

# Air Force Interested In Navy Jet Seaplane

WASHINGTON, Oct. 16. — (AP)—Air Force interest in the Navy's new jet seaplane bomber has advanced to the point where it is considering an initial purchase of four or five of the big, fast flying boats for study purposes.

A recommendation for the purchase was reported today to have been made, probably to the Air Force council. The council is composed of high ranking civilian and military officials who consider aircraft requirements, designs, budgetary needs and other factors.

The Navy, for which the Glenn L. Martin Company produced the experimental model of the Seamaster, presumably will have priority on delivery of production models.

An Air Force decision to enter the market for the new plane would require approval from the top level echelon of the Defense Department. Defense Secretary Wilson already has indicated, however, that he had some part in the Air Force's desire to take a serious look at the Navy's highly acclaimed jet seaplane.

## GENERAL'S SPEECH.

First official evidence of Air Force attention came last Saturday when the Air Force vice chief of staff, Gen. Thomas D. White, said in an address that new engine developments "may enable the water-based bomber to take its place alongside other Air Force airplanes." White said it was conceivable that a nuclear powered seaplane might become an effective bomber for wartime strategic missions.

However, there have been indications that the Air Force wants to start trying out the Seamaster now, in its present jet powered version, without waiting several years for the advent of atomic engines for airplanes.

The Seamaster is rated at a speed of about 600 miles per hour, putting it into the class of the Air Force's medium and heavy jet powered bombers.

Tactically, airmen consider a primary advantage for the sea based bomber could be dispersal—getting bombers away from dependence on overseas airfields which are within striking distance of Red planes. This would not mean that land bases would be abandoned. But it would provide a second source for launching bomber strikes if land bases were knocked out.

## TACTICAL ADVANTAGE.

Inclusion of sea based bombers also would provide the additional tactical advantage of allowing air strikes to be launched from directions not predictable by an enemy.

The Navy long has used seaplanes for patrol work and bombing. But until the jet powered Seamaster appeared, they were slow and cumbersome, an easy target for interceptor planes or anti-aircraft fire.

The Seamaster is reported by the Navy to have remarkable "sea keeping" ability—to be able to take off and land in waves of the open sea which would disable or wreck conventional flying boats.

Part of the explanation for this is the rugged hull structure and design. But the use of jet

engines also helps. Spray, which tears up conventional propellers when used for long in rough water, is no problem with the jet engines.

While the vast majority of Air Force pilots are trained only to handle land based aircraft, the Air Force does have the nucleus of a seaplane force. Its air-sea rescue service operates dozens of Grumman SA16 amphibious planes at bases scattered around the world, including the arctic and tropics.