

Foreword

David Bruhn and Rob Hoole have in this book produced a compelling and very detailed account of the World War II activities of often unsung, small, naval forces off the East Coast of the United States and off South Africa. Supported by a wealth of facts and quotations, their eloquent descriptions of many anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and mine warfare events in these theatres must be seen as a significant contribution to the body of history which details the defeat of Kriegsmarine U-boat forces.

The actions by packs of German U-boats off the US eastern seaboard and their escapades even further afield off South Africa are two of the lesser reported campaigns within World War II. The concurrent and rather effective German submarine mining of Chesapeake Bay and various ports along the US East Coast is equally under-investigated, despite such mining constituting a direct attack on the US homeland. This excellent book addresses these literary shortfalls through highlighting some of the innovative, resourceful and strategically vital Allied responses to these Axis forays.

Whilst the ships assigned to address these specific Axis threats were, in the most part, from the less-capable end of the warship spectrum, this does not diminish the vital part they played in enabling eventual Allied victory. In particular, the deterrent effect of the presence of such small warships, even if only lightly armed, must not be lost to history and is ably highlighted in this work. Wars are not only won during direct confrontation between high-end warfighting units; the contributions of a wide variety of often smaller and cheaper vessels—such as sonar-fitted armed trawlers, wooden minesweepers, and Q-ships—can aggregate quickly to enable an overall decisive edge.

The contribution of lessons to modern warfare from this period in history remains significant. Attacks on the East Coast by U-boats in the period immediately after US entry into the war saw the defensive forces allocated being those immediately available from within the peacetime US Navy. The requirement for reinforcement by the King's Ships ably highlights that such peacetime navies must be able to sustain a viable defence until wartime shipbuilding programmes can catch up with an emergent threat, holding the line until shipyards eventually build sufficient new assets to allow defence to morph into offence and then into victory. That the enemy gets a vote in such activities is then reiterated in this book by the excellent description of the Axis

operational shift away from the US East Coast, once the US Navy had built sufficient organic defensive forces, to new hunting grounds off South Africa where the King's Ships were then redeployed to bolster that navy.

The deployment of Royal Navy ASW assets to aid our Allies, as told in this fact-packed book, has become one of the UK's enduring tasks. Throughout the Cold War the Royal Navy maintained its pre-eminence in Atlantic ASW, and continues to do so today. That this sphere of warfare remains an area of very close cooperation between the Royal Navy and the United States Navy is a subject with which I am especially familiar and particularly proud.

During my early naval career, I was honoured to have Rob Hoole as one of my mentors. In this book he has continued that lasting relationship between us and I feel privileged to have been asked to write this foreword to his latest work. In Chapter 9, Rob, along with David Bruhn, notes that by that point in their book "many readers...will appreciate the great burden shouldered by Eastern Sea Frontier naval forces in the first half of 1942." I will go further, by highlighting that this work will allow a great many people to fully appreciate the unglamorous yet vital contribution of a fleet of oft-forgotten small ships and under-resourced commanders as they defended Allied shipping, eventually going on to defeat fascism. For researching and scripting this excellent addition to the historical record, both authors should be very proud.

I thoroughly recommend this detailed description of the activities of the King's Ships, and those of our Allies, to naval historians, to maritime warriors and also to the many military strategists who occasionally need factual detail and evidence to remind them that the early stages of conflict can be highly burdensome and require contingencies to be developed and resourced long before the formal declaration of hostilities.

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