

Atomic Submarine Costs Seen Deterrent To Early Purchase

By DAVE MCINTOSH
Canadian Press Staff Writer
OTTAWA (CP)—The Canadian navy won't get any atomic submarines at least until the price comes down, informants said Tuesday.

In the meantime, the navy plans to place increasing emphasis on the helicopter as an anti-submarine weapon.

A proportion of its 20 new destroyers—12 have been commissioned—will be fitted to carry at least one helicopter and the aircraft carrier Bonaventure may eventually carry more "choppers" than she does now.

Estimated cost of the U.S. Skipjack class atomic submarine is between \$50,000,000 and \$55,000,000 and of the Triton class some \$100,000,000.

TWO EXPENSIVE

Even the lower figure is too expensive for the Canadian government. In any event, naval officers say, the atomic submarine is incapable of undertaking the whole anti-submarine task.

The navy's study of the possibility of building atomic submarines in this country is continuing but as yet there has been no recommendation one way or the other. A final report will be delayed until the cost decreases appreciably.

The question of air defence of the fleet now is under study and the decision may be not to replace the carrier-borne Banshee jet fighter planes when they become obsolete.

The navy may decide to use a

surface-to-air missile for fleet air defence or it may accept the risk of no air defence at all to enable the Bonaventure to carry more helicopters and anti-submarine Tracker aircraft.

CONVERT DESTROYERS

In any case, some of the new destroyers will be fitted with helicopter platforms. This may mean conversion of some of the new destroyers already in service but no drastic changes would be required. Conversion will be carried out gradually.

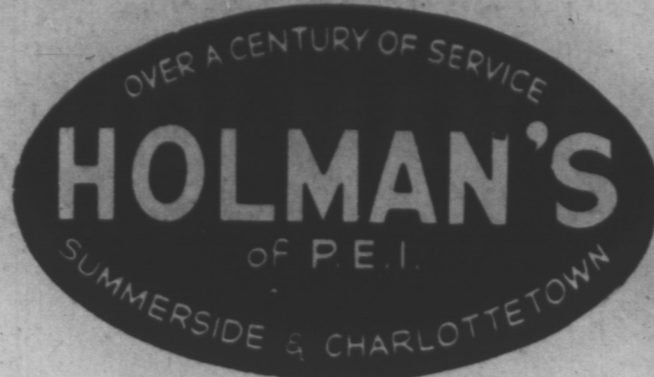
The navy has been experimenting with the helicopter as an anti-submarine weapon since 1955.

The chopper's advantages are its range, its dunking sonar and its ability to carry a homing torpedo. The dunking sonar is simply underwater detection gear lowered into the water by the hovering helicopter.

The navy has no present plan for more tanker supply ships beyond the one announced last month in the government white paper on defence. This matter, however, will be considered in the future after the navy has had experience with the first 22,000-ton supply vessel, which will enable the fleet to remain at sea for longer periods of time.

There's little doubt the Canadian navy would like to have some atomic submarines. But it can do only so much with its limited financial and manpower resources. The navy has only 20,000 personnel to keep 45 warships and five squadrons of aircraft in operation.

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