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Sir,

ENEMY RAIDER OPERATIONS IN INDIAN AND PACIFIC OCEANS.

I am directed to advise, for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that the Australian Naval Board have given considerable thought to the policy to be adopted in connection with action against Raiders in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The following lessons have been learnt from recent attacks on shipping in these areas:-

- (a) Enemy ships chosen as raiders appear to be fast, perhaps 18 to 20 knots, and so the ordinary merchant ship has little chance of escape once it has been sighted.
- (b) Slow Armed Merchant Cruisers are of little value in bringing these raiders into action.
- (c) Most of the attacks in the area under consideration have been carried out clear of the focal areas on the trade routes some distance to seaward.

2. In this connection, the following two proposals suggest themselves:-

Proposal "A": That a certain number of fast vessels should be given an armament which would enable them to engage a raider of the "ALTMARK" type, but which would not materially reduce their cargo carrying capacity. If this be practicable, these vessels should produce an element of surprise similar to "Q" ships, but more difficult to counter, and they would form a means of protection not only to themselves but to other vessels in the same area. The most suitable ships would seem to be fast liners built to carry about 12 passengers, i.e. Blue Star Line or Port Line, as the passenger accommodation could be used for the necessary additional naval personnel.

3. Most of these ships now carry 1 - 6" and an H/A gun, and it is suggested that at least 4 more 6" guns should be mounted, giving a broadside of three.

4. The loss of cargo carrying capacity on account of stiffening would not be great, and guns could be camouflaged as much as possible. The cost and time required to fit out would not be excessive if electric wiring were kept down to a minimum.

5. No built-in magazines, but ready-use lockers to contain up to about 40 rounds per gun, and reasonable fire control arrangements could be fitted.

Personnel:

6. Two Naval Officers as Gun Control Officer and O.O.O. with two or three ratings as nucleus crew for each gun, say about 15 to 20 in all, ship's ordinary complement to make up numbers at each gun as far as they go. The ship could be classed as a Fleet