

Not for publication, broadcast or release on club tapes before 2000 hours B.S.T. on Wednesday, 28th February 1945.

A statement on jet-propelled aircraft is also being released in America.

R.A.F. "JET" FIGHTERS IN ACTION.

The first and so far the only jet propelled aircraft of the United Nations to go into action against the enemy is the Gloster "Meteor". These "Meteor" jet propelled fighters were first employed by a squadron of R.A.F. Fighter Command against flying-bombs launched by the Luftwaffe last summer from France so the first combats of British jets were not against conventional aircraft. The R.A.F. "Meteor" proved to possess a greatly superior speed to the pilotless German flying-bomb and many tactical lessons were learned from these early combats.

Like the Gloster E.28/39, the first turbine jet aircraft in the world to fly (in May 1941), the "Meteor" is also a product of the Gloster Aircraft Company (Hawker-Siddeley Group). The "Meteor" is powered with Rolls Royce engines manufactured to the basic design of Air Commodore Frank Whittle, R.A.F., in collaboration with Power Jets Ltd., and the British Thomson-Houston Co., Ltd. The first engine supplied to the U.S. Army Air Force in Oct. 1941 was built by Power Jets Ltd. Air Commodore Whittle visited the U.S.A. in order to assist our Allies to initiate their development programme.

In addition to the "Meteor", Great Britain has another jet propelled fighter in an advanced stage of development. This has been designed and engined by the De Havilland Aircraft Co. Ltd. These engines are also manufactured on the basic principles used by Air Commodore Whittle.

One built by this company was supplied to the U.S.A.A.F. in July 1943 and was used by the Lockheed Company as the power unit of a prototype aircraft which was built by that firm. This prototype later engined by a Unit of American construction was developed into the Lockheed P-80A.

Other research and development work is in active progress with a view to progressive increase of the performance of British built aircraft using jet propulsion units. These are of a highly secret nature.

Just as full information was provided to the United States Air Forces of the original Whittle design, so in conformity with the unswerving policy of the British Government to make all technical information immediately available to our American Ally, full details of the progress made by British Aircraft firms in developing jet aircraft and engines has been freely communicated to the United States. Information on American development progress is similarly being made available to us.

The original British turbine jet aircraft was a single-engined aeroplane but the "Meteor" is a twin-engined monoplane of very clean design. It first flew experimentally in March 1943, and since then the production types have been considerably improved.

The engines of the "Meteor" take in enormous quantities of air (hundredweights a minute) which are sucked in, compressed, heated with burning paraffin and ejected through the turbine and then through a large rear nozzle. There are several immediate advantages to be found in the jet engine or gas turbine. First and foremost it is simpler in almost every respect than the piston engine; it is lighter; it is far more easily serviced and it possesses a rotary distinct from a reciprocating movement. It is known that the Rolls-Royce engine of this type is more efficient and of longer life than the Jumo engine of the German Messerschmitt Me.262.

The turbines emit no flame, as did the jet-propulsion units of flying-bombs, and only under certain rare conditions do they leave any smoke trails. The passage of a jet plane on the ground leaves in its wake the typical smell given off by a hot paraffin oil stove or a hurricane lamp.

The Gloster designers, chief of whom is Mr. W. G. Carter, had to take account of a new crop of aero-dynamic problems in order to achieve with safety the high speeds at which the "Meteor" flies, but in spite of this the aircraft is highly praised by the R. A. F. as being very manoeuvrable, easy to fly and with no such penalty as high landing speed. Its extreme smoothness of running, absence of the usual vibration, and simplicity of the engine controls are very much welcomed by pilots.

The First R. A. F. Squadron to be equipped with "squirts", as the pilots call their jet planes, was a squadron which had previously been flying Spitfires.

The squadron's pilots, not specially selected in any way and representing an average cross-section of any fighter unit in the Royal Air Force, began their jet training by converting from single-engine aircraft to "twins", learning the multi-engined technique in Oxfords, standard R. A. F. twin-engined training aircraft.

Spurred on by the new job in prospect, they went solo on "twins" in record time, and after an average of six hours' solo multi-engine flying time they were judged ready to pass on to the next stage - the jet aircraft.

Travelling secretly, and in small batches, pilots and key ground staff went to an R. A. F. Experimental Establishment, where jet fighters fresh from the factory assembly lines were awaiting collection.

While the pilots, fortified with a few hours' ground instruction from test pilots and experimental personnel, flew their first solo jet flights and did a few hours' practice flying on the new type, the ground crews learned the care and maintenance of the prototypes.

Then, after a few days, the pilots flew the jet aircraft back to their base, where the 'planes were guarded every minute of their earth-bound time by special security police.

The R. A. F.'s first operational jet patrol was flown during the Battle of the Flying Bomb and had its first success on August 4, 1944. Subsequently the Meteor shot down a substantial number of flying bombs.

"They are really beautiful aircraft, and I should hate to return to normal flying", said a pilot. "When they start up and taxi, our 'squirts' make a noise rather like an oversize vacuum cleaner, but when they take off, or fly at full throttle, they sound almost like a normal aircraft.

"The cockpit layout differs very little from the conventional type, and it is very comfortable with good visibility all round. There is plenty of armour to give one a sense of security, and a remarkable contrast to a normal type of aircraft is the almost complete absence of noise in the cockpit when one is flying, it is just like driving about on a cloud.

"The 'squirts' have plenty of power, and if you open the throttle suddenly you get a kick in the back from your seat. They go up like a lift, the faster the higher. They're sweet to handle even at high speed, and it's jets for me from now on".

Not for publication, broadcast in overseas bulletins or use on club tapes before 2330 B.S.T. on 22.11.44 (i.e. for Thursday mornings papers). Not to be broadcast in the midnight news of 22/23.11.44. Overseas messages should be prefaced with this embargo.

This story is being released simultaneously in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Air Ministry News Service.

A.M.B. NO. 16297.

MOSQUITO ARMED WITH SIX POUNDER GUN.

On a bleak morning last winter, a home-coming U-boat was proceeding slowly to base in the calm waters south of Brest. For weeks it had been at sea, always fearing attack from constantly patrolling R.A.F. Coastal Command aircraft or from the warships of the Royal Navy.

At last they were in safe waters.....

But as first light stole across the sky, their peace was shattered by the sounding of an alarm "enemy aircraft approaching."

From out of the rising sun Germans on the conning tower picked out a Mosquito aircraft diving towards them. A red ball came streaking across the sky, and there was a tremendous crash as the U-boat was hit by a large shell. This first attack killed several Germans.

This is the story of the first attack made on a U-boat with one of Britain's secret weapons--then newly introduced--the six-pounder gun carried by Mosquito aircraft of R.A.F. Coastal Command, details of which are officially revealed to-day.

Subsequent events showed that the German Admiralty were forced to change their in-shore tactics. Waters close to the French coast could no longer be considered safe for unescorted U-boats, and even boom and gun-defended harbours could be penetrated by the speedy and manoeuvrable Mosquito armed with the new gun.

Following the first two attacks with this weapon, the German Admiralty were forced to provide an escort of surface ships and fighters to protect their U-boats leaving or going into the harbour, thus diverting flak ships and armed trawlers from other duties.

But in spite of flak from escort vessels and "umbrellas" of fighters, Coastal Command Mosquitos have persisted in their attacks on the U-boats with marked success. Cannon shells have holed or damaged a number of the
/surface.....

surface vessels, including: 2 tankers, 1 destroyer, 16 trawlers and 5 minesweepers.

The accuracy of the gun was proved when a shell from it shot an enemy fighter out of the sky.

The gun is slung beneath the fuselage of the Mosquito, and fires shells in quick succession as the aircraft dives to attack. Since D-day it has been used extensively against U-boats attempting to sink into the Channel to interfere with our landing craft.

In addition to its six-pounder, the Mosquito also carries four machine guns.

The gun was first fitted to three Mosquitos which became a detachment of a secret experimental squadron. Squadron Leader C.F. Rose, D.F.C., D.F.M., was the first Commanding Officer of the detachment, which operated from an aerodrome in the south-west of England, and there were three other pilots-- 26 year old, F/O D.J. Turner, D.F.C., of Glebe Way, Hornchurch, Essex; F/O A.L. Bonnett, 24 year old R.C.A.F. pilot of Vancouver, and F/O A.H. Hilliard, aged 24 of Hatfield Road, St. Albans, Herts.

"We were naturally very excited at being the first to use the gun", said F/O Turner, "and we practised at sea for some time, firing one shell and then trying to hit it with others. We soon became quite accurate and worked out the tactics to be used. When the gun is fired there is only a slight reaction on the aircraft--a jerk--but this in no way affects the accuracy.

"The first attack was made on the morning of November 4th, 1943, when Squadron Leader Rose and I set out to search for U-boats. Close into the French Biscay coast we saw several fishing vessels and nearby was an armed trawler. The squadron leader decided to attack and dived on to the trawler, scoring hits with his first shells. I followed on as he turned to port. The squadron leader then went in for the second attack and, after straightening out from the dive over the ship, seemed to lose height. I made my second attack, and hit the engine room of the trawler, causing the boiler to explode. I could then see smoke coming out of the tail of the squadron leader's aircraft and he jettisoned the hood in an apparent attempt to ditch. The aircraft crashed into the sea and disintegrated.

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"This was a tragic beginning, for both Squadron Leader Rose and his navigator, F/Sgt. Cowley were lost. The effectiveness of the gun, however, had been proved."

Three days later came the attack on the U-boat returning to base, near Brest. This was the first of many attacks on U-boats. The Mosquito was piloted by F/O Bonnett, who scored shell hits on the zig-zagging U-boat around the conning tower. The aircraft was hit by flak but reached base safely after the pilot had been black and yellow smoke pouring from aft of the conning tower.

The first major success was achieved early this year, following which F/O Turner and his navigator, F/O D. Curtis were awarded the D.F.C.

Two big gunned Mosquitos were on patrol escorted by four fighters, when they encountered flak from an enemy destroyer off the Ile de Re, which broke up the formation. Two minutes later Turner flew over a coastal type minesweeper and saw a fully surfaced U-boat, with another minesweeper, in line ahead.

Despite heavy flak, he made several attacks on the U-boat with the six-pounder gun scoring numerous hits.

Meanwhile, the other aircraft swept the decks of the surface vessels with cannon and machine gun fire. A large oil patch was left by the U-boat as it disappeared into the sea. Aircraft which make these attacks are seldom able to provide evidence that a U-boat has definitely sunk.

Another example of the determined attacks on heavily escorted U-boats close in to the French coast was on April 11 at St. Nazaire.

F/O B.C. Roberts, aged 23, of Laverstoke, Whitechurch, Hampshire, in a Big Gun Mosquito accompanied by nine cannon and machine gun Mosquitos, sighted a fully surfaced U-boat escorted by a flak ship and three minesweepers. While the fighters battled with 12 Ju.88's which were providing air cover to the escort ships, Roberts twice attacked the U-boat with the six-pounder gun and claimed three hits on the stern and five possible hits below the waterline amidships. When last seen the U-boat was moving under the lee of a minesweeper and was slightly down by the stern. Roberts was awarded the D.F.C.

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After D-day a swift attack by a Mosquito fitted with the six-pounder caused a U-boat to crash-dive before all the crew could get below. One German was seen in the water after the submarine had disappeared.

Turner and Bennett were patrolling together, when they sighted the U-boat wake six miles away. Bennett flew over the U-boat to attract the flak, while Turner made three attacks with the gun registering seven hits. During the third attack all flak from the U-boat ceased, and as it crash-dived, badly damaged, a patch of brown oil appeared on the surface of the water.

An enemy fighter was shot out of the sky when hit by a shell from the gun early in March, when two big gun Mosquitos and four fighters sighted off the Spanish coast a fully surfaced U-boat escorted by four destroyers and eight Ju.88s.

During a furious battle in low cloud two Ju.88s were seen to crash into the sea.

As Wing Commander A.D. Phillips, D.S.O., D.F.C., the then Commanding Officer of the "Big Gun" Mosquito Detachment, who led the formation, broke away from attacking the U-boat he could see a Ju. through his sights and opened fire with the six pounder at a mile range. A shell blew the port engine out of the Ju. which crashed into the sea. All our Mosquitos returned safely to base.

Soon after the gun had been tried out successfully in November, these Mosquitos were assigned a special task. Landing craft which were being brought across the Atlantic from America to Britain for the invasion of Europe ran into heavy seas. A landing craft was abandoned and drifted towards the French coast. But it was attacked by the Mosquitos and left in a sinking condition before the enemy could seize it and learn some of our invasion secrets.

The gun marks the latest stage in R.A.F. Coastal Command's successful war against the U-boats. Firstly, the aircraft chased the submarines from our shipping lanes close in to the British coast, causing them to seek the wide expanses of the Atlantic ocean. Then, day and night, long range aircraft hunted the U-boats in the Atlantic. Exhausted and battered, the U-boats

/returned

Flying Officer D.J. TURNER, D.F.C. was before the war a police constable in Hornchurch (Romford Division). Born in Wellingborough, Northants, where his mother and father live; he went to school at Kettering Grammar School and Cambridge County High School. He is married and has two children, a boy and a girl. He joined the R.A.F.V.R. in 1941, went to U.S. to train as a pilot, returned to this country in July, 1942, and began operations with Coastal Command in January 1943. With his navigator, Flying Officer D.Curtis, D.F.C., of Torquay, he has taken part in 15 anti-U-boat and shipping strikes. Flying Officer A.H. Hilliard is married and is, in civil life, a compositor. Born in St. Albans he joined the R.A.F.V.R., in 1941, trained in Southern Rhodesia, returned to Britain in March, 1942 and began Coastal Command operations in December 1942. His navigator is Warrant Officer J.B. Hoyle, aged 22, of Hadfield Street, Walkley.

Flying Officer B.C. Roberts, D.F.C. born at Overton, Hants, was at school at Whitchurch, Hampshire. He joined the R.A.F.V.R. in October, 1940 and trained in Canada, and returned to Britain in January, 1942. He began Coastal operations in October, 1942. His navigator is Warrant Officer P.G. Winsor, aged 21, of Umfreville Road, Harringay, London, N.4.

Flying Officer A.L. Bonnett and his navigator, Flying Officer A.M. McNichol were killed when their aircraft collided in mid-air with the Mosquito piloted by Wing Commander Phillips, and crashed into the sea in June.

Wing Commander Phillips one of the leading Coastal Command shipping strike leaders, was killed in July when his aircraft was hit by flak attacking a tanker and motor vessel south of Brest and crashed in a field.

Pictures available at B.I.P.F.A. and P.N.A.
