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FEATURE MATERIAL

INTERIOR'S FISHERY RESEARCH VESSEL, GERONIMO, RETURNS FROM STUDIES OF AFRICAN WATERS

The Geronimo, fishery research vessel of the Department of the Interior, returned May 18 to her home berth at the Navy Yard Annex in Washington, D. C., after a four-month, 15,000-mile expedition to the Gulf of Guinea, off West Africa.

Arrival of the Geronimo was marked by presentation of a Departmental Unit Citation to the Master, T. E. Sorensen of McLean, Va., and the crew, "in recognition of exceptional performance in operating the vessel during three extended cruises in the Gulf of Guinea."

In the citation to the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries unit, Secretary Stewart L. Udall noted the "initiative, ingenuity, and devotion to duty of the crew of the Geronimo, individually and collectively have been major factors in the successful conduct of research programs in the Gulf of Guinea...."

This fourth cruise of the Geronimo to West Africa during the International Cooperation Year, now being observed worldwide, was another contribution to United States participation in cooperative international studies of the tropical Atlantic Ocean. These studies, begun in 1963, have involved some 20 ships from many nations. One of the major goals is to gain knowledge useful in increasing the supply of protein for West African countries.

Robert C. Wilson of Bethesda, Md., Chief Scientist on the cruise, said the expedition was successful in accomplishing two main objectives: further measurement of a hitherto unknown ocean current in the Gulf of Guinea, and confirmation of hypotheses about the distribution of tuna schools off West Africa.

During the first cruise of the Geronimo to the Gulf of Guinea in 1963, odd behavior of research instruments in the water below the eastward-flowing Guinea Current led scientists to believe that a substantial westward-flowing undercurrent

existed. On subsequent cruises, the hitherto unknown Guinea Undercurrent has been confirmed, and the measurement of its role in the Gulf of Guinea circulation has been accomplished.

The wide-ranging tuna are found where their food is most abundant--generally near the boundary between ocean water of differing types and origin. In February such a boundary was found offshore from Senegal to Sierra Leone, West Africa, by scientists aboard the Geronimo. As predicted, great concentrations of tuna schools were located just to the south of this boundary.

A new oceanographic instrument, developed at the University of Miami, was tested from the Geronimo on this cruise. When lowered into the water, it records aboard ship simultaneously and continuously the depth, temperature, salinity, and time. Its use will greatly increase the speed and efficiency of data collection on future oceanographic surveys.

While on the cruise, the Geronimo made a rendezvous with the John E. Pillsbury, general fishery and oceanographic research vessel of the Institute of Marine Science, University of Miami. Particular concern of the joint research was a study of variations in rate of flow of the Atlantic Equatorial Undercurrent and changes in its north-south location.

The cruise of the Geronimo had other international aspects. Two French scientists--Jean Claude De Guen, and Francis Poinsard of the ORSTOM Laboratory at Pointe-Noire, Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), worked aboard the Geronimo during the tuna surveys. They are studying the population dynamics of the tunas of West Africa. At Monrovia, Liberia, about 20 biology students from the University of Liberia were shown the ship's laboratories and its oceanographic equipment. And during the tuna survey off Republic of Ivory Coast a one-day cruise was arranged for fishery administrators, fishery scientists, and fish processors of that nation to demonstrate various oceanographic techniques.

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