

U-BOAT RAID PROBLEM TAKEN UP BY CABINET

Secrecy About New Plans to Fight Menace Maintained After Un- usually Long Session.

WASHINGTON, Aug. 13. — German submarine raids in American waters were understood to have been discussed today at an unusually prolonged session of the Cabinet, but if any new plans for combating this menace to helpless fishing craft, lightships, and other vessels were formulated by President Wilson and his advisers, the fact was not disclosed.

The only report of the activities of the raiders reaching the Navy Department during the day told of the destruction of the Norwegian steamer Sommerstad yesterday morning off Fire Island. The destruction of the Sommerstadt by a torpedo which passed under the ship's bow and later circled and struck the vessel amidships gave rise to a suggestion that the torpedo was controlled by radio on the submarine, but this was ridiculed by naval experts.

They explained that the course of a torpedo is regulated by the gyroscope, which can be so set before discharging that the weapon will describe a circle. This has been done time and again during torpedo practice in the American Navy, so as to return the weapon to the ship discharging it, high officials said, and it has not been an uncommon thing for torpedoes fired by German submarines to take similar courses. With the torpedo's steering gear set so the weapon will run in a circle it becomes almost doubly effective, naval officers explained, for if it misses the object on its outward course, the possibility remains that it will strike after it turns about, a possibility that is increased if the ship attacked goes full speed ahead, as the Sommerstadt did.

No additional reports on the depth bomb attack by an American destroyer on a submarine off the Virginia coast have reached the Navy Department, but it now seems fairly well established that it occurred Sunday after gas from oil supposed to have been discharged from a submarine overcame six men in the Coast Guard Station and Lighthouse on Smith's Island, North Carolina, Saturday evening. While most naval experts accept with great reservation the theory that the gas was from a submarine, Secretary Daniels said today he believed the report as given by the commandant of the Coast Guard Station was correct. It was accepted by the commandant of the Sixth Naval District who must have satisfied himself concerning it, Mr. Daniels said, before transmitting it to the department. Additional reports have been requested by the department and are expected soon.

No previous accounts of gas attacks by submarines have been received, nor has there been any information coming to the department that the U-boats are equipped for such attacks. Some officials, however, do not regard it as at all improbable that, in carrying out their campaign of "frightfulness" the Germans would make whatever use of gas by submersibles that might be found possible.

Though thirty-one vessels have been sunk by U-boats off the Atlantic Coast since May, most of the ships have been small, many only being fishing schooners, and the loss of life has been very slight. The department, it was said, was taking all possible measures to deal with the submarines.