

That problem was and is the patrolling of our long and deeply indented coast line with a view to detecting enemy craft, on sea or in the air, disguised or otherwise. The possibility of a base being established at some remote place, perhaps with the connivance of sympathizers ashore has to be guarded against.

Both for reconnaissance and for quick and effective attack upon raiding craft and for disposing of an enemy base it was considered that aircraft were the most appropriate weapon. Their extreme mobility, their great striking power by means of bombs, torpedoes and machine guns, and the fact that a powerful airfleet could be developed more speedily and more economically than a comparable naval establishment led to the decision to place air defence as the first problem to be dealt with.

The need for naval defence was placed second because attack must necessarily come from overseas. Technical advice indicated that destroyers and mine-sweepers were the first essential in naval craft. Destroyers are small, fast and powerful. Air craft can sight suspicious craft, but only a naval vessel can go alongside and board a doubtful ship. Destroyers can enter narrow and shallow waters to attack an enemy base, where larger naval craft could not penetrate.

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