

1974

## Aircraft versus Submarine

W.W. Price III

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Price, W.W. III (1974) "Aircraft versus Submarine," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 27 : No. 1 , Article 14.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol27/iss1/14>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

## 96 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

the development of the American intelligence community was in line with administration and congressional wishes; it would not have happened, otherwise. This is an important point to note, especially today when the furies of frustration reach out to indict and accuse the CIA and the FBI of lives independent of control. Nonetheless, the experienced Kirkpatrick is realistic and candid enough to recognize that authorization for an intelligence organization is one thing and implementation and control of operations is quite another. In fact, there is a refreshing implication, at least, that not all intelligence (especially covert) operations are brilliantly conceived and executed.

The book is grouped about seven basic chapters which simply and effectively detail the need, legal basis, organizational makeup, and the operations, at home and abroad, of the intelligence community, comprising principally the CIA, FBI, the various military intelligence services, and the National Security Agency.

The book describes with interest and fullness three prime examples of covert intelligence failures: the U-2 incident, the Bay of Pigs in Cuba, and, for good measure, the Vietnam operation known as "Phoenix" which sought to identify and remove the NLF infrastructure.

The book will be a primer for intelligence specialists, a revelation for novices, and a tribute to its author who has done a doubting American citizenry a public service with this forthright report on U.S. intelligence, warts and all.

R.F. DELANEY

Forrest Sherman Chair of Public Diplomacy

*Price*

Price, Alfred. *Aircraft versus Submarine*. London: Kimber, 1973. 268p.

The author, Alfred Price, writes not as an interested layman or a military historian, but from the vantage of operational experience as an officer in

the Royal Air Force (American readers must remember that the RAF has the mission of long-range maritime patrol). Evidence of the author's expertise in electronic warfare and aircraft weapons can be found throughout the book. However, it should be stressed that *Aircraft versus Submarine* is eminently readable with sufficient explanation of both tactics and weapons to include the layman in its audience.

Our story commences in 1916 when two flying boats from the now defunct Austro-Hungarian naval air arm chanced upon the French submarine *Foucault*. After an initial iron bomb attack, the damaged submarine surfaced—a prudent move when in a minefield. To his horror, the French captain found his ship face to face with two angry flying machines. Following a few more attacks, the French scuttled their boat and became the first submarine victim to the flying machine. In the name of chivalry, the flying boats taxied up to the scene and allowed the crew to cling to the floats until rescuers arrived. However, each Austrian aircraft returned home with a humiliated French officer, a trophy of the victory.

Stories of light humor and keen insight abound throughout the volume. The progression of tactics comes under scrutiny in the following example. Early masochists devised a plan whereby a seemingly helpless seaplane would alight on the sea, baiting an enemy submarine to surface and take the cripple under fire. Meanwhile, a submerged submarine, in league with the aircraft, would maneuver to torpedo its gullible opponent. Today some flippant aviators may claim this "live worm" tactic to be a credible role for destroyers.

This reviewer would be remiss if he were to overemphasize sea stories in this review. The pattern of innovation in the ASW duel reveals the elements of a management case study. A crucial part in the World War II Battle of the Atlantic was played by the technocrats.

## PROFESSIONAL READING 97

The race between lower frequency radars (British) and passive receivers (German) resulted in a lost battle for the submarine. The challenge of wedding technology and tactics gave birth to a thought process which commands our attention today, systems analysis. Perhaps the words of Lord Blackett (scientific adviser to Britain's Coastal Command) in 1941 should be embossed on the backside of all Pentagon security badges or framed in each corridor.

One of the tasks of an Operational Research Section is to make possible at least an approach to a numerical estimate of the merits of a change-over from one device to another, by continual investigation of the actual performance of existing weapons, and by objective analysis of the likely performance of new ones . . .

In general, one might conclude that relatively too much scientific effort has been expended hitherto in the production of new devices and too little in the proper use of what we have got.

Unfortunately, Alfred Price seemed to tire of writing after 235 pages. His last chapter of less than 20 pages covers the period from 1945 through 1972. Devoting a paragraph to carrier borne aviation and two pages to helicopters, the author continues to emphasize the RAF role of patrol aviation at the expense of naval ASW aircraft.

Admittedly, security and classification begin to hamper the military writer as he approaches the present. Nonetheless, considerably more attention could have been devoted to the use of helos on destroyers, and the new capital ships of ASW, the Soviet's *Moskva*, the Royal Navy's through-deck cruiser *Invincible*, and the American sea control ship. Discussion of the interaction between seabed sonar systems and patrol aircraft was needed.

Finally, the author held out the perennial hope that science would wave

its wand and make the sea transparent with a "supersensor." We might just as well request some deity to part the waters of the Atlantic and leave all the submarines high and dry. The application of Lord Blackett's advice holds more promise.

In summary, *Aircraft versus Submarine* offers a fascinating and useful history of ASW aviation from which the reader can gain a valuable historical perspective. The book's shallow coverage of the current picture does not hamper the knowledgeable officer and fulfills the needs of the layman.

W.W. PRICE, III  
Lieutenant, U.S. Navy

Summersell, Charles G., ed. *The Journal of George Townley Fullam*. University: The University of Alabama Press. 229p.

Few events in a nation's history can match the brutality and horror of that self-inflicted disaster, the civil war. The American "War Between the States" was no exception. Fought with the rudiments of technology that would mature in future wars (the ironclad, rifled gun, and submarine, to name a few), this semimodern war retained many of the romantic characteristics of an earlier age. Nowhere was this paradox more apparent than in the adventures of the commerce raider C.S.S. *Alabama*.

*The Journal of George Townley Fullam*, boarding officer of the *Alabama*, is not and was not written to be another of the many historical documentations of her cruise. Indeed, the account ends with the unresolved entry, "This afternoon our commander . . ." dated several days before the climactic confrontation with the U.S.S. *Kearsarge*. The *Journal* is, however, one man's record of the day to day life and labor aboard the most famous of Confederate war cruisers, and as such it succeeds well.