

Fleet Airship Wing Four

2 Aug-31 Dec 1943

1 Jan-30 Jun 1944

Operational Missions	268	858
Enemy Ships Damaged or Sunk	None	None
Own Blimps Lost (Combat)	None	None
Own Blimps Lost (Operations)	None	2
Own Blimps Damaged (Combat)	None	None
Own Blimps Damaged (Operations)		1
Personnel Lost	None	None
Personnel Rescued	None	15
Rescue Mission Assists	2 (1 crashed aircraft; 1 hospital case)	11 (4 crashed aircraft; 1 crashed blimp; 1 stranded aircraft; 2 vessels in distress; 1 jungle rescue; 2 survivor groups)
Miscellaneous	None	None
Hours flown by All Airships Assigned	4,692	14,520

Fleet Airship Wing Five

2 Aug 1943-
31 Jan 1944

1 Feb-31 Jul
1944

1 Aug-11 Dec
1944

Operational Missions	605	1,020	391
Enemy Ships Damaged or Sunk	None	None	None
Own Blimps Lost (Combat)	None	None	None
Own Blimps Lost (Operations)	2	1(1 JRF)	1
Own Blimps Damaged (Combat)	None	None	None
Own Blimps Damaged (Operations)	None	2 (1 JRF)	1
Personnel Lost	8	None	None
Personnel Rescued	None	None	None
Rescue Mission Assists	5	6 (3 vessels in distress; 1 aircraft in distress; 2 survivor groups)	2 (2 boats in distress)
Miscellaneous	None	None	None
Hours Flown by All Airships Assigned	8,976	14,136	5,716

ZP-32 Operations

LTA operations on the West Coast centered around the three main operating bases: Santa Ana, Moffett Field and Tillamook. NAS Moffett Field was the first operational LTA air station to be established after hostilities began. The first squadron assigned to the West Coast was Airship Patrol Squadron 32 (later redesignated Blimp Squadron (ZP) 32). The squadron was established on January 31, 1942, at Sunnyvale.

A directive was signed by the CNO on December 29, 1941, authorizing the formation of ZP-32. Work began immediately on the airships TC-13 and 14 to make them fit for service and prepare them for transportation from

NAS Lakehurst to Moffett Field. These two airships were the nucleus for ZP-32's operations. On January 7, 1942, Lieutenant Commander George F. Watson, the prospective commanding officer, left NAS Lakehurst headed for Moffett Field. Five days after his departure, 11 railroad cars loaded with the dismantled TC-13 and 14, plus spare parts, tools and miscellaneous gear followed. The first of these cars reached Moffett Field on January 24 and work on the TC-14 began the next day. The day after the squadron was established, the TC-14 made her first test flight. A week later, on February 8, the TC-13 was placed in service and flown by the squadron.

The first mission for the TC-14 was on February 4 when she made a wartime

patrol with other units of the Pacific fleet. On February 23, an enemy submarine lying off the coast of California shelled an oil field of Santa Barbara. ZP-32 sent the TC-14 to search for the submarine and to escort any merchant ships in the area. The airship flew from Moffett Field to Morro Bay and operated in the area on February 24. She escorted several tankers and searched for the submarine without any definite results. Even though the airship did not locate the submarine, the squadron was able to demonstrate its capability to respond to crisis situations.

ZP-32 continued to expand its fleet of airships, receiving its first L-type airship on February 28. This new airship, L-6, was the former *Reliance* from the Goodyear commercial fleet. The L-8 was

1 Jul-31 Dec 1944

1 Jan-15 Jul 1945

748	262
None	None
None	None
2 (1 PBY)	1
None	None
1	1
23	None
2	3
8 (6 crashed aircraft; 1 aircraft in distress; 1 hospital case)	2 (1 crashed aircraft; 1 aircraft in distress)
8 Nov: Santa Cruz det. struck by cyclone — minor damage	None
11,191	4,927

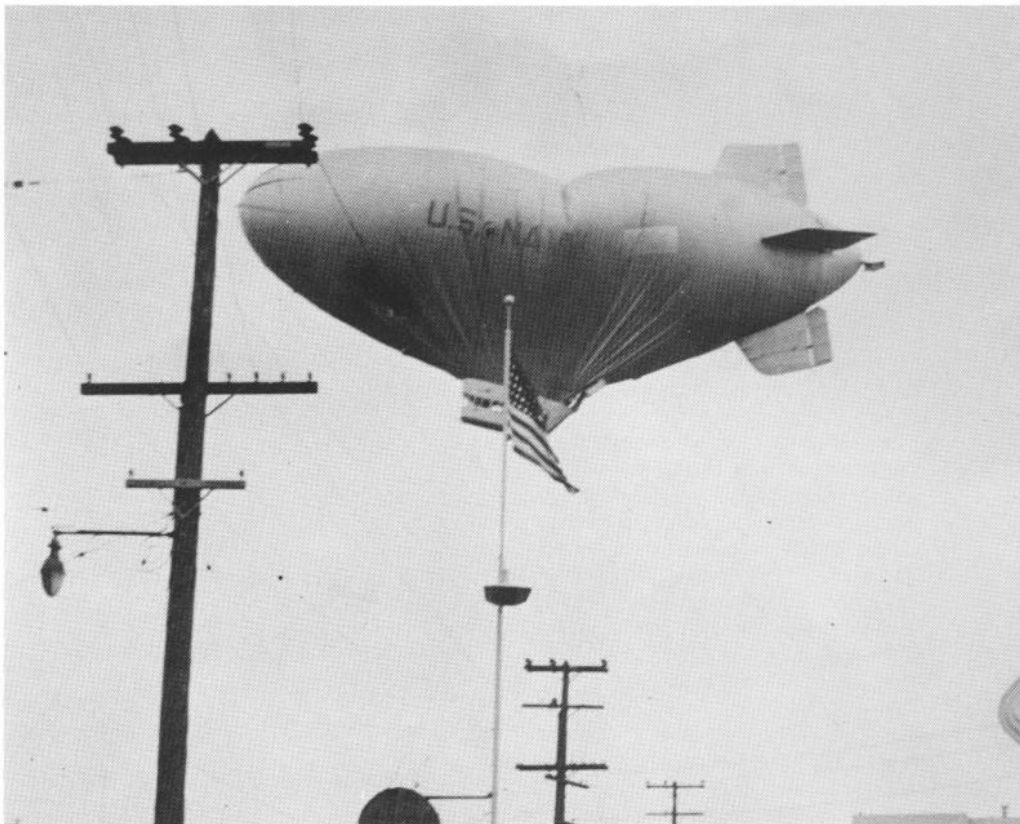


received on March 5 and five days later the third L-type was accepted. It was the L-4, Goodyear's former airship *Resolute*.

On April 11, the L-8 was ordered to perform a special freight mission. She departed San Francisco with a 300-pound load and was ordered to rendezvous with USS *Hornet* (CV-8) off the coast of California. The freight was lowered by line to the deck of *Hornet* while the L-8 hovered over the carrier. The transfer required careful maneuvering of the airship to enable her to land the cargo on a clear spot on the flight deck. Most of the flight deck space was occupied by B-25s. The delivered freight was vital for the success of a secret mission. It consisted of parts for the B-25s which were en route to a carrier takeoff in the middle of the Pacific to make the famous Doolittle raid on Tokyo.

On August 16, 1942, the L-8 was involved in a bizarre incident that has never been completely solved. The L-8 left Treasure Island on a routine patrol off the coast of San Francisco. Several hours later the airship crashed in Dale City. The engines were not running even though there was adequate fuel. The radio equipment was operative but there was no one on board. She took off with two crew members, Lieutenant Junior Grade Cody and Ensign Adams. No trace was ever found of either man and there was no indication of what happened to them. The airship had apparently drifted with the wind toward land, exceeded her pressure height and deflated, settling to earth at Dale City. The L-8 was salvaged and completely repaired. She continued serving the Navy during WW II and after the war was returned to Goodyear.

The first K-type airship, the K-20, was received by ZP-32 on October 31, after being ferried across the country from Akron, Ohio. The squadron received the



The above scenes are from the crash and riddle of the L-8 during WW II.

K-21 and 22 in November, the last K-types to be ferried to the West Coast. Goodyear set up an airship assembly organization at Moffett Field and all future West Coast K-types were assembled there. On December 19, the first K-type, assembled at Moffett Field, was delivered to ZP-32.

With the arrival of the K-types at ZP-32,

the TC-13 and 14 were transferred to NAS Moffett Field's inventory. The transfer of these airships led to the end of the use of both Land TC-type airships for operational patrol duties on the Pacific Coast. They were later used for training and by squadrons for some utility missions.

On March 31, 1943, Lieutenant

Commander Richard E. Bly relieved Cdr. Watson as commanding officer of ZP-32. He remained in this position until he was relieved by Lieutenant Commander Robert E. Huse on June 3, 1944, who was the last commanding officer of ZP-32.

The squadron demonstrated the practicability of using airships in direct rescue operations on October 23, when a squadron pilot was lifted from San Francisco Bay into the K-107, using special rescue gear. The airship dropped a rubber life raft to Lieutenant Junior Grade Gordon W. Dooley, who was floating in the water in a life jacket. Dooley swam to the raft, inflated it and then crawled into it. The K-107 made a second pass trailing a long line. Dooley caught the line, hooked the harness to it and then was pulled aloft when the life raft was directly under the airship. He was hauled on board by the recovery line, using sand bags as counterweights. The rescue demonstration was covered by photographers from San Francisco newspapers.

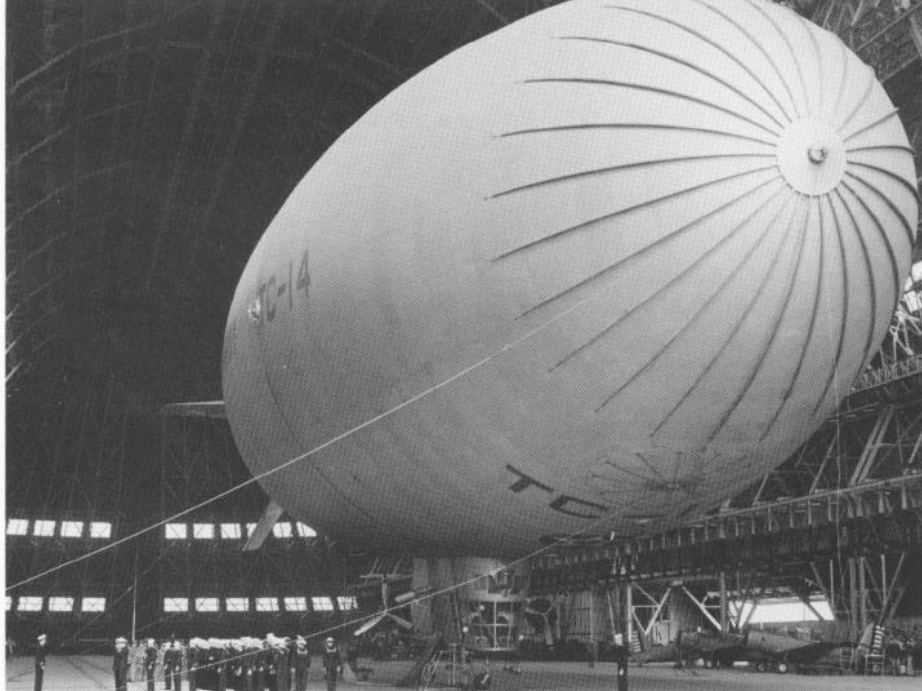
During the war, ZP-32 was tasked with a special mission authorized by the CNO and sponsored by the Office of War Information. The K-75 airship had all armament and confidential equipment removed and several additional seats installed. On May 1, 1945, the K-75 conducted the first in a series of special flights in the San Francisco Bay area, carrying civilian and military personnel attending the United Nations (UN) Conference for International Organization. This organization drew up the charter for the UN during its meetings in San Francisco.

ZP-32 conducted 42 special flights for members of this organization, totaling 331 passengers. ZP-32 was also assigned special ASW patrol duties covering the sea approaches to San Francisco for the maintenance of security while the conference was in session. These special patrols lasted from April 20 to June 27, 1945.

ZP-32 operated a variety of airships during WW II. By 1943, the squadron was operating only K-type airships. In late 1944, ZP-32 received an L-type for general utility purposes.

Mission requirements for ZP-32 varied from primary duties as ASW patrol and escort, to being utilized as a platform for motion picture productions. The squadron investigated a large number of possible submarine contacts and reported sightings, but no enemy submarines were ever encountered.

ZP-32 conducted various types of missions during WW II, including:
 searching for missing aircraft and ships;
 assisting in military and merchant ship work-ups;



The establishment ceremony of ZP-32 in hangar 1 at NAS Moffett Field on January 31, 1942. The first airship assigned to the squadron was the old TC-14.

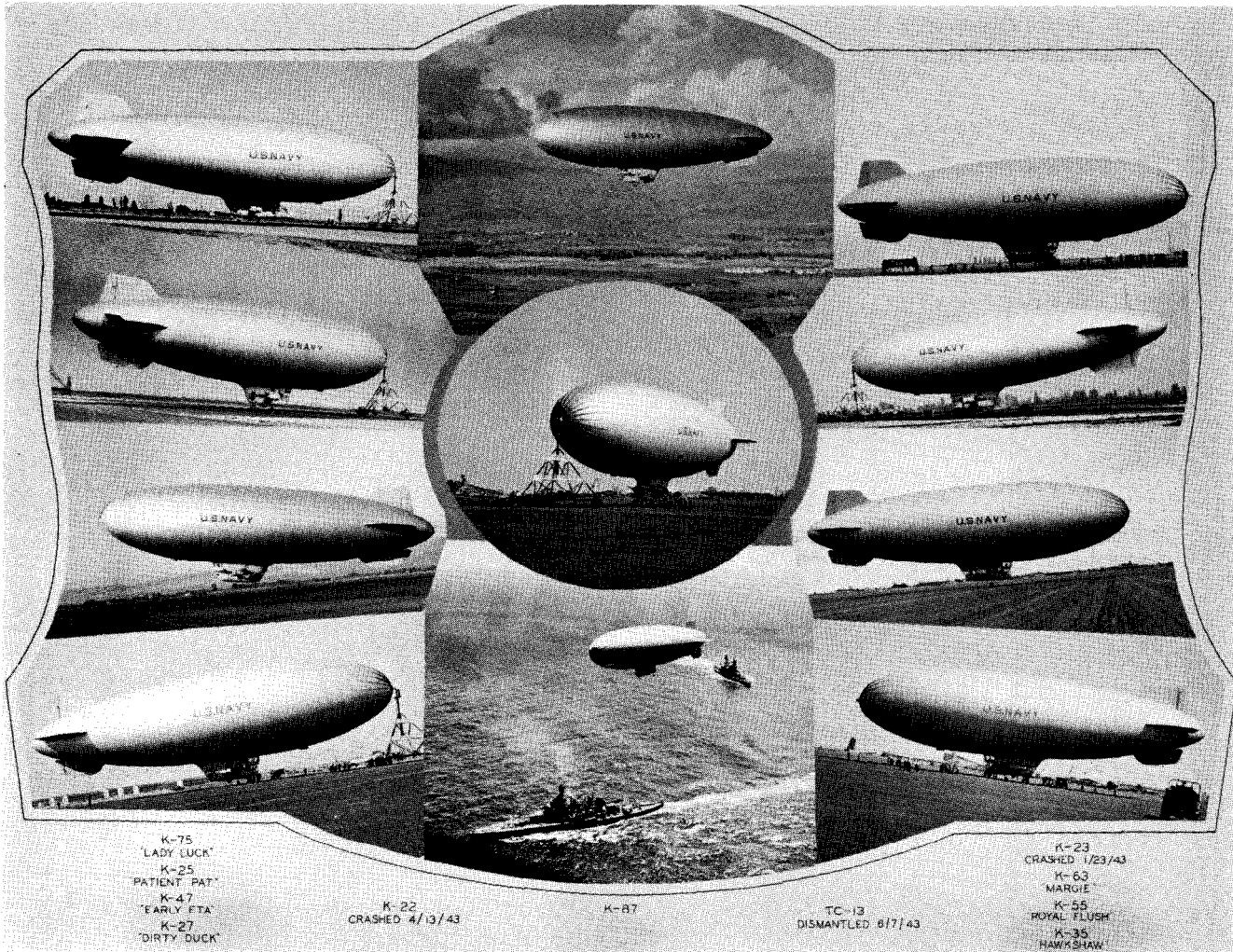
practice in tracking and bombing runs on friendly submarines; torpedo tracking and recovery; dropping targets and spotting for ships engaged in surface gunnery exercises; searching for mines; escorting important Pacific Fleet task groups; responding to enemy submarine sightings; photography and motion picture work;

VHF, IFF and radar calibration flights;
 aerial surveys of coastal installations;
 identifying and reporting location of incoming tankers to San Francisco to facilitate preparations for loading or unloading due to the limited docking facilities;
 air-sea rescue patrols; and special VIP flights.

A summary of ZP-32's activities during WW II follows:

ZP-32

	1942	1943	1944	1945*	Totals
Escort Flights	615	619	698	283	2,215
Hours	4,432	6,048	7,403	2,952	20,835
Patrol Flights	176	1,126	1,599	671	3,572
Hours	981	8,049	12,605	7,355	28,990
Other Flights	30	59	176	619	884
Hours	108	380	1,046	4,147	5,681
Patrol & Escort Flights	27	70	325	79	501
Hours	336	687	3,358	958	5,339
Experimental Flights	21	15	38	—	74
Hours	33	38	64	—	135
Ferry Flights	56	56	93	116	321
Hours	154	202	361	342	1,059



A composite photo of the various airships assigned to ZP-32 during WW II.

	1942	1943	1944	1945*	Totals
Training Flights	109	413	314	191	1,027
Hours	358	1,666	1,237	936	4,197
Night Escort Flights	—	—	—	4	4
Hours	—	—	—	41	41
Night Patrol Flights	1	4	11	5	21
Hours	5	28	160	51	244
Night Escort & Patrol Flights	—	—	—	38	38
Hours	—	—	—	543	543
Ships Escorted	—	1,280	1,287	508	3,075
Total Flights	1,035	2,382	3,254	2,006	8,657
Total Hours	6,407	17,098	26,234	17,325	67,064

*Jan to Aug

With the end of WW II, mission requirements for ZP-32 were reduced. On October 6, 1945, CNO issued a directive for its disestablishment. Preparing to stand down, the squadron participated in several special operations. On October 15, five of ZP-32's K-ships conducted observation flights for members of the press covering the Third Fleet entering San Francisco Bay. From October 16-19, flights were conducted using public address systems to welcome home returning units from the Pacific. On November 19, 1945, ZP-32 was disestablished.

ZP-41 in South America

LTA operations on the Atlantic coast were far more active and covered a much larger area in comparison to the Pacific coast. The area included the coastal waters of the U.S.; the Caribbean; the Gulf of Mexico; the waters off South America from Colombia to and including Brazil; the Straits of Gibraltar; and portions of the western part of the

Mediterranean Sea.

In the South Atlantic, ZP-41 was the first blimp squadron to be assigned to Brazil. It had been established as ZP-52 on June 15, 1943, at NAS Lakehurst, with Lieutenant Commander Daniel M. Entler, Jr., as its first commanding officer. The squadron was scheduled to be transferred to Brazil when facilities became available.

On July 15, in line with the general reorganization of LTA, ZP-52 was redesignated ZP-41. While at Lakehurst, ZP-41's complement was assembled from other units. The squadron's first airship, K-84, conducted its first flight on August 12. K-84 began her ferry flight from Lakehurst to Brazil on September 10, 1943. En route she stopped at NAS Glynco, Richmond, Guantanamo Bay, San Juan, Edinburgh Field, Trinidad, Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana, Amapa and finally Lgarape Assu, Brazil.

On September 26, during the last stage of K-84's flight from Amapa to Lgarape Assu, she became the first non-rigid to cross the equator. K-84 continued on to Fortaleza, Brazil, where temporary headquarters were established. In Brazil, this base was the nearest to completion. Immediately after the K-84 landed at Fortaleza on September 27, plans were made for a rigorous training

program along with the assigned missions.

ZP-41 began its first ASW patrol mission on the morning of September 28, returning to base in the late afternoon. Flight crews then changed and the airship took off again, late in the evening, for her first night patrol. It was a vigorous beginning.

During the month of October, ZP-41 conducted daily operations. Two more airships, K-88 and 90, arrived to assist the squadron in its patrol duties. By November, missions were routinely carried out by ZP-41's airships. When no operational missions were assigned, training flights were conducted including bombing drills, using practice bombs on wooden land targets of the size and shape of a submarine's pressure hull; radio navigation practice; and handling maneuvers; as well as landings under the unique conditions of wind and superheat prevalent in South America.

On January 3, 1944, ZP-41 moved its headquarters from Fortaleza to Sao Luiz and, on May 1, Lieutenant Commander John J. McLendon relieved Lt.Cdr. Entler as commanding officer. During the squadron's operations in Brazil, it was engaged primarily in ASW patrol and escort duties, and air/sea and jungle search and rescue missions. The



ZP-41 K-ships at Sao Luiz, Brazil. Note the portable stick mast in the foreground.

squadron did not have any active encounters with enemy submarines during the war. ZP-41's history records its numerous successes in rescue missions, although the squadron had more than four times as many hours on ASW patrol and escort missions. Its ASW patrol and escort mission was obviously

A ZP-41 K-ship moored at Sao Luiz, during WW II.



successful even though there were no sightings or attacks on enemy submarines. This is substantiated by the fact that none of the ships escorted by ZP-41 were attacked or sunk.

In March 1945, a CNO dispatch ordered the withdrawal of ZP-42, the other blimp squadron in Brazil. This left ZP-41 as the only blimp squadron operating in the South Atlantic. As the war in Europe drew to a close, ZP-41's operations in April consisted primarily of ASW sweeps of shipping lanes. When the war ended in May, the squadron's mission was altered to one of air/sea and jungle rescue. All ASW operational sweeps were cancelled on May 15.

ZP-41 experienced various changes as other operational units were disbanded. The squadron remained in Brazil after the war to transfer the squadron's airships and material to the Brazilian government. However, on July 12, 1945, Brazil announced the termination of its LTA program, thereby precluding ZP-41's lend-lease transfer of its equipment.

Despite cancellation of the Brazilian program, ZP-41 continued its rescue mission. Operations were limited in August and September, with routine training as the major activity. In October, the squadron received a dispatch ordering personnel to prepare for disestablishment upon being relieved of

its rescue mission by the U.S. Army. By November 1945, the squadron was operating with only one airship, the K-52. Squadron personnel were reduced to two flight crews and a skeleton ferry crew, with training flights their only activity. On December 28, Lieutenant Commander Jack L. Nolen relieved Lt.Cdr. McLendon as commanding officer of ZP-41. The squadron's last airship, departed Sao Luiz, for NAS Glynco on January 18, 1946, the last U.S. airship to leave the South American area. On January 31, the squadron was disestablished.

The statistics (lower left) cover ZP-41's operations while assigned to Brazil during WW II:

ZP-41

	1943	1944	1945*	Totals
Escort Flights	72	464	62	598
Hours	872	5,281	520	6,673
Patrol Flights	75	45	82	202
Hours	803	400	641	1,844
Other Flights	10	276	66	352
Hours	95	1,575	492	2,162
Ferry Flights	42	286	90	418
Hours	452	2,530	752	3,734
Training Flights	37	512	150	699
Hours	331	2,294	420	3,045
Night Escort Flights	—	4	—	4
Hours	—	57	—	57
Night Patrol Flights	—	1—	1	
Hours	—	12	—	12
Airships Assigned	3	7	4	
Flight Hours Per Ship	233	142	114	—
Airship on the Line	2	5	3	—
Flight Hours Per Ship	296	180	136	—
Total Flights	236	1,588	450	2,274
Total Hours	2,555	12,152	2,827	17,534
Ships Escorted	628	4,784	196	5,608

*Jan to 15 May

ZP-21 in the Caribbean

The Caribbean Sea was a vital area of operation for the U.S. and her Allies during the war. The region included the shipping lanes for merchantmen carrying their cargo between U.S. Atlantic ports and the ports of the gulf states, Mexico, Central and South America, as well as Africa and the Pacific. This concentration of shipping was a major drawing card for submarines. Enemy submarines could enter the deep Straits of Florida and the gulf stream via the Yucatan Channel and drift noiselessly with the gulf stream, making the area a profitable hunting ground.

Mission requirements for units operating in the Caribbean included: air coverage to surface units and convoys; observing and reporting suspicious vessels; protection of friendly shipping; assistance in rescue work; ASW patrols and attacks against subs; participation in ASW killer groups; assistance in convoy rendezvous work, including delivery of special convoy instructions; aid in laying and clearing minefields; and assistance in various types of utility missions.

The characteristics of the airship supported a wide variety of these services and ZP-21 was established to help combat enemy submarine activity in the northern and eastern Gulf of Mexico. On November 1, 1942, Airship Squadron 21 (later redesignated Blimp Squadron 21) was established at NAS Richmond, Fla. Commander Gerald D. Zurmuehlen became the squadron's first commanding officer. The squadron had an inventory of two airships, the K-18 and 19. The airships arrived in October and were immediately used for convoy escort work. Additionally, daily indoctrination flights were flown to acquaint crews with the general topography of the areas in which they would fly ASW patrols.

In order to provide ASW, rescue, escort and utility services in its area of operations, ZP-21 established a number