



U.S.S. Quincy and Transport "Quincy" off South America. If the Panama Canal were stopped the Navy would have to round Cape Horn (9,000 added miles)

Is America Safe?

By FRAZIER HUNT

IN THIS war-ridden world millions of Americans are asking if America is prepared to meet military attack.

We have a long and vulnerable coast line to defend. We are envied and hated by nations that desire certain of our possessions. The crux of our vulnerability is the Panama Canal. Without it, we would be quickly crippled. Is it properly protected? How long will it take to give it the protection it needs?

To answer these questions, and many others that will be obvious as you read, we asked Frazier Hunt, famous war correspondent, to make a thorough study of American defense, and to tell the blunt truth to our readers. This is the first of a series of articles that will lift the curtain on the facts about our Navy, our Air Corps and our Army. It should be of vital interest to every one of our one hundred and thirty million citizens.

—THE EDITOR

WHAT does America need in order to make herself reasonably safe?

What has she now to defend herself with, in a world that understands only force?

Let us for the moment stop being self-satisfied sentimentalists, and be cold-blooded realists. Let's consider these facts:

Our total army of some 400,000 regulars and National Guard troops is no larger than that of tiny Finland; it is less than one-fifth the Polish army that was crushed and demoralized in seventeen days by the German war machine; it is no more than a third the size of the Chinese army that faced the Japanese invasion two years ago.

Our navy is a splendid fighting force, but half its ships are now over-age; many ships now building will not be complete until 1944; and, even in 1944, there will be very definite limits to what we can expect our Navy to accomplish.

And today, added to the threat of war on land or sea, is the greater threat of war in the air. Long-range bombers are casting their ominous black shadows far in front of them, and we begin to realize that our old ocean

security will be weakened and possibly gone forever.

Our "empire" stretches from the Atlantic a full 10,000 miles westward to the Philippines.

We are rich, proud, and always right — and enjoy sticking our nose in other people's business. Sooner or later that may lead to trouble.

Well, just how do we stand in this world of force and arms? We have no way of foretelling how the present war may end, or what its peace consequences may be. It is conceivable that a group of more or less unfriendly powers may emerge all-powerful and victorious. Part of the peace settlement might be the ceding of some of the French or British Caribbean islands, or British or French or Dutch Guiana, to these unfriendly powers. Any one of the islands is only a bomber-hop from the Panama Canal. Or it might be that a part of eastern Canada would be the price of peace. That would put enemy bombers within striking distance of our great Eastern cities and industrial centers.

What would we be able to do about it? Could we defend our rights, and our hemi-

sphere, against a combination of victorious and unfriendly powers?

To answer that question, our first job is to consider the United States Navy — America's traditional first line of defense. How big is it? How big should it be? How wide a field can it cover — and defend?

IN 1921 our statesmen and well-wishers destroyed a quarter of a billion dollars worth of fighting ships — sunk them without trace. Then for the next eleven years we coasted along on the promise of a world at peace. During the eleven years of our naval holiday we laid down a grand total of thirty-six ships; against 156 by Japan and 123 by England.

Then we put a sailor in the White House. He realized the importance of adequate defense in an upside-down world, but he quickly had his ears knocked back when he tried to modernize our Army. He did better with the Navy. In his first year in office the President allocated \$238,000,000 from emergency funds for the construction of thirty-two ships. The next year the Vinson-Trammell Act gave us ninety-four additional ships, forty-five of which are now in service and the rest still building. Then in May, 1938, came the billion-dollar naval building program. To date this vast program — for which only \$70,000,000 has, up to this present Congress, been actually appropriated — has given us a grand addition of exactly two oil tankers, purchased ready-built. But new fighting ships will begin to appear this year, and by 1944 the billion dollars' worth will be in service.

But ships, like men, grow old. A submarine is ready for the scrap heap after thirteen years. A battleship lasts for twenty-six years. It can be modernized, but it is still nothing but a rebuilt job.

Today we have fifteen battleships. One is already over-age; two will become over-age this year, and four more in 1942. That means that seven of the fifteen great ships of our battle line are, or soon will be, obsolete. Of the remaining eight the two newest are sixteen years old, the next two are eighteen, and the rest still older. It is a proud but aging fleet that guards our ocean ramparts.

Now we have eight beautiful battleships in the building. Two of them are 45,000-ton ships, and they will cost around \$90,000,000 each. When they are finally commissioned

they will be the most powerful battlewagons in the world. In 1944, when this billion-dollar program is completed, what will be our strength in modern, *under-age* ships? We will then have the following *under-age* ships:

16 battleships
45 cruisers
150 destroyers
56 submarines
8 aircraft carriers
3,000 active Navy planes

That's the picture for 1944. Only the British Navy of that date will equal it in size and fighting strength — and even Britain won't if her fleet is whittled down by the war. Our Navy will be some thirty per cent larger than the Japanese, and will be the equal of the German and Italian navies combined.

And if the appropriations being asked for at this session of Congress go through, we should have in the latter forties three additional aircraft carriers, eight more cruisers, large numbers of additional submarines and auxiliaries and an air strength double the 3,000 planes projected. As this is written it is impossible to tell what new warships will be authorized. There is talk that bigger warships may be built in smaller number — and of fast, heavily-gunned cruisers of 12,000 to 20,000 tons or more.

THE figures given above, let it be understood, do not take into account the over-age or reconditioned ships that may still be in service for patrol and training purposes — or auxiliaries such as sub-chasers and small torpedo boats. Nor do they reflect the status of our Merchant Marine, so essential for supply and transport in time of war. Under the United States Maritime Commission eighty-six new ships — over 1,000,000 tons — have been added. But still more ships and more trained men are needed for a merchant marine adequate for a nation at war.

But let's concentrate on the figures for the Navy itself. Assume that the present naval building program is pushed through to completion in 1944. Will that give us a big enough navy for our probable needs? And just what are our probable needs? Who is threatening us — and where? And what's all this talk about a two-ocean Navy?

You have been reading a lot about a two-

(Continued on page 6)