

2000

## The Battle of the Atlantic and Signals Intelligence: U-Boat Situations and Trends, 1941 - 1945

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### Recommended Citation

Rielage, Dale and Syrett, David (2000) "The Battle of the Atlantic and Signals Intelligence: U-Boat Situations and Trends, 1941 - 1945," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 53 : No. 4 , Article 26.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol53/iss4/26>

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*Pampanito's* greatest achievement was its rescue of seventy-three Australian and British prisoners of war from enemy waters, the single greatest such recovery of the war. Michno makes this event the centerpiece of the book. On 12 September 1944, *Pampanito* and USS *Sealion* (SS 315) attacked a convoy carrying war materials to Japan. Unknown to the American submarines, two of the ships they sank had on board more than 1,360 Allied prisoners of war. Michno carefully builds the narrative leading to the sinking, with a well written and heartrending description of the soldiers' original capture, imprisonment, and forced labor on the Burma-Siam railway.

Not realizing that its attack had simultaneously freed and doomed hundreds of Allied soldiers, *Pampanito* continued chasing the convoy. For some seventy-two hours the oil-soaked men floated on rafts and debris as the number of their dead steadily increased. *Pampanito* discovered the prisoners only when it passed through the area a second time. As the sub approached the bedraggled survivors, its officers assumed they were Japanese. Michno writes compellingly of their uncertainty about what to do.

The wretches in the water were not the enemy, and Michno's account of their rescue and the care given them by *Pampanito's* crew offers a clear understanding of the prisoners' condition, the crew's feelings toward them, and the instant bond of friendship and caring that developed between survivors and rescuers. Michno makes good use of first person accounts from the crew and the survivors as he describes many emotional encounters.

*USS Pampanito: Killer-Angel* contains much to recommend it. Michno does a good job of explaining details unfamiliar to nonsubmariners and of providing

historical and technical background on everything from diesel engines to ULTRA. In addition, the book includes twenty-seven black-and-white photographs, many taken by the crew. Fourteen maps help the reader locate the sub's patrol areas and visualize its torpedo attacks. The footnotes are excellent.

*USS Pampanito: Killer-Angel* offers a deckplate view of the life of a submarine's crew in an account that is well worth reading and owning.

WILLIAM GALVANI  
Director, Naval Undersea Museum  
Keyport, Washington



Syrett, David, ed. *The Battle of the Atlantic and Signals Intelligence: U-Boat Situations and Trends, 1941–1945*. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 1998. 628pp. \$130

With this volume, the Navy Records Society (the book's U.K. publisher) adds some of the key intelligence documents of the Battle of the Atlantic to its series of published Royal Navy historical records. The defeat of the German U-boat threat during the Second World War was made possible by a massive combined intelligence effort by the American and British navies. Both sides cooperated to exploit decrypted German naval message traffic—the intelligence source known as ULTRA. The overwhelming intelligence “take” from this source—almost fifty thousand decrypted messages on the U.S. side alone—had to be digested into usable form for the senior naval leadership.

On the British side, all available intelligence on the U-boat threat was conveyed to decision makers through the Admiralty reports known as *U-boat Situations* and *U-boat Trends*. *Situations* was a weekly update on worldwide U-boat dispositions; each was usually several pages

long, consisting of a table of known U-boat locations followed by textual commentary on their operations. *Trends* was a shorter, irregularly issued report covering changes in German U-boat employment and technology. Both were written by Rear Admiral J. W. Clayton and Commander Rodger Winn, heads of the Admiralty Operational Intelligence Centre and Submarine Tracking Room, respectively. They represent collectively one of the best sources of insight into what the Allies knew about the German U-boat campaign at any given moment.

Editor David Syrett, also the author of *The Defeat of the German U-Boats: The Battle of the Atlantic*, has compiled these reports, dating from late 1941 through the end of the war, into a useful and convenient volume. His introduction provides a clear, succinct overview of the kinds of intelligence that were incorporated into the reports, the American and British collection process, and a short selected bibliography. Unlike many document collections, this work includes a comprehensive and convenient subject index.

The reader familiar with naval intelligence reports will be impressed with the clear, candid style employed by Admiralty intelligence. For example, the 12 June 1944 *U-boat Situation* states that “the U-boat reaction to OVERLORD was prompt, energetic but remarkably confused.” The reports also provide insight into the ten months of 1942 when a change in the German code left the Allies unable to read U-boat message traffic. The Admiralty continued to estimate U-boat movements using other intelligence sources, but a comparison of intelligence reports from each period underscores the importance of ULTRA to Allied operations. In the words of one

report, without ULTRA “an accurate estimate of the number and disposition of U-boats operating in the Atlantic is not possible” (*Situation*, 23 February 1942).

What is lacking in this work, however, is a sense of how specific intelligence documents were used. It is clear that these reports circulated at the highest levels of the Admiralty, which included the First Sea Lord and certain other flag officers. Syrett comments on the difficulty of reconstructing exactly what intelligence was passed to senior naval leaders, but his decision not to reproduce even the limited routing information available for each document deprives the reader of useful insight. It is also not clear what reports, or parts of them, were shared with the American naval leadership.

According to his introduction, Syrett presumes that “his readers will be naval historians with a fairly high level of expert knowledge.” While not for casual reading, then, this well edited volume provides naval history students, as well as nonspecialist historians, convenient access to some of the key documents of World War II naval history.

DATE RITTAGI  
Norfolk, Virginia



Still, William N., Jr., John M. Taylor, and Norman C. Delaney. *Raiders & Blockaders: The American Civil War Afloat*. New York: Brassey's, 1998. 263pp. \$16.95

Roberts, William H. *USS New Ironsides in the Civil War*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1999. 209pp. \$49.95

Mention of the American Civil War invokes images preserved for us by Matthew Brady—the encampments, the battlefields, and the aftereffects of the battle—in short, images of conflict on