

GEOGRAPHY

# Urges Bases in Greenland For Planes and Submarines

## Location Favored to Forestall Similar Attempt By Hostile Powers and To Guard Great Circle Ship Lanes

THE UNITED STATES should establish plane and submarine bases in Greenland, Prof. William H. Hobbs of the University of Michigan told the American Association for the Advancement of Science. This should be done, he said, partly to forestall any attempt on the part of possibly hostile powers to establish such bases for use against this continent, partly because possession of such bases on our part would enable us to dominate the main great circle route for ships operating between the United States and the ports of northern Europe. This route lies only 100 miles from the extreme southern tip of Greenland.

Favorable locations for landing fields are few, Prof. Hobbs admitted. However, there are at least three promising sites, one on the east coast and the other two on the southwest coast. In addition, he pointed out, it would be possible to use flying boats based on the fjords, whence submarines would also operate. It is possible to make plane landings on the inland ice well back from

the coast, but difficulties of transporting supplies over the rough intermediate zone would probably make the servicing of planes at a base on the ice cap too difficult.

"A submarine base could be established in one of the fjords of extreme South Greenland," Prof. Hobbs stated. "Whether it could operate during the winter when the coast is flanked by pack ice is a question not yet given a demonstration, though it is highly probable."

As is well known, the sea area around Greenland is one of the foggiest places in the world. Not so well known, according to Prof. Hobbs, is the fact that the fogs do not come over the land to any great extent. This situation would give the planes a great advantage, as also would the prevailing winds. The air circulation over and around Greenland provides dependable winds blowing away from the land at one level and back toward the land at a higher level. This would enable planes to fly with a good tail-wind both going and coming.

Sufficient legal sanction for American occupation of such posts in Greenland can be found in the Havana pact, which has now been ratified by the required 21 Western Hemisphere powers.

*Science News Letter, January 11, 1941*

## Attack Likely Via Dakar

DAKAR, Vichy-held port on the West African coast, was indicated as the likeliest danger focus in a totalitarian attack on America's jugular vein at Panama, by Capt. G. S. Bryan, hydrographer of the U. S. Navy, in an address on geography and the defense of the Caribbean and the Panama Canal.

Even the combined fleets of Europe, convoying a vast fleet of transports loaded with invader troops, would hardly risk a straight-out attack on the Caribbean bases with no base of their own nearer than Europe, Capt. Bryan declared. The position of the defenders would be too strong, especially for plane and submarine action, and any damaged

ships of the enemy would have nowhere to go for repairs.

Far more likely, he continued, would be an expedition based on Dakar, moving across the narrow part of the South Atlantic to seize a base on this side on the Brazilian coast, then working northward. The combat fleet could come alone, leaving the convoy behind until they had blasted a way through the American defenses, aided by land planes from the new base. Damaged ships could then retire to safety at more practicable distances.

There is far less danger of attack on the Panama Canal from the Pacific side, Capt. Bryan held. The shortest distance from Yokohama to Panama, he said, lies along a great circle route that skirts the Aleutian islands and the whole Pacific coast of North America—obviously a strategic lunacy to follow. The most practicable route would be by way of Hawaii—which would first have to be taken.

In any case, the Canal itself would not be worth much to an Asiatic power. More tempting would be the actual exploitable resources of Mexico, Central America and the west coast of South America. The military importance of the Canal, to an outsider, is negative—it would be desirable to cripple it for American use by a gigantic raid, but seizure and permanent occupation hardly promise rewards enough to make the effort worth while.

Capt. Bryan pointed out the curious situation, that the most complete screen of islands affording bases for light and heavy naval forces and land planes is on the Atlantic side, where overseas attack would be easiest, whereas nearby island groups are fewer and less advantageously placed on the Pacific side, where attack would be hampered by long distances and presence of strong defense bases on the flanks of possible lines of travel.

*Science News Letter, January 11, 1941*

INVENTION

## Stop Light for Bicycles Works When Pedals Reverse

A STOP light for bicycles, which operates when the direction of the pedals is reversed to apply the brakes, is the subject of a recent patent. (*U. S. Patent 2,222,075, Hiram R. Johnston, Hamilton, Ohio.*)

*Science News Letter, January 11, 1941*



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