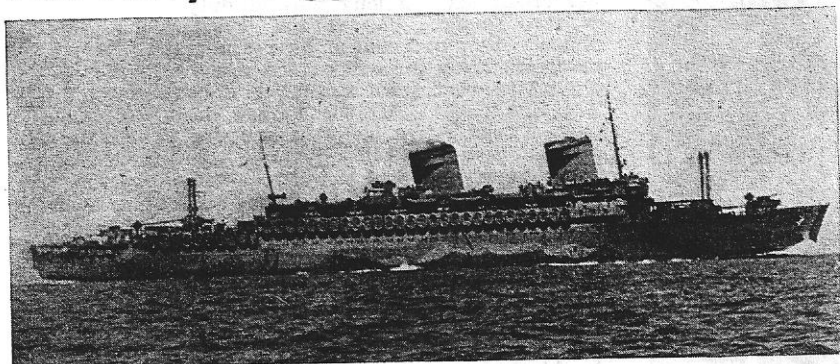


## The Navy's Biggest Transport



USS WEST POINT'S sleek lines suggest speed which protects her from subs.

Through seas streaked with torpedo wakes, torn by storms and ripped by bombs the *USS West Point*, the Navy's largest troop transport, has carried more than 350,000 soldiers, sailors and marines to and from the battlefronts of the world in unescorted dashes covering more than 350,000 miles and equal to 14 trips around the globe.

Like most large transports—she's only 27 feet shorter than a 750-foot *Washington*-class battleship—all her wartime voyages have been made without the protection of convoying warships. On speed alone has her safety depended and never once has she lost a passenger.

Details of her operations came last month as security was partially lifted on her career. Converted from the luxury liner *SS America*, largest merchant vessel ever built in the United States, the *West Point* began her war life in Singapore harbor when Jap artillery and planes scattered shrapnel on her weather decks and dropped bombs within 50 yards of her giant hull.

Since then her escapes have been numerous. Off Rio de Janeiro a Nazi torpedo streaked across her bow. In Milne Bay men of the *West Point* stood at battle stations for hours

against Jap air raiders. In the Red Sea and at Suez her guns were alerted and barrage balloons were lifted against surprise Nazi torpedo planes. Submarines have been sunk not far from her track.

Last winter, during raging storms which produced waves 50 feet high, the *West Point* suffered some damage, according to her skipper, Capt. Webb C. Hayes, USNR. One wave struck the forward gun platform, 50 feet above the waterline, and demolished it.

In continuous service since the outbreak of the war, the *West Point* has made as many as 24 crossings of the Atlantic in a single year. Her ports of call include Bombay, Marseilles, Capetown, Guadalcanal, Canal Zone, Liverpool, Noumea, Merzel-Kebir.

With a crew of more than 800 men, the *West Point* can carry upward of 7,700 passengers but only half of them can crowd at one time on open weather decks. Besides serving as a troop transport she also carries casualties. In a recent trip—after V-E day—she brought 191 litter cases and 400 wounded home from Europe. She has transported thousands of Axis prisoners destined for prison camps in the States.



Official U. S. Navy photographs

GI PASSENGERS sun themselves on deck. *West Point* ferried 350,000.