Drifting Battleship is Found and Taken in Tow Off N. Y.

By The Associated Press

Newark, N. J., Nov. 13.—The decommissioned battleship New Mexico was temporarily lost off Long Island early today while en route to her last “battle.”

She was found later by a Coast Guard plane 58 miles outside New York Harbor and taken in tow again by two tugboat crews, who were ready to rename her “Reluctant.”

The 30,000-ton former dreadnought, center of a controversy which has caused Newark officials to send out fireboats to blockade her from being scrapped on the city’s waterfront, had been cut loose by the two tugs in heavy seas en route from Boston yesterday.

Skippers of the tugs said they eventually lost her and could not find her this morning.

Three men were believed to be aboard the New Mexico.

At the entrance to Port of Newark Channel inside New York Harbor two Newark fireboats meantime maintained a vigil to keep the former battleship out of Newark. City officials had sent out the fireboats armed with chemical sprays and water hoses to show they meant business.

The fireboats remained at their posts although Mayor Vincent J. Murphy said after a conference with Undersecretary of the Navy Kenney yesterday in Washington that some agreement to stave off the pending “battle” was in sight.

Despite the possibility of a Wash- (Continued on Page Two, Column Three)
Newark, N. J., fireboats trying out water hoses in preparation to repel the decommissioned USS New Mexico en route to Newark Bay to be scrapped. City officials don't want it. The former battleship was cut adrift in a storm, but has been located.

Battleship Adrift

(Continued from the First Page)

Washington-enforced truce in the Battle of Newark Bay, new complication were reported brewing at Santa Fe New Mexico. The local chamber of commerce there said it plans to protest New York's "slur" in refusing admittance of the one-time battleship bearing the State's name.

The New Mexico is owned now by Lipsett, Inc., a New York Salvage firm which purchased it for scrap and also leased part of the Newark Navy Base for the dismantling job. City officials previously had requested the Navy to give up its wartime base at Port Newark in order to permit a $70,000,000 expansion program to get under way.

No Help From Halsey

The City of Newark will have to map out its own battle strategy without any help from New Jersey's best-known naval authority, Admiral William (Bull) Halsey.

The former Elizabeth, N. J., resident and commander of the Third Fleet in the Pacific in the last war was reached by telephone at his Virginia home and Newark-born, succinct in the expanding (perhaps) battle of Newark Bay.

"I don't know a damn thing about naval strategy," said Admiral Halsey with a chuckle. "I don't know a damn thing about naval strategy."
Newark Takes Steps to Guard Channel, all Entry of Battleship for Scrapping

NEWARK, N. J., Nov. 11 (-)—This city’s navy—two 20-foot fireboats—put on the alert today to guard a channel of Port Newark against any attempt to bring the onetime citadel New Mexico here for scrapping. The former USS New Mexico, decommissioned and sold to scrap, USS, is under tow from Boston. It is expected in New York Harbor by 10 a.m. tomorrow, but will anchor at Gravenhage Bay to resume work on $10,000,000 development of the shallow channel to Port Newark.

Thus, the showdown on whether the 29,000-ton New Mexico will slip through the channel or will halt in the face of a fireboat blockade is set for Thursday morning.

Before the “zero hour,” however, Mayor Vincent J. Murphy, of Newark, who ordered the fireboats take their battle stations, Port Newark authorities officials, and representatives of Governor Alfred Driscoll of New Jersey planned call on the Navy department in Washington in an attempt to clear the situation which led to the recent impasse.

Authorities here contend that the situation of the Navy in contracting with the Lipsett firm for scrapping the New Mexico, the Wyoming and Idaho here would jeopardize a recently signed lease between Newark and the Port of New York authority for a $70,000,000 development of the city’s air and sea ports.

Under terms of the agreement with the Port authority, development would not be started until the Navy relinquished its wartime lease of part of the seaport.

Mayor Murphy instructed Public Safety Director John B. Keenan today to have his fireboat fleet readied for action and to hire another tug, if necessary, so that a line could be stretched across the channel entrance.

Keenan made it clear the dispute was not a fight with the Navy. The Navy announced it was not concerned in the dispute.

The Navy responsibility for the New Mexico ended when it was turned over to the Lipsett firm at Boston, a naval spokesman said.

Battleship New Mexico Will Be Sold for Scrap

NEW YORK, Aug. 30.—The 30,600-ton battleship New Mexico, built at an estimated cost of $7,600,000 in 1918 and subsequently subjected to several expensive face-liftings, is up for sale.

Sealed bids from a American citizen must be submitted to the New York Naval Shipyard in Brooklyn by September 30, and the successful bidder will be required to scrap the vessel, now tied up at Common-wealth Pier 1, East Boston, Mass.

The Navy Vessel Disposal Office said the 624-foot ship contained four turbines each capable of developing 10,000 horsepower. Practically all that remains in the stripped hull is the propulsive machinery and twelve 14-inch and numerous 5-inch guns which have been spiked.

The world’s first turbo-electric battleship when built, the New Mexico came off the ways too late to get into action in World War I. In the World War II she supported a dozen invasions of Pacific Islands, and on one occasion her guns roared continuously for 19 days.

New Jersey Navy Gets Respite; Battleship’s Tug Disabled

Newark, N. J., Nov. 12.—(AP)—The decommissioned battleship New Mexico rolled toward her last battle—the Battle of Newark Bay—at reduced speed today as one of her tow tugs became disabled.

A Coast Guard cutter and plane rushed to the aid of the tug which was helping tow the New Mexico toward a Newark scrapyard from Boston. Newark officials, who wanted no more ships scrapped on the city’s waterfront, have sent two tugs and a chemical spray and water hoses to block the New Mexico from the Newark Harbor channel.

The Coast Guard reported the tug C. Haywood Mesik had cast off from the 30,000-ton New Mexico in rough seas about 17 miles off Fire Island and 35 miles outside New York Harbor. The tug radioed the district commander and said it was on a mission to be abandoned, the Coast Guard said.

Meanwhile, the tug Dorothy Anne Mesik continued to tug the battleship along toward the entrance of New York Harbor, of which Newark Bay is a part.

Newark Navy Relaxes

The Michael P. Duffy, its deck guns capable of firing 2,000 gallons of water and foam at a 400-foot range, rushed through the night with its crew of six on the alert against any attempt to slip the former battleship through the channel under cover of darkness.

Fire Captain Walter Danow, in command of the flagship of Newark task force, gave orders to his men to stand easy as the sky cleared.

“Didn’t think they’d dare to do it,” said a sailor. “He’s in the ready on his side,” he said with the mark of a smile, “And good for them they didn’t.”

During the patrol, contact by radio had been lost with the Duffy sister ship, the William P. Brennan.

The Duffy’s fuel was running low but plea for relief to Admiral John B. Keenan, who acts as public safety director, in less critical times, went unheeded.

City officials, who had requested the United States Navy to vacate its lease on part of the port in order to permit the start of a $7,000,000 development program, said they wanted no more ships scrapped at Newark.

Navy Returns Silver Of BB New Mexico

SANTE FE—The Navy has returned a unique 14-piece silver service to the State of New Mexico. The people of that state originally gave the silver to the battleship New Mexico during World War I.

The aircraft carrier Bon Homme Richard has had the service since the end of World War II when it battleship New Mexico was scrapped. New Mexico has insured the silver service for $50,000.
THE USS NEW MEXICO

For the first time in her 28 years the USS New Mexico suffered battle damage on January 6 in action at Lingayen Gulf during the landing operations on Luzon. The Jap bomb that struck the New Mexico hit on the port navigating bridge, causing heavy personnel losses, including her commanding officer, Capt. Robt. W. Fleming, U. S. N.

Among the casualties was Lieut. Gen. Herbert Lumsdaine, British Royal Marines, an observer.

The executive officer, Comdr. John T. Warren, U. S. N., assumed command. Repair parties quickly put out fires and cleared wreckage. Air attacks continued, but the New Mexico was able to throw intense antiaircraft fire at the enemy.

Though casualties were severe, material damage to the ship caused little loss of battle efficiency. For the remainder of the day and until the beaches were secured some five days later, the New Mexico continued her scheduled bombardment.

Detached from Lingayen Gulf, the New Mexico was ordered to Pearl Harbor, where battle damage was quickly repaired. Within a month she put to sea again with a new commanding officer, Capt. John M. Holmes, U. S. N.

The Philippines operation was the first in which the New Mexico was required to use her increased anti-aircraft batteries. Since the war started there had been a gradual strengthening of the anti-aircraft armament until it included not only 5-inch guns, but many 40-mm. and 20-mm. guns as well. The first 40-mm. guns had been installed at Pearl Harbor in 1942.

In early January the New Mexico left for Lingayen Gulf to support the Luzon landings. In addition to the staff officers of a battleship division, the "Queen" carried several distinguished visitors, including Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser, Royal Navy, and Lieut. Gen. Lumsdaine.

Arriving in the Gulf on the morning of January 6, a systematic bombardment of shore positions began with less than expected opposition. Japanese attacks were fierce and frequent beginning about 10 a.m.

Although two of her anti-aircraft guns were knocked out by the Jap bomb, the battleship's gun crews effectively continued to fire at enemy planes.

The New Mexico had escaped battle damage to this time, although her history bridges two wars.

Elderly and battlewise, the New Mexico earned the nickname "Queen" in peace time because of the extraordinary efficiency with which she won fleet honors for gunnery, engineering, navigation, and battle efficiency. Even in sports, her crews regularly carried off honors. She has one of the longest lineages of a ship of the present Navy. Authorized by Congress in 1914, she was commissioned in 1918.

Like many things war-built, the New Mexico incorporated many advances in construction. Her hull was 16 feet longer than the preceding class of battleships. Her 14-inch, 50-caliber main battery was larger than any ship before her. And she was the first battleship equipped with turbo-electric drive.

Highlight of her activities between wars was her service in 1919 as escort to President Woodrow Wilson on his return home from the Paris Peace Conference. Later in 1919 the New Mexico became the flagship of the newly formed United States Pacific Fleet.

In 1920-21 and again in 1927-28 the "Queen" achieved the distinction of winning three major "E" awards simultaneously. The awards were won for gunnery, engineering, and battle efficiency.

When the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941, the New Mexico was operating with the Atlantic Fleet on neutrality patrol. She was soon transferred to the Pacific.

Ordered to the Aleutians in May, 1943, the New Mexico, then under the command of Capt. Oliver Lee Downes, U. S. N., participated in the recapture of Attu as flagship of the task group. Although thousands of shells were fired by the group with which the New Mexico was operating, little Japanese opposition was encountered. When assault forces landed on Kiska Island in August, the New Mexico was part of the naval force covering the landings.

The New Mexico next participated in the recapture of the Gilbert Islands to the south and east of important Japanese bases in the Marshall and Carolines. Commanded by Capt. Ellis Mark Zacharias, U. S. N., with Lieutenants Capt. Downes in August, she heavily bombarded the shore of Butaritari Island in the Makin Atoll before the landings were made on November 20, 1943. No enemy resistance was encountered.

On January 30, 1944, the largest offensive operation yet undertaken was directed against the Marshall Islands by task forces under the command of Adm. F. Halsey. Among the operations the New Mexico participated in were the bombardment of Euey on January 31; bombarded Euey Island and, on February 27, bombarded Kwajalein.

During the Kwajalein bombardment the New Mexico achieved the incidental distinction of being the first battleship ever to enter into the Kwajalein atoll.

The operation cost her the first casualty of the war. She had launched planes to spot targets. One of the planes, piloted by Lieut. Forney O. Fuqua, U. S. N., with Lieutenants N. R., with Harrison D. Miller, Radioman 2c, U. S. N., as passenger, was struck by enemy fire. Lieut. Fuqua radioed his ship: "Cockpit full of gasoline leaping...hit very badly...making emergency landing." He was overheard telling his radio operators to take control and land the plane. The radioman brought the plane down, but overturned in the water. A minesweeper operating inside the atoll rescued the radioman, but the plane sank before Lieut. Fuqua could be recovered.

The Ailsa Medal was awarded posthumously to Lieut. Fuqua. Miller won the DFC for his coolness and courage in the operation.

During the latter part of February, 1944, the New Mexico bombarded Tarawa Island in the Makalip Atoll and Wotje Island in the Wotje Atoll, both in the Marshalls. She carried the flag of the commander of a Pacific battleship division and was the first of the old battleships to operate with escort carriers.

She was part of a task force, early in March, bombarded Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands.

The next action involved the Mariana Islands.

Six months later, on March 15 and 16, she bombarded Guan in the Philippines. The New Mexico began this in group on June 14 and 15 and Guan on the 16th. Guan was hit again on July 12, 13, and 14.

The task force with which she was operating temporarily withdrew. Returning three days later, she bombarded the island and on November 21, she bombarded the island once more.

Making history again, the New Mexico began several days of intense action as part of the occupation of the islands.

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The Mariana campaign consisted of a heavy bombardment for the "Queen," and she returned to Puget Sound naval base for new guns, overhaul, and leave. During this stay in the United States, Capt. Zacharias was detached and Capt. Fleming assumed command.

To see again in October, the New Mexico headed for Leyte Gulf, where she participated in the landings of Leyte and Samar. Later, part of the covering force, she entered the Sibuguey Strait, then passed through the Mindanao Sea into the Sulu Sea, protecting the Mindoro landings.