

Battle of the atlantic notes

War



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Battle of the Atlantic The Battle of the Atlantic played a very significant part in World War Two. In World War Two, after the escape at Dunkirk and the inspiration of the Battle of Britain, the Battle of the Atlantic was Britain's next nightmare. The Battle of the Atlantic was " the only thing that ever frightened me. " Winston Churchill. As an island Britain needed to bring in a vast amount of food and military equipment to survive the war. The German submarine force (U-boats) severely damaged our ability to survive the war - hence Churchill's quote above when he feared we would be starved out of the war.

A great deal of our raw materials came from America and therefore had to cross the Atlantic. In normal times this journey could be hazardous because of the weather but in the war the German submarines lead by Admiral Raeder proved a very real threat. Nazi Germany estimated that they needed to sink 150 merchant ships each month to starve us out. German submarines hunted in what were called wolf-packs. British supply ships crossed in convoys and the ships that brought in our food etc. were slow and they could barely protect themselves. After leaving America they were reasonably safe while in American water and they were also more safe when they approached British waters as we could give the ships fighter plane cover. It was in the mid-Atlantic that we were at our most vulnerable and where to start with the U-boats could run riot. The Battle of the Atlantic was the longest battle in World War 2, which was fought in period from 1939 until the German defeat in 1945.

It started in first days of war in 1939 when allied forces declared naval blockad to Germany, immediately Germany launched counter attack.

Struggles have led the greatest intensity from mid-1940 through to the end of 1943. At first in the fighting participated German Navy (Kriegsmarine) and German air forces (Luftwaffe) that attacked Allied merchant ships and convoys. These convoys, which was often traveling from North America to Britain and the Soviet Union, they initially were protected by the British and Canadian navies and air forces.

At the end of 1941 U. S. air and naval forces joined defense of the convoys. In June, 1940. Italian Royal Navy(Regia Marina)joined this fight on the German side. United Kingdom was highly dependent on imported goods, they need more than a million of tons of a various materials per week to be able to defend against German attacks. The Battle of the Atlantic was war for materials and supply routes, Allies struggled to protect supply routes that provides Britain with goods that were required for making all kind of defenses against German air attacks.

The Battle of the Atlantic started at first day of war and lasted for six years. There was more than 1000 single-ship encounters and approximately 100 convoy fights, this battle involved thousands of ships and were fought on more than thousands of square miles of ocean. The ultimate outcome of the battle was the Allied victory and the defeat of Germany, both sides have suffered great losses, Germany lost 783 U-boats and about 28 000 sailors, as well they managed to destroy 3 500 merchant ships and 175 allied warships and about 30 000 allied sailors. War lasted from 3 September 1939 – 8 May 1945 (5 years, 8 months and 5 days) •Because Britain was an Island it relied heavily on imported goods •The Nazis saw this and looked to attack and destroy and ships going into Britain •Without supplies Britain would lose the

war- Mission of Nazis •The Nazi boats would attack in “ wolf packs” (the U-boats attacked in large ‘ wolf-packs’ – when a U-boat came across a convoy, it would radio its position to a number of other submarines, which would close in on the convoy.

Then they would wait until nightfall and make surface attacks in numbers. On 18 October 1940, a pack of 6 Nazi U-boats attacked slow convoy SC-7, sinking 15 ships in 6 hours. Next day, reinforced by three more U-boats, the pack attacked the 49-ship convoy HX-79, sinking 12 ships in one night) •The USA tried to help Britain. In August 1940 the US gave Britain 50 destroyers in exchange for Atlantic naval bases •The name “ Battle of the Atlantic” was coined by Winston Churchill in February 1941.

It has been called the “ longest, largest, and most complex” naval battle in history. •The situation changed constantly, with one side or the other gaining advantage, as new weapons, tactics, counter-measures, and equipment were developed by both sides. The Allies gradually gained the upper hand, overcoming German surface raiders by the end of 1942 (withdrawn on Hitler's orders) and defeating the U-boats by mid-1943, though losses to U-boats continued to war's end. Allies won because Eight things helped the Allies to stop the U-boat menace. . The work of the British codebreakers at Bletchley Park in deciphering the German Enigma code was vital in giving the Allied navies the edge in the Battle of the Atlantic. In February 1942, however, the German code was improved, resulting in ‘ the Drumbeat crisis’ when shipping losses were their greatest – until March 1943, when the German code was again broken. 2. Sonar had been invented before World

War I, but after 1942 the US Navy Department developed 'console sonar' which could plot accurate bearings using an echo 'ping'.

Training of sonar operators was also improved. 3. Radar was improved so that U-boats could even be detected in bad weather. 4. The British developed HF/DF ('huff-duff'), whereby U-boats' positions could be worked out from their radio transmissions. 5. Six aircraft carriers were sent to patrol the Atlantic, and this extended air cover to the whole route convoys took. 6. Air depth-bombs were developed so that planes could attack U-boats under the water. 7.

Weapons called Hedgehog and Squid were developed which allowed attack ships to catapult depth-charges up to 300 yards in front of the ship. 8. The Allies set up hunter-killer groups of ships, including one aircraft carrier with a number of destroyer escorts, to hunt down and sink U-boats. Book Info "The Battle of the Atlantic" by Andrew Williams Quotes from book- "The U-Boat's chief weapon was a surprise; the undetected rush of a high-explosive torpedo" - Boats weren't prepared for this new technology of underwater torpedoes.

This made U-Boats very effective. "Before sailing, all U-Boats had been issued with strict orders to operate within the Prize Rules, the international agreements governing the conduct of war at sea. Merchant ships were to be stopped and searched; if found to be carrying enemy cargo they could be sunk, but only after the crew had been safely into the lifeboats" - Again Submarines were really new, and they couldn't go by the rules that all the other ships had (Prize Rules), they could blow up a ship with people still inside.

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