

New research vessel Argo commissioned

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The University of California's Scripps Institution of Oceanography's new research vessel Argo will "seek the golden fleece of new knowledge for tomorrow's world," Rear Admiral Rawson Bennett II, Chief of Naval Research of the U. S. Navy, said in San Diego recently at the commissioning ceremony for the ship.

Argo is a former naval rescue and salvage vessel operated by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography on a lease with the Bureau of Ships. Funds for her conversion to research were made available by the Office of Naval Research. The Navy will support a substantial share of her research program.

Admiral Bennett said "the Argo is another great milestone in the tradition and practice of the collaboration of the Navy with science in attempting to fathom the secrets of the world's oceans. There is no question that our accomplishments in science, whether for civilian or military purposes, will determine what kind of future civilization will have. Our own modern U. S. Navy could no more function without its scientific program than it could without ships."

The Navy's interest in oceanography has increased in recent years as the nuclear powered submarine has come to the fore as a major combat ship. "A thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the ocean, from the waves on the surface to the contours of the sea floor, has become essential in naval warfare."

Admiral Bennett pointed out that The University of California is one of the Navy's major research contractors. "There are well over a hundred research projects sponsored by ONR under way on the various California campuses from Berkeley to La Jolla. In the campus and non-commercial laboratory the scientist can give free play to his broad-ranging imagination. We foster this philosophy by not limiting the scientist, but allowing him as much time as he needs to complete his research."

Argo is the third Navy ship to be converted to oceanographic research within the past two years. These three, of 2,000 tons each, are the largest in the U. S. oceanographic fleet.

The vessel's first voyage will take her to the Indian Ocean. Admiral Bennett pointed out that we know far less about that Ocean, a 28-million-square-mile area constituting about 14 per cent of the earth's surface, than we know about the surface of the moon.

Director Roger Revelle of the La Jolla campus presided at the ceremony, formally delivering the custody of the vessel to her captain, Laurence E. Davis.