

Transport Submarine Carried Uranium for Japan's Atomic Program.

U-235 . One of the eight large mine-laying submarines built by Germany, a type XB or type VIIC, the largest class of German U-boat ever constructed at 1,650 tons and 294 feet; only *U-234* and *U-219* survived. *U-234* was damaged by bombing in construction, her forward end was rebuilt, and commissioned 3Mar44. She exercised as a mine-layer until refit as a transport.

Cargo . Cargo containers were built to fit in the original mine shafts forward, midships and astern. Four cargo containers were carried topside. 240 tons of cargo were loaded for departure 25March1945. Cargo included three crated Messerschmitt aircraft (two Me-262 jet fighters, ME-163 rocket-propelled fighter), Henschel HS-293 glider-bomb, extra Junkers jet engines, 10 canisters of uranium oxide, a ton of diplomatic mail, and over 3 tons of technical drawings, plus other technology (torpedo, fuses, armor piercing shells, etc.) Passengers were 9 high technical officers (one general) and civilian scientists. Destination: Japan. Two returning Japanese Navy Lt. Commanders, one air and one submarine, were returning, having observed Nazi technology and techniques.

Voyage . *U-234* collided with another U-boat while both were on schnorchel. After minor repairs and topping off with food and oil, she set sail again 15April1945, proceeding slowly underwater 22 hours a day on schnorchel. The Nazi order fell on May 7 while *U-234* was out of reliable radio contact; she surfaced 10May to receive surrender orders and to confirm them with other submarines. Told to proceed toward Halifax, the skipper actually made for Newport News, Virginia, anticipating less militant treatment for his crew. The Japanese officers committed suicide (sleeping pills) and were buried at sea. *U-234* was intercepted 14May45 by USS Sutton (DE-771), a short time later by Coast Guard cutter Forsyth, and arrived Portsmouth, NH, on 17May.¹

The Uranium carried by *U-234* was enough to make two atomic bombs, to blow up two American cities -- 1,235 pounds of 77 percent pure uranium oxide -- unusable by the destroyed Nazi hopes, it was destined for the Japanese atomic bomb program.

The *U-234* executive officer supervised the opening of the containers in Washington, DC, and reports he was told that one of the Americans was Oppenheimer. It is generally believed the uranium was taken over by the Manhattan project, but its ultimate

use, if any, is lost in secrecy. It was most certainly sent to Oak Ridge, but there was probably not enough time for it to have been processed and used in the two WW2 weapons. It certainly would have been in followup weapons and probably was expended at Bikini Atoll or in Nevada.

The German A-bomb laboratory was destroyed by the Hamburg bombing raids in July 1943 and was shifted after this. The Germans developed a gas centrifuge technology to refine bomb grade uranium in 1942 that did not require heavy water reactors. (Destroyed in Norway early in the war.) Magic decrypts of signals to the Japanese embassy in Berlin discovered requests for Uranium from the Japanese A-bomb project in July 1943. The Nazis may have transferred this technology to Japan during 1943-44.

Japanese Intentions. were clear, Japan was searching for a miracle weapon from all sources, including atomic research centers operating in North Korea. It would have been justice if the Nazi material intended to let Japan win the war, had helped fuel the bombs that did end the war.

Other Trips . There were at least 98 different U-boat or I-boat attempts to travel between Germany and Japan. Some German and Italian boats made it and were commissioned into the Japanese Navy. Several I-boat succeeded in the round trip. Most subs, and their cargos, were lost.³

The Italian sub "Amiraglio Cagni" capitulated at Cape Town South Africa on 8 September 1943 with a load of "Mercury" aka Uranium-oxide.

The last two transport U-boats to reach Jakarta in November 1944 (U-195 & U-129) between themselves carried 12 V-2 disassembled rockets.

U-859 wrecked in the northern Straits of Malacca. U-boats carried Mercury in zinc cannisters inside the flooded keel and ballast tanks. Mercury when mixed with uranium oxide forms a paste which resists the hydrostatic crushing of U-boat dives and can later be separated from the Uranium quite easily.

1 . <http://www.uboatarchive.net/U-234.htm>

2 . <http://www.ussvance.com/Vance/nazisub.htm>

3 . <http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/genocide/reviewsw54.htm> for discussion and bibliography.

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