

Foreword

Send Some King's Ships is an interesting and engrossing read. It tells an unusually complete story of how in WWII, far from principal combat theaters, vital shipping lanes through traditionally safe routes close to coasts were attacked by enemy submarines. The expansive coastlines of maritime countries at war, the shipping operating along them, and their relatively unprotected ports, were easy prey for these submarines. They posed immediate and serious threats that were difficult to deal with early in the war. This was particularly true of nations with insufficient anti-submarine forces (like the United States) who found it difficult to combat the well-armed and well-led boats that could attack shipping at times and places of their choosing.

As highlighted in the book's preface, Admiral Karl Doenitz, commander of the German submarines, famously stated that the primary objective regarding the use of his U-boats was to "destroy more enemy tonnage than can be replaced by all Germany's enemies put together." In pursuit of this objective, he sent groups of U-boats, often in sequential waves, to poorly protected waters, offering Allied shipping as easy targets. These were weapons that could hide by day, and surface at night to employ their torpedoes, guns, and sometimes mines to send merchantmen and their vital cargos to the bottom, often in sight of the still well-lighted coastal cities.

In this book, David Bruhn and Rob Hoole take readers to two of the most dangerous areas for shipping during the war. First, the Eastern Seaboard of North America during the first half of 1942. The U.S. Atlantic coastline stretches over 2,000 miles from Maine to Florida. Northward lie Canadian waters. After a disastrous six months during which hundreds of ships were lost—and with them many lives of crewmembers, passengers, and Naval Armed Guardsmen—the United States and Canada, with help from Britain, finally prevailed in limiting losses to U-boats. To be accurate, effective countermeasures induced Doenitz to move-on where the cost/benefit ratio of his valuable assets could achieve better results.

Second, the herculean task shouldered by the small South African naval forces in trying to counter the onslaught of U-boats mirrored the earlier challenges in North American waters, and is recounted and analyzed. A theme that runs through the book, and the basis for its title, is the assistance that the Royal Navy first provided the U.S. Atlantic

Fleet, and subsequently the South African Naval Forces. This assistance took the form of twenty-four trawlers and whalers converted to desperately needed anti-submarine vessels. Taken up by the British Admiralty for war duty as units of the Royal Naval Patrol Service, these modest, coal-burning vessels were fitted with ASDIC (sonar), a single deck gun, smaller anti-aircraft weapons, and depth charges.

Built for service in the North Sea fishing grounds, these ships could hold the sea in dirty weather and, equally important, were crewed by tough ex-fishermen and merchant seamen. They turned the tide. With such meager assets, wars are won.

Most especially, *Send Some King's Ships* hammers home the great devastation wrought by the German submarines off Canada and America during the first half of 1942. There have been many books and articles written about the U-boat onslaught on the Eastern Seaboard, a majority of which have a regional emphasis (New England, Hatteras area of North Carolina, etc.), or have focused on the expansive U.S. Eastern Sea Frontier, without including the other components of the larger Eastern Seaboard: Canadian east coast waters, and the east coast waters of Florida, which were a part of the U.S. Gulf Sea Frontier. Additionally, war diary references to shipping losses generally only concern themselves with the originator's area of responsibility. However, a ship sunk one mile or farther seaward of a Sea Frontier boundary was still sunk, and still a victim of a U-boat. This book endeavors to encompass a fuller picture by chronicling operations in the wider area.

Bruhn and Hoole are to be commended for providing readers a comprehensive description of the uphill battle faced by the naval "home guard" in North American and South African waters in 1942-1943. The men aboard the small vessels and the aircrews of planes patrolling overhead which finally brought the U-boats to heel, have never gotten full recognition for their vital contributions to the war effort. They get that recognition here.

Send Some King's Ships also reminds us of the steadfast leadership of such tireless professionals as Vice Admiral Adolphus Andrews, USN and the role of the ships Britain sent to America to work directly for him. This action, a sort of reverse to the "Lend-Lease" aid then being provided by the United States to Britain, paid great dividends and helped put the Allies on the road to ultimate victory.

Rear Adm. Christopher Weaver, USN (Retired)