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INTERIOR DEPARTMENT RESEARCH VESSEL BEGINS OCEANOGRAPHIC  
CRUISE IN TROPICAL ATLANTIC

The Geronimo, the Department of the Interior's oceanographic and fishery research vessel which until recently was one of the Navy's seagoing tugs is heading for the Gulf of Guinea from Boston, Mass., to participate in an international oceanographic investigation of the equatorial Atlantic Ocean, Secretary Stewart L. Udall announced today.

Another Department vessel, the Oregon, left Pascagoula, Miss., February 4 for the western tropical Atlantic to begin its part of this cooperative research project. Other American vessels include the Chain and the Crawford of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Woods Hole, Mass., and the Explorer, a U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey vessel. There are also three Russian ships, two from Brazil, and one each from Argentina, Republic of the Ivory Coast, Nigeria, and Republic of Congo.

In addition, U. S. Air Force hurricane reconnaissance planes will fly from Recife, Brazil, to Dakar, Morocco, gathering meteorological data and measuring the sea surface temperatures with infra-red radiation instruments. The flights will coincide with the transit of the weather satellite Tiros. The clouds will be photographed and surface temperatures measured simultaneously from ships, planes, and the satellite. Researchers believe the results should provide means for a better understanding of weather and oceanographic information transmitted from the satellite.

The investigations, sponsored by UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and officially designated the "International Cooperative Investigations of the Tropical Atlantic," are divided into two parts. The first, "Equalant I," is now in progress; the second, "Equalant II," begins August 1, 1963. Seven nations and 14 ships are cooperating in Equalant I; additional nations and ships will participate in Equalant II.

All ships are working in specified areas on a program coordinated by Department of the Interior fishery and oceanographic scientists. Headquarters is the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries Biological Laboratory in Washington, D. C. Resulting data will be compiled and published by the U. S. National Oceanographic Data Center. Vernon E. Brock, Director of the Washington Laboratory, was appointed by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission as the international coordinator.

The area of investigations extends from the latitude of Dakar, Morocco, south across the equator to Ascension Island and from the coast of Africa west to points north of Venezuela, South America.

The purpose is to get "still photographs" of the oceanographic conditions--surface and subsurface--in the equatorial Atlantic. For that reason 14 ships in different sections of the tropical ocean will gather biological and oceanographic data at as near the same time as possible. Data will be collected from the sea surface to the bottom at stations 30 miles apart near the equator and 60 miles apart at stations farther north and south. By collecting the material during periods six months apart, the basic "photographs" will show differences in the biological and oceanographic features of the tropical Atlantic during mid-winter and mid-summer conditions.

The Geronimo sailed March 5 from a Boston shipyard where it was converted for research work. Aboard the Geronimo will be 15 scientists, including five from foreign countries. Several of them will board the ship at African ports. It is scheduled to arrive at Abidjan, Republic of Ivory Coast, March 20. It departs the next day for its first station at zero degrees longitude and five degrees north latitude, a point not far from Accra, Ghana. Operations begin March 24.

The Geronimo will work eastward and southward following the bend in the African coast and end its observations at Pointe Noire, a short distance south of the mouth of the Congo, on April 10. It then will undertake a trawling program along the west African Coast for about three weeks. On May 2 the vessel will leave Pointe Noire for Freetown, Sierra Leone, and is scheduled to arrive in Washington, D. C. on June 1.

Scientists who will be aboard the Geronimo include Robert C. Wilson of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Washington, D. C., Biological Laboratory, Chief of the field party; John W. Van Landingham, Fred M. Valentine and Jack W. Jossi, also of the Washington Laboratory; Victor Springer, U. S. National Museum, Washington, D. C.; Frank J. Thrasher, Weather Bureau, U. S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D. C.; Charles D. Watkins, Murray Fogelman, and Francis Mitchell, all of the National Oceanographic Data Center, Washington, D. C.

Others will include Peter Wangersky, Bingham Oceanographic Laboratory, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.; William Hargis, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Gloucester Point, Va.; Walter B. Charm, Miami Marine Laboratory, Miami, Fla.; Peter G. W. Jones, Fisheries Laboratory, Lowestoft, England; Johannes Kinzer, Institute for Fischereiwissenschaft, Hamburg, West Germany; and B. M. U. Uboma, Fisheries Officer of Nigeria.

The Oregon will make its scientific observations along the continental shelf off the northeast coast of South America. It began its work on February 15 at a point north of British Guiana and in March it is scheduled for a 10-day run south-east off the Brazilian coast to a point near Camocim. It will then proceed to points north of Surinam and French Guiana. The Oregon was at Belem, Brazil, just south of the mouth of the Amazon River, earlier in March.

On board the Oregon, during part or all of the cruise, will be scientists from the Marine Laboratory of the University of Miami and from the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries Exploratory Fishing Base, Pascagoula, Miss. The Miami scientists are Dr. Gilbert Voss, Dr. Fred M. Bayer, Donald Moore and Raymond B. Manning. The Bureau of Commercial Fisheries' scientists are Richard A. Waller, Francis J. Captiva, and Harvey R. Bullis, who will be field party chiefs on portions of the cruise; James S. Carpenter and Tomio Iwamoto, fishery biologists; Arden G. Sumrall, fishery aid, and John R. Thompson, fishery methods and equipment specialist.

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