# The Daybook

**Volume 6 Issue 1** **Fall 1999**

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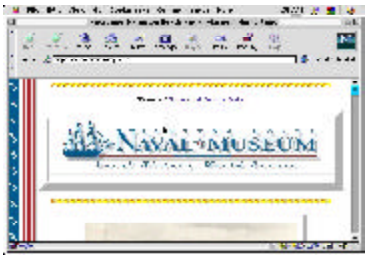


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NAVAL MUSEUM
*Local History. World Events.*

### *About* The Daybook

*The Daybook* is an authorized publication of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum (HRNM). Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official view of the U.S. Government, the Depart ment of Defense, the U.S. Navy or the U.S. Marine Corps and do not imply endorsement thereof. Book reviews are solely the opinion of the reviewer.

The HRNM is operated and funded by Commander Navy Region Mid-Atlantic. The museum is dedicated to the study of 225 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free. *The Daybook*'s purpose is to educate and inform readers on historical topics and museum related events. It is written by the staff and volunteers of the museum.

Questions or comments can be directed to the Hampton Roads Naval Museum editor. *The Daybook* can be reached at (757) 322-2993, by fax at (757) 445-1867, e-mail at gbcalhoun@cmar.navy.mil, or write *The Daybook*, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, VA 23510-1607. The museum can be found on the World Wide Web at http://www.hrnm.navy.mil

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**Cover Photograph:** The crew of the Type X *U-118* is caught and attacked by Avenger torpedo-bombers. The aircraft operated from the Norfolk-based escort carrier USS *Bogue* (CVE-9) and were part of a new "hunter-killer" ASW squadron. Using data from the super secret ULTRA project, *Bogue*'s air squadron and her destroyers cleared the way for the huge 84-ship convoy UGS-12 which had left Hampton Roads a few days eariler bound for North Africa.

# On to the New Year

## The Director's Column

by Becky Poulliot

I am certain that all of you have become saturated with millenium madness, but as an historian, I have to admit that it has been good for business. So, please bear with me for a few minutes as we recap the course of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum during its first score of existence.

The Museum opened in1979 in Norfolk Naval Base's Pennsylvania House, a 1907 Jamestown Exposition State House located on Admiral's Row. During the course of the facility's history, this two-third's size replica of Independence Hall served several functions, its most popular being the Officer's Club. If the museum had only received a dollar donation for every time we heard about the Friday Night Seafood Buffet during the good old days, we would be on our way to a healthy endowment.

During its early years, the museum experienced good attendance (up to 80,000/year) yet paradoxically was little known. The Base bus tour dropped off hundreds of visitors per day during the summer. Yet, if a visitor wanted to drive to the museum a pass had to be obtained, something many people found daunting. By 1989, the museum had first-rate permanent exhibits, a growing collection in ship models and artwork, yet lacked educational programs and promotional materials, to include a brochure. In that year, the Navy finalized the agreement to relocate the museum to Nauticus.

Today, I think it is fair to say that the Hampton Roads Naval Museum is a completely different organization in terms of what it offers its visitors. Certainly, attendance and public awareness have grown incrementally with the relocation. But a more fundamental shift has occurred in what we bring to Hampton Roads as the Navy's educational outreach center in the region: hands-on school programs, a traveling luncheon lecture series, a speakers' bureau, a naval enthusiast's club, and of course the core of the museum—the permanent and temporary exhibits interpreted by a great volunteer staff. The USS *Wisconsin* is our first order of business in the year 2000. She will be our largest artifact, and our greatest challenge to date. The successful interpretation of this ship will require all the stamina and creativity we can muster and I look forward to increased interest and support for the Hampton Roads Naval Museum when she arrives sometime during Winter, 2000.

New volunteers are a must. Five new recruits just completed the required docent training course: Wyndham Curles, Jim Curtin, Ed Hipps, Bill Reidel, and Brent Streit. They are remarkable in their enthusiasm for naval history and their promotion of the local region. **Wyndham Curles**, an Army veteran, worked for the Paxton Company in Norfolk for 43 years. He has served on numerous committees to promote the City of Norfolk and is interested in the USS *Wisconsin* project. Wyndham's area of expertise is the Modern Navy. **Jim Curtin** served in the Coast Guard. A railroad buff, he worked for N&P and later Roadway Express, and today serves as chapter president of the National Railway Historical Society, Tidewater Chapter. He hopes to share his interest in the Civil War and local history with museum visitors. **Ed Hippes**, a former Naval Academy professor, is a retired Naval Aviator. A life member in the Retired Officer Association and the Virginia PTA, he is also known for his sense of humor. His historical period of interest is the early Navy, its formation, custom and traditions. **Bill Reidel,** our fourth addition, is so knowledgeable about the Civil War that he started his own organization called the Blue & Gray Education Society. **Brent Streit's** practice tour, a docent course requirement, unnerved his classmates due to its thoroughness. He is an accomplished teacher, and worked at Princess Anne High School teaching chemistry and physics, after a distinguished career as a Naval aviator. He enjoys the Revolutionary and Federalist period, and has done extensive research on his 18th century British tar ancestors.

*Mr. Edward W. Wolcott*

In this overview of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum, one name stands out — **Edward W. Wolcott**. It was he who drew up the papers to incorporate the non-profit museum support group, the Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation in 1983. He served as counsel, vice president, and immediate past president of this organization.

It was Mr. Wolcott who tirelessly brought museum issues to the forefront both to the Naval and civilian communities. He would not rest until critical museum issues, whether space, signage, or exhibitry questions were resolved in our favor. Mr. Wolcott died on September 6. Not a week goes by that our staff does not miss him, his razor-sharp wit and especially the kindness and generosity of time that he freely gave to us. We have indeed lost a friend, and one of the greatest supporters this Museum will ever have. This issue is dedicated to his memory.

# What's In Store for the Year 2000

HAMPTON ROADS NAVAL MUSEUM
Local History, World Events.

## Exhibits

### A 100 Years of Silence

The Secretary of the Navy has announced 2000 to be the hundredth anniversary of the submarine force. To mark this occasion, the museum is teaming up with Submarine Force Atlantic and Nauticus and will open a new exhibit on the history of the U.S. Submarine Force. Exhibit opens March 6.

### Battle of the Atlantic

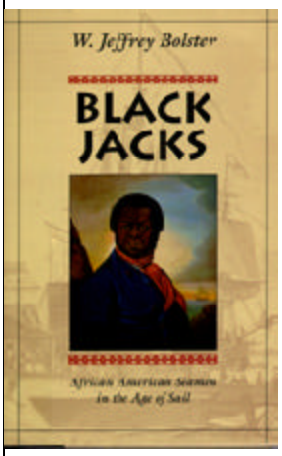
In June, the museum will re-open its Battle of the Atlantic exhibit. This permanent display will have interactive exhibits, artifacts, and information on one of the most crucial campaigns of World War II.

### Online Exhbits

With the new museum's web page up and running, we are bringing back some of more popular temporary exhibits in a new format. Starting in January, *The Sailors' Best Friend: Animals in the U.S. Navy* and Cuba Libre!: *The Spanish-American War* can both be found at www.hrnm.navy.mil.

## Speaker Series

**Robert Browning**-Coast Guard historian and author of the Civil War history *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear: The North Atlantic Blockade Squadron*. **March 9**.




**Jeffrey Bolster**-Professor at the University of New Hampshire and author of *Black Jacks: African Seamen in the Age of Sail*. **June 19**.

**Melanie Wiggins**-Author of *U-boat Adventure: First Hand Accounts from World War II*. **August 16**.

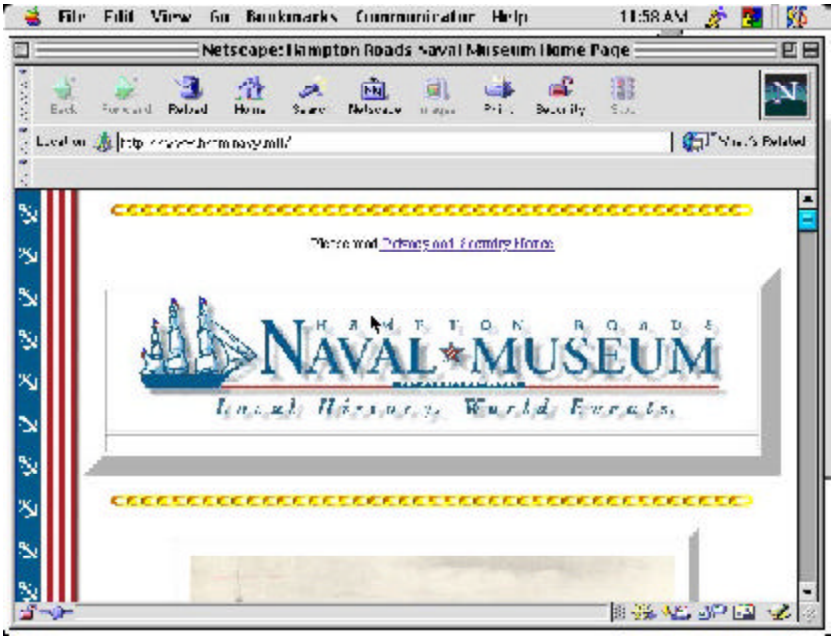
*All talks to take place at Pier 26 at Naval Station Norfolk. Lunch to be served and reservations are required. Call (757) 322-2992 to make reservations.*

## Programs at the Museum

**Dunderfunk**-Join us for an informal afternoon of food and naval history. On the fourth Thursday of every other month, the museum sponsors this luncheon lecture gathering. Lunch to be held at the Painted Lady. Call 322-2992 for details and reservations.

**Education Programs**-The museum offers programs for all school age children with special programs for 3rd and 6th graders. Starting in the spring, the museum' s 6th grade program will focuse on African-Americans in the U.S. Navy during WW II. Call Bob Matteson at 322-2986 for more information.

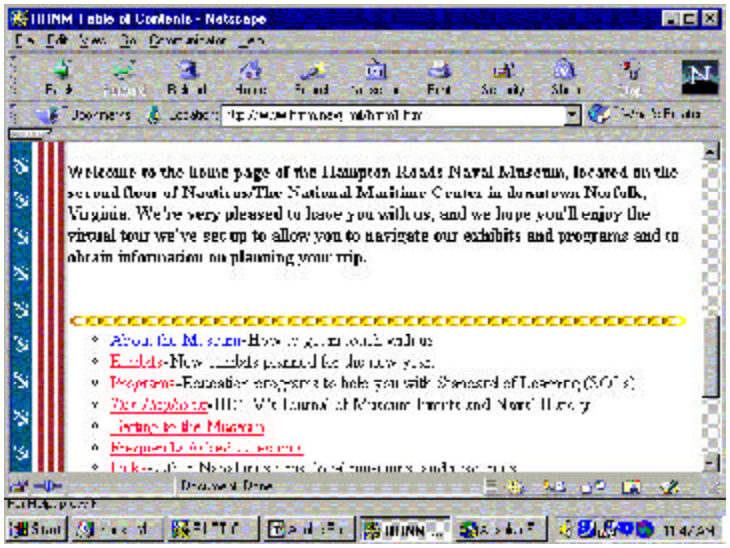
# HRNM.Navy.Mil is Now Up and Running




The museum now has its own name on the Internet. Thanks in large part to Jim Heartwell and Carl Alvers at CINCLANTFLT, the museum's web page has a new, simpler name. Write this down and bookmark it:

## HTTP://WWW.HRNM.NAVY.MIL

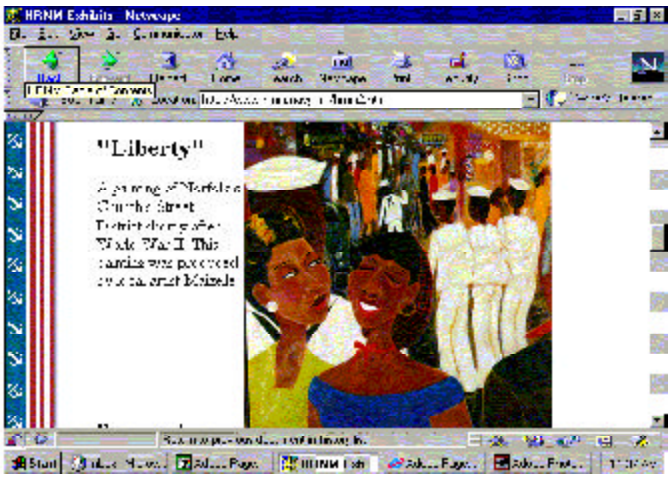
The page currently includes: photos of current exhibits, information on upcoming events, directions on how to find the museum, and how to contact us should you wish to talk to a real person and not a computer. It also includes several articles from previous issues of *The Daybook*, should you have missed one.



In the future, we plan to build exhibits online, include a "Frequently Asked Questions" section for historical information on some of our more popular topics, links to other web pages we think you will find useful, information on how the museum can help with Standards of Learning, and an on-line version of the activity book that we just published.

So, remember:

**Http://www. hrnm. navy.mil.**



# The Battle of the Atlantic

## Prepare to Experience the Most Important Naval Campaign of World War II. Opens June 2000 in the Museum's World War II Gallery.

Featuring:

- ☞ **Interactive Displays**
- ☞ **Maps and Photographs of the Campaign**
- ☞ **Artifacts from the War Zone**

**Call 757-322-2987 or visit http://www.hrnm.navy.mil for more information about this exciting exhibit.**

HAMPTON ROADS NAVAL★MUSEUM

*Local History. World Events.*

# Breaching the Westwall

## Hampton Roads' UG convoys to North Africa

by Gordon Calhoun

When the U.S. Army's 1st Division hit the Moroccan beach in November 1942, it brought Hampton Roads to forefront of the Battle of the Atlantic. The region would now become a primary player in one of the most important campaigns of World War II. While this area was important in the early stages, serving as a feeder port for shipping traffic and as a major ship construction and repair port, the vast majority of European-bound convoys left out of New York City and to a lesser extent Halifax, Nova Scotia.

That all changed when the Allies began to plan for an offensive move on North Africa. This move, called Operation *Torch*, was the opening of the long awaited "second front" in the European Theatre. The final supply plan for *Torch* called for 50,000 troops and over 300,000 tons of supplies to be delivered from the United States to North Africa within the first 90 days of the operation.

In a perfect world, this would not have been necessary as the United States had already shipped hundreds of thousands of tons of war materials to England. Unfortunately, much of it was neatly packed away deep in English warehouses and would take some time to fully sort out. As a result, combat supplies would have to come directly from the United States. To meet the monstrous demand, the Atlantic Fleet planned a new convoy route. Labeled "UG," short for United States-Gibraltar, the new route would funnel ships from the East Coast of the United States to ports in North Africa via the central part of the North Atlantic Ocean.

Like all North Atlantic convoys, each "UG" convoy received a name that consisted of letters and a number. Fast convoys, ones that were capable of at least 12 knots and were usually made up of military transports and tankers, received an additional "F" to its name. Slower convoys received an "S" designation. These convoys usually consisted of civilian merchant ships carrying break-bulk cargo, heavy equipment, and spare parts. Numbers were assigned in sequential order. UGS-11, for example, would be the 11th slow convoy following the UG route.

The campaign began with the invasion force leaving Hampton Roads in late October 1942. Usually labeled Task Force 34, this group actually was the first of the UG convoys. In this case it was labeled UGF-1.

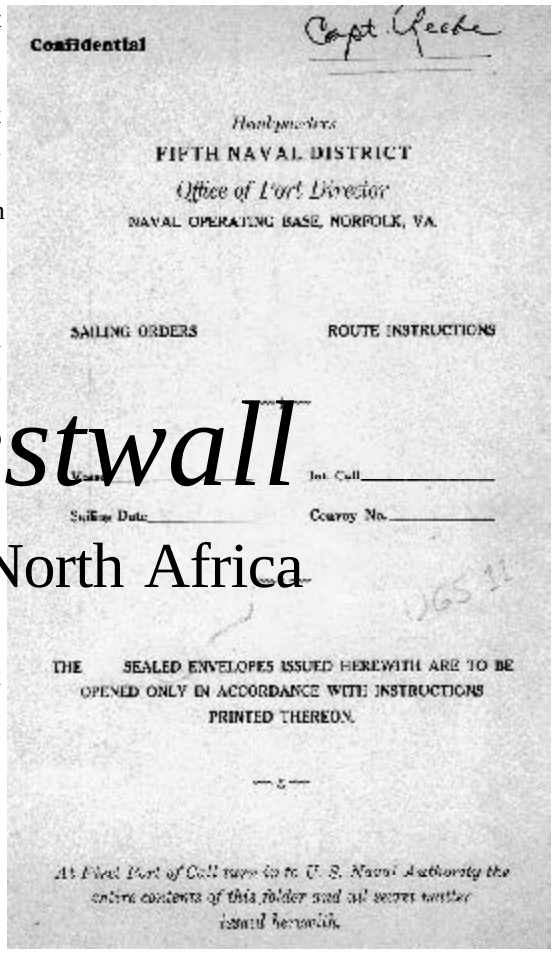
The U-boat command had made a decisive error in not using any boats to resist the Allied invasion (see page 8 for details on this). Adm. Karl Doenitz ordered as many boats as he could spare to North Africa in an attempt to recover from the mistake and to stop future supply attempts. "The U-boats…will be too late to interfere with the landings but should be able to interrupt further disembarkation of supplies, and attack shipping bound for the Mediterranean," Doenitz wrote in his war diary.

Soon after UGF-1 unloaded its soldiers and cargo in Morocco, Doenitz organized 20 boats into a wolfpack called *Westwall* to carry out his orders. The first German boats to arrive on the scene did some significant damage. They sank or damaged seven ships including the Norfolk-based destroyer USS *Hambleton* (DD-455).

While *Westwall* scored some hits, several U-boats failed to get a shot off due to the fierce Allied air cover, that used captured French air bases, and the presence of several escorts. One U-boat history notes that some boats were forced to stay underwater for over 20 hours at a time, leaving little time to hunt. The group adjusted their strategy. All boats in the group pulled back to the west and increased the distance between each boat's patrol zone. The group's zone was centered around the Azores Islands, stretching a few hundred miles west and east of the island chain.

The success of UGF-1 contributed

***UG continued on page 7***



Confidential

Headquarters
FIFTH NAVAL DISTRICT
Office of Port Director
NAVAL OPERATING BASE, NORFOLK, VA.

SAILING ORDERS ROUTE INSTRUCTIONS

Int. Call_____
Sailing Date_____ Convoy No._____

THE SEALED ENVELOPES ISSUED HEREWITH ARE TO BE OPENED ONLY IN ACCORDANCE WITH INSTRUCTIONS PRINTED THEREON.

At Final Port of Call turn in to U. S. Naval Authority the entire contents of this folder and all secret matter issued herewith.

*Picture here is just a small section of the 90 plus ship convoy UGS-13 at anchor in Hampton Roads. The convoy headed for Algeria the next day loaded down with supplies, spare parts, and fuel for Allied forces engaged in Sicily. (HRNM photo)*

***UG continued from page 6***

mightily to the relative ease of the landings. American and British forces met some resistance from pro-Axis Vichy French naval units, but quickly silenced them. To keep the forward momentum going, Atlantic Fleet organized a slew of convoys to provide the U.S. Army's Western Task Force with supplies and reinforcements.

The script called for eight convoys, four fast and four slow, to leave New York and Hampton Roads over the next 95 days from the moment UGF-1 arrived in North Africa. The first wave left between November 18, 1942 and February 19, 1943. It consisted of six convoys. All departed New York. The ships carried close to 95,000 soldiers plus over 1,000,000 tons of supplies. All were heavily escorted, but none went opposed.

After the scripted convoys, American planners had to do some juggling. There was pressure not to abandon other world-wide commitments. As a result, some ports were becoming overtaxed and chaotic. Out of this enviorment, Hampton Roads received the nod to support all the Mediterranean operations.

The baton was officially passed with convoy UGS-5. The 44 ships and 7 escorts of UGS-5 left the region on February 15, 1943. This convoy faced little opposition. In fact, the biggest problem the UG convoys faced at this early stage were Army commanders who tended to change their supply and weapons' requests at the blink of an eye. In addition, supply ships were getting mixed in with troop ships. As a result, the convoy organizers would not have the proper ships ready, forcing delays, waste, and sometimes general chaos on the docks.

Officers in the field got the message and began to request specific items, as opposed to vague gestures, to supply officials. Supply officials and the Navy efficiently responded to an emergency request by organizing UGS-5 followed by UGS-5A a week later. It was also decided to keep troop ships in separate convoys from supply ships. This decision brought about more efficient order to supply deliveries and allowed troop ships to form more fast convoys.

To the U-boat command, interdicting the central Atlantic route was becoming its most frustrating experience of the war. "Results of the past eight weeks against convoys bound for the Mediterranean were disappointing, and the main purpose of relieving the military situation in that sea remained unachieved. We failed to find a single USA-Mediterranean supply convoy," Doenitz wrote in early 1943 in his war diary.

Doenitz, whose U-boats had sunk all of six UG merchant ships between November 1942 and February 1943, again adjusted his tactics. His original tactic of setting up two picket lines of U-boats was tossed in favor of concentrating wolfpacks closer to the Azores islands. This strategy called for the wolfpacks to place themselves close enough to Gibraltar to find the convoy, but far enough away from Allied air bases.

The first convoy to face this new German plan was UGS-6. Ships left New York and Hampton Roads on March 4 for a rendezvous point near Bermuda. In all, UGS-6 consisted of 34 cargo ships and five tankers and carried 329,500 tons of cargo. *U-130*, an experienced boat with 24 kills under her belt, first spotted UGS-6 a few hundred miles west of the Azores. Three wolfpacks closed in to attack. Shortly after *U-130* radioed her sightings, USS *Champlin*'s (DD-601) radar picked up the surfaced U-boat. The American destroyer at first attempted to ram *U-130*. This being unsuccessful, she dropped six depth charges and sank the U-boat ace in a dramatic night action.

Radar continued to be a major nemesis for the German boats. When the Germans surfaced to run on diesel engines, American destroyers picked them up on their radar and chased them down. This forced the Germans to stay underwater 10 miles away from a convoy. In an attempt to deal with the radar problem, Doenitz ordered his boats to place themselves in front of UGS-6 and attempt more submerged attacks.

On March 14, UGS-6 passed through the picket lines of two wolfpacks. Three days later, the Germans attacked. Using the submerged tactic, wolfpack *Ugverzagt* and *Wohlgemut* were able to get five kills. However, American counter-attacks damaged almost every one of the 12 boats, which kept Allied losses to a minimum. By the 18th, Allied land-based aircraft operating out of Morocco arrived to reinforce the convoy, forcing Doenitz to call off the operation.

The cancellation of this operation allowed the follow-up convoy, UGS-6A, to traverse the Atlantic with no opposition. UGS-6A left Hampton Roads 15 days after UGS-6 and arrived in Gibraltar with over 170,000 tons of cargo plus 700 tanks and trucks.

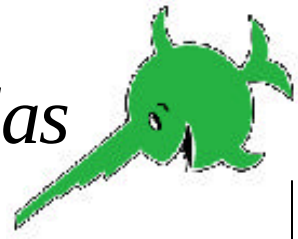
Despite the lack of success, the German Naval staff continued to press upon the U-

***UG continued on page 8***

*Teamwork was more than just a buzz word when it came to a successful convoy operation. It was essential. Here, the port director for NOB Norfolk reads out the sailings orders for UGS-13 to a diverse group of military and civillian skippers. Behind the port director is the organizational layout of UGS-13. So that every skipper knew his place in the convoy,each would sit in an assigned seat that corresponded to his ship's placement. (HRNM photo)*

*"Hurry up and get your business done. Beer in the rear-Good Luck-SCRAM!"* -How the Port Director of NOB Norfolk ended the captains' conference for UGS-21.

# *Operation* Torch *and the U-boat Flotillas*



*"Swordfish," emblem of the 9th U-boat Flotilla. (Drawing courtesy of Gudmunder Helgason)*

The Allies chose North Africa in 1942 as the place to open up a "second front" in the European theatre largely because it was considered an easier target than the alternatives (namely France or Norway). Morocco and Algeria were controlled by Vichy French forces and not the more experienced and better equipped German forces. The Allies also favored North Africa, particularly the British, to relieve pressure on Commonwealth forces engaged in heated combat with Rommell's Afrika Korps in Egypt. The landings themselves went very well and casualties were relatively light.

For the U.S. Army, North Africa was an easy target. For the U.S. Navy, getting UGF-1 and the Army's Western Task Force from Norfolk/Newport News to Casablanca was a nightmare waiting to happen that must have caused several officers to lose sleep at night. Unlike the amphibious assault on France in June, 1944, the Allies were nowhere near close to controlling the North Atlantic. The *Kreigsmarine* still had, on average, 59 boats at sea and were quite capable of disrupting any Trans-Atlantic convoy. The big convoy battles, like HX-229 and SC-122, were still several months away.

Fortunately, the nightmare never occurred. The U-boats only sank a few ships of the invasion task force and these were sunk long after the Allies had already landed. This leads one to ask where were all of Doenitz's U-boats during this major Allied offensive?

The short answer is that the Germans made a very serious strategic error. When one digs deeper one finds some finger pointing. Krovetten Kapitan Hesseler, Doenitz's son-in-law and commanding officer of *U-107*, asks the same question in his landmark history *The U-boat in the Atlantic*. According to his research, the German General Staff had reached the conclusion that no second front was possible in 1942. Nonetheless, the staff had considered several locations where the Allies might land including Norway, Spain, and France, but never even thought about North Africa. Hitler actually considered Norway to be the main target and ordered U-boats home from their successful raids off the American East Coast to defend against a possible invasion. Unlike the General Staff, Germany's Naval Staff did consider North Africa, but dismissed the possibility as nothing more than rumor.

Doenitz came under harsh criticism for the blunder and tried to defend himself. In his memoirs *Ten Years and Twenty Days*, Doenitz blamed the German Intelligence Service for failing to even notice the naval build-up in Hampton Roads. Doenitz also wrote that while his planning staff did receive reports of increased Allied naval activity around Gibraltar in the days leading up to *Torch*, they incorrectly concluded that it was a convoy bound for the besieged island of Malta. The staff also assumed that the Vichy French forces would resist any assault more than they actually did.

As a result of all these reports, Doenitz elected not to change his overall Atlantic strategy and believed long after the war that he had made the correct decision. He wrote "In view of the lack of any concrete information…regarding the time and place at which the enemy meant to land, and in view of the abundance of points which the long coast-line offered for his selection, it was quite impossible to order any precautionary concentration of U-boats."

In addition to this conclusion was Doenitz's overall stragetic goals. Doenitz's number one priority was to sink as many Allied merchant ships as possible, wherever they may be. He even had a formula drawn up that indicated how many ships he needed to sink in order to win in the Atlantic. He did not think North Africa was the best place where his boats could further this goal.

However, whatever Doenitz may have believed in 1942 or in 1958 (when he wrote his memoir), the damage caused by this error was very serious. The end result was that the Germans made an error on the scale of the Battle of Stalingrad (which also happened in November 1942). The Anglo-American force was able to land without serious opposition and gained a valuable foothold in the European Theater.

***UG continued from page 7***

boats to do more. The planning group, who no doubt was getting pressure from higher ups, made a direct connection between the success of the UG convoys and the advance of Allied forces towards Italy. Despite his misgivings, Doenitz organized another wolfpack to try to cut the supply line.

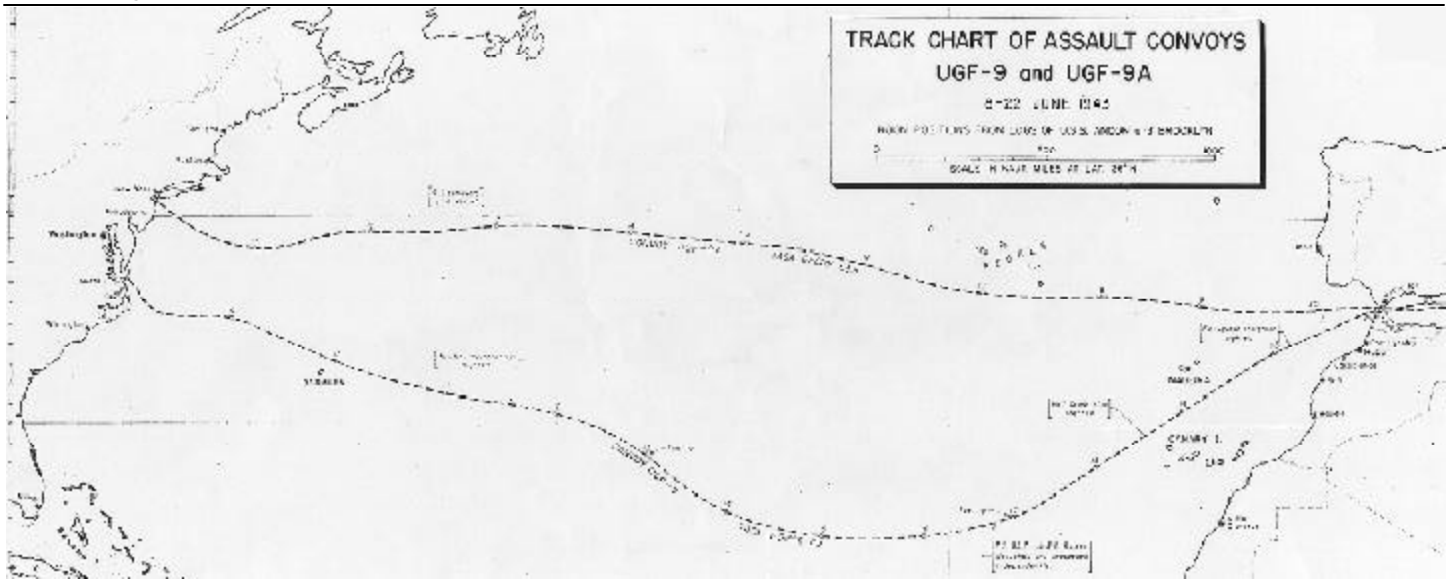
In late March, Atlantic Fleet loosened some of its restrictions placed on the make-up of an Atlantic convoy in order to meet the high demand for combat supplies and reinforcements. At this point in the campaign, Atlantic Fleet and Army logistics had to supply over 400,000 Allied troops. The ceiling for the number of merchant ships in a single convoy increased to 60 and the minimum speed for a merchant was lowered, allowing more ships to qualify. UGS-7 and 7A alone brought 750,000 tons of supplies in 96 ships during the first two weeks in April, 1943. Among the 96 ships, 17 were Norfok Naval Shipyard-built tank landing ships (LSTs), which were to be used for the pending invasion of mainland Europe. U-boats only scored three kills total out of both convoys.

*The crew of an unidentified U-boat (possibly* U-664*) of the 9th Flotilla prepares to abandon ship after being severely damaged by Avengers from the Norfolk-based carrier USS* Card *(CVE-11). (HRNM photo)*

The success of these Hampton Roads/New York convoys helped Allied forces defeat the Afrika Korps in Tunisia. Close to 2,000,000 tons of supplies and equipment were successfully rushed to the front. The delivery of these supplies should not be underappreciated as the Germans, for a time, had the upper hand against the inexperienced American Army. In stark contrast, British air and naval units decimated convoys supporting Axis forces. In 1942 and 1943, the British sank 2,000,000 tons of shipping.

With the Axis defeat close at hand in North Africa, Allied planners looked towards a tougher task than *Torch*: Sicily. Codenamed *Husky*, the Allies agreed to invade Italy via

***UG continued on page 9***




*This map shows the routes of convoys UGF-9 and UGF-9A (sometimes called UGF-9 1/2), two highly successful fast troop convoys that carried the 45th Divison. The UG route (which stood for United States-Gibraltar) originated in one of two ports: New York or Hampton Roads. (National Archives)*

***UG continued from page 8***

Sicily in hopes of knocking her out of the war.

UGF-7 and 8 left New York carrying elements of the 36th Infantry Division and 82nd Airborne Division in early April. UGF-7A and 8A left Hampton Roads a month later carrying the remaining elements of the 36th. These troop convoys were relatively small, largely due to the fact a ship had to be capable of at least 16 knots to qualify. For example, UGF-8A only had 12 troopships and two tankers. Once again, the Germans failed to locate any of these troop convoys and the only losses were due to mechanical breakdowns.

To feed the ground offensive, Atlantic Fleet dropped its previous restriction of 60 merchants to a convoy. UGS-8A at first assembled in Hampton Roads, but to due its sheer size, Atlantic Fleet moved its anchorage out beyond Cape Henry. Eight-four ships joined nineteen escorts assembled off Cape Henry. Forty-five more ships plus their escorts joined the armada from New York for a total of 129 merchants and 19 destroyers. This was the largest World War II convoy to date. It covered over 70 square miles of ocean and took close to 12 hours to get together.

As added insurance, Atlantic Fleet gave UGS-8A additional protection beyond her destroyer screen. To solve the "air-gap" problem in the Battle of the Atlantic, Atlantic Fleet assembled a new type of ASW squadron, called "hunter-killer," around a single escort carrier. The use of escort carriers was a more aggressive strategy as the squadron operated semi-independently from the convoy. These "baby flattops" were considerably smaller than their larger cousins and carried an air wing of only about 15 to 20 aircraft.

*The Norfolk-based USS* Bogue *(CVE-9) was one of the most effective anti-submarine weapons in the Allied arsenal. This carrier, her planes, and escorts are credited with 13 submarine kills. (HRNM)*

Many of the aircraft in these "hunter-killer" groups were based either at NAS Norfolk or NAS Oceana. The air squadrons were labeled "composite squadrons" as they were a mixed bag of aircraft. They generally used older naval aircraft such as Wildcats, Avenger torpedo bombers, and Dauntless dive bombers. The make-up and numbers varied greatly from squadron to squadron.

The Norfolk-based USS *Card* (CVE-11) was one of the first of these ships. She formed up one of these groups with three destroyers. Atlantic Fleet had *Card* support UGS-8, a supply convoy bound for Algeria. The convoy went unseen and made it to its destination with no trouble.

The convoy went unopposed as the U-boats continued to be baffled. "Convoys between the USA and the Mediterranean had now been running at regular intervals for almost six months. We were well acquainted with the times of their departure and arrival on each side of the Atlantic, but still knew very little about their routes," the Germans wrote in May 1943.

It was not through a lack of trying that the Germans had failed because they had an average of 15 boats comitted to the UG route. It is very likely that convoys received information on U-boat positions via the super-secret ULTRA project that had cracked the German naval codes.

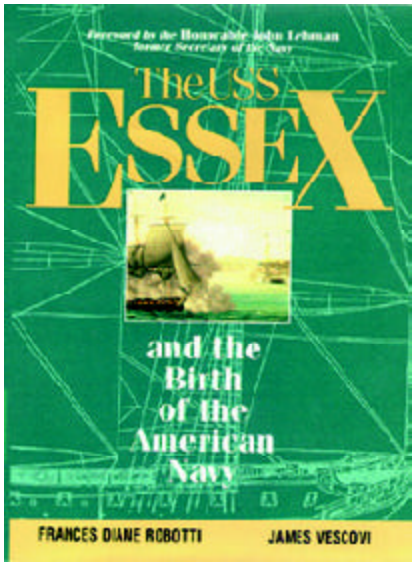
The next of the *Husky* convoys was UGS-9 that left New York on May 28, 1943. Ten escorts guarded sixty-four merchants. Joining them off the coast of Bermuda was another "hunter-killer" squadron led by the Norfolk-based USS *Bogue* (CVE-9). Working with intelligence provided by spies, the Germans

***UG convoys continued from page 14***

# Book Reviews

## *The USS Essex and the Birth of the American Navy*

by Frances Diane Robotti & James Vescovi
Reviewed by Joe Mosier




*The USS Essex and the Birth of the New American Navy* is an unfortunate work. The authors, Frances Diane Robotti and James Vescovi, have attempted a popular history of the U.S. Navy during the period 1798 - 1815. They use the frigate *Essex* as a metaphor for those dramatic early years which saw the young navy fight three wars. The first of these conflicts was a strictly naval affair between the United States and France. At the start of this so-called Quasi-War, America had no navy. In an effort to build one quickly, Congress authorized citizens to construct new warships or convert merchant ships through a joint subscription effort rather like building a sports stadium today. In Virginia, for example, merchants in Norfolk, Richmond, Petersburg and Williamsburg subscribed funds to convert the brig *Augusta* into the brig-of-war *Richmond*. The good citizens of Salem, Massachusetts, came together to fund construction of a new 32-gun frigate, *Essex*.

Frances Diane Robotti & James Vescovi. *The USS* Essex *and the Birth of the American Navy*. Holbrook, MA: Adams Media Corporation, 1999. 304 pages ISBN 1-58062-112-0. $22.95.

The authors are most effective in their description of the subscription effort and construction of the frigate. While my own view is that many subscribers found the guaranteed six percent return on their investment quite attractive, Robotti and Vescovi stress the merchants' patriotism. Whatever the motivation, the end result was a fine ship which served the nation well.

It is in describing the career of the frigate and the navy in which she operated that the authors come up short. This reviewer was put off by three aspects of the book. First, the authors chose to write without footnotes. This becomes problematic because they also make a number of statements which require defense. For example, Navy Secretary Benjamin Stoddert is said to have "resigned the office because he was disgusted with the country's vacillation toward its navy." Such documents as are in the public record indicate that Stoddert was a reluctant office-holder in the first place. Three years in Adams' cabinet had left him fatigued and worried about his financial future. His staying on at the start of Jefferson's administration was acknowledged by all to be merely a transitional service. If the authors have documentation to support their view, a footnote would have been most appropriate. As historian and Public Television talking head, Doris Kearns Goodwin has said, "Footnotes provide the reader with building blocks to understand the author's thought process." Very frequently in *USS Essex* we are confronted by statements and claims, the understanding or acceptance of which is hampered by the lack of footnotes.

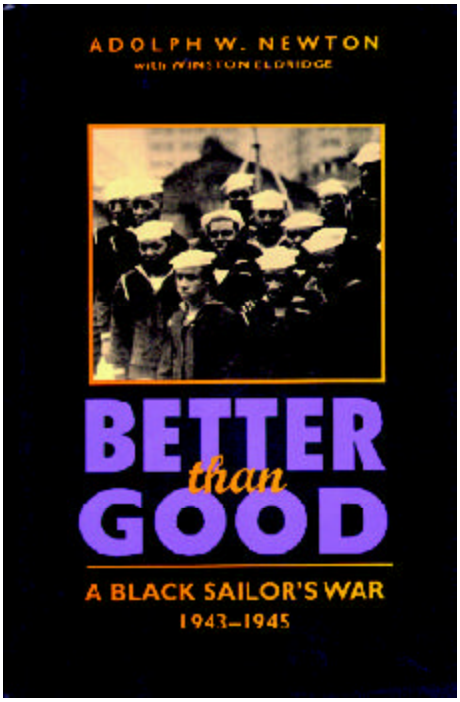
A second source of frustration for this reader was the uneven narrative flow of the work. Barbara W. Tuchman wrote in an essay entitled "In Search of History": "One of the difficulties in writing history is the problem of how to keep up suspense in a narrative whose outcome is known….I found that if one writes *as of the time*, without using the benefit of hindsight, resisting always the temptation to refer to events still ahead, the suspense will build itself up naturally." Had the authors been as strict as Ms. Tuchman in avoiding the temptation to "write ahead", this work would have been far more readable. A particularly egregious example comes at the climax of *Essex*'s career, the battle off Valparaiso in which the frigate was finally captured by the Royal Navy during the War of 1812. In the middle of the fight, the authors take a four-page excursion to describe the diplomatic efforts of American envoy Joel R. Pointsett. The book is replete with this sort of serpentine wandering that proved more distracting than illuminating.

The third irritation was the fact that all too often the authors just got their facts wrong. By way of example, consider their recounting of the duel between James Barron and Stephen Decatur. The authors state that "Barron wrongly believed that Decatur had spoken out against his return to the navy." There was no "wrongly" about it. Decatur was in fact very outspoken in his resistance to Barron's reinstatement as it would have put him above many officers who had performed heroically during the War of 1812 while Barron was ashore in Copenhagen. According to the authors, "William Bainbridge acted as umpire." Bainbridge was in fact Decatur's second in the duel and shared any striped-shirt responsibilities with Barron's second, Jesse D. Elliott. The authors claim, "…Decatur had made his officers sign pledges that they would not engage in duels to settle their scores." In fact, the so-called Decatur Plan, did not prohibit dueling but merely required that junior officers seek Decatur's approval of the duel before it could be fought. Lastly in this paragraph, the authors write of "the reprobation of Congress". Congress did fail to adjourn the morning after Decatur's death because of some members' objection to dueling. It *did* adjourn the following day for his funeral. His casket was followed in procession by the President, his cabinet members and the members of both House and Senate. While the whole Decatur-Barron aside is tangential to the story of *Essex*, four misinterpretations in one long paragraph does not bode well for the rest of the work.

*The USS Essex and the Birth of the American Navy* is a small, duodecimo-sized volume. This means that the illustrations are correspondingly small, generally 3 X 3.5 inches. This detracts from what could be an attractive volume. On whole this reviewer can recommend the work only to those who will go on to read better organized and crafted standard histories of the same period. For those who do decide to read it, use a library copy and save the cost.

# *Better Than Good: A Black Sailor's War*

by Adolph W. Newton with Winston Eldridge
Reviewed by Jack Robertson




All you colored boys got cut marks somewhere."

"Well, this is one Negro that doesn't have any cut marks, and I'm not going to say it again!"

With that exchange at his pre-induction physical, Adolph Newton ran into one of the first of many racial confrontations, and other overt and covert signs of hostility, he would experience in a Navy which had received a mandate to integrate from President Franklin Roosevelt in 1942.

Adolph Newton was a seventeen year old Baltimore boy who wanted to join up and help win his country's war. Knowing that with three older brothers already in service, his parents would not agree to his going. He lied about his age, forged their signatures to his enlistment papers, and boarded a train for Great Lakes Training Station. He soon found out that everybody was not eager for his help, or his presence!

Adolph W. Newton with Winston Eldridge. *Better than Good: A Black Sailor's War*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1999. 182 pages. ISBN 1-55750-649-3. $25.95

At San Diego's Point Loma Small Boat Base, he was recommended for Advanced Diesel Engine School in San Francisco, run by the International Harvester Company. On arrival there, he was told that "colored" could not attend the school—it was against company policy.

So, early in his military career, Newton learned that survival in the predominately white Navy would depend on standing up for his rights, speaking out on the truth, and not backing down from anybody. But, early on, he had learned that you do not "smart mouth" a chief, and when your commanding officer speaks, you don't talk, you listen! Both of those axioms he breached at Point Loma and wound up with a captain's mast and a summary court martial, which cost him thirty days in the brig and loss of a month's pay.

Newton's narrative takes the reader to a number of bases, stateside, overseas, and shipboard. It's the story of a black enlisted man, in the wartime white man's Navy, who tried to learn and do his job, keep his nose clean and move up through the ranks. All that, while trying to punch holes in the color barrier and make friends with his fellow sailors.

His first overseas base is Gammadodo, Milne Bay, New Guinea. He then went on to Samar, Leyte, The Philippines, where he had the experience of being kamikazed and forced to abandon ship on Christmas Day 1944. After that experience, he said "War gave us all a 'don't give a damn' attitude. You live today—to hell with tomorrow! Today is yesterday's tomorrow!" A strange philosophy, but one any combat veteran can relate to.

From Samar, on to Tacloban where, for the first time, he makes a good friend of one of his white shipmates, named Wickline, the coxswain on their LCM. Wickline becomes his aegis in many confrontations. It was also in Leyte that Newton had a nighttime meeting with Adm. William "Bull" Halsey, under unusual circumstances, and got a "four-star" apology for being inconvenienced. He was still there when word came of a big bomb being dropped on Hiroshima, and the Japanese surrender. Shortly, Adolph Newton was discharged and happy to be on his way home to Baltimore. Here he hoped to get a job as a diesel mechanic—a job that the Navy had trained him for.

It was a rude awakening to find that the civilian world was still segregated and no one was hiring black diesel mechanics—veteran or not. So, after a try at a few odd jobs, and some months of idleness and drinking cheap wine, Newton decided the service was not as bad as he had thought it was.

He went to the recruiting office and re-enlisted. Next stop, Norfolk, Virginia, duty onboard the USS *Donner* (LSD-20). He has few kind words to say about Norfolk with its segregated life and "unfriendly" police force. To make it worse, shipboard life, as far as racial tension went, had not improved that much. But, he was in for a hitch, so off to many foreign ports of call: Gibraltar, Naples, Greece, Turkey, Beirut, then home again for a while before shoving off for the Caribbean and San Juan, St. Croix, and St. Thomas. On shore leave in each of these ports, Newton and his friends found time for a few beers, a few women, and a few shore patrols or local minions of the law. Some encounters wind up with a captain's mast and a couple with a summary court martial.

When he is not pursuing the racial aspects of a situation, Newton's story is a good chronicle of the life of the enlisted man in the World War II Navy. In fact, it could also be pretty well applied to the other branches of the service. Some of his escapades brought an "ain't it the damn truth" from this reviewer, who spent a couple of years in the Army Air Corps. Veterans of the other services could do the same. The book is an easy read and eye-opener as to the trials and tribulations of the African-Americans who served during World War II.

Today, Adolph Newton probably chuckles to himself and says, "well, one of my boys made it!" One of his sons is a lieutenant commander, now serving as an executive officer on one of the Navy's ships.

*Jack Robertson is a docent at the museum, author of* Block the Chesapeake, *and crew member of B-24s during World War II.*

# *The Sage's War Message*

Military historians can be a cynical bunch. We loved to critique, we enjoy finding the "true cause" of a war, and most of all, we love to second guess and kick around military officers and politicians who are no longer alive to defend their reputations. We were not always this bad. Up until the 1950's, military histories were full of life and patriotism. The more recent trend in military history is the quest for "secret" or other discovered "truths" about

*The Museum Sage*

wars. In large part one can point to the uncertainties of the Korean and Vietnam War as an explanation for motive.

Modern histories of the War of 1812 are some of the ugliest of this type of modern scholarship, second only to modern histories of the Spanish-American War. These historians claim that the war at the time was considered "unnecessary" and quote several prominent contemporary personalities at the time that supports this view.

The cynics' statements inevitably point to America's alleged imperialist attitude towards Canada as the real cause of the war and that the "Free Trade and Sailors Rights" slogan was nothing more than empty words. They point out that nothing in the Treaty of Ghent (the treaty that officially ended the war) mentioned "free trade and sailors rights." They also point out that since the British lifted the Orders in Council, the document which proclaimed that Britain had the right to seize neutral shipping bound for Napoleonic France, that the war was truly unnecessary.

One of the grossest example is calling the War of 1812 "Mr. Madison's War." President James Madison may have written the letter to Congress requesting a declaration of war, but he most certainly was not the only person demanding it. A War of 1812 history by the name *Mr. Madison's War* starts chapter one about Madison's designs on Canada and only eventually gets around to discussing the maritime problem much later in the book. The author makes the Virginia native out to be an American Genghis Khan.

Here is what "Mr. Madison" said in his war message to Congress:

*"Against this crying enormity, which Great Britain would be so prompt to avenge if committed against herself, the United States have in vain exhausted remonstrance and expostulations. And that no proof might be wanting of their conciliatory dispositions, and no pretext left for a continuance of the practice, the British Government was formally assured of the readiness of the United States to enter into arrangements such as could not be rejected, if the recovery of British subjects were the real and the sole object. The communication passed without effect.*

*British cruisers have been in the practice also of violating the rights and the peace of our Coasts. They hover over and harass our entering and departing commerce. To the most insulting pretensions they have added the most lawless proceedings in our very harbors; and have wantonly spilt American blood within the sanctuary of our territorial jurisdiction. The principles and rules enforced by that nation when a neutral nation, against armed vessels of belligerents hovering near her coasts, and disturbing her commerce, are well known. When called on, nevertheless by the United States, to punish the greater offences committed by her own vessels, her Government has bestowed on their commanders, additional marks of honor and confidence."*

The above is just an excerpt as Madison's message goes on for six pages. Not once did he mention Canada. What he was speaking about was the before mentioned Orders in Council. The proclamation allowed British warships to stop any neutral ship (mostly American) thought to be heading for France. This document was on top of the insulting British practice of "impressement," whereby British officers seized sailors vaugely suspected of being a British citizen. At least 1,000 Americans, possibly many more, were taken off their ships by the British and put to work on a British one.

The fact that the British repealed the policy at the same time as the Americans declared war is one of the great ironies of the war. However, it should be pointed out that the British had several opportunities to repeal this policy before 1812, but failed to do so. Opposition parties in the British

***War Message continued on page 13***

***War message continued from page 12***

parliament frequently warned their government of the American anger over the policy. Even as early as 1810, the British had a golden opportunity to repeal the Orders when the French repealed their maritime policy against the Americans. Yet the British decided to continue.

What the cynics are also blind to is the longer-term impact that a small American Navy had on the British attitude towards American shipping and sailors. On numerous occasions after the War of 1812, the problem of "Free Trade and Sailor Rights" came up. The problem was not localized to the early part of the nineteenth century.

Despite the language of the Treaty of Ghent that called for "friendship and universal peace" between the British and the Americans, the two nations butted heads several more times over the next hundred years. In many cases, war was almost declared, but both sides remembered the War of 1812 and found a peaceful solution. While the British did not have an official policy of seizing American sailors, they continued to insist to have the right seize American merchant ships if they felt the Americans were violating a law. This happened frequently off the coast of Africa in the 19th century, for example.

The War of 1812 is considered by many to be a draw. That is, neither the Americans nor the British gained anything from the war. The Sage presents the idea that it was not a tie. All too often, the sole criteria for winning a war is based on how much territory was conquered. This is why some military historians consider other wars like the Korean War and the 1991 war with Iraq "draws" and not victories. Where this imperialistic attitude came from is worth investigating someday.

Maybe patriotism is dead among historians. It is possible to be patriotic in a history about a government institution and still provide a fair analysis of the subject. *To Shining Sea* by Stephen Howarth (who is British by the way) is an outstanding example of a U.S. Navy history that falls into this category.

If President Madison's reasons for war are not enough, listen to another president:

*"The wealthy man who cares only for mercantile prosperity, and the cultivated man who forgets that nothing can atone for the loss of the virile fighting virtues, both also forget that, though war is evil, an inglorious or unjustifiable peace is a worse evil."*

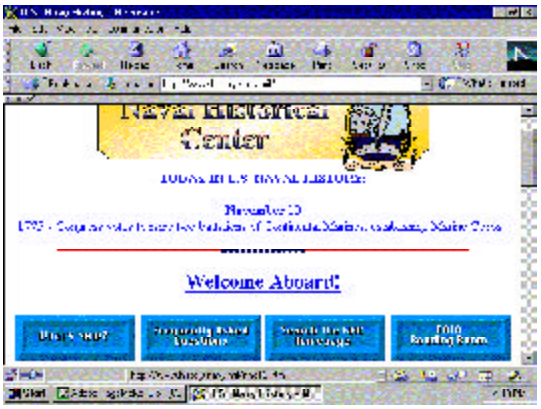
Teddy Roosevelt wrote these words in the introduction to his history on the War of 1812. A war is won if its goals are achieved. The goal of the War of 1812 was to gain final respect of the British on the high seas. This, we accomplished with flying colors.

# Naval History Web Pages

The Internet has become the researcher's new best friend as it is making information more accessible. There are literally thousands of web pages on maritime history. From time to time, the Sage will point out a few that he has found useful in his research.

We must note that since *The Daybook* is an official Navy publication, we can not officially endorse any site nor can we be responsible for the content. However, these sites we believe will be helpful. Additionally, the Sage would like to mention that the printed word, i.e. books and primary source documents, are still by far and away the best reference sources.

**uboat.net**-This web site is extremely useful for anyone doing research on World War II U-boats or the Battle of the Atlantic. The site includes information about individual U-boats, their records, their captains, and even the flotilla emblems. The best part of this site is the U-boat search engine. A researcher can type in any U-boat hull number and receive a plethora of information and statistics. All of this information is free too. The designers of this web page are to be commended for their hard work.




**www.history.navy.mil**-This is the site of the Naval Historical Center in Washington, D.C. with which our museum is affiliated. This site has information about the activities of Navy's history agency and the various branches of the Center. It has a "Frequently Asked Questions" section for various topics on Naval history. The Photographic Branch section has a selective list of the Center's photographic collection and information on how to order. The page also includes a section on declassified Navy documents and information on how to make a "Freedom of Information" request for documents that have yet to be declassified.

*"We assume that in each case the patrol line was circumvented after being located ahead of the convoy by high-flying aircraft. In this part of the Atlantic, the widest possible avoiding action can be carried out without substantially lengthening the convoy route. As we were unable at present to intercept enemy aircraft radar, there is no point in sending any more boats into the mid-Atlantic for the purpose of intercepting UG and GU convoys."* -A German report on U-boats vs. the UG convoys, late 1943

***UG convoys continued from page 9***

organized a 16-boat wolfpack, named *Trutz*, and formed them in a patrol line with the north end anchored near the Azores.

Unknown to the Germans, *Bogue*'s group had been give unprecedented freedom to chase down possible targets. Atlantic Fleet decided to cut *Bogue* loose while UGS-9's escorts kept watch over the flock by themselves. Atlantic Fleet knew about *Trutz*'s positions and ordered the convoy to sail further south. After many days of waiting for the convoy to show up, Doenitz ordered *Trutz* to first decrease the space between boats in the patrol line. He then gave up and ordered his boats to fall back and refuel from *U-488*, a Type XIV tanker U-boat. Soon after they arrived at the refueling zone, *U-758* reported that they had finally found some Allied ships. It was automatically assumed that this was UGS-9. Unfortunately, for the Germans, it was *Bogue* and her four destroyers.

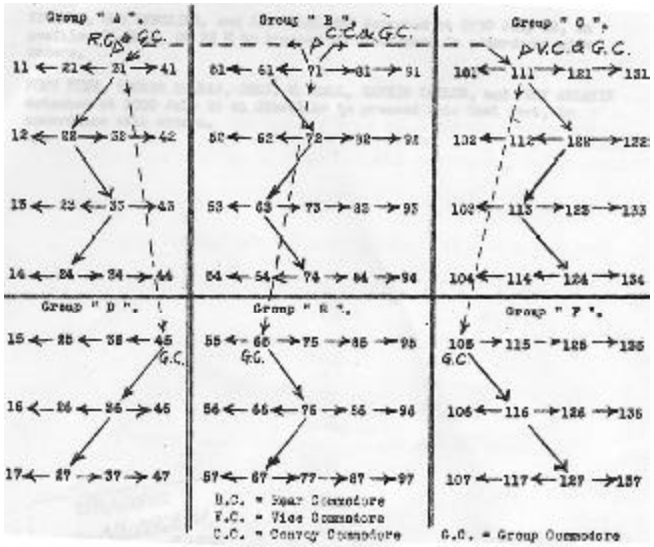
*Bogue*'s aircraft pounced on four boats. Two boats were damaged. One, *U-217*, was sunk, and one, *U-603*, got very lucky and escaped. An Avenger dropped three depth bombs on *603*. Two bombs missed and one hit the U-boat and skidded off. The boat that initially spotted the American squadron, *U-758*, was spotted herself running northeast at high speed.

Much to the shock of the American pilots who attacked, *U-758* was one of the first boats to receive the deadly quad 20mm anti-aircraft gun. The boat damaged four Allied aircraft before being forced to retire by American destroyers. *Bogue*'s aircraft attacked and sank one final boat, the Type X minelaying/refueling *U-118*, before the group return to Hampton Roads.

The sucess of *Bogue*'s squadron encouraged Atlantic Fleet to organize two more "hunter-killer" groups. Along with *Bogue* and *Card*, USS *Santee* (CVE-29) and *Core* (CVE-13) were also selected to form new ASW groups. They all operated out of Hampton Roads.

*Santee* provided continuous cover for the 70-ship UGS-10, the last of the New York convoys. This would have been a flawless convoy except that a French tanker broke radio silence and was torpedoed.

UGF-9, a troop convoy made up of 25 fast attack transports, three cruisers, and 19 destroyers, proved to be the finishing touch for the *Husky* operation. The 45th Division loaded troops and combat stores at Newport News. Due to poor port facilities in the Mediterranean, the Army decided to load out the 45th in such a way that the division would be all set to go for the amphibious assault. This was similar to what they did for *Torch* except that it was not a chaotic mad house on the docks. For the *Husky* convoys, supply officers stuck to their schedules.




*The flag signaling chart for convoy UGS-16. If followed correctly, the convoy commodore could relay his orders to all the ships in a short amount of time (National Archives)*

The convoy left the region on June 8, 1943 and went rather smoothly. A neutral merchant vessel was spotted and promptly warded off on the 11th. Neutral flagged ships were always a danger because they often were German ships in disguise. Atlantic Fleet informed the convoy commodore of a possible U-boat within 150 miles of the convoy on June 18. The commodore changed course to the south and avoided any contact.

Starting with the next convoy, UGS-11, Hampton Roads became the exclusive port for ships heading for Italy. Thirty-seven ships arrived from New York to join the 61 ships already anchored off the coast of Virginia Beach.

UGS-11's commodore noted that few of the merchant ship captains had any experience traveling in a large group. In an attempt to fix this problem, the commodore conducted a crash course in convoy operations the morning the convoy left the region. It was not a pretty sight as ships went in every different direction during the first change in course drill. Training continued until there was at least a little bit of cohesion.

Besides the somewhat comical training, the operation was another flawless success. This was largely due to operations of *Core*'s ASW group that sank two boats, *U-67* and the *milch cow* boat *U-487*. Even though the Germans had 16 boats at sea looking for the convoy, none got within 150 miles.

Despite the flawless success of UGS-11, the commodore had some gripes. He complained about the lack of experienced merchant captains. Then he commented that the Army had a better handle on logistics than the Navy. Finally, and most notably, he recommended the British "be removed from our operations" as he claimed they were getting in the way.

Seventy-nine ships of UGS-12 left two weeks after UGS-11 with *Bogue*'s group providing support. *Bogue*'s aircraft swept the Azores region and sank the minelaying *U-613*, *U-527*, and just missed getting a third, *U-648*, which was able to escape. While a few possible sonar contacts were picked up, the U-boats made no attacks and no ships of the convoy were lost. The central Atlantic theater of the Battle of the Atlantic was truly becoming a hunting ground for the Allies, not the Axis.

UGS-13 left Hampton Roads with 82 ships and *Card* assisting. USS *Card* had a bit more frustrating time in her operations than previous escort carrier groups. Her aircraft

***UG convoys continued on page 15***

***UG convoys continued from page 14***

missed *U-117*, *U-66*, *U-262*, and at first *U-664*. The Germans, however, were the ones experiencing the most frustrations. The experience of *U-664* is a prime example. After weeks of finding nothing, *664* spotted what the captain thought was a tanker His boat fired three torpedoes at the target, but all missed. The ship they fired at was not a tanker, but *Card* whose crew was oblivious that they had just been shot at. A few weeks later, *Card*'s aircraft later discovered and sank *664*.

In addition to the carrier-based aircraft, ULTRA, HD/DF direction finding equipment, and land-based aircraft made it even more difficult for a U-boat to get close to a convoy. *U-232*, *U-951*, and *U-435* were all sunk by land based aircraft operating out of Morocco while searching for UGS-13. The Germans seriously contemplated surrendering the central Atlantic to the Allies.

"We assume that in each case the patrol line was circumvented after being located ahead of the convoy by high-flying aircraft. In this part of the Atlantic, the widest possible avoiding action can be carried out without substantially lengthening the convoy route. As we were unable at present to intercept enemy aircraft radar, there is no point in sending any more boats into the mid-Atlantic for the purpose of intercepting UG and GU convoys," one German naval staff member wrote.

Additional kills by *Bogue*, four more in the months of August and September, only added to the problem. The hunter-killer groups also found and destroyed almost every one of the *milch cow* boats, which further restricted operations in the central Atlantic. For all practical purposes, Doenitz gave up the central Atlantic by early 1944.

As the Allied advance in the Mediterranean slowly lurched forward, the UG route was extended to meet combat needs. A call went out to increase the tempo of the campaign. The Army demanded that the Navy send a UG convoy out of Hampton Roads at least once a week, instead of 10 to 20 days, with at least 80, instead of 60, merchant ships. The Navy succeeded in meeting the first part of the demand. But due to a lack of vessels, it was frequently not able to find 80 ships.

Twenty-one convoys, UGS-14 through 35 left Hampton Roads over the course of the three months of 1943 and first three months of 1944. By the spring of 1944, the UG route was now supporting both the offensive into Italy and a planned invasion of southern France.

As the final destination of the UG route moved closer towards Axis-held territories, the Germans made preparations to use aircraft against them. The 104-ship UGS-36, that had left the region in late February 1944 was spotted and attacked by a lone U-boat. It was quickly driven off by a British destroyer escort. The next morning, 20 JU-88 bombers attacked at dawn near Algeria. Only one merchant was torpedoed. Escorts downed two planes before the attack ended.

*The 75-ship UGS-37 steams into the Mediterranean enroute to Sicily and southern France, 1944. As the UG route expanded towards enemy held territory, the convoys were increasingly attacked by German bombers. (U.S. Navy photo)*

Twenty-six aircraft attacked UGS-37 off the coast of Algeria on April 11. The 60-ship convoy was protected by 13 escorts including five that were equipped with radio jamming gear. One of the more feared weapons the Germans had developed was an air dropped, radio controlled glide bomb. The jamming equipment was to be used in an attempt to make the bomb miss its target. The planes attacked in early evening and hit the two destroyers before being driven off.

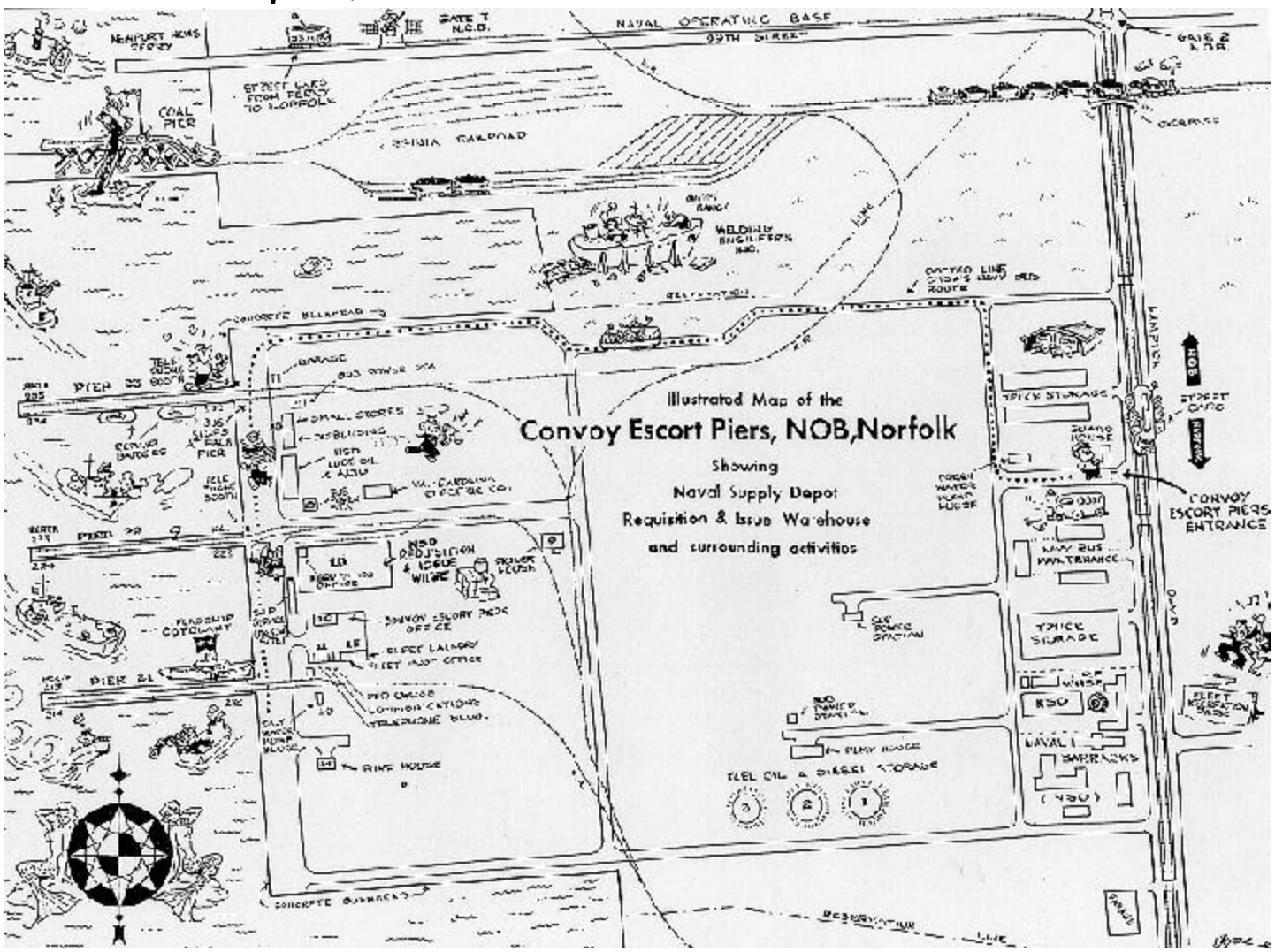
USG-38 arrived in the Mediterranean from Hampton Roads in the first week of April 1944 where she picked up reinforcements. On April 20, 21 bombers flew just above the water and raced towards the Allied convoy. They achieved a tactical surprise and hit four merchants with torpedoes before escorts could even sound an alarm. The destroyer USS *Lansdale* (DD-426) was hit, the second time in as many months, and was lost.

The attack on USG-38 was the last UG convoy to meet opposition. Before the end of the war, 53 more convoys with an average of about 70 ships to a convoy left Hampton Roads for the front in central Europe. The UG route was a critical element to the war in the European Theatre. Despite a concentrated effort to interdict the route, the Germans never were able to gain the initiative the way they did against the Great Britain-bound HX and SC convoys. The UG route was the first big loss for the U-boats in the Atlantic.

Hampton Roads' geography contributed to the victory. The acient Chinese military thinker Sun Tzu wrote in his book *The Art of War* that the best battle is the one you do not fight. Because of Hampton Roads' location, the convoys were able to start further away from U-boat bases making it harder for them to find. When ULTRA and HF/DF located U-boats, the convoys had room to maneuver in hundreds of miles of open sea. Secondly, the size of Hampton Roads' harbor allowed Atlantic Fleet to assemble a large number of ships under a protective anchorage.

The route was also successful because the Navy was flexible in its thinking. Atlantic Fleet had to balance the supply needs of the Army with the ever-changing battleground. To meet the larger supply demands the Fleet increased the size and frequency of the convoys. The Fleet also used a combination of aggressive ASW hunting with the escort carrier squadrons together with the traditional, yet proven, close escort system.

# *An "Official" Map of the Convoy Escort Piers at NOB Norfolk, 1943*




# In Our Next Issue....

☞ *The "Germ" Experiment*

☞ *If Looks Could Kill: The Sage Looks at Naval Architecture*

☞ *Book Reviews:* Desert Shield at Sea *by Marvin Pokrant* and FDR and the U.S. Navy *edited by Edward J. Marolda*