

Vast U-Boat Attack in Atlantic, Said to Be Reply to Tokyo Plea

34 German Submarines Believed to Have Been in North Atlantic Early This Month— British Think Warships May Shell Aruba

By The Associated Press.

LONDON, Feb. 20 — Germany has launched a major submarine offensive in the North Atlantic from the Azores to Greenland, to cooperate with Japan by keeping United States naval units in the Atlantic and preventing reinforcement of the United States Pacific Fleet, informed British sources said today.

These sources declared that, according to information from the Continent, the Nazis had thirty-four U-boats at sea in the North Atlantic early in February. This probably means, they added, that actually there were three times that many available for operations in the area at that time.

Japanese demands for naval cooperation were said to have been made at an Axis conference in Bavaria early in January. Vice Admiral Karl Doenitz, in command of the U-boat fleet, was said to have told them he would use "pack tactics" on the sea lanes near Europe, while his largest submarines and best crews would range the North American coast.

The original opening date for the campaign, according to these reports, was April 1. Instead, renewed Japanese urging led the Nazis to open their campaign two months ahead of schedule, the sources added.

Doenitz Has Much Power

Adolf Hitler was said to have given Admiral Doenitz the latitude the Kaiser gave Admiral von Tirpitz in the Spring of 1917, when the Germans announced the opening of unrestricted submarine warfare.

German U-boat building was said to have been stepped up this Winter at inland factories, from which the ships then were shipped to Bremen and Kiel to get their "blood baptism" in minor operations off the coast.

The attacks on Allied tankers moving out of Aruba in the Netherlands West Indies and along the Eastern Coast of the United States were seen as designed to cripple the world's dwindling tanker fleet.

British sources predicted that the Germans, after three months of the heaviest U-boat offensive that has ever been seen, might send one of their larger warships into the Caribbean to attempt a knockout blow

at Aruba and its refineries. By then, according to this plan, the submarines already would have forced the Allies to disperse their heavier surface ships and such an operation might be executed successfully.

The informants said that among the submarine commanders operating in the Western Atlantic are Captain Hardegen, directing operations of a flotilla off the coast of the United States, and Captain von Tiesenhausen, credited with the sinking of the Barham in the Mediterranean last November.

The flotilla headed by Captain Hardegen, one of the most publicized U-boat officers in Germany since the death of Commander Guenther Prien, was credited in a recent Berlin communiqué with the sinking of eight ships, "including three tankers in the immediate vicinity of New York harbor."