



SUPPLEMENT

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THE ATTACK ON THE TIRPITZ BY
MIDGET SUBMARINES ON 22ND
SEPTEMBER, 1943.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 8th November, 1943, by Rear Admiral C. B. Barry, D.S.O., Admiral (Submarines).

8th November, 1943.

REPORT ON OPERATION "SOURCE".

Be pleased to lay before the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty the following report on operations by X-craft in 1943 against the German main units in their protected anchorages on the Norwegian coast (Operation "Source").

Preliminary.

2. The X type of small submarine was evolved as a result of a study of the problem of how enemy main units could be attacked in their heavily defended and inaccessible anchorages.

3. On completion of the successful trials of the prototype X-craft (X.3), a contract was placed with Messrs. Vickers Armstrong, Limited, on 12th May, 1942, for the construction of six X-craft of a new and improved design, built for the purpose of attacking capital ships in harbour and surrounded by net defences.

4. At the same time, volunteers were called for for special and hazardous service and training commenced, using the prototype X-craft (X.3) and the second prototype (X.4).

5. The six operational X-craft (X.5-X.10) were delivered from Messrs. Vickers Armstrong between the 31st December, 1942, and 16th January, 1943, and preliminary plans were put in hand and advanced training commenced with a view to attacking the German main units on the Norwegian coast in the Spring of 1943, before the hours of darkness became

too short. The latest date for such an attack was considered to be the 9th March, 1943.

6. Unfortunately the time in hand proved insufficient to allow of the crews and craft being worked up to the high standard required for such an operation, and this was aggravated by a number of teething troubles in the craft themselves—troubles which were to be expected in a new design of weapon but which it had optimistically been hoped would not occur. Nor had the vital problem been solved of how to transport the X-craft to within striking distance of their target. Various methods had been tried before it was proved that the only profitable way was to tow them there by operational submarines. I was thus reluctantly compelled to inform the Vice Chief of Naval Staff on the 11th February, 1943, that the operation must be postponed until the Autumn.

7. The time gained proved invaluable, and that the decision to postpone the operation was the correct one, was proved beyond doubt by subsequent events: it ensured that, when the time came, both the crews and the craft were trained and perfected to that concert pitch so vital to such an operation.

8. On the 17th April, 1943, the 12th Submarine Flotilla was formed under the command of Captain W. E. Banks, D.S.C., R.N., to co-ordinate, under Admiral (Submarines), the training and material of the special weapons, including X-craft, and Acting Captain P. Q. Roberts, R.N., assumed command of H.M.S. BONAVENTURE, the depot ship for X-craft, under Captain (S), 12th Submarine Flotilla. The officer in charge of training was Commander D. C. Ingram, D.S.C., R.N.

9. On completion of preliminary trials and training, X.5-X.10 joined H.M.S. BONAVENTURE for advanced training and working up at Port HHZ (Loch Cairnbawn, close north of Loch Ewe), where from the 4th July until the commencement of the operation full scale