RBZ Special – The radio made for the French Resistance

This is a quite uncommon personal radio, built by Emerson for US Navy. The RBZ covered the band from 2 to 5.8 MHz. This sample is an RBZ Special, covering from 5.0 to 13 MHz. Very little is known about its story, but it was already in use during 1944 by French Resistance in the days before the D-Day landings. The RBZ Special had been modified just to tune the BBC radio stations and to listen to the daily coded or ‘personal’ messages.

RBZ is composed by two small fiber enclosures fitted into a two-pouch canvas holder. One unit contained the radio itself, the second one hosting the dry batteries, connected by a 4-wire cord. The headset was weared with a canvas skullcap under the helmet, which was used as antenna.

The permeability tuned superheterodyne receiver has only switch/volume control and tuning knob. 5 vacuum tubes, 1T4, 1R5, 1T4, 1S5 and 1L4. The radio could also be AC operated using a special RBZ Power Pack Model 2.

Manufactured by Emerson Radio & Phonograph Corp.