

COMM-CEN WHITEHALL—UK RATT SHIP-SHORE

by LRO Reynolds

Communications within the Royal Navy change rapidly for the better as time goes by and RATT ship-shore has not been left behind. For over 2 years I have been working as RATT ship-shore controller/operator and the methods and equipment have advanced far beyond my wildest dreams. Gone are the old auto-head continuous taped 'Frequency Availability Broadcast (FAB)'; gone the dust covered T/Ps which struggled to receive off-line, and gone too, but not completely, the control from Forest Moor of the aeriels which we relied upon so much.

In its place—a fully automatic self-contained unit consisting of 4 covered T/Ps, 4 uncovered T/Ps, automatic FAB and aerial selection controlled from Whitehall at the ship-shore bay. What more could

anyone want? Just one thing—your CO-OPERATION.

Our equipment is 1st class; our methods good; our operators good. But nothing will work as it should without your help, whether you are in Capetown, Malta or South America, even if you are only ZBZ2 in Portland we will try, if you will, to clear your traffic, covered or uncovered, from ZBO1 to ZBO50.

Frequency Availability Broadcast (FAB)

The whole crux of RATT ship-shore is centred on the FAB. To work RATT ship-shore the very first thing one must do is to ensure good clear readability of FAB. This is going to be your guide and your aid to the whole process of working. If you cannot hear FAB do not risk it, you are not the only one at sea, and more than likely you will block out some poor chap who has done everything correctly and is busy clearing traffic.

Your signal is not cleared until FAB 'rogers' for it and gives you the DTG. This indicates that we have accepted the signal completely, so do not keep sending in the hope that we get your traffic. QRM is a very funny thing and it can cause the text of signals to read completely different from what you have sent so if told to send it again, send it, time is most important—the quicker we get your traffic, the quicker it is onward routed. Once we have received sufficient to cut a clean tape, you will get your 'roger'.

FAB has many uses but one it will not do is—answer requests such as one ship asked recently—'INT key card No. being used on HNR today Monday'. One must remember that FAB is not on-line and questions of this nature can have far reaching complications, so please do not ask that kind of question. Indefinite callsigns have come in very handy for opting off the air when you make a mistake. But when you make a mistake again please do not hide behind a wall of silence, it does not help you or us and we have our methods of finding out, so do not try it!

Remember then, together we can do wonders, but to do this we must have your help and your co-operation. Our aeriels will find you, and the FAB will tell you just what to do. Not complying with FAB can cause a good deal of confusion and bad tempers, not forgetting the delay and possible loss of signals. FAB is there to help you, to guide you into the swiftest clearance of all your signal traffic—but do not feel the underdog if told to do something by FAB. Do it—and you will find that everything will work out fine. *We will always be here, so go on—give us a call.*