ISLAND BOMBARDED IN NAVY WAR GAME

Live Shells, Bombs and Rockets 'Soften' Vieques, Near Puerto Rico, for Landing Today

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Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

ON BOARD, U.S.S. POCONO, Vieques Island, March 1—The steep tree-covered slopes of Mount Jalobre and the tropic-green hills and valleys of eastern Vieques were cratered by live shells, bombs and rockets this morning as the Navy commenced its greatest post-war amphibious exercises.

Used in today's air-gunfire rehearsal for tomorrow's landing were the sixteen-inch guns of the "Mighty Mo"—the great battleship Missouri—500 and 1,000 pound bombs dropped by Naval planes, rockets and napalm incendiary bombs.

The Atlantic Fleet, under Admiral W. H. P. Blandy, sent more than 100 ships, some 35,000 men and several hundred planes into action against the island, which is east of Puerto Rico.

Several thousand marines and Army troops from Puerto Rico and Panama clambered down cargo nets into landing craft. Wave after wave of small boats, led by LCI's and patrol craft, scuttled across the shining sea from the outer transport area 6,500 yards off the beach.

The soldiers and marines did not actually land today, but turned back 1,000 yards off the beaches as the guns of the Missouri, three cruisers and numerous destroyers thundered on their flanks.

Necessary safety restrictions and limitations on ammunition expenditures reduced to some extent the realism of the exercise, and the whole "show"—which in wartime might have extended through several days—was compressed into about two hours.

The air-gun fire rehearsal was centered around Mount Jalobre—a thickly wooded hill about 400 feet high on the eastern part of Vieques. The theoretical landing beaches were on either flank of Mount Jalobre, which is also called Mount Matias, and a three-mile stretch of southern coast was liberally plastered with bombs, rockets, shells and machine gun fire.

The rehearsal started about a minute late when a Douglas AD-1 attack plane dropped a smoke bomb to mark the aiming point. Other Douglas planes — their fuselage dive brakes set—screamed out of the high cloudy skies to the westward, dove down through thin wisps of clouds and dropped their 1,000-pound bombs.

Aboard the Pocono—some 3,000 yards off the beaches—were Secretary of the Navy John L. Sullivan, Gen. Jacob L. Devers, Gen. J. Lawton Collins and other distinguished observers.

When the attack planes finished their fifteen-minute "softening," four rocket ships, with a capacity of some 5,000 rockets apiece, opened up. Their five-inch rockets streaked like fiery meteors into the sunlit sky, with a great screeching "whoosh."

The Missouri, three light cruisers and eight destroyers joined the measured cacophony; then gunfire ceased and fifty-two naval fighters dropped 500-pound bombs and napalm incendiaries on the area.

Some of the incendiaries missed the shore and dropped in the water; one of them literally set the a ablaze as the jellied gasoline floating on the surface flamed and flared.

The crescendo was reached about 9:18 A. M. when the boat waves—loaded with troops—crossed the line-of-departure headed for the beach. The Missouri unlimbered her sixteen-inchers, and in nine minutes the empty beaches and the hills behind them were ploughed and pocked by twenty-seven sixteen-inch shells, 1,634 five-inch shells and 2,800 five-inch rockets. The sixteen-inchers burst in great geysers of flame and smoke that soon obscured the foreshore.

More shells and rockets, more air strikes and a final "curtain act" by smoke-laying planes completed the largest live ammunition "shoot" in the Navy's simulated war.

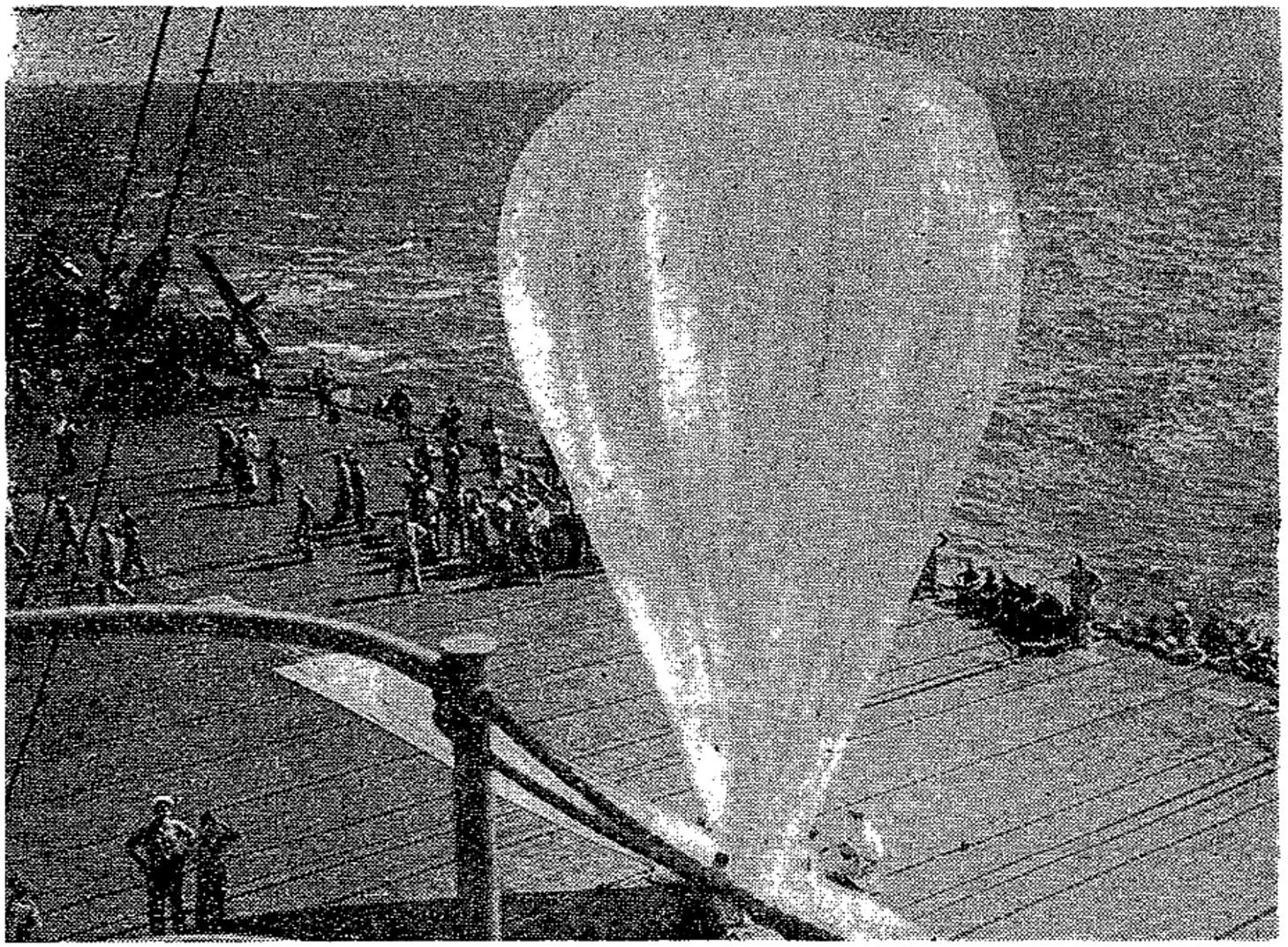
The exercise this morning was intended to train the Atlantic Fleet in the coordination of an amphibious landing with air and gunfire support. An amphibious landing is perhaps the most difficult of all military problems; success depends upon precision.

Admiral Blandy and the other observers agreed that this morning's exercise was not precise, although the timing was on the whole good—and except for some of the Navy planes the fleet appeared considerably better trained than it was a year ago.

Both air and submarine "attacks" against the invading fleet continued yesterday and today, and more surface ships were adjudged "sunk" by the subs. One submarine—a guppy-snorkel type, the Trumpetfish — was actually damaged when she collided while underwater with the surface cargo ship Marquette.

There were no personnel casualties and the Trumpetfish, with some topside damage, is returning to the United States for repairs.

THE NAVY TESTS COSMIC RAYS WITH HIGH ALTITUDE BALLOONS



Project designated "Operation Skyhook" is launched from aircraft carrier Saipan while en route to training cruise in Guantanamo Bay. The plastic balloons reached an altitude exceeding 90,000 feet in the Caribbean area as part of the cosmic ray research work being carried out under the direction of the Office of Naval Research. Here the balloon is being made ready for launching.

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