

JUNE 1945

## BATTLE OF ATLANTIC

**Now It Can Be Told:  
The Story of the Navy's Exploits  
In the Campaign That Made  
Possible Victory in Europe**

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**FINAL KILL:** on 6 May, three Navy and one Coast Guard crew watched surface pattern blasts that destroyed sub.

**T**HE Battle of the Atlantic, one of the most decisive campaigns of the war, was a fight to the finish. The Nazis carried on their U-boat warfare to the bitter end.

Only three weeks before the Germans surrendered, a formidable wolf pack of U-boats was intercepted and badly mauled by one of the most powerful forces of carriers and destroyer escorts ever to operate in the mid-Atlantic. From prisoners we learned that this pack had orders to blanket the East Coast from Maine to Florida. We sank five U-boats in this blitz of the Nazis.

We had four carriers and 46 destroyer escorts hounding U-boats in the mid-Atlantic after their presence was discovered.

In addition to this blitz there was considerable U-boat activity along the East Coast. For the first time in more than a year U-boats operated off the East Coast in numbers.

Only 24 hours before Germany surrendered we sank a U-boat in our own back yard, off Block Island. We also got another sub south of Nova Scotia in the middle of April. And we had a probable kill off Cape Hatteras just two weeks before the surrender.

These U-boat actions undoubtedly were the Nazis' last fanatical attempts to panic us before the collapse. They did manage to torpedo five merchantmen off the East Coast in the last three weeks, all but two reaching port.

We were ready for them. When we disposed our forces several months ago to take into account the possibility of buzz-bomb attacks we closed the gaps. Those precautions paid divi-

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dends. Buzz bombs never buzzed but the subs were there and we smashed their attack. We got a total of eight U-boats and kept the others down where they could do no harm.

Since V-E Day the U-boats have been surrendering. Until they are all accounted for and the Atlantic is definitely clear we will maintain our patrols out there.

Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King was Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet until 30 Dec. 1941, when he was succeeded by Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll. I relieved Admiral Ingersoll on 15 Nov. 1944.

To Fleet Admiral King and Admiral Ingersoll should go full credit for the splendid organization of the Atlantic Fleet and for the magnificent record established in this bitter silent sea war.

From Cape Cod to Capetown, from Reykjavik to Rio, Atlantic Fleet air and sea groups tracked and destroyed the U-boats. Each kill was a small war of its own. The "unpredictable" incident became routine in this most baffling of all types of warfare.

The success of the antisubmarine warfare groups may be attributed to teamwork. Each group was finely trained to operate together, as a team and not as an individual unit. The efficiency of such a group is probably three or four times greater than if each ship had been trained separately.

Now that the Battle of the Atlantic is over, it is possible to tell of some of the exploits of the boys in blue.

For example, we captured a U-boat intact last June. We refer to it as Yehudi. The story of that capture is one of the most interesting to come out of the Atlantic. Captain D. V. Gallery was in command of the *Guadalcanal* and the task group that captured it. He had issued orders to capture the first submarine sighted. Pilots were warned to concentrate their attacks on personnel and not to sink the sub unless absolutely necessary. Destroyer escorts and destroyers were similarly warned. When Yehudi was sighted by planes from the carrier Captain Gallery's orders were followed out strictly. The sub was trapped and the crew was forced to abandon her under the severe strafing attacks. The sub circled dizzily until a boarding party from the *Pillsbury* reached her and got her under partial control only to learn that she was flooding and might sink any moment. Boarding parties from the *Guadalcanal* arriving shortly afterward got the pumps started and prevented her from sinking. The *Guadalcanal* took her in tow and conducted flight operations with the U-boat tagging along astern.

On another occasion aircraft from the *Guadalcanal* sighted a U-boat placidly nursing a rich meal of diesel oil from a huge mother sub. A quick blitz from the air sent both boats to the bottom and two hours later escort ships were fishing water-soaked Nazis out of the brine.

One airman from the *Bogue* added another twist to the U-boat stories. After harassing a U-boat to the surface, the aircraft, now bereft of ammunition, was startled to see the German hoist his white flag. The

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problem: how to get surface ships, several miles away, to the scene to make the surrender stick. Solution: fast talking to the ships which managed to arrive in time to scoop up another load of live specimens for Uncle Sam's collection of swastika-men. When our ships appeared the Nazis scuttled their sub.

The sub sunk closest to home during the Battle of the Atlantic now rests on the muddy bottom off Block Island. The one most distant was "dunked" off the shores of South Africa. In between these points the battle ranged over 30,000,000 square miles of ocean.

Probably the quickest kill of the war was turned in by a destroyer escort. His orders: "Proceed Halifax to New York, sweeping for possible U-boat enroute." Result: "Sank sub enroute, losing no time underway."

The laurels for brevity in reporting, even beating the famous "sighted sub sank same," went to the *Croatan's* group. One word did the work of four. His orders: "Hunt and destroy U-boat in designated area." With eloquent economy of words the captain replied a few hours later: "Complied." Another sub had found its way to the bottom.

The "brand-newest" ship to sink a sub was the *Gandy*, a destroyer escort. Fresh from shakedown, eighteen hours after departure on her first escort job, she rammed a U-boat and with the help of two sister ships sank it. Trophies for this adventure included eight live Nazis: the captain, two fellow officers and five crewmen.

The title of "public enemy number one" so far as the carrier groups were concerned probably went to the U-boat that slipped a "fish" through the screen to sink the *Block Island*. What ensued was not only war but a personal grudge fight that resulted in the sinking of the U-boat four hours later.

One of the most exciting instances of rough-and-tumble free-style sub-fighting developed from an aircraft tip-off to the "lucky" *Buckley*, a destroyer escort. Guided to the scene of the surfaced U-boat by the plane, the *Buckley* and the sub exchanged point-blank surface fire. *Buckley* then rammed and rode over the sub. The battered U-boat got away, the *Buckley* in pursuit. The DE poured lead into the conning tower while the crew heaved coffee cups at the swastika. The U-boat got out of control, crashed into the *Buckley* and sank in 10 minutes leaving 32 members of the master race thrashing around in the bubbles with a few more hanging for dear life to the *Buckley's* forecastle.

Surprise and deadly risk characterized every moment in the lives of the men and the ships hunting the U-boat



SAFE ACROSS the Atlantic, a United Nations convoy steams into port. A Navy escort stands watch at left.

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with the annoying capacity to make itself invisible through submergence. These are only a few of the scores of battle reports that enliven the logs of the sub-hunters.

Operations against the surface raiders and U-boats in the South Atlantic were just as tense but the hunting was probably more difficult. There weren't as many U-boats in that area. We established a blockade to halt the traffic of vital supplies between Japan and Germany, with the invaluable assistance of Brazil's bases from which to operate. In our famous triple play, we sank three German surface blockade runners in three successive days. I was in command down there at the time.

Long before the trend of victory was apparent—in fact, during the darkest days of the Battle of the Atlantic—the courageous government of Brazil, with the full support and approval of the people of Brazil, threw her weight and full strength to the Allied cause. Throughout the war Brazil exerted every energy to the successful prosecution of the war.

It is common knowledge that we had a close call in the Atlantic in the early days of the war. The U-boats were ready. We were not. Admiral Doenitz's U-boat fleet was estimated to consist of 118 subs in January 1941. By December 1941 this figure had increased to 153, according to reliable estimates. By January 1943 the Germans were reported to have 400 U-boats. They maintained around this number, reaching a peak of 450 on 1 March 1945.

During the height of submarine warfare in 1942 and 1943 there were about 150 U-boats on station, preying on the Atlantic shipping. The others were enroute either to their stations or to their home ports or were in port for repairs and relaxation for the crews. These crews were well trained and well paid.

Had the U-boats not been brought under control and finally defeated there is no doubt that the unconditional surrender of the Nazis might never have been accomplished. At least it would have been delayed for some time.

The turning point in the Battle of the Atlantic occurred in the spring of 1943. Prior to that time we were on the defensive. With the introduction of specially trained antisubmarine warfare groups, we assumed the offensive.

The Atlantic Fleet's record speaks for itself. Since the declaration of war we have escorted 16,760 ships across the Atlantic. Of these, less than a score were sunk in convoy. It required 3,552 escort trips to do this job. Roughly, the Atlantic Fleet and ships in convoy cruised more than 50,000,000 miles in the battle against the U-boats, to say nothing of the millions of miles flown by our pilots patrolling the vast stretches of the ocean.

From our entry in the war we know definitely that we sank 126 U-boats, most of them far from shore. We probably sank many more than this but in the Atlantic definite proof must be obtained before credit for a "kill" is given. Searching for these U-boats

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was like looking for a needle in a haystack. For the most part, they were scattered over thousands of square miles of ocean. Apart from the hazards involved and the patience required there was the rugged Atlantic weather to battle.

The number of ships in the usual convoy ranged from 24 to 60 with eight to nine escorts respectively to protect them. The largest convoy consisted of 119 ships plus nine escorts.

Our convoys operated on a schedule. Every five days a convoy departed from the East Coast for the United Kingdom, Iceland or Africa. At any given moment we had at least 450 cargo ships at sea and 75 escorts with them.

The speed of the convoys varied, depending on their cargoes and destinations. Some made only six or seven knots, others 10 knots. Troopship convoys, of course, with their valuable cargo, were heavily escorted and got across as quickly as possible at speeds ranging to upwards of 15 knots.

Seeking out and destroying U-boats and keeping the sea lanes open is but one of the many jobs of the Atlantic Fleet. The forces of the Atlantic Fleet conducted the amphibious operations against the enemy in Morocco, and participated actively in Sicily, Italy, Normandy and southern France.

Atlantic Fleet training commands, organized after Pearl Harbor to ready for war the tremendous flow of ships from America's industrial yards, have shaken down upwards of 1,500 combatant and auxiliary types and nearly 3,000 amphibious vessels. Tens of thousands of officers and nearly a million men have been trained by these commands.

These ships and men provided the trained personnel and superior equipment which licked the U-boats and safely escorted American troops and material to Europe and Africa to victory. These newly trained ships and men gallantly and effectively engaged the enemy in battle in the Pacific, some within a matter of weeks after their departure from the Atlantic training area.

Our extensive facilities for pre-commissioning and shakedown training fit new ships for combat. Our "refresher" training keeps the fleet up-to-date and allows those getting ready for combat for the first time to profit by the experience of the men from the war zones. We have advanced training in specialties such as antisubmarine, anti-aircraft and amphibious warfare; communications, damage control, and interception of enemy planes. This adds up to continual progress toward final victory.

Since 1 January of this year more than 800 ships trained in the Atlantic have passed through the Panama Canal to join our forces in the Pacific.

For the future, the Atlantic Fleet will train the newly commissioned ships and those returning from the European theatre of operations and will continue to raise the proficiency level of the United States Fleet with refresher and specialty training.

When German heavy ships were at Brest the Atlantic Fleet maintained a task force at sea in readiness to intercept any of these ships that might



### CAPTURE OF U-BOAT 505

A SECRET the Navy was sitting on for nearly a year— capture off French West Africa on 4 June 1944 of the Nazi U-boat 505 — was revealed after Germany's fall. The capture was made by a task group composed of the escort carrier USS Guadalcanal and five destroyer escorts. Commanding the group was the Guadalcanal's skipper, Captain Daniel V. Gallery. The submerged U-boat was first detected by the USS Chatelain's sound gear.

slip out to raid the Atlantic. Similarly when German heavy ships were stationed in Norway a detachment of the Atlantic Fleet operated with the British Fleet and participated in an attack in Norwegian ports.

Geographically the Atlantic Fleet's operations are spread out from the North Pole to the Falkland Islands, from the eastern coasts of North and South America to Africa and Europe. Bases for extended operations and training are located not only within the continental limits of the United States but in Argentina (Newfoundland), Iceland, Trinidad, Greenland, Brazil and Bermuda.

At Greenland the Atlantic Fleet has maintained a detachment, largely of Coast Guard vessels. These vessels and aircraft have carried supplies to stations along the Greenland coast and through the ice to inaccessible areas of Greenland and the Atlantic. They have rescued aviators found on the ice cap and performed escort duty between Greenland and North America. The latter services were most important when the importation of cryolite from Greenland was a vital factor in aluminum production.

Realizing the importance of Greenland as a base for weather operations the Nazis made frantic attempts to establish themselves in that area. Last year a small Atlantic Fleet detachment of Coast Guard cutters smashed a Nazi attempt to establish a weather station on the northeast coast of Greenland, capturing another weather station, taking a German radio station and fighting off a twin-motored bomber attack.

Before the war the Atlantic weather patrol was established in connection with the overseas flights of commercial aircraft. Since the war the number of weather stations has been more than quadrupled and the reports of the ships on the weather stations have aided materially in the conduct of operations not only in the Atlantic but

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in Europe. Atlantic Fleet ships have also served as plane guards for overseas flights.

These far-flung operations of the Fleet in the Atlantic, the United Kingdom and the Mediterranean presented a difficult logistics problem. Supplying the men, material and ships in this vast area is also a function of the Atlantic Fleet.

At present the Atlantic Fleet is operating an extensive network of beacon and rescue ships to guide and safeguard the planes returning from Europe, to the Pacific. The planes are loaded with casualties and with personnel who are to be readied for duty in the Pacific. The setting up of this network has been quite a complicated undertaking. Ships of the Atlantic Fleet are spotted in the North and South Atlantic and are on the alert to effect rescues should any of these planes be downed.

The Allies made a great team out there in the Atlantic. On numerous occasions we operated jointly with the British. Throughout the war we operated with the Canadians. Nothing was left to be desired in our relationships and mutual understandings of each other's problems and the methods to be employed in solving them.

The commanders of the Eastern, Caribbean, Gulf and Panama sea frontiers figured prominently in the Battle of the Atlantic. They kept our coastal areas clear. They too, share in the success of the Battle of the Atlantic.

I would not want to let this occasion pass without taking my hat off to the officers and men of the Atlantic Fleet. That goes for regulars and reserves. I make no distinction. We are all in the Navy. Our reserve officers and reserve enlisted men acquitted themselves with honors.

Every officer and every man of the Atlantic Fleet, at bases, training stations, aboard battleships, cruisers, carriers, submarines, destroyers, destroyer escorts, frigates, tugs, in fact, every conceivable type of surface and aircraft did a tough job well.

**ALL HANDS**