

Klein-Schnellboote – Leichte Schnellboote LS3

HSK Kormoran carried a small motor torpedo boat type of craft known as a Leichte Schnellboote or light speedboat. The vessel was designated LS3 and was armed with a 20 mm gun in a perspex turret and carried four TMB type mines which could be laid through the bottom of the boat as long as the boat was traveling slowly. The following is an extract which describes the vessels dimensions, speed and endurance.

“Fast Fighting Boats 1870-1945” Published in 1978.

Klein-Schnellboote (small high speed coastal craft)

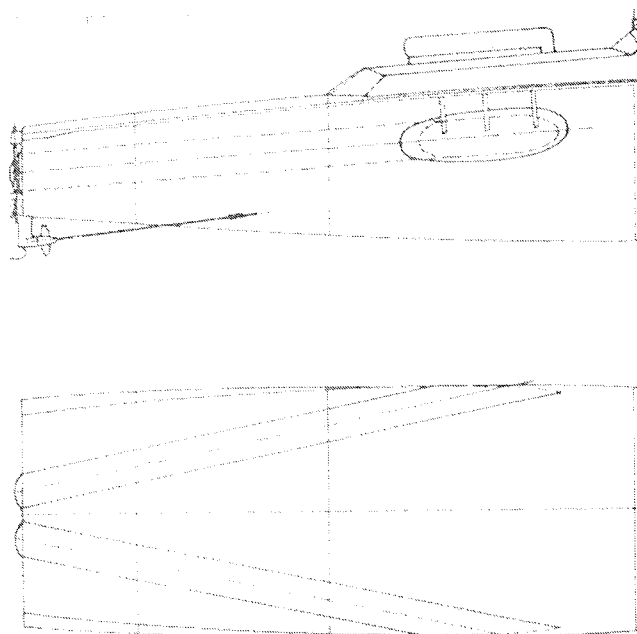
The LS Boats.

In 1936 Supreme Command was requested to recommence development of a Klein-Schnellboote to be carried aboard all cruisers and raiders in place of the usual naval pinnace, to be used when they were on long-distance raiding operations or to capture enemy vessels. A design similar to the German I.M. boat of World War I for a 20metre wood and light metal composite built boat with one bow torpedo tube was rejected by the fleet as being too unhandy for the intended aims, especially as regards hoisting aboard and lowering at sea.

Although the fleet's interest declined at first after this rather unsatisfactory outcome the naval architect H. Docter. Wjp was deeply concerned in the development of German Schnellboote and personally, extremely interested in building fast motor boats, took on this rather unusual task. The required and necessary restriction to 10-11 tons weight and 12-15 metres length called for comprehensive comparative testing of different hulls, power units and armament. Only a Vee-bottomed planing hull was possible in view of the size. Alternative materials were the proven wood and light metal of the larger boats, light metal mainly riveted, or an entirely welded V2A steel, stainless steel, with which Docter had already become acquainted and found practical when used for pioneer tugs for foreign contractors. Light metal or V2A steel would save about 1 ton or 10% over composite construction but as thin plates were essential welding would cause distortion and, later, sea damage would cause buckling between the frames, leading to increased hydrodynamic drag which would be considerable at speed. In contrast, the wooden skin of composite boats would 'give' and not distort, consequently producing less drag, but, as weight was the prime consideration for these boats, designs were based on entirely metal construction.

As to power it was obvious that the light fast diesel already used in larger boats was preferable, but the MAN and Mercedes-Benz engines available at this time were too heavy for this small vessel so the preliminary design was based on two American 600 hp, Packard petrol V engines weighing 1.2 tons each, in anticipation of the future availability of a diesel engine of suitable power and weight. This could be expected later in view of the high standing of the German engine industry. As to weapons the alternatives were bow and stern torpedo tubes and one 53.3cm, or two 45.7cm, tubes were investigated. The fleet's tactical requirement for firing dead ahead would be difficult because the centre of gravity would lie so far forward, causing the boat to be down by the head unless she were designed very full forward which, in turn, would lead to poor seakeeping qualities. The lesser explosive charge on one 45.7cm, caliber torpedo would allow two tubes and torpedoes to be carried, improving the chances of a hit. The decision was made eventually to install two 45.7cm stern torpedo tubes.

Further questions arose as to whether the torpedoes should be fired head first from the stern after turning the boat's head away from the target, or whether they should be launched tail first, to run beneath the boat as it turned away from the enemy. The second method, used successfully by the World War I CMBs and later by the Klein-Schnellboote was preferable from the weight aspect, but was ruled out at the time by the torpedo experimental division because the torpedo launched tail first might run into its parent due to the great variation in depth after German torpedoes had been launched. The torpedo experimental division therefore suggested a very interesting compromise, taking into account design requirements for a stern lay-out, tactical requirements for firing ahead, and the torpedo's depth problems, by installing tubes aft which would fire at an angle of 20° . The fleet turned down the idea of hinged ports just above the water line which could be raised for firing.



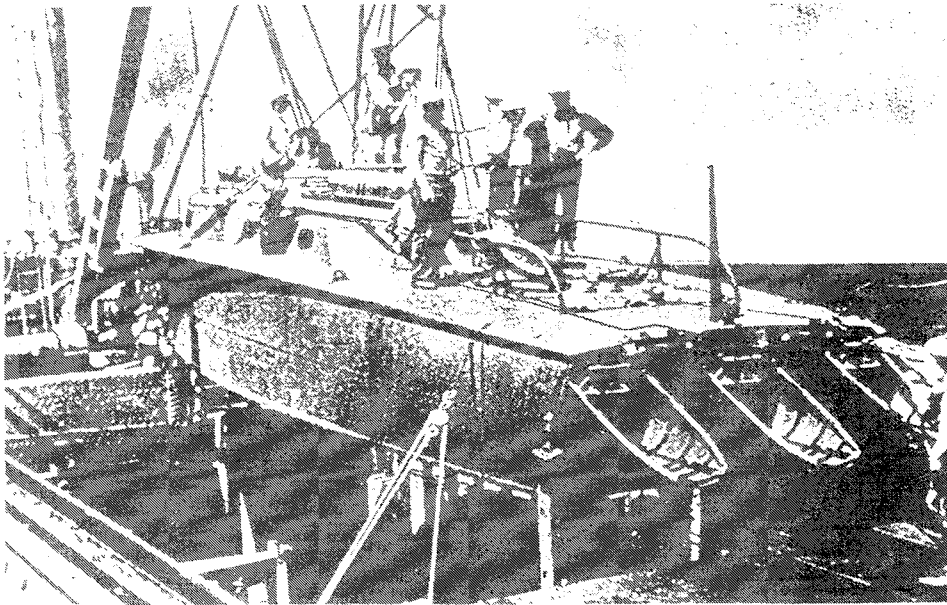
The torpedo research department's suggested layout for LS boat torpedo tubes.

At the end of 1938 two experimental boats were ordered, LS 1, a composite-built carvel boat of diagonal mahogany and light metal from Naglo's works in Berlin, and LS 2, an entirely light metal boat from Dornier's yard in Friedrichshafen on the Bodensee, a firm which had first built flying-boats and later had great experience of building light metal high-speed seagoing vessels. The dimensions were: length over deck 12.50m, LWL 12.16m, maximum beam 3.46m, moulded beam 3.30m, freeboard forward 1.45m freeboard amidships 1.27m, freeboard aft 0.77m, moulded depth amidships 1.94m, hull draft 0.77m, extreme draft including propeller and rudder 0.92m, designed displacement 1.5 tons, complement 9.

The diesel engines ordered from Daimler-Benz and required to produce a maximum output of 850hp at 2200rpm were not available for the two experimental boats at the time, so two Junkers 700hp, 6-cylinder opposed piston two-stroke aero diesel engines of the Jumo 203 type were ordered to enable basic trials to be started. Range was expected to be 300 miles at 30 knots. On the outbreak of war in 1939 building of both boats was stopped, but work on the engines and gears was pursued.

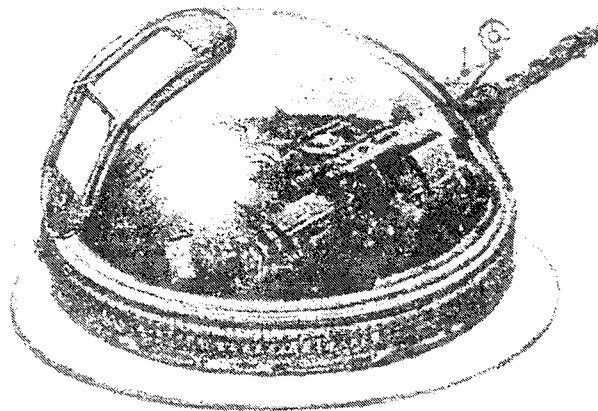
At the beginning of 1940 interest reawoke in *LS 1* and *LS 2*, the Klein-Schnellboote which had been laid aside on the outbreak of war. The composite-built *LS 1* was made available for alternative use because the hull was so heavy but *LS 2*, built entirely of light metal by Dornier's was completed rapidly and shipped aboard the armed merchant raider HSK 7 *Komet* as the *Meteorit*.

Those responsible for torpedo and torpedo tube construction stated that they were unable to complete in time the 45 cm. equipment specified in the design, which differed from the standard 53.3 cm. calibre so the boat was equipped as a fast minelayer carrying magnetic TMB mines, to be laid off harbour entrances. After preliminary tests with a full scale wooden model, three tubes, which could be closed by flanges, were added alongside each other in the stern compartment (Photo 141); the mines, which were carried on rollers, fell out when the fastenings had been slipped.



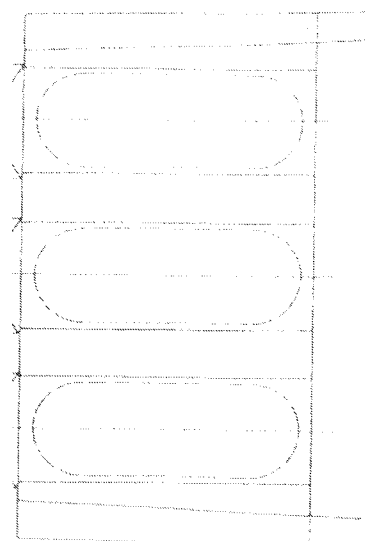
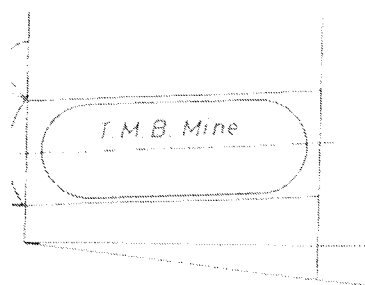
German Klein-Schnellboote LS2 showing mine releasing chutes.

Two 20mm. canon with aircraft Drehkranz mountings and perspex domes were fitted for self defence.

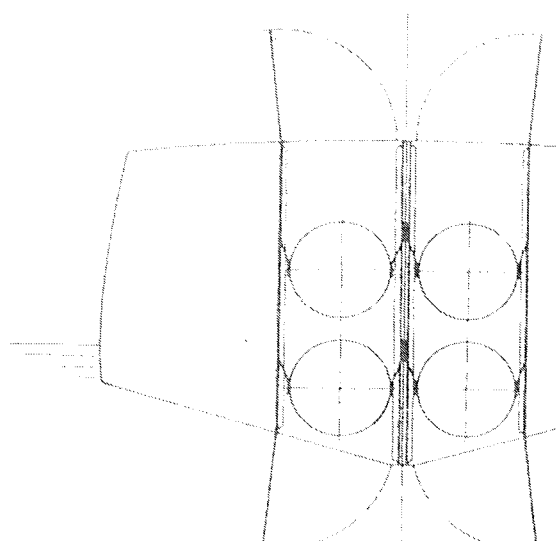
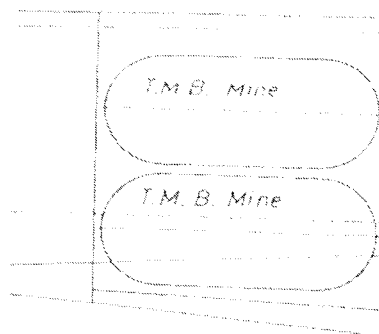


The boat was taken over on 2 June 1940, but the tall, narrow Junkers aero engines proved troublesome during trials. Junkers' request that the engines and their transmission should be given sprung suspension proved unfeasible, and the engines had to be fixed firmly to base plates. Although it was felt, then, that propulsion problems could be eliminated, when trouble recurred later aboard the raider, it could not be cured with the equipment on board, which led to the total failure of the boat.

Four more boats, *LS 3-6*, were ordered as minelayers from the Dornier yard in early 1940. The engines originally intended for *LS 1* and *2* were available for *LS 3* and *4*. Daimler-Benz light diesels MB 507 that had just been developed for this type of boat, V 12-cylinder four-stroke engines of 850hp. at 2200rpm., weighing only 1100kg., that is 1.3kg. per hp., complete with the Stockicht reverse and reduction gear were comparatively quiet, short, and light with a low centre of gravity. To save weight they were started by a cartridge and only one engine per boat was to be fitted with reverse gear. The transmission ratio of 2200 engine rpm. to 3300 propeller rpm. was selected by the designer, Ober-Ingenieur Docter, in spite of outside opinion on propeller performance, because satisfactory performance could be obtained at even higher propeller revolutions in racing boats, and because high propeller revolutions permitted the use of smaller, and therefore lighter propellers smaller diameter shafts, smaller propeller struts and bearings to the benefit of both resistance and weight.



Mine laying arrangements for the German Klein-Schnellboote LS2



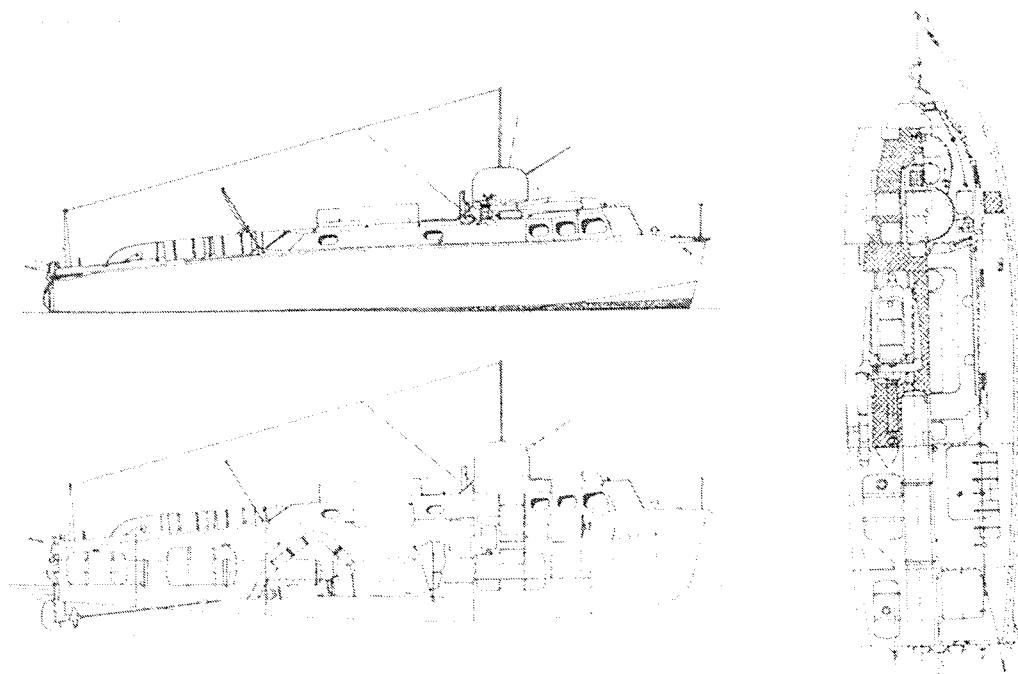
Mine laying arrangements for the German Klein-Schnellboote LS3.

LS 3 was given new mine gear so that she could carry four mines instead of *LS 2*'s three, two mines supported by straps hanging horizontally above each other in two parallel shafts positioned further forward in the boat (Fig 119).

The mines were loaded through two hatches on deck, and dropped through opening traps in the bottom by slipping the straps from the engine room, the moment for them to be dropped being indicated from the bridge by a signal light. To prevent the mines shifting in a seaway they were held tightly by means of a spindle in the engine room until just before being dropped. Although the traps in the bottom were strong enough to be opened at 20 knots, the mines could not be dropped at speeds over 14 knots without damaging the rudder and propeller.

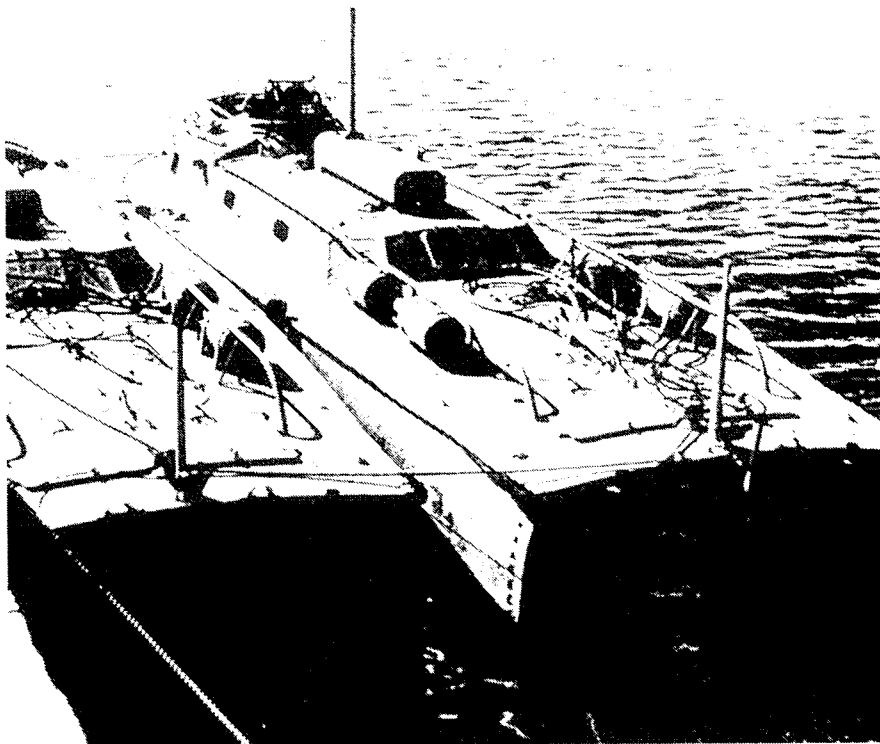
LS 3 was delivered on 14 October 1940. Like all later boats she only had one 20mm. cannon on the bridge with a Drehkranz mounting covered by a perspex dome. Although the mine-laying equipment proved entirely satisfactory on trials, the boat only made 38 knots instead of the expected 42. Due to the low pitch propeller the governor on the engines became operative at too low revolutions. A suitable propeller could not be obtained quickly, but the speed achieved seemed adequate for mine laying, so *LS 3* was shipped aboard the armed merchant raider *HKS 8 Kormoran* according to plan.

LS 4, delivered on 5 July, was the first to be given two 45cm. stern torpedo tubes as designed (Photo 142) and thus fulfilled the original concept (Fig 120). She achieved her designed speed after extended trials with different 0.48m. diameter propellers, making 42.5 knots over the Neukruger mile off Pillau in January 1942. She carried radio, DF apparatus and emergency sails in case of need. She could maintain top speed up to wind force 4, and was shipped aboard the armed merchant raider *Michel* as the *Esau*.



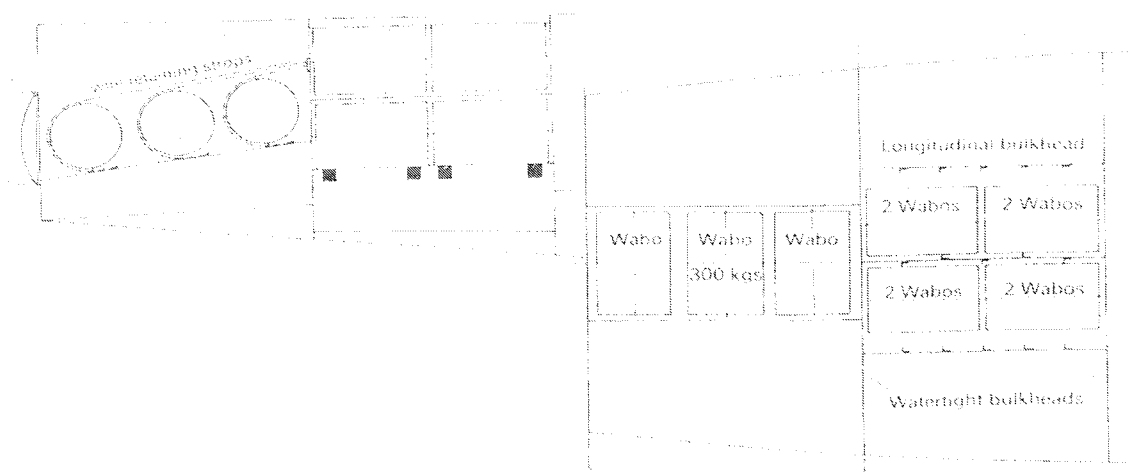
German Klein_Schnellboote type LS. LOA 12.50m, max beam 3.46m, draught 0.77m
 Displacement 11.50 tons, 2x850 hp, 42.5 knots, 2x45cm torpedo tubes, 1x20mm cannon.

As no more Daimler-Benz engines were available at first the next boats, *LS 5* and *6*, had to have Junkers aero engines again, to which improvements had been made in view of previous difficulties. On OKM's instructions both vessels were reconverted for anti-submarine duties in the Aegean and Mediterranean because they could be transported by t--- at no great expense. They were too small for submarine locating apparatus to be fitted so were to be used purely to carry depth charges. The medium-sized Raumboot M (23 tons, 12 knots) was to carry locating gear, and all the vessels would have operated jointly when submarine hunting.



German Klein-Schnellboote *LS 5* and *6*, fitted for dropping depth charges.

The two *LS* boats (Photo 143) were given a launching tracks in the stern compartment, which could be closed off by ports in the transom; three depth charges were held in place on this track by wire strops which could be released from the deck (Fig 121).



Depth charge launching arrangements for Klein-Schnellbootes *LS 5* and *6*.

Eight reserve depth charges lay just forward in two wells, stowed on transverse support beams, and could be hoisted with lifting gear to be loaded onto the launching tracks through the deck hatch. Tests gave a minimum speed of – knots when dropping depth charges. However, MR 7, the locating vessel essential for submarine hunting, was transferred to the Black Sea instead of the Mediterranean, so the entire anti-submarine plan fell through, and the LS boats delivered on 15 October 1941, were used instead for ---- communication and courier work between the Greek mainland, Crete and the Aegean islands. The Junkers engines were not well suited to marine use and more trouble appeared after about six months service, so the boats were returned to the yard for a basic overhaul, the opportunity being taken to remove the unused depth charge gear. A plan to keep both boats in Germany for training future LS crews was frustrated by the objections of the C-in-C Aegean who urgently needed the boats due to the utterly inadequate vessels in his Command which consisted solely of captured craft.

LS 7-14 were ordered from Dornier's in the spring of 1942 with Daimler-Benz MB 507 engines and stern torpedo tubes. They differed from their predecessors in that instead of the lowering mast abaft the bridge an aerial support was fitted to the machine gun dome (see Fig 120) so that the radio could be used when on alert or during an engagement. The two floating smoke buoys were retained to starboard of the after deck, but the two port side buoys were replaced by a fixed smoke generator with a nozzle on the stern and the 20mm. cannon was replaced by the new 15mm. Luftwaffe AA machine gun with an electrically operated dome and an electrically raised barrel. The higher initial velocity and rate of fire, belt-feed, and the greater number of rounds fired due to the smaller weight of the ammunition offset completely the disadvantage of the small calibre.

The first boat of the series, *LS 7*, was not finished until 8 October 1943 due to numerous building delays, and the last, *LS 12*, was delivered on 12 July 1944. *LS 7-11* were transported to the Aegean, but *LS 12* was stopped in Yugoslavia and returned to Germany where she was allocated to the Torpedo Versuchsanstalt for experimental firing duties (TVA, torpedo experimental department). After the war she was handed over to the Russians as spoils of war. A contract given in the spring of 1943 for a further twenty-two boats, *LS 13-34*, and a contract for a total of 100 engines from Daimler-Benz never got going. The hulls of *LS 13-18*, which fell in French hands as booty in 1945, were competed for France and the remainder of the contract was cancelled. All in all the LS (Leicht-Schnellboote or light Schnellboote) was technically noteworthy and interesting and so was the ---ersion to turn of the century plans for carrying torpedo boats aboard larger vessels, but with a thoroughly convincing new look, working from armed merchant raiders disguised up to the last moment. However, as the mass of boats originally proposed for this operational use were not available at the right time, or were not suitably equipped, they were allotted for tasks to which they were only partially suited."

Senate Inquiry 1997-1998.

The results of the Senate Inquiry held during 1997-1998 had the following to say about the *LS3* boat carrier by the *Kormoran*.

"The Leichtes Schnellboot (Light Speed Boat)

- 5.70 Several submissions examined the possible role of the Leichtes Schnellboot (*LS-3*), *Kormoran*'s mine-laying speedboat which was 'specially constructed of light metal'⁹⁸

and 'was 41 feet long, weighed 11 and a half tons and was capable of at least 45 knots'⁹⁹. It was armed with two mines able to be discharged vertically through tubes on the stern; plans for these type of vessels to carry two to four torpedoes were made but not implemented for this version (LS-4 on the raider *Michel* did carry torpedoes)¹⁰⁰. It is important to note that this vessel was not a motor torpedo boat, as a number of submissions called it, it was not equipped with torpedoes, but rather with mines¹⁰¹.

- 5.71 A number of theories were put forward about the LS-3's possible involvement in the events of November 1941:

LS-3 was laying mines in *Sydney*'s path, two of which exploded, thereby explaining the inconsistency in accounts by some on how many torpedoes struck *Sydney*¹⁰².

LS-3 was used to tow some of *Kormoran*'s lifeboats after the ship was scuttled (according to Mr Eagles until the morning of 22 November when the LS-3 was itself scuttled), thereby explaining the speed with which the survivors apparently reached the Western Australian coast¹⁰³. It is also claimed that the towing would explain why some of the Germans were reported as being clean-shaven and in good condition when rescued:¹⁰⁴ and

The LS-3 was used to trail *Sydney* survivors in the water, allowing the Germans to dispose of those who remained from *Sydney*'s crew¹⁰⁵.

- 5.72 Mr Eagles is convinced that the role of LS-3 has been insufficiently examined to date, and believes that there exist many compelling reasons why Captain Detmers may have used LS-3¹⁰⁶. Mr Eagles told the Committee that;

Detmers was a torpedo boat captain. He was a torpedo specialist, although the motor torpedo boat was not armed with torpedoes. I believe that his two assets, the things that he knew most about – the motor torpedo boat and under-water torpedoes – are the two things that he would have used...¹⁰⁷

- 5.73 Mr Eagles feels that during the interrogations of Captain Detmers and his crew, insufficient questions were asked about the significance of the LS3¹⁰⁸. He believes that the *Leichtes Schnellboot* was laying mines near *Sydney*. He suggested that the inconsistency regarding the torpedo strikes on *Sydney* may be explained by the theory that LS-3 was using magnetic mines to force *Sydney* to turn, and that two mines exploded. Mr Eagles further suggests that the reason for the battle taking place 300 miles off the coast was that this was the limit of the LS-3's range, and that Captain Detmers had calculated this on the grounds that LS-3 might be needed to tow survivors to shore.¹⁰⁹ Mr Eagles also maintains that part of the reason for secrecy about the role of the speedboat was 'not to attract any importance to it. They [*Kormoran*] were the first to use the LS boat'.¹¹⁰ This however, ignores the fact that other raiders already operating were fitted with similar boats.¹¹¹

- 5.74 In his submission to the inquiry, Mr Michael Montgomery supported the second of Mr Eagles's claims, but with an apparently different destination for the LS-3. He stated that:

Looking at a plot of the positions in which the *Kormoran* lifeboats were found, one is immediately struck by the greater distance – at least 80km – covered by the two which made land at 17-mile Well and Red Bluff. My book includes a photograph of the pile of stores landed at the latter far in excess of what one would expect to be contained in a boat already crammed with 57 men – while one of the survivors at the former indicated that they had been beached there the previous day – ie the 23rd. This necessarily implies that both boats had been assisted by a motorized vessel, possibly the *Kormoran*'s large motor boat which was then scuttled...¹¹²

- 5.75 Mr John McArthur agreed with Mr Eagles and Mr Montgomery, supporting the theory that LS-3 played an important role in the confrontation between Sydney and *Kormoran*. Of concern to Mr McArthur was:

How a heavily laden boat with a lug sail could travel against a strong SE wind and cover such a distance is truly remarkable UNLESS it was towed while having only 40 men and then the occupants of the towing boat ditched their craft and came on board knowing that rescue was only hours away. An explanation [is that it was] the *Leichtschnellboot* from the *Kormoran*. The same boat that Frame ignores completely, Winter says could not have been used, and Detmers conveniently ignores altogether.¹¹³

-
- 5.76 This opinion is supported by LCDR McDonald RAN (Retd) who claimed that 'the "shaven" group collected by *Aquitania* could well have been the crew of the MTB'.¹¹⁴
- 5.77 Contrary to these theories is evidence about the use of the LS-3 from Barbara Winter who notes in her book that the propeller of the boat was damaged in early 1941 and that it was not used after that, and that furthermore the boat was unable to be raised when *Kormoran* was being abandoned.¹¹⁵
- 5.78 It is apparent, however, that the theories of the use of the LS-3 are only speculative, with there being no agreement on whether it towed all of the boats for a period, whether it towed two boats to land (according to Michael Montgomery) or whether it towed the boat that was eventually picked up by the *Aquitania*. The Committee felt that, without any evidence, it was impossible to determine if the LS-3 was used to shadow survivors of the engagement, and kill them as they floated in the water. There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that this occurred, and the continued claims of such behaviour, as with so many unfounded claims about the whole *Sydney-Kormoran* engagement, are both malicious and distressing to family members of those lost on *Sydney*.
- 97 Leichtes Schnellboot 3 was the updated model of the LS-1 and LS-2. See Eagles, Submission p 2365 and p 3618.
- 98 Winter op cit p 26.
- 99 Eagles, Submission p 2365.
- 100 Conways Maritime Press, quoted in Eagles, Submission p 3618. Mr John Doohan, of the End Secrecy on Sydney Group has incorrectly stated that LS-2 and LS-3 were 'exactly the same' (Transcript p 2540. This ignores the different engines used in LS-1 and LS-2, compared with LS-3, and the different fitout for laying of mines.
- 101 For example, Mr James Eagles refers to the vessel as an MTB (motor torpedo boat) although in his submission he acknowledges that the LS-3 did not carry torpedoes (Eagles, Submission p 2394).
- 102 ibid p 2368
- 103 ibid p 2394
- 104 McDonald E, Submission p 553.

- 105 McDonald E, Transcript p 234. McDonald also raises questions about the use of the motor torpedo boat after the battle in a submission (McDonald E, Submission pp 3173-3174).
- 106 Eagles, Submission p 2368.
- 107 Eagles, Transcript, p 565. Barbara Poniewierski states in a submission that the LS-boat on *Kormoran* was equipped to lay mines (not torpedoes) and therefore that the Sydney cannot have been attacked by 'Kormoran's torpedo boat' (Poniewierski, Submission p 316).
- 108 Eagles, Transcript p 568.
- 109 Eagles, Submission p2368
- 110 ibid p 2383
- 111 ibid p 3618
- 112 Montgomery, Submission p 638.
- 113 McArthur, Submission p 2259. In fact, Frame mentions the LS-3 on p 47 of his book, and Detmers refers to it on a number of occasions in his book pp 20 30 38
- 114 McDonald E, Submission p 3174.
- 115 Winter, op cit, pp 58 142

There are a number of reasons why the Committee is wrong in the summing up of the evidence given at the Inquiry. First and foremost is the fact that a third 'lifeboat' was seen near the shore at Red Bluff by searching aircraft and reported but this information wasn't available to us but was to the committee. This craft was seen near the shore and again out at sea but disappeared. This was followed by two of the lifeboats (the only two left at sea) being more crowded than had been earlier reported by searching aircraft. Both boats were very crowded and could not have survived in the weather conditions described by the survivors for the entire boat journey until rescued.

The next thing is the description of the LS3. The boat was designed at a motor torpedo boat and the LS3 was taken to sea before the design was finalized so it was equipped with mines. However, this does not alter the type of craft it was, a vessel is not necessarily classified by its weapon system. For instance, you can have a destroyer equipped in several different ways for several different roles it has to undertake, but it is still classified as a destroyer and the same goes for any other naval vessel. Only someone ignorant of the navy would make this simple error. Conways Maritime Press, Janes and even the Committee described the vessel as a motor torpedo boat. Following that, Oxenbould made the same error that Winter had made in her remarks to the Inquiry in saying that the LS3 had been damaged while being taken aboard *Kormoran* and had swung on the davits and been damaged and never used again. First, this is ridiculous, the LS3 was not lifted aboard the *Kormoran* by the davits at all, only the lifeboats were lifted by the davits. The LS3 was lifted aboard by the ships heavy lifting gear situated both forward and aft of the ship, it was after all, a merchant ship fitted for lifting heavy cargo. Oxenbould aped Winter's comment but should have known better, I cannot believe that an Admiral could make such a stupid remark, unless it was deliberately done to mislead the Committee.

There has never been any satisfactory evidence of any major wreckage or oil found following the loss of two very large ships. The only wreckage, or floatsam, found were rafts and lifejackets, material that would have been collected from a wreck site by survivors and taken with them. The very fact that no major floating wreckage or oil was found proves that the lifeboats were towed away from the battle site and this could only have been done by the LS3. No other boat was capable of doing this. Another error is the remark that the LS3 only had a range of 300 miles. While this is correct it is only correct in that while operating from the *Kormoran*, its range was 300 miles away from the *Kormoran* and 300 miles back. Once

the *Kormoran* sank, the LS3 had an 'endurance' of 600 miles at 30 knots, even further an a more economical speed.

The Committee report states that during the interrogation I believed that the LS3 had been insufficiently questioned. They also state that others were using the LS boats and the Germans had no reason to keep it secret. That is misleading. The people who questioned the Germans did question them about the boat, but the Germans claimed little knowledge or refused to answer questions about it. It was important to keep it secret because the interrogators didn't know to what use the boat was being used. The boat was in fact being used by other raiders, impersonating British vessels and flying the White Ensign, they were ordering ships to stop, claiming to be British patrol boats. That's why it was so important. Even so, while the Archives have the questions listed during the interrogation specifically mentions the mine-laying speedboat, during the Senate hearings the navy representatives from the Sea Power Centre and the Naval Historical Centre, Rear Admiral Oxenbould, Dr David Stevens and Joseph Straczek denied the navy knew anything about the LS3. Even the Committee members were taken by surprise, but later Admiral Oxenbould wrote to the Committee and confirmed that the navy knew nothing about the LS3. Is there little wonder that researchers tend to believe the navy is covering up much of this story.

Remembering that Detmers was the captain previously, of a motor torpedo boat and was a torpedo specialist, why would he not use one of his most expert skills in planning the trap for the *Sydney*, as he himself admitted it had been. As for the interrogations about the LS3:

Barbara Winter writes...

"Information was obtained that there was a large speedboat, and that Schafer was in charge of it. Schafer could say nothing about a speedboat."

"Detmers also willfully misunderstood questions about a speedboat and gave truthful but irrelevant answers about motorized cutters used for transporting supplies. The speedboat was looking very suspicious. Had it been designed for mines or torpedoes? Again the ratings gave information from the make and horsepower of its motors to its mine-laying equipment, and the fact that the thing was too awkward to be launched with their derricks,"

With that remark Winter differs from her book in that now the LS3 was hoisted with the derricks. All of this shows the LS3 was being downplayed. She goes on to say...

"There was trouble, obtaining it, trouble fitting it out and as it turned out, nothing but trouble, when they tried to use it."

After *Kormoran* met *Penguin* on 25 February, 1941, after an attempt to mine Walvis Bay in South Africa she states...

"In calmer seas a few days later, they tested the speedboat. It set out successfully, and its crew under Lt Schafer and Petty Officer Jurgensen took it for an hour-long test run."

“With only a slight swell running, the heavy boat swung and twisted as it was raised. Then one of the falls slipped, The boat crashed stern-first into the side of the ship, damaging the propeller. It was hauled aboard and never used again.”

David Woodward, however, states the boat was unable to be tested because of the weather at Walvis Bay, making no mention of damage....

“This, however, at the first attempt, proved impossible for bad weather prevented the LS boat being used off Walvis Bay.”

Whatever the case may be, Detmers was not the type of sailor to have such an important piece of equipment unserviceable for very long, if indeed it ever was. Detmers was an experienced navy man and his officers ex-merchant navy officers, quite conversant with heavy lifting gear. The ‘falls’ would not have been used to lift the LS3, as Barbara Winter states, when she said it was damaged, because it was stowed in the after hatch amidships.

The damage story is hard to credit especially as Detmers had just been re-supplied and it seems difficult to believe that the boat had not been repaired ever since this was supposed to have happened, nearly a year before. As well as that, it is also hard to credit that there were no spare propeller blades for the LS3, its most vulnerable part.

Detmers, in his own book, when his MTB arrived to be stored in his ships hold he writes...

“One day our fast M.T.B. arrived from Friedrichshafen at last - by train - in charge of Lieutenant Schafer. We took it onboard at once, and it was stowed away in No6. It fitted excellently, but we soon found that the poop just beyond it greatly interfered with launching and stowing away. At first opportunity we tried it out, and we discovered that the launching could be carried out properly only when the ship was fairly still. The motorboat itself was an excellent job, having a speed of twenty-two knots and a range of ten hours. It could carry four mines.”

He is also quoted as saying that when they were first storing their ship prior to departing Germany, fully storing with all of the fuel, provisions, stores, ammunition, torpedoes and explosives that...

“Lighter after lighter was brought alongside and one after the other they were emptied - and still there was room. It was astonishing how much the ship's maw could swallow. The transfer of the provisions went like clock-work, and Both officers and men found they could manage the electric Winches, the derricks and the cranes as smoothly as though they had been on cargo boats all their lives.”

The LS3, described as nothing but trouble, is belied by the performance of the LS4 carried on the *Michel*, The LS3 and LS4 were the two MTB's first fitted with the new Damlier-Benz

motors and they performed very well, unlike the first two boats which had the Junkers engines in them. It was those experimental boats that had all of the problems.

The LS4 on the *Michel*, exactly the same type of craft as the LS3 tells us that the LS4 – the first equipped with torpedoes used them to sink the *Connecticut* (a US registered tanker) and the *Menclaus* (Blue Funnel Line) was intercepted by the *Michel*, but put on speed and began to draw away from the raider after she was ordered to stop. The *Michel* put the LS4 into the water and flying a White Ensign ordered her to stop, claiming to be a naval patrol craft. The Captain of the *Menelaus*, wrote in his log book:-

“By this time I decided he was coming full speed astern and at the same time trying to work a bluff so that I would stop for the motor boat and allow her to board me. At about 7.00am the Raider then being about 5 – ¼ miles astern a splash was observed from the stern of motor boat but 1-1/4 miles ahead of us. I immediately crossed her wake as I formed the opinion she was laying submerged floating mines ahead and thereby endeavouring to turn us towards Raider. Raider at this time was observed to swing out another motor boat.... About 7.20am motor boat turned around and came down at full speed about 35 to 40 knots on starboard side about 1-1/4 miles off and when one point abaft our beams swung stern on and fired one torpedo. Helm was immediately put hard aport and ship swung for torpedo to pass by. I could see trail of torpedo in water and motor boat carried on to Raider.”

I have underlined some of the above points as this is exactly what the *Sydney* did during the attack by the *Kormoran* in swinging hard to port and attempting to cross behind the raider, the way ahead possibly being blocked by the mines laid by the LS3. It would also have had the effect of unsighting the *Kormoran*'s guns, while still allowing *Sydney*'s guns (which still could) to bear. And later the *Michel* saga continues as David Woodward writes

“A fortnight later, on June 6, *Michel* found the American Liberty ship *George Clymer* (7,176 tons) which had been drifting broken down, about 600 miles south-west of Ascension. Picked up by the *Michel*, just as her engines were in working order once again, she was followed and attacked at night by the LS boats which hit her with two torpedoes. However, the American did not sink, but wirelessed with determination about her plight. To her appeals the radio station at Capetown answered, ‘A cruiser is coming to pick you up.’ Ruckteschell had apparently been told by *SkI* that the only British warships in the neighbourhood were either ancient ‘C’ class cruisers with an armament no better than his own or else armed merchantmen of the same type as those with which *Thor* had so severely dealt. Accordingly, he decided to lie in ambush for the British cruiser and treat her as the *Kormoran* had treated the *Sydney*.”

It is interesting that some of the raiders used similar tricks, some even copied from the raiders that operated in World War I. Its possible that all of the raider captains studied in detail the tactics and strategies of other raider captains that had preceded them. And why would they



not as the earlier raiders had all been very successful. The actions by the Michel took place on June 6, so it is very likely that the signal issued by the Admiralty on June 11 regarding the LS boats, was a result of the Michel attacks. Now it had become clear why Detmers had been reticent about the LS3, it was being used to stop vessels, to torpedo vessels, to slow down vessels so the raider could take over from them and make captures. Up until then the navy had simply assumed that the LS boats were simply motor boats fitted out for mine-laying, they were not aware of the speed of the boats nor their other attributes.

=====
 Raiders carry MTBs, June 1942

SECRET

1628B/11th June.

To "A" Message Home and Abroad 806A

Date 11.6.42
 P/L BY UP

From: Admiralty.

IMMEDIATE.

Positive evidence has been received that German raiders are carrying two or more M.T.B.'s [motor torpedo boats] armed with 2 torpedoes and depth charges. These craft are about 40 feet long speed 40 knots and are hoisted out by derrick. Usual signals are made by Raider to endeavour to persuade ships to stop and M.T.B.'s also make signals in English and may wear White Ensign in endeavour to deceive.

2. All Masters of Merchant vessels are to be warned on the lookout for this form of attack which there is reason to believe is generally delivered during dark hours. Any vessel sighted with a motorboat slung on a derrick should be considered suspicious.

1628B/11.

For D.D.L.C. (1230)

=====
 It has become evident during research that the battle could not have taken place in the early evening as the Germans have suggested for the following reasons. First, *Sydney* could not have been anywhere near the *Kormoran* when she sent the QQQ signal as the Germans claim. The *Sydney* would have immediately opened fire on the Germans. Second, the *Kormoran*, if as claimed, were disguised as the *Straat Malakka*, would have been immediately revealed as being fraudulent as the two ships were quite different. Additionally, the *Straat Malakka* was a relatively new ship built in 1939, of the Royal Dutch Line and would not have been so bad with their signaling. The *Straat Malakka* was also not on the ship list that was held by the Sydney because they were never in Australian waters during the whole of 1940 and 1941. As well, if that wasn't enough, the *Straat Malakka* was under the control of the British Ministry of War Transport from May 1940 after Holland had

been invaded by the Germans. As such, she would have been easily recognized and would have had a secret callsign. Knowledge of the secret callsign has long been denied by the Germans, however, they must have had the secret callsign of whatever ship they were disguised as, for the *Sydney* to even approach them. It has been found that the secret callsigns were compromised by the British traitor Patrick Heenan in Malaya who had access to them and was giving everything he had access to, to the Japanese. They in turn passed it on to the German Naval Attache Admiral Wenneker in Tokyo, who sent the callsigns to the *Kormoran* via the *Kulmerland* replenishment a month previous to the battle with *Sydney*.

There is little wonder that the *Sydney* was ambushed and so badly damaged, the British naval code and naval cipher as well as the Merchant Ships code had all been penetrated by the Germans so they knew all of *Sydney*'s movements. The secret callsigns had been betrayed by Captain Patrick Heenan of the Indian Army in Malaya, so *Sydney* had no way of knowing that the secret challenge was useless and finally the *Kormoran* was able to disguise herself as a ship that must have been on the Movements list that was issued to *Sydney* and not the *Straat Malakka* as they would have us believe, because that Dutch ship had not been in Australian waters at all till then and was being used by the British as a troopship.

Furthermore, the QQQ signal that *Kormoran* sent would have aroused the suspicions of the *Sydney* officers if the *Sydney* had been in company with the *Kormoran* so the signal must have been sent several hours earlier before *Sydney* arrived on the scene. As the QQQ signal was sent on an M/F frequency, and received by the tug Uco and at Geraldton very weak and barely readable, the *Kormoran* must have been at least 300 miles away from their positions which means that the position given by the Germans and the German captain is false. It is far too close to those receiving stations and must have been twice as far away as the Germans claimed. All of this changes the entire story told by the Germans, so what credit can be given to their story, when they say the LS boat wasn't used, none of the rest of their story holds up at all.

LS3 Track.

I have advocated the use of the *LS3* to tow lifeboats to the coast, just as the lifeboats were towed after the *Atlantis* was sunk in the Atlantic. Anyone who has a copy of the chart I included with "*HMAS Sydney II and Operation Fish 1941*", who takes the time to look through Commander Hardstaffs' notes taken from SWACH reports of the positions where survivors were collected by search ships, will find they were distributed closely either side of the *LS3* track. The general direction of all the lifeboats, from the aircraft reported sightings, shows a trend from west to east. Especially interesting is the Carley Float and the British lifejacket picked up by the *Heros* and *Evagoras* respectively. These life saving floats managed to out-sail all the boats and rafts and wreckage heading north from Detmers' position by 150 miles in just 4 days from where survivors were picked up by the *Centaur* on the 24th to where they were found on the 27th that is about 3 times the drift rate of everything else, so the Carley Float and lifejacket had to have been discarded by the lifeboats being towed by the *LS3*. It then follows that Detmers' boats were able to collect wreckage from the *Sydney* after the battle. Further on the *LS* debate - Captain Peter Hore cites a signal dated 16 December 1941 (page 243)

"Add paragraph C4. There is good reason to believe that enemy raiders, if stopped by British Warships, have orders to withhold fire until the British Ship is stopped and is lowering a boat. The raider will not send their own boat if they can avoid doing so." Another signal dated 11 June 1942 refers to the *LS* boats carried by raiders, which indicates (in part):

“These craft are about 40 feet long speed 40 knots and are hoisted out by derrick, Usual signals are made to stop and M.T.B.’s also make signals in English and may wear White Ensign in endeavour to deceive. All Masters of Merchant vessels are to be warned on the lookout for this form of attack which there is reason to believe is generally *delivered during dark hours*”. (My italics)

Apart from the above signals issued by Admiralty, Crace specifically mentions mine-laying speedboats in the interrogation instructions and during the interrogations information on the *LS3* was given by the German survivors. Richard Summerrall too mentions the *LS3* in the Sydney Guide 3. Yet during the Senate Inquiry Rear Admiral Oxenbould, L/Cdr Stevens together with the Archivist from the Navy Historical Centre at that time, J. H. Straczek all denied the navy knew anything about an *LS3*. When queried by the Senate committee Oxenbould agreed to look into it and later wrote to the committee and again denied the navy knew anything about the *LS3*. When the Germans and the navy all strongly deny something, I always assume that it has a direct bearing on the solution to the *Sydney* mystery and this is no exception. The Germans have always made a point of strongly denying they knew the secret call sign.

Towing Lifeboats and *LS3*

It has already been shown that there was another boat found by search aircraft that subsequently disappeared and was covered up by the counting of both boats being towed by the *Centaur*. It has been claimed that the lifeboats could not have been towed, but the *Centaur* has proved them wrong. Winter wrote:

“For several hours, the towing worked successfully. Then in the half-light of dawn, the lifeboat bow suddenly went under. As the boat filled with water, Kuhlen slashed the towrope with a hatchet the boat did not go to the bottom, Its air tanks held it in position just below the surface.”

It has been stated that Detmers’ boat was towed all night at 4 knots with 62 people onboard. When it filled with water; Captain Dark suspected that the boat had been swamped deliberately as part of a plot.....” After that Captain Dark had two of his lifeboats lowered and the Germans were put into the two boats and again taken under tow. There was no plot, but if the Germans had been towed by the *LS3*, then Detmers had to prove the point that the boats could not be towed with so many onboard. Although they had been towed successfully all night they waited until daylight before swamping the boat knowing it would not sink. If Detmers thought that he had proved his point about being towed, he has failed. It simply proved that the boats could be towed, and that there had not been 62 in the boat originally, but half of the crew aboard the *LS3*, once aircraft had spotted them, had been transferred to Detmers’ boat.

Further to this use of the *LS3*, Winter stated that the boat had been damaged at Walvis Bay and never used again. Detmers in his book, stated it had been used to collect a ship’s crew from one of the vessels he sank *Stamatios G. Embiricos* “Our MTB was launched and went away to the *Stamatios* with the boarding party”. Additional to that, another book written by Captain C. H. Hill-Willis, Master Mariner, described how, when he was the First Officer of the *Agnita*, the Germans on the *Kormoran* used the *LS3* to tow the lifeboats occupied by the *Agnita*’s crew, over to the *Kormoran* and they were all taken prisoner. [*On Their Majesties Service*, Neptune Press, Victoria, 1983, p144]. It is almost possible to put together the story

of the *Sydney* from the items that the government and navy vehemently deny and the use of the *LS3* is one of the most strongly denied things of all.

The following appeared in a booklet published by the RAN Seapower Centre, Canberra under *Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs No.9* and edited by Captain Peter Hore of the Royal Navy. It is dated 2001.

Under Chapter Nine, page 243 is the following:

Raiders carry MTBs, June 1942

SECRET

1628B/11th June.

To "A" Message Home and Abroad 806A

Date 11.6.42
P/L BY T/P

From: Admiralty.

IMMEDIATE.

Positive evidence has been received that German raiders are carrying two or more M.T.B.'s [motor torpedo boats] armed with 2 torpedoes and depth charges. These craft are about 40 feet long speed 40 knots and are hoisted out by derrick. Usual signals are made by Raider to endeavour to persuade ships to stop and M.T.B.'s also make signals in English and may wear White Ensign in endeavour to deceive.

2. All Masters of Merchant vessels are to be warned on the lookout for this form of attack which there is reason to believe is generally delivered during dark hours.

Any vessel sighted with a motorboat slung on a derrick should be considered suspicious.

1628B/11.

For D.D.I.C. (1230)

As the first raider to carry an *LS* boat the *Kormoran* was able to use it with impunity simply because then nobody knew about them and if it was being disguised as a British or Australian patrol craft flying a White Ensign, in 1942, why not in 1941 ?

James Eagles

2006