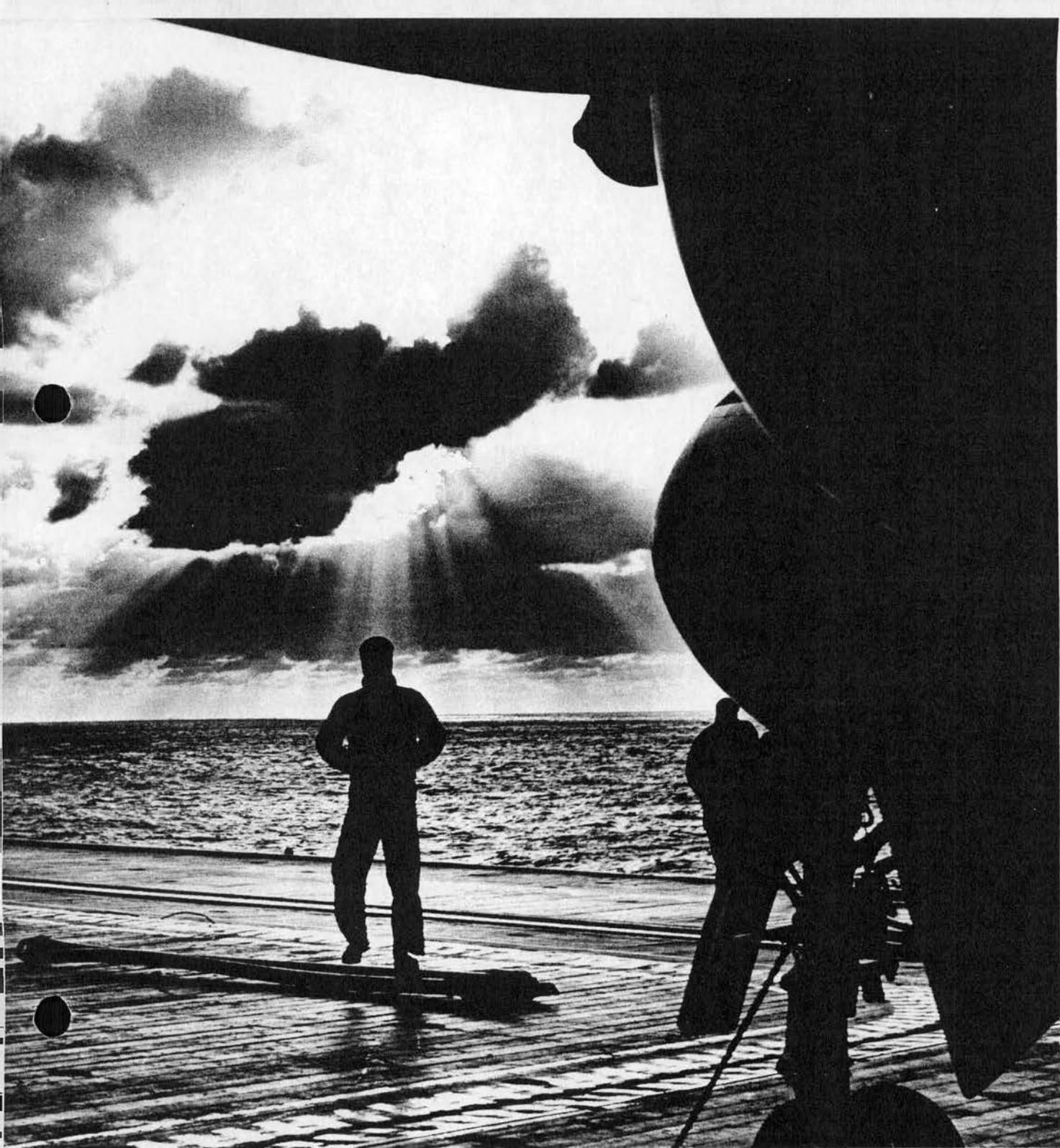
*...the problem:*

**SURVEILLANCE**

*their medium:*

**THE OCEAN** *...the greatest sin*





*stacle to effective anti-submarine warfare.*



Norfolk,  
Virginia,  
home of

## Task Group ALFA.

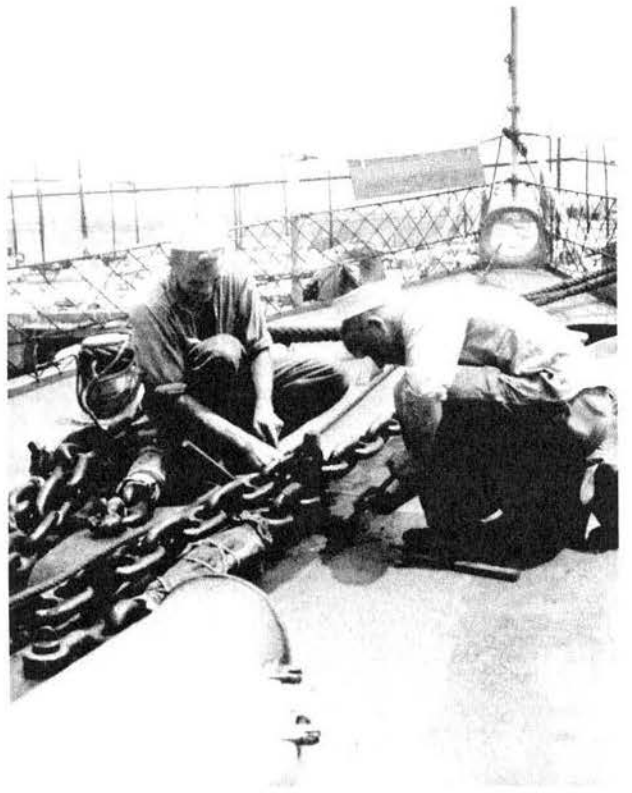
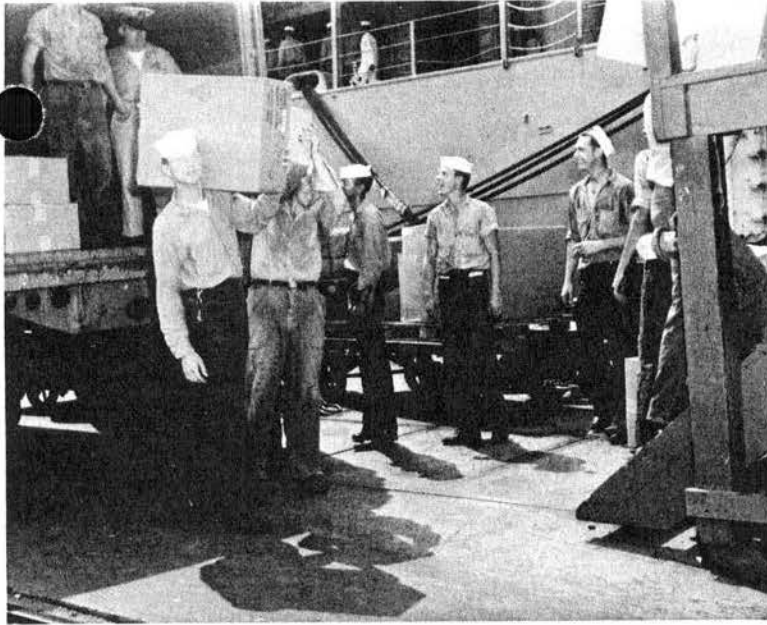
*Prepare to assume ready duty ASW. Prepare for sea*

At sea within the ocean lies the job of Task Group ALFA. The ocean is a strong host; the ships must be prepared to meet its demands. Paint is replaced; lines are extended; supplies are laid in to nourish and equip the men and their machines. Ammunition is brought aboard. "Ready ASW Duty" means exactly that.

The men spend their last hours on the beach saying goodbye to their families, to their friends. They anticipate two weeks at sea knowing that this at-sea period will be a combination of boredom and romance, of tedium and adventure. They perform the tasks assigned... they look to improving their skills, their tools.

The Task Group is ready to leave port . . . supplies aboard, the last goodbyes spoken. Lines are cast off, tugs appear . . .





## *...and the Task Group is underway*

Rendezvous, look at the Virginia coast for the last time, steam steady for a vague point within some ten thousand square miles of ocean. This time it might be "Point Pete" or "Point Jack"—perhaps "Point Fran." We arrive... the exercises begin.

Tactical sit-ups and push-ups, designed to have us lose weight, to regain the sharp coordination and skill with which we ended the previous at-sea period. A steady "No-cal" operational diet, until we are performing to the limits of our abilities. All units of Task Group ALFA, reading the operational order, learning new ways to overcome old liabilities, ironed out by endless meetings after the last time at sea. High protein for the aircraft, low fat for the destroyers, calisthenics for the carrier... reduction of waste, increase of efficiency. Surveillance, alertness, preparation.



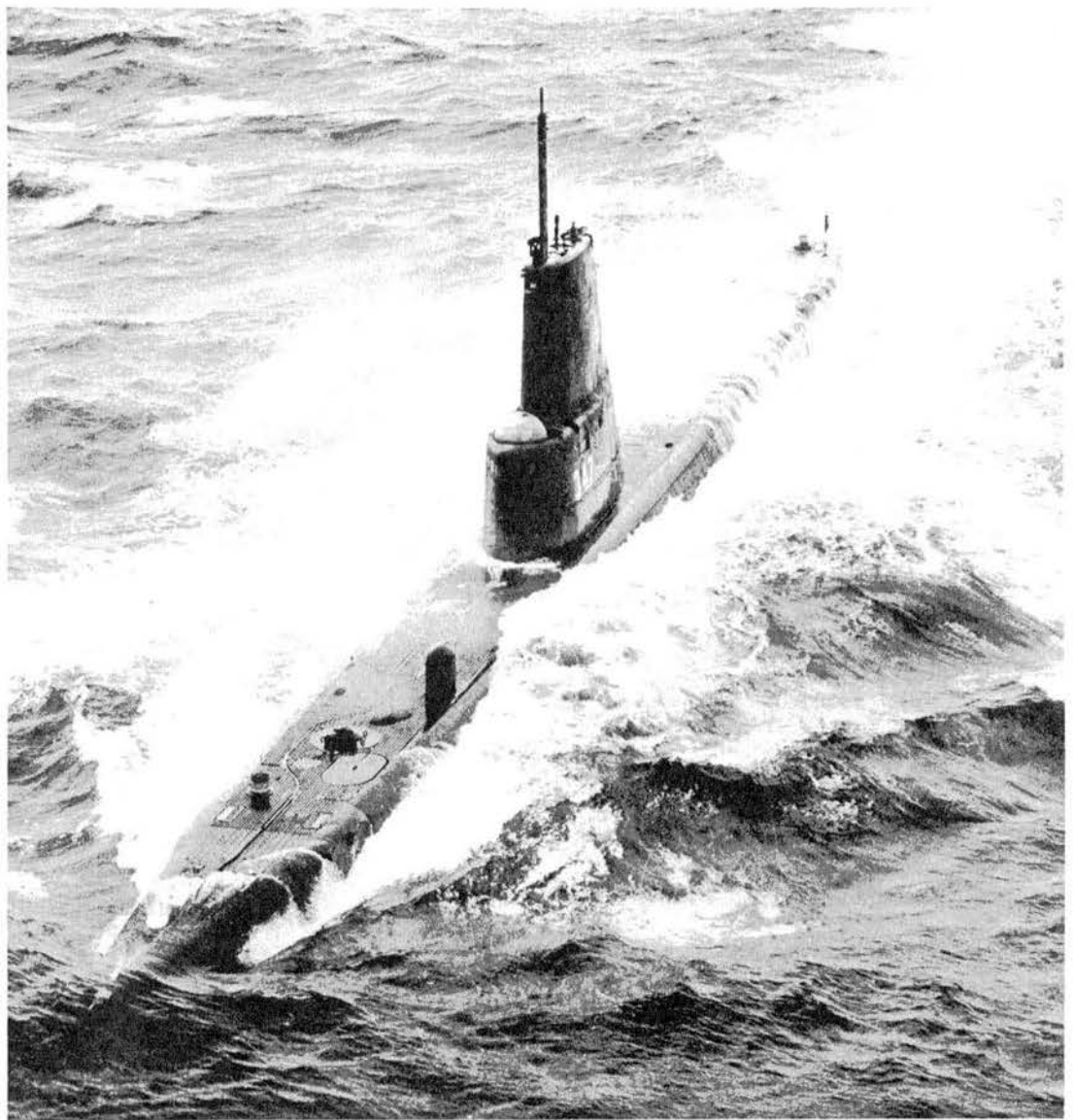
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A coach may gauge the strength of his opponent . . . ALFA never knows even the date of its next encounter. It might interrupt holiday routine, or replenishment exercise. It might come from the patrolling aircraft or a lone merchant ship. One of the air-liners which daily cross the ocean may sight a periscope or a signalman in RANDOLPH might happen to glance astern. It might even come late at night, while the Task Group sleeps. But whenever it comes, we must be ready. Surveillance, survival, our job.

