

Foreword

Major advances in mine warfare before and during World War II included the widespread use of influence ground mines that allowed greater flexibility for offensive mining. The impact of mines during World War II in the Pacific was significant and, in particular, saw the extensive use of aircraft-laid offensive ground mines. However, the majority of mines laid in the Pacific were defensive moored mines: more than 87,000 defensive mines compared to about 27,000 offensive mines.

Whilst most books on mining during World War II concentrate on the impact of offensive mining by aircraft and submarines, the many defensive minefields laid by surface forces has received little attention. Indeed, Gregory Hartman in his seminal book, *Weapons That Wait*, devotes only two paragraphs to the subject. He sums up by saying that 'U.S. defensive minefields seem to be better at sinking their own ships than those of the enemy, although they can perhaps be credited with keeping the enemy out'.

Night Raiders is a welcome addition to the literature on mine warfare as it covers the Pacific War at sea through the eyes of the mine warfare forces and, for the first time, describes in detail the many surface-laid fields. The book title effectively encompasses the context as minelaying ships were referred to as 'night raiders' due to the requirement to undertake operations at night in enemy waters to avoid detection.

The book summarises the total allied minelaying effort against the Japanese, covering USN, RN, USAAF, RAF, RAAF and Dutch minelaying. It provides a comprehensive listing of forces involved and, also, honours and awards. However, the main focus is the thorough description of surface-laid minefields. The U.S. Navy's surface minelaying force consisted of—at different times—seven minelayers (CM), 20 light minelayers (DM), three coastal minelayers (CMc), and 10 auxiliary minelayers (ACM). The total number of ships was 37, and much of the material in this book is devoted to U.S. Navy light minelayers.

A protective minefield has the capability to sink ships and submarines, and this capability makes its threat credible. However, the real function

of a protective minefield is not the sinking of ships but the control of the movement of enemy assets. An ideal protective minefield deters the enemy from challenging the minefield, so does not sink any ships. Control does not arise from the number of mines and mine technology per se, but results from the enemy's perception of potential damage. It is human nature to overestimate the threat from weapons which cannot be seen. The mine can be considered to have a psychological warhead, and a USN report on this topic states that the real effect of a minefield derives from a more subtle influence—an exaggerated fear. Minefields work more on the mind than on ships.

Between 1942 and 1945, Queensland became an important strategic hub and a support base for the war effort in the South West Pacific. The ports in Brisbane, Townsville, and Cairns were rapidly expanded to become significant naval bases. There was a major USN submarine base at Brisbane, and by 1944 Brisbane had major headquarters establishments, including Allied Headquarters.

HMAS *Bungaree*, the Australian surface minelayer, laid 5,226 Mk 14 moored mines to provide a 500-mile safe passage inside the Great Barrier Reef north of Townsville, the major assembly port for the U.S. Army. In undertaking this minelaying task, during 1942-43, *Bungaree* made at least 38 passages along the east coast of Australia, where Japanese submarines had attacked 29 ships during this period. There was 0.05 kiloton of TNT in mines on the mine deck, 0.05 kiloton of TNT in mines in the four forward holds, equivalent to a 0.1 kiloton tactical nuclear weapon. The crew were always conscious that they were in a very large 'powder keg'. The end result was that the extensive defensive minefields ensured troop and support ships transiting north to New Guinea were never attacked by Japanese forces.

Night Raiders provides a valuable insight into the sea war in the Pacific and in addition will be the authoritative source on the mine warfare forces which participated. The early chapters summarise Royal Navy, Royal Australian Navy and Royal Netherlands Navy contributions before describing the full extent of the USN mine warfare forces' contribution to the war in the Pacific. This will be the source document for future researchers which, apart from being easy to read, provides extensive detail on the forces involved and awards won.

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