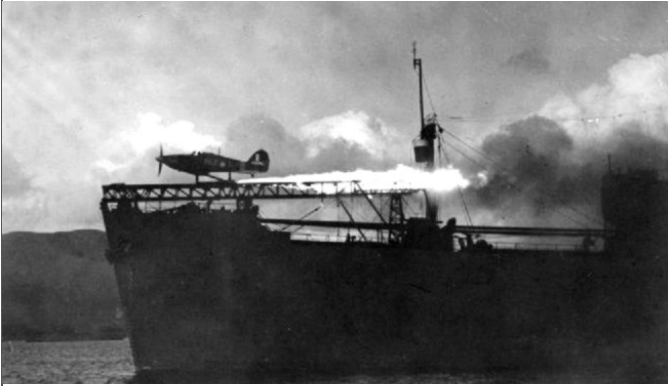




Supplying Europe: Crossing an Ocean Full of Wolves

FROM THE ARCHIVES



One of the ideas for defense of convoys in the Atlantic was the use of aircraft launched from cargo ships. Shown here is a Hurricane being launched from a ship. The wheels are replaced by rockets, with a rod near the center of gravity of the aircraft. The aircraft launches off a track with the rockets to provide propulsion. This allows the aircraft to achieve takeoff speed in short distances. The aircraft was not able to return to the ship, and all required crash landings by ditching the aircraft. CAM aircraft had a 100 percent success rate.

While this wasn't used much beyond testing, it provided the foundation for technology later used on aircraft carriers.

Of the many struggles during the era of World Wars I and II, logistics of moving materiel from the United States to the Allies in Europe proved to be a costly and difficult endeavor. German U-boats plagued the Atlantic and were sinking ships virtually indiscriminately. Adoption of convoy systems was used to mitigate the hazards of these so-called "wolf pack" hunts. However, this still did not stop numerous losses both prior to and during their implementation.

Struggles began prior to any declaration of war by the Americans. This was primarily due to the shipping of supplies to Western Europe for the Entente and later the Allies. World War I saw the export of small arms and ammunition among other personal accoutrements to the British and French. In some instances, this cargo was transported on civilian flagged vessels as it transited the Atlantic. The first major loss of American assets came in the form of 123 citizens on the RMS Lusitania on 7 MAY 1915 off the southern coast of Ireland. The German Kriegsmarine sacked the ship as part of their unrestricted warfare doctrine. Following the sinking of Lusitania, not only did the Americans begin to arm cargo and civilian ships, but the Kriegsmarine rescinded, albeit temporarily, their unrestricted submarine warfare. The restarting of this warfare on 1 FEB 1917 was one of the reasons President Woodrow Wilson rallied Congress for war the following April.

Problems with moving materiel continued throughout the war's closure in 1918. These issues continued to plague the Allies at the opening of World War I. Although convoy systems were implemented, defense of shipping still proved to be a significant issue.

During World War II, the British found that its Atlantic logistics supply routes from Canada and the United States (through Lend-Lease) to be especially vulnerable. To mitigate these risks, they implemented large convoy systems. By 1941, the convoy system was standard, but large amounts of ships continued to be lost due to the lack of means for ships to defend themselves. The Americans also suffered significant issues with loss early in their involvement in the war. Specifically, numerous ships were lost along the American coastline due to issues with afterglow. Following the implementation of blackouts, the loss of ships on the coast began to be reduced.

Other key issues factored into the Allies securing shipping lanes over the Atlantic. Some of these issues were resolved by implementing new and improved SONAR capabilities within the convoys. Other innovations included the fitting of rocket-propelled aircraft onboard cargo ships to provide additional scouting. The ability to include warships within the convoy remained strained, especially due to the war in the Pacific. Most convoys that suffered significant losses did so due to their distance from any meaningful air or sea support. Because of this, large amounts of sunken ships and U-boats litter the northern shipping lane that stretches from New England, up the coast of Newfoundland, south of Greenland, to Iceland, and finally to the western coast of England.

The key to success and the end of the largest troubles in the Atlantic, however, came in the form of breaking the Enigma code. Being able to break through this code allowed the Allies to better understand the location of Kriegsmarine wolf-packs. As the war continued in Europe, and U-boat bases began to wane in availability, this also in turn reduced the number of U-boats in the open seas. The surface fleet of the Kriegsmarine was anemic at best, and the pride of the German Navy was slowly being stripped away.

Following the end of World War II, advances in aviation allowed the inclusion of air-transport as a means of providing materiel support around the world. The first time this was used in large quantities was in 1948 with the Berlin Airlift. Unfortunately, such deployment was not available to the Allies during the war and the result was the loss of hundreds of thousands of tonnages in shipping. Nevertheless, the quantity of materiel coupled with the fast reaction by the Allies made the shipping war in the Atlantic a success in the face of wolves.

MONTHLY TRIVIA

- 1 What was the name of the machine that was used by German during World War II to send cryptic messages?
- 2 What was the price tag of Lend-Lease for all of the Allies during World War II?
- 3 How many Allied ships were sunk by U-boats during the D-Day Invasion?

ANSWERS FOR DECEMBER 2022 QUESTIONS

- 1 What Christmas drink did CPT John Smith invent in 1607 at Virginia Jamestown settlement?
➤ **Eggnog**
- 2 How many Soldiers are believed to have taken part in the Christmas Truce of 1914?
➤ **100,000**
- 3 What was President Nixon's "11 days of Christmas" in 1972?
➤ **Operation *LINEBACKER II***



As a gentle reminder to everyone on installations across North America, the Canadians are attacking! Each year more people are attacked by Geese...probably. In all seriousness though, do not approach Geese even on a good day. They are especially active now that migration season is among us. Beware! Be suspicious! Be safe! Don't pet the Geese. They will fight you.

Martin Luther King Observance



Each year on the third Monday in January, the Department of Defense joins the nation in honoring the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

King is remembered as America's preeminent advocate of nonviolence and a leader of the Civil Rights Movement. While others were fighting for equality by "any means necessary," he used the power of words and acts of nonviolent resistance. His achievements are well documented.

Observing Martin Luther King Day through service continues the DoD's mission of promoting change and building communities.



History is being made every day at this command.
Headline Photo: An aerial photo of a UG (Mediterranean/Southern Europe) convoy in 1942. UG routes all began in the Chesapeake Bay and ended on the south coast of Europe.

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