

WORLD WAR I COMMEMORATIVE SERIES

ENSURING THE LIFELINE TO VICTORY



*Antisubmarine Warfare, Convoys, and
Allied Cooperation in European Waters
during World War I*



CHRISTOPHER B. HAVERN SR.

“When you pass beyond the defenses of the harbor you face death.”

—Vice Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, RN, Commander-in-Chief, Coast of Ireland,
to commanding officers of U.S. destroyers at Queenstown, May 1917

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INTRODUCTION

At the Pless Conference on 8 January 1917, the German High Command, in an effort to win World War I, made the fateful decision to resume unrestricted submarine warfare (USW). Relying on a flawed calculus, German planners now staked all in the belief that U-boats (*Unterseeboote*) could force Britain into submission within six months and put a stop to a war, two and a half years old, that had already cost millions of lives. Instead of producing peace and the ultimate triumph, however, Germany's resumption of USW set off a chain reaction that ended in defeat and revolution.

The resumption of USW, though initially successful in threatening Britain, ultimately goaded the United States into declaring war. The influx of U.S. Navy destroyers and other patrol craft allowed the Allies to revive the traditional practice of escorting troop transports and merchantmen with warships—convoying—to ensure the transport of masses of matériel and more than 2 million troops to the Continent. There, on the Western Front, the impending arrival of U.S. manpower and supplies prompted the Germans to risk all in a series of desperate offensives in the spring and early summer of 1918. When those offensives failed, the Allies counterattacked, forcing the overextended German army to retreat. By 11 November, with the empire having succumbed to revolution, the civilian leaders of the new German republic resigned themselves to the terms of the Armistice agreement. That which had promised victory at the Pless Conference of January 1917 proved, 672 days later, to be one of the primary catalysts for the defeat and demise of Imperial Germany.

While many historians generally understand World War I to have hinged on the colossal land battles on the Western Front, the outcome of those battles depended on the ability of the Allies to sustain transport and supply, especially across the Atlantic. It was in the safeguarding of these supply lines that the war was ultimately won.¹

The U.S. Navy Patrol Forces' operations also had a long-term impact on the U.S. Navy itself. This was the first time the service had engaged in coalition warfare with an allied force in the conduct of fleet operations.

¹ Michael B. Miller, "World War I," in *Europe and the Maritime World: A Twentieth-Century History*, ed. Michael B. Miller (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 213–44.

The dispatch of its ships in 1917–18 set the precedent for similar interoperability in World War II and the Cold War. The forward basing of these U.S. naval units saw the development of a logistics system that greatly exceeded the Navy's efforts to sustain its foreign stations during the preceding century. The operational experience of close coordination with Allied navies during World War I also saw the U.S. Navy become not only more technically sophisticated but also more professionally proficient and capable. The veterans of this campaign during World War I—the non-commissioned officers and junior- and mid-level officers—helped shape the Navy in the Interwar years and served in key leadership billets during World War II. Thus, in helping to keep Imperial Germany's U-boats at bay and ensuring the lifeline to victory, the Patrol Forces in European Waters played an integral role in the U.S. Navy's development and eventual emergence as the world's foremost sea power.

Two factors were paramount in determining the success of the Patrol Forces' operations and, by extension, the war's outcome. The first was the number of ships, those that transported men and supplies and those that escorted them; the second was the management of shipping and port logistics in the midst of total war. In protecting ships steaming from and to Atlantic ports, the convoys became the most important part of the effort to secure the logistics that helped to win the war.

NAVAL BLOCKADE, UNRESTRICTED SUBMARINE WARFARE, AND THE U.S. ENTRY INTO WORLD WAR I

The assassination on 28 June 1914 of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, prompted a diplomatic crisis that led to the outbreak of war in late July.² As they embarked on their military campaigns, the Entente (Britain, France, and Russia) and its adversaries, the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary), looked to the United States' response. In a message to Congress on 19 August 1914, President Woodrow Wilson acknowledged the war's outbreak and urged the nation to "be impartial in thought as well as in action."³ In the coming months and years, however, the combatants, particularly Britain and Germany, would test the U.S. government's ability to remain neutral.

Early in the war, the U.S. State Department formally requested that the warring nations abide by the 1909 Declaration of London, which asserted neutrals' right to free trade and determined the categories of contraband that could be seized by belligerents who had established wartime blockades.⁴ The Germans agreed to abide, but the British declined, insisting on the right to seize foodstuffs and other cargoes on board neutral ships believed to be destined for Germany. Despite British efforts to handle U.S. ships with caution, lest the Americans take punitive action in retaliation, the British blockade and the policies that defined it nonetheless antagonized the United States and its government.⁵ To make matters worse, new technologies, such as floating mines, longer-range guns, and self-propelled torpedoes, forced the British to proclaim a "long-distance"

2 Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Macmillan, 1962); Michael S. Neiberg, *Dance of the Furies: Europe and the Outbreak of World War I* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011); and Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012).

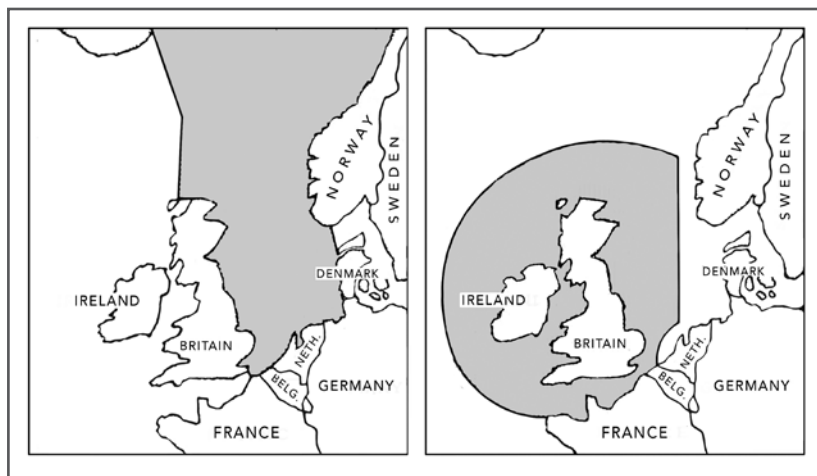
3 Message to Congress, 19 August 1914, 63rd Cong., 2d Sess., Senate Doc. No. 566 (1914), 3–4.

4 Arthur J. Marder, *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904–1919*, vol. 2, *The War Years: To the Eve of Jutland, 1914–1916* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2013), 373.

5 Nicholas A. Lambert, *Planning Armageddon: British Economic Warfare and the First World War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), chap. 6; Tuchman, *Guns of August*, 335.

blockade in violation of international law.⁶ The Germans now sought the means to counter the unprecedented British blockade and inflict similar hardship on the British population.⁷ That means would be the U-boat.

The Entente had largely eliminated the threat of German surface raiders by the end of 1914, making U-boats Germany's principal remaining recourse to attack Allied shipping. After some debate in the highest circles of power—military and civilian—and in response to the British designation of the whole of the North Sea as a war zone on 3 November 1914, Germany announced in early 1915 that as of 18 February, every enemy merchant vessel found in the waters surrounding the British Isles would be subject to attack without warning.⁸ Germany had launched the world's first USW campaign.



The waters around northwestern Europe. *Left*, the British military area, shaded in gray; *right*, the German submarine war zone, also shaded in gray.

6 Thomas A. Bailey and Paul B. Ryan, *The Lusitania Disaster: An Episode in Modern Warfare and Diplomacy* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 29. Ostensibly a warning of the danger from German mines sown in the area, the promulgation of the extended blockade provided convenient cover for the Royal Navy's own extensive mining operations. See Lawrence Sondhaus, *German Submarine Warfare in World War I: The Onset of Total War at Sea* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), 15.

7 Lawrence Sondhaus, *The Great War at Sea: A Naval History of the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 137.

8 Sondhaus, *German Submarine Warfare*, 30. Vice Admiral Hugo von Pohl, formerly the Chief of the German Imperial Admiralty Staff, made this announcement on 4 February 1915, two days after he had been named commander of the High Seas Fleet.

As a result, Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, at President Wilson's direction, issued a "Strict Accountability" warning, urging "the Imperial German Government to consider . . . the critical situation in respect of the relation between this country and Germany." He reminded the Germans "that the sole right of a belligerent in dealing with neutral vessels on the high seas is limited to visit and search, unless a blockade is proclaimed and effectively maintained."⁹ On 15 February, Emperor Wilhelm II, therefore, ordered all U-boat commanders to spare neutral ships in the designated war zone. Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg followed two days later with a note to Wilson implying that the Germans would suspend their campaign if the British adhered to the London Declaration.¹⁰ The British again refused, and the German campaign commenced on 18 February. Meanwhile, the Wilson administration, particularly Bryan, questioned the legitimacy of both nations' actions.¹¹

As British and French countermeasures proved ineffective, the Germans found increasing success in sinking Allied shipping in the campaign's first few months.¹² Although it demonstrated the U-boat's potential as a commerce raider, USW also caused irreparable harm to German-U.S. relations, especially when the sinking of the British liner *Lusitania* by *U-20* on 7 May 1915 resulted in the deaths of 1,198 people, 128 of them U.S. citizens.¹³ In response, the U.S. government drafted an official protest. Emphasizing the broader principles of "freedom of the seas," the communiqué questioned the German "methods of retaliation which go much beyond the ordinary methods of warfare" and asserted the indisputable rights of U.S. citizens on the high seas. "Submarines," moreover, "cannot

9 The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Germany, 10 February 1915, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter: FRUS) 1915, Supplement, The World War, Document 133, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1915Supp/d133>.

10 Sondhaus, *German Submarine Warfare*, 31.

11 Bryan, a populist Democrat who was defeated four times as a candidate for the presidency, was a pacifist.

12 Paul G. Halpern, "Handelskrieg mit U-Booten: The German Submarine Offensive in World War I," in *Commerce Raiding: Historical Case Studies, 1755–2009*, eds. Bruce Elleman and S. C. M. Paine (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2013), 141.

13 Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 149.

be used against merchantmen,” the notice argued, “without an inevitable violation of many sacred principles of justice and humanity.”¹⁴ This and future protests notwithstanding, the Germans’ USW campaign proceeded apace, sinking over 100,000 tons of merchant shipping per month in the period May–August 1915.¹⁵ In the fall of 1915, however, the Germans suspended the campaign after having sent approximately 750,000 tons of shipping to the bottom. Despite these successes, the campaign had been a failure. Undertaken with too few U-boats and inconsistent political support, the first USW campaign did too little damage to the British war effort and too much damage to German–U.S. relations.¹⁶

Faced with potential belligerency, Wilson resolved to bolster U.S. naval strength.¹⁷ In late 1915 and early 1916, he started to campaign publicly for the establishment of a fleet that would be “practically impregnable” and the “greatest navy in the world.”¹⁸ This effort resulted in the passage of the Naval Appropriations Act of 1916, which Wilson signed into law on

14 The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Germany, 13 May 1915, FRUS 1915, Supplement, The World War, Document 575, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1915Supp/d575>.

15 The Secretary of State ad interim to the Ambassador in Germany, 9 June 1915, FRUS 1915, Supplement, The World War, Document 632, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1915Supp/d632>; The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Germany, 21 July 1915, FRUS 1915, Supplement, The World War, Document 692, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1915Supp/d692>. See also Bailey and Ryan, *Lusitania Disaster*, 245. Cf. Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 158, and *German Submarine Warfare*, 47.

16 Jan S. Breemer, *Defeating the U-boat: Inventing Antisubmarine Warfare* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2010), 20; Gustav Bachmann, former Chief of the German Imperial Admiralty Staff, had predicted that the USW campaign, undertaken with inadequate U-boats and inconsistent political support, would not secure German victory but would be “enough to create incidents and quarrels with the Americans.” Sondhaus, *German Submarine Warfare*, 51.

17 George T. Davis, *A Navy Second to None: The Development of Modern American Naval Policy* (Boston: Harcourt Brace, 1940), 213. Two of the most prominent figures in this “preparedness movement” were Theodore Roosevelt, president from 1901 to 1909, and General Leonard Wood, Army Chief of Staff from 1910 to 1914. See Paul E. Pedisich, *Congress Buys a Navy: Politics, Economics, and the Rise of American Naval Power, 1881–1921* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 221; George W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The U.S. Navy, 1890–1990* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 59.

18 The tour included nine cities, beginning in New York on 27 January 1916 and ending in St. Louis on 3 February. Davis, *A Navy Second to None*, 216–18.

29 August and which promised the construction of 156 ships.¹⁹ Although the ships would not be ready when the United States went to war in 1917, this legislation would influence the future course of the United States as a naval power, especially when combined with the operational experience gained during the succeeding two years. In the meantime, the Imperial German Navy shifted strategy from unrestricted to restricted submarine warfare, all the while enhancing its U-boat construction program, should German decision makers ever again feel the need to resume USW.²⁰

That eventuality became real in the face of a costly stalemate and pressing shortages, especially of food and fuel for civilians.²¹ The dire situation prompted Germany’s leaders to reconsider USW. On 22 December 1916, Admiral Henning von Holtzendorff, Chief of the German Imperial Admiralty Staff, sent a memorandum to Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, Chief of the German General Staff. The memorandum calculated that Britain would be forced to sue for peace if Germany’s U-boats could sink 600,000 tons of shipping per month for five months. Holtzendorff justified the risk of war with the United States “so long as the U-boat campaign is begun early enough to ensure peace before the next harvest, that is, before August 1.” This target date would allow the U-boat force a six-month period to do its work before an expected U.S. declaration of war would see American troops and matériel arrive in appreciable numbers and sway the war’s outcome in favor of Germany’s enemies.²²

At the Pless Conference on 8 January 1917, German Navy and Army leaders urged Wilhelm II and the chancellor to renew the USW campaign. The emperor assented and ordered the resumption of USW, effective 1 February 1917. Holtzendorff’s memorandum, its points generally accepted, now shaped the campaign’s swift implementation: “The

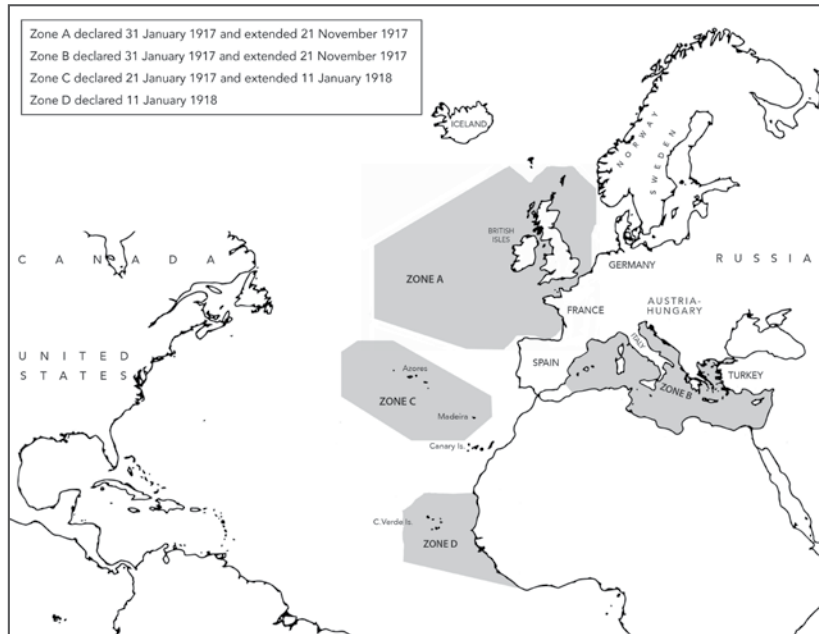
19 Baer, *One Hundred Years*, 60.

20 Sondhaus, *German Submarine Warfare*, 60.

21 G. J. Meyer, *A World Undone: The Story of the Great War, 1914–1918* (New York: Delacorte, 2006), 275; Holger H. Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914–1918* (London: Arnold, 1997), 283–96.

22 Sondhaus, *German Submarine Warfare*, 87, 103.

declaration and commencement of the unrestricted U-boat war should be simultaneous so that there is no time for negotiations.”²³



Areas in gray indicate the war zones declared by the Germans, effective after 1 February 1917.

The German embassy in Washington gave formal notice of the resumption of USW on 31 January 1917. An outraged Wilson summoned his cabinet and subsequently addressed a joint session of Congress on 3 February announcing the severing of diplomatic relations with Germany.²⁴ At the end of February, Wilson provided the so-called “Zimmermann Telegram” to the Associated Press. This memorandum by Arthur Zimmermann, Germany’s new foreign minister, revealed German plans to proffer an alliance to Mexico in exchange for the promise of the latter

²³ Ibid., 102.

²⁴ Address of the President of the United States to Congress, 3 February 1917, FRUS 1917, Supplement 1, The World War, Document 100, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1917Supp01v01/d100>

regaining territory lost in the 19th century.²⁵ With the publication of the telegram, many Americans came to favor Wilson’s desired armed neutrality, at the very least. A good many other Americans, including a large contingent in the press, called for war.

Amid the furor over Zimmermann’s note, German U-boats sank four ships of U.S. registry during March, and each of these sinkings brought the United States closer to war with Germany.²⁶ On 21 March 1917, the Navy Department devised a confidential mobilization plan to be enacted upon a declaration of war. The Atlantic Fleet relocated to Hampton Roads, Virginia, and its destroyers began patrolling to protect against potential U-boat incursions. By early April, the fleet had again shifted, this time to a secret rendezvous location at Yorktown, Virginia (Base No. 2). As Destroyerman Charles M. Blackford recalled, “The Fleet was on a more warlike basis now.”²⁷

With war imminent, the Navy Department made an informal suggestion to Captain Guy Gaunt, RN, the British naval attaché in Washington, for a closer relationship between the U.S. and Royal navies. The British were amenable and made that known to Walter Hines Page, the U.S. Ambassador to Britain. Page communicated to U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing on 23 March 1917 the British “hope for the establishment of full and frank naval interchange of information and cooperation.” Page then recommended that the U.S. government send “an admiral of our own” right away. Sir Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, also

²⁵ British intelligence intercepted this missive and provided it to the U.S. government in the hope that the contents might prompt just such a response. For more information on the Zimmermann Telegram, see Thomas Boghardt, *The Zimmermann Telegram: Intelligence, Diplomacy, and America’s Entry into World War I* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012).

²⁶ Sondhaus, *German Submarine Warfare*, 114; Rodney Carlisle, *Sovereignty at Sea: U.S. Merchant Ships and American Entry into World War I* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2009), 106–7, 120.

²⁷ Christopher B. Havern Sr., “Wadsworth I (Destroyer No. 60), 1915–1936,” in *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships* (hereafter cited as DANFS), 11 April 2017, <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/w/wadsworth-i.html>; Josephus Daniels, *Our Navy at War* (New York: George H. Doran, 1922), 5–6; Charles M. Blackford, *Torpedoboat Sailor* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1968), 65.

expressed his enthusiasm for such a plan, and Wilson concurred after having been briefed by Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels.²⁸

Daniels summoned Rear Admiral William S. Sims to Washington on 26 March 1917.²⁹ He arrived two days later, and Rear Admiral Leigh C. Palmer, Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, informed Sims that he was to be the “high-ranking officer” to go to London. His immediate duty “was to secure all possible information as to what the British were doing, and what plans they had for more effective warfare against the submarines.” Daniels reminded Sims that the United States was still neutral and that “his mission must be a secret and confidential one.” As a result, Sims did not receive written orders detaching him from his previous duties. He was also to travel as a civilian passenger and report to Ambassador Page upon arriving in London.³⁰ Admiral William S. Benson, as the first Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), purportedly told Sims before his departure, “Don’t let the British pull the wool over your eyes. It is none of our business pulling their chestnuts out of the fire. We would as soon fight the British as the Germans.”³¹



Left, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels (NHHHC, NH 2336); right, Rear Admiral William S. Sims. The image reflects his rank at the time he departed on his secret mission to Britain in 1917 (NHHHC, NH 2840).

28 Daniels, *Our Navy at War*, 36–37.

29 Sims was then President of the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island.

30 Daniels, *Our Navy at War*, 39.

31 Mary Klachko and David Trask, *Admiral William Shepherd Benson, First Chief of Naval Operations* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1987), 58. Benson was a known Anglophobe.

Speaking to another joint session of Congress on 2 April, Wilson avowed that the Germans’ campaign was “warfare against mankind” and asked for a formal declaration of war on Germany.³² Four days later, on 6 April, Congress obliged and authorized the President to “employ the entire naval and military forces of the United States and the resources of the Government to carry on war against the Imperial German Government; and to bring the conflict to a successful termination.”³³ While the United States had entered the Great War against Germany, it did so as a cobelligerent *associated* power rather than a formal ally of the Entente nations. Wilson did this to avoid “foreign entanglements” and to ensure freedom of action for the United States. Nevertheless, the U.S. Navy was prepared to cooperate with those of Britain and France.



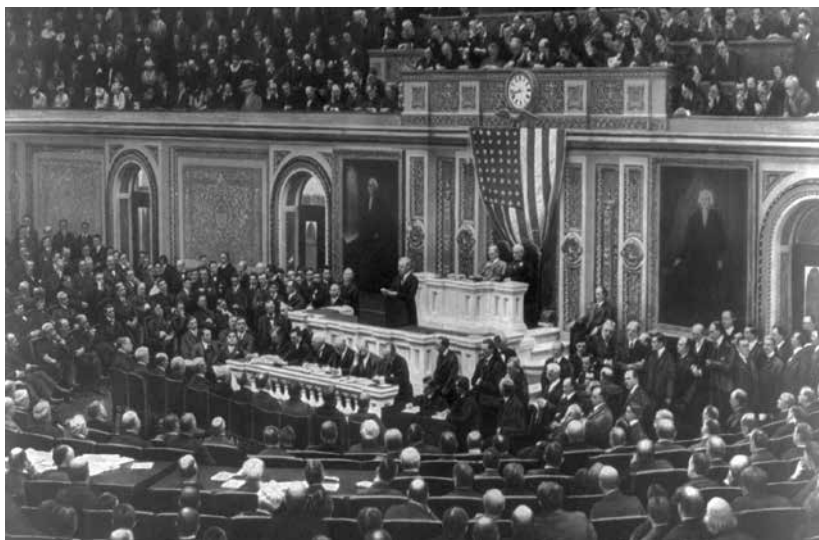
Admiral William S. Benson, Chief of Naval Operations from 1916 to 1919. (NHHHC, NH 366)

32 Address of the President of the United States Delivered at a Joint Session of the Two Houses of Congress, 2 April 1917, FRUS 1917, Supplement 1, The World War, Document 231, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1917Supp01v01/d231>.

33 Formal Declaration of War, 6 April 1917, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/65th-congress/session-1/c65s1ch1.pdf>. The vote in favor was 82 to 6 in the Senate on 4 April and 373 to 50 in the House of Representatives on 6 April.

THE U.S. NAVY GOES TO WAR

A week before the United States declared war, Sims and his aide, Commander John V. Babcock, boarded the steamship *New York* as passengers S. W. Davidson and V. J. Richardson. (They were still crossing the Atlantic when the United States declared war.) At Liverpool on 9 April 1917, Rear Admiral Sir George P. W. Hope, RN, Director of the Operations Division, met the two U.S. officers at the dock. They then boarded a special train that conveyed them to London. Upon arriving there on 10 April, Sims conferred with Ambassador Page and British naval authorities, who admitted Sims into the Admiralty's confidence.³⁴



President Wilson requesting a declaration of war against Germany, 2 April 1917
(Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-17146)

On the same day, at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, Vice Admiral Sir Montague E. Browning, RN, Commander-in-Chief, North America and West Indies Station, and Rear Admiral Maurice F. A. de Grasset (French navy), Commander, Antilles Division, met with Benson. Admiral Henry T. Mayo, Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet, and Rear Admiral Henry

B. Wilson, Commander of the U.S. Patrol Force, Atlantic Fleet, were also present. Upon the arrival of the naval representatives from Britain and France, Benson asked, "Where can our Navy render the best immediate service?"³⁵ Both admirals stressed the need for destroyers and other small craft. Benson, however, was keen to maintain the integrity of the U.S. battle fleet. "The present naval policy of the United States," he informed them, was to keep "the Fleet intact" at present, but the Americans "were ready to do our part in patrol of the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts." Despite this promise, Benson offered little more than one or two destroyers, to "show the flag" in European waters.³⁶

After their initial meeting, all the officers boarded the presidential yacht *Sylph* and steamed to Washington to confer with Secretary Daniels, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the General Board on 14 April 1917. According to Benson, the meeting had been convened "to consider and carry out without delay the best plans for the fullest cooperation of the navy of the United States with the allied navies, and to place every ounce of our naval strength into the struggle in the ways where it will do most to win victory." After some discussion, the representatives agreed that the United States was (1) to patrol the Atlantic coast from Canada to South American waters, (2) to have squadrons ready to operate against any German surface raiders in either the North or South Atlantic, (3) to send a division of destroyers that would be made ready for distant service, (4) to patrol the Pacific coast from Canada to Colombia, (5) to provide armed government vessels to maintain continuous service to Chile, the source of nitrates indispensable to munitions manufacture, (6) to maintain the U.S. Asiatic Fleet, (7) to take responsibility for the Gulf of Mexico and Central American waters as Allied navies transported their oil, chiefly from Tampico, Mexico, through this area, (8) to have the U.S. Navy assume the duty of sending submarines to Canadian waters upon the sighting of U-boats off Canadian coasts, (9) to give assurances to the French navy that the U.S. Navy would send patrol vessels to the French

34 William S. Sims, *The Victory at Sea* (London: John Murray, 1920), 2; Daniels, *Our Navy at War*, 39–40; Elting E. Morison, *Admiral Sims and the Modern American Navy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1942), 338–40.

35 Daniels, *Our Navy at War*, 45–46.

36 William N. Still Jr., *Crisis at Sea: The United States Navy in European Waters in World War I* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006), 380.

coast as soon as possible, and (10) to send armed naval transports carrying needed railway equipment to France—one immediately and others as soon as possible. After the conference adjourned, Benson coordinated further with the British and French on how U.S. naval units were to cooperate with those countries' respective fleets.³⁷

Despite Benson's intent to send only a token force to Europe, Browning later reported to the Admiralty that he had been able to secure from Roosevelt and Mayo the deployment of six, rather than two, destroyers. In fact, Rear Admiral Albert Gleaves, Commander, Destroyer Force, Atlantic Fleet, had issued confidential orders at 9:00 p.m. on 13 April 1917 to six destroyers, terminating their current assignments and instructing them to "expedite all necessary preparations for special service."³⁸ The six destroyers, reorganized as the Eighth Destroyer Division under Commander Joseph K. Taussig, were *Wadsworth* (Destroyer No. 60), *Conyngham* (Destroyer No. 58), *Davis* (Destroyer No. 65), *McDougal* (Destroyer No. 54), *Porter* (Destroyer No. 59), and *Wainwright* (Destroyer No. 62).

According to Taussig,

The selection was based entirely on the material readiness and steaming radius of the vessels. The Eighth Division was composed of the newest destroyers, with the exception of a few which had been lately commissioned. It was natural that this division would be in the best material condition. It would have been selected intact if it were not for the fact that the *Tucker* (Destroyer No. 57) and *Jacob Jones* (Destroyer No. 61), through no fault of their personnel, did not have the steaming radius of the others. This reason, and no other, was why they were replaced by the *McDougal* and *Davis*.³⁹

37 Daniels, *Our Navy at War*, 46, 47–48, 50; Still, *Crisis at Sea*, 381. High-profile missions from each country arrived in the United States to coordinate the Allied war efforts. Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, headed the British mission while René Viviani, former Vice Premier, and Marshal Joseph Joffre led the French delegation. Admiral Sir Dudley S. de Chair, RN, was the British naval representative; Vice Admiral Paul L. A. Chocheprat represented the French.

38 Joseph K. Taussig, "Destroyer Experiences during the Great War," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 48, no. 12 (1922), 2018.

39 *Ibid.*, 2019–20.

Meanwhile, the United States promised the French that ships would be dispatched to France as soon as they became available. Grasset thanked Daniels for the promised ships but complained of a certain unfairness regarding the U.S. allocation of naval support: Whereas Browning received everything he had wanted, Grasset, by his own estimation, "got nothing."⁴⁰

The same day that the Washington meeting adjourned, 14 April 1917, the Navy Department received Sims's first report from London. Having met with First Sea Lord⁴¹ Admiral Sir John R. Jellicoe, Sims began his report by noting that the situation was worse than realized. The "recent success of [U-boat] operations and the rapidity of construction constitute the real crisis of the war."⁴² The U.S. entry into the war had coincided with the worst period of the USW campaign for Britain. The Germans were exceeding their own expectations, and the longer days of summer, fast approaching, could expose the Allies to potentially greater losses. U-boats, moreover, were also sinking shipping faster than it could be replaced, as Allied building capacity was only 130,000 tons per month. Neither new construction nor the transfer of ships from foreign flags could compensate for these losses.

At this point, the Allies were making little progress in destroying more U-boats. Sinkings stood between 54 and 58 since the war began, only a few per month. Meanwhile, German shipyards were now turning out more capable and lethal U-boats at a rate of *three per week*. As Sims observed, the Royal Navy was "dangerously strained." Ambassador Page referred to the situation as "the sharpest crisis of the war."⁴³ Jellicoe urged Admiral Sir Dudley R. S. de Chair, the British naval representative in Washington, to "keep constantly before the U.S. authorities the great gravity of the situation and the need that exists for immediate action."⁴⁴

40 Still, *Crisis at Sea*, 380–81.

41 The First Sea Lord was the highest-ranking British naval officer, similar to the U.S. Chief of Naval Operations but with greater discretion in regard to the operations of the fleet.

42 Michael Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1917–1919* (Aldershot, UK: Naval Records Society, 1991), 206.

43 *Ibid.*, 193; Halpern, "Handelskrieg," 147–48.

44 Jellicoe to de Chair, 26 April 1917, quoted in Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations*, 210.

The Eighth Destroyer Division lost little time in preparing to steam across the Atlantic. On 14 April 1917, the destroyers cleared Yorktown. Bound for their respective home yards at New York and Boston, the ships entered drydock, made repairs, overhauled machinery, and took on three months' stores and provisions. The destroyers then rendezvoused at the Boston Navy Yard and departed, crammed with spare parts and ammunition, on 24 April at 4:30 p.m. under sealed orders, which routed the force to the Royal Navy base at Queenstown, on Ireland's southern coast.⁴⁵ The envelope containing the orders offered little else in the way of clarification—"no letter of instructions," according to Commander Taussig, "and no information concerning submarines or how they were to operate. We were certainly on our own resources."⁴⁶

Taussig's experience here is illustrative of the problem faced by the deploying destroyers. Although the United States had entered the war because of the predation by U-boats, the Navy had no doctrine or practical experience in the conduct of antisubmarine warfare (ASW).⁴⁷ A further issue concerned the destroyers' material readiness. Shortly after its arrival, Taussig's division would be expected to patrol the approaches to the British Isles in search of U-boats, yet the four 4-inch guns and four twin 21-inch torpedo tubes carried by the 315-foot destroyers were of limited utility for engaging submarines.

First, a U-boat on the surface with little but its conning tower above the waterline would be difficult to locate amid the waves and mists of the destroyers' patrol sectors. A U-boat with only its periscope piercing the surface was even less visible. Thus, a destroyer was likely to be detected well before a U-boat, enabling the latter to dive before it could be fixed and then engaged with either a gun or a torpedo. In addition, after diving, U-boats were invisible but for the occasional telltale oil slick or wake. "The submarines did not have much to fear from the destroyers," according to

45 Still, *Crisis at Sea*, 91. Queenstown is now known as Cobh.

46 Taussig, "Destroyer Experiences," *Proceedings* 48, no. 12 (1922), 2020.

47 Prior to the war, U.S. destroyermen had devoted themselves to tactical innovation and the development of a mission-centered doctrine that transformed the flotilla into a potent arm of the battle fleet. However, this progress did not extend to ASW. Trent Hone, *Learning War: The Evolution of Fighting Doctrine in the U.S. Navy, 1898-1945* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2018), 112-16; Breemer, *Defeating the U-boat*, 6-7.

Taussig, unless a destroyer managed to surprise a U-boat, "a difficult thing to accomplish as the submarine had the great advantage of seeing the destroyer before being seen."⁴⁸ The Navy's patrol vessels, therefore, would have to make significant changes and devote considerable energy to tactical preparedness and material capability in order to counter the U-boat menace.

The myriad shortcomings were further compounded by the lack of an effective ASW strategy for the Entente. In a memorandum to Sir Edward Carson, First Lord of the Admiralty,⁴⁹ Jellicoe bemoaned Britain's dire position: "We are carrying on this war . . . as if we had absolute command of the sea. We have not . . . anything approaching it."⁵⁰ The Germans' resumption of their USW campaign in early 1917 forced the British to divert some 3,000 craft and their crews to ASW duty.⁵¹ Nevertheless, in just three months, the Germans sank 1,104 ships at the cost of only nine U-boats. The British defensive effort "was clearly a shambles."⁵²



First Sea Lord Admiral Sir John R. Jellicoe, RN(Library of Congress, LC-B2-6462-7).

48 Joseph K. Taussig, "Destroyer Experiences during the Great War," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 49, no. 1 (1923), 60.

49 The First Lord of the Admiralty was the civilian head of the Royal Navy, similar to the U.S. Secretary of the Navy.

50 Jellicoe to Carson, 27 April 1917, in *The Jellicoe Papers: Selections from the Private and Official Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Earl Jellicoe*, vol. 3, 1916-1935, ed. A. Temple Patterson (London: Navy Records Society, 1968), 160-62.

51 Henry Newbolt, *History of The Great War Based on Official Documents, by Direction of the Historical Section of the Committee of Imperial Defence: Naval Operations* (London: Longmans, Green, 1928), 4:347-48.

52 Breemer, *Defeating the U-boat*, 47.

THE BRITISH DEBATE ABOUT CONVOYING

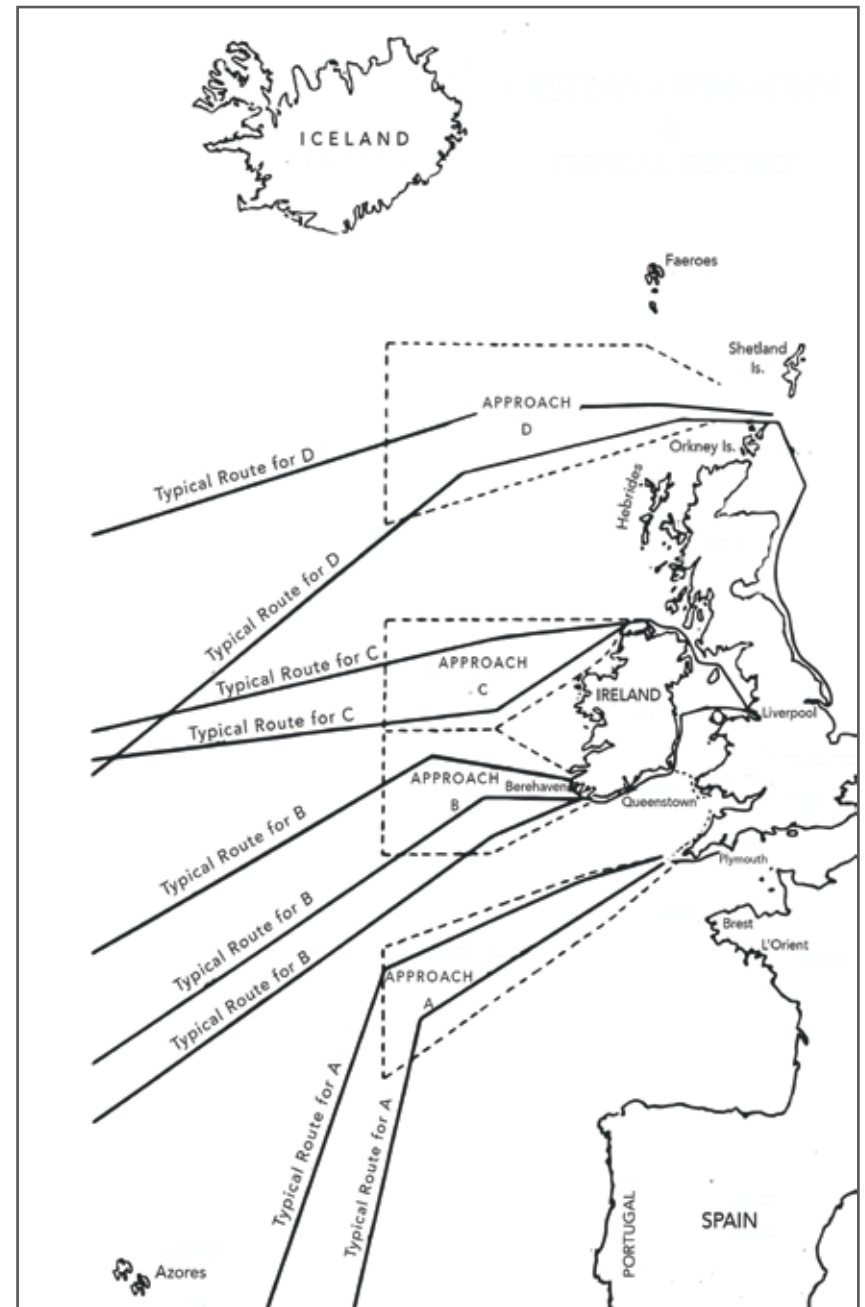
The Royal Navy's primary strategy for protecting shipping was known as the approach-areas strategy. Initially deployed off the southern coast of Ireland in 1915, it was later expanded to three "great cones of approach," which comprised the Western Approaches, where oceanic shipping converged on Britain's ports. The scheme routed inbound shipping along very thinly patrolled routes until it arrived in home waters and could benefit from the more heavily patrolled inshore routes. Outbound shipping followed the reverse procedure. The system worked reasonably well against smaller U-boats inshore, but it fell apart when the larger, more capable U-boats targeted ships some 200 nautical miles westward into the Atlantic. Patrols in this area were weak or nonexistent. As the shipping routes converged there, they created heavily trafficked danger zones of some 10 to 15 thousand square miles, where 25 percent of all steamers that left Britain in the spring of 1917 were lost.⁵³

Convoying, like blockades, had been a successful strategy for the Royal Navy. With the war's outbreak in 1914, the Entente navies saw fit to convoy troopships, not only those across the English Channel to France, but also those from Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand.⁵⁴ Yet British planners disagreed over whether convoying was appropriate for the protection of merchant ships. Jellicoe, for example, sided with the convoy skeptics, while Admiral Sir David Beatty, Jellicoe's successor as the Grand Fleet's commanding officer, was among those favoring the strategy.⁵⁵

53 Ibid., 47–48.

54 Ships of the Imperial Japanese Navy escorted troopships from the Antipodes, Australia, and New Zealand for the duration of the war and also deployed cruisers and destroyers to the Mediterranean. See Hiram Yoichi, "Anzac Convoy (October 1914)," in *The Encyclopedia of World War I: A Political, Social and Military History*, ed. Spencer C. Tucker (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 1:114; Timothy D. Saxon, "Anglo-Japanese Naval Cooperation, 1914–1918," *Naval War College Review* 53 (2000), 71; John R. Jellicoe, *The Crisis of the Naval War* (New York: Doran, 1921), 149; Vincent P. O'Hara, W. David Dixon, and Richard Worth, eds., *To Crown the Waves: The Great Navies of the First World War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2103), 313; Paul G. Halpern, *The Naval War in the Mediterranean, 1914–1918* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1987), 344.

55 Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 255.



The Western Approaches



Patrol areas around the British Isles

Several factors figured in the opposition to the employment of merchant convoys. Senior British naval authorities believed that slow-moving convoys offered tempting targets for the U-boats. Many officials, including Jellicoe, also doubted the ability of merchantmen to steam in close formation, especially at night and while zigzagging. There were also concerns regarding the Royal Navy's ability to protect convoys with

the forces available.⁵⁶ Most merchant captains believed that they could outrun U-boats if encountered and that participation in a convoy, which moved only as fast as its slowest ship, would limit the individual merchant ship's ability to take evasive action. Managers of port facilities likewise cited the potential logistical problems stemming from convoy arrivals and departures and the impact of having too many merchantmen in ports with inadequate loading and unloading capacities.

The counterargument—the argument *for* merchant convoying—was centered on the demonstrated effectiveness of convoys for troopships, hospital ships, and valuable individual cargoes as they plied the waters between Great Britain and the Continent.⁵⁷ Convoying measures instituted in 1916 to protect cross-channel shipping brought losses down to less than 1 percent. Convoys for supply ships to neutral Scandinavia began in April 1917, followed quickly by convoys for trade among the ports along England's eastern coast. In all cases, the decline in losses was dramatic. Nevertheless, the Admiralty leadership largely ignored these successes. They might have seemed irrelevant to the Atlantic problem, which had yet to become the object of any serious operational research on convoying as an effective measure against U-boats.⁵⁸

The arrival of a new prime minister, David Lloyd George, and his reorganization of the British war effort prompted the research into convoying that ultimately led to implementation in 1917. In December 1916, Lloyd George created the Ministry of Shipping, and shortly thereafter, in keeping with the renewed focus on ASW, Jellicoe established the Admiralty's Anti-Submarine Division, with Rear Admiral Alexander L. Duff as its director. The Anti-Submarine Division was to synchronize all means of countering the U-boat threat and produce a detailed, comprehensive study of the Royal Navy's pursuit of ASW up to that point. The study, in turn, determined the next steps in countering the U-boats. The measures fell into two classes: (1) those recommending that U-boats be attacked wherever they operated, and (2) those intended to provide better

⁵⁶ Jellicoe, *Crisis of the Naval War*, 104; Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 255.

⁵⁷ Paul E. Fontenoy, "Convoy System," in Tucker, *Encyclopedia of World War I*, 1:312–14.

⁵⁸ Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations*, 196; Jellicoe, *Crisis of the Naval War*, 109–10.

protection to merchant shipping. Convoying was not particularly valued in this second class.⁵⁹

While there is some debate as to how the Royal Navy eventually adopted the convoy strategy, two relatively junior officers, Commander Reginald Henderson in the Anti-Submarine Division and Captain Kenneth G. B. Dewar in the Operations Division, played prominent roles. In their examination of the relevant data, Henderson and Dewar made two important discoveries: first, that the attrition of British shipping was far greater than the publicly available statistics suggested, and second, that the actual number of oceangoing ships arriving at and sailing from British ports was much smaller than previously thought. In light of the latter discovery, convoying of merchant vessels now appeared to be a much more manageable undertaking than the Admiralty had claimed. For their data, Henderson and Dewar had turned to the brand-new Ministry of Shipping. Having acted through a civilian ministry and then appealing to Lloyd George directly, Henderson and Dewar challenged the Admiralty's anti-convoying approach and, in so doing, Lloyd George would act to limit the Admiralty's decision-making authority.⁶⁰

At a War Cabinet meeting on 23 April 1917, when Lloyd George raised the prospect of adopting convoys for merchant ships, Jellicoe argued against it and reiterated the Admiralty's preference for staying the course.⁶¹ Jellicoe's continued resistance to convoying merchant vessels likely stemmed from his belief that ships sailing closely together, emitting a massive combined plume of smoke, would be more likely to be spotted from a distance. U-boats could then attack their targets at times of their choosing, causing the surviving ships to panic, lose formation, and collide in their haste to flee.

59 Newbolt, *Naval Operations*, 4:325–32.

60 Breemer, *Defeating the U-boat*, 48–49; Arthur J. Marder, *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904–1919*, vol. 4, *1917, Year of Crisis* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 150.

61 Breemer, *Defeating the U-boat*, 51; Newbolt, *Naval Operations*, 4:380.

This focus on station-keeping, however, was misplaced and stemmed from a flawed understanding of the differences between the practices of the battle fleet and those of a merchant convoy, which did not necessarily need to maneuver as the fleet would, even when responding to a threat.⁶² The Admiralty also overestimated the escorts required to protect a convoy—two escorts for every ship. These assumptions, moreover, were based on neither practical experience nor any form of careful analysis. No one considered that a destroyer screen's purpose with the battle fleet was completely different from that of a convoy. In the former, the destroyers were to attack the enemy's battleships with torpedoes and defend against a like enemy attack. In the latter, the destroyers' presence would force a U-boat to remain submerged, thus inhibiting its preferred method of attack—on the surface and with the deck gun.⁶³

Amid the Admiralty's resistance to convoying merchant vessels in the spring of 1917, the rate of sinkings accelerated. U-boats destroyed 860,330 tons in April, a monthly total unequalled in either world war.⁶⁴ In response, the War Cabinet urged Lloyd George to “visit the Admiralty with a view to investigating all the means at present in use in regard to anti-submarine warfare.”⁶⁵ The next day, Rear Admiral Duff of the Anti-Submarine Division cited the successful French coal convoys and the U.S. entry into the war as support for his recommendation that the Admiralty adopt the convoy system.⁶⁶

Faced with overwhelming pressure from the prime minister, from the War Cabinet, and now even from his own Anti-Submarine Division, Jellicoe finally conceded and ordered that measures for convoying merchant vessels be implemented on 27 April.⁶⁷ He notified de Chair, his representative in Washington, of the new requirements: “The system necessitates first a considerable increase in number of destroyers and

62 In naval operations, tight station-keeping was necessary to minimize the transition from cruising to battle formation.

63 Breemer, *Defeating the U-boat*, 52.

64 Sondhaus, *German Submarine Warfare*, 117.

65 David F. Trask, *Captains and Cabinets: Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1917–1918* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1972), 72.

66 Sondhaus, *German Submarine Warfare*, 122–23.

67 Trask, *Captains and Cabinets*, 72.

therefore the assistance of U.S.A. in provision of as many more as possible is very urgently needed.”⁶⁸

The U.S. entry into the war undoubtedly sealed the Admiralty’s decision regarding the implementation of convoys. President Wilson had inquired as early as 25 February 1917 about the British reluctance to adopt convoys, and Sims, once in London, became the foremost U.S. advocate there for convoying.⁶⁹ The expected reinforcement by U.S. patrol craft would sufficiently bolster the Royal Navy and allow for the escorting of convoys through the danger zones.⁷⁰

With Jellicoe’s decision made, the Admiralty established a committee to organize the system.⁷¹ Then early in May, this committee decided to run two experimental convoys. Seventeen ships would depart Gibraltar on 10 May, and 12 ships would clear Hampton Roads two weeks later, on 24 May, escorted by the cruiser HMS *Roxburgh*.⁷²

68 Quoted in Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations*, 211.

69 Sims raised the issue with Jellicoe when he arrived in London. See Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations*, 239. The Royal Navy’s official history went so far as to state, “Admiral Sims must be given the credit of being the first naval expert in his position who had the insight to realise that the remedy for which the Allies were still seeking had actually been found.” See Newbolt, *Naval Operations*, 5:133. Sims, however, in a letter to Babcock, remarked, “I am still of the opinion that, in the absence of an authorized statement from the Admiralty . . . it would be a mistake for any officer to publish or to authorize the publication of the claim that the influence of our officers was the determining factor in the adoption of the convoy by the Admiralty. Our influence may have been the determining factor. It is at least probable that our influence accelerated the decision, but there is no single authoritative statement to prove that this is true, much less to prove that but for our insistence the convoy would not have been adopted at all. I think there can be no doubt that in the absence of our advocacy the convoy policy would have been adopted before very long.” Morison, *Admiral Sims*, 351–52.

70 Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations*, 211.

71 Breemer, *Defeating the U-boat*, 58.

72 Fayle, *Seaborne Trade*, 3:129; Marder, *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, 4:187. Two of the ships dropped out of the convoy. One of those was torpedoed and sunk; the other made port.

THE EMERGENCE OF A SYSTEM

In May 1917, Captain Gaunt, the British naval attaché in Washington, cabled the Admiralty in London to say that the Navy Department was “very strongly against [the] convoy scheme.”⁷³ The primary resistance came from the Navy’s two foremost officials, the Secretary and the CNO. At this early stage of U.S. involvement in the war, Daniels was still naive when it came to understanding what was required, and Benson was still loath to see his battleships stripped of their destroyer screen, which at any rate was ill-prepared for an ASW campaign on the other side of the Atlantic.⁷⁴

Despite his foremost naval advisers’ lack of enthusiasm for convoying, it was President Wilson who intervened to settle the matter. According to historian David Trask, on 13 July 1917, the President met with Sir William Wiseman. The Englishman “seized the opportunity to urge a definitive U.S. Navy commitment to the convoy system. This decision by Britain, he argued, would make it easier for [Wilson] to obtain funds from Congress for the construction of destroyers.”⁷⁵ Subsequent to this meeting, the Navy Department received orders to collaborate fully with the British to employ the convoy system.

The next issues concerned organization and management of a global system that would be run by the Admiralty at Whitehall. There, in the “convoy room,” lay “a huge chart” that “gave a comprehensive view of the North and South American coast, the Atlantic Ocean, the British Isles, and a considerable part of Europe and Africa,” as Sims recalled. “A mere glance at this chart,” he explained, “gave the spectator the precise location of all the commerce which was then en route to the scene of war.” From this room, a “small group of officers in the Admiralty exercised a control which extended throughout the entire convoy system,” even managing to fix “the dates when convoys sailed from America.” From the convoy

73 Quoted in Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations*, 218.

74 *Ibid.*, 198.

75 Trask, *Captains and Cabinets*, 97. Sir William Wiseman was an officer in Britain’s Secret Intelligence Service. As the head of the British intelligence mission in the United States, Wiseman acted as a liaison between Woodrow Wilson and the British government. See Richard Spence, “Englishmen in New York: The SIS American Station, 1915–21,” *Intelligence and National Security* 19 (2004), 511–37.

room at Whitehall, the Admiralty was able to serve as “the central nervous system of a complicated but perfectly working organism which reached the remotest corners of the world,” its vessels now set in motion along “hard and fast routes” according to timetables “as fixed as those of a great railroad.”⁷⁶ U.S. Navy Captain Byron A. Long, a member of Sims’s staff at Grosvenor, in London, served as the liaison to Rear Admiral Duff, now Assistant Chief of Naval Staff, who was responsible for managing the massive system now in place.⁷⁷

The Admiralty assigned its own local convoy officers to New York, Sydney and Halifax in Nova Scotia, and Hampton Roads.⁷⁸ By summer’s end, convoys were leaving every four days from Hampton Roads and every eight days from New York, Sydney, and Halifax, at an average rate of 20 convoys per month crossing the North Atlantic. Destroyers on convoy duty, both U.S. and British, soon became the war’s busiest naval vessels, each spending five days at sea for every two or three in port and cruising on average 6,000 miles per month.

Even while cooperating fully with the implementation of convoys, U.S. priorities differed from those of the British. As Daniels explained in a letter to Sims on 28 July 1917:

The paramount duty of the destroyers in European waters is . . . the proper protection of transports with American troops. Be certain to detail an adequate convoy of destroyers and in making the detail bear in mind that everything is secondary to having a sufficient number to ensure protection to American troops.⁷⁹

U.S. officials therefore hesitated to integrate the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) troop convoys into the general convoy system, instead diverting the majority of U.S. patrol vessels in European waters to troop convoys while persistently attempting to take over convoy organization in U.S.

76 Sims, *Victory at Sea*, 103–7.

77 Jellicoe, *Crisis of the Naval War*, 12–13. The four divisions under Duff’s command were the Mercantile Movements Division, the Trade Division, the Anti-Submarine Division, and the Mine-Sweeping Division. Sims, *Victory at Sea*, 103. Captain Long’s primary task was coordinating the movements of the U.S. convoys with those of the Allies.

78 Sondhaus, *German Submarine Warfare*, 123.

79 Daniels, *Our Navy at War*, 76.

ports from British officers, “though to no avail.”⁸⁰ The Admiralty retained responsibility for organizing convoys in the principal U.S. ports and eventually designated Vice Admiral Sir William L. Grant, RN, Commander-in-Chief, North America and West Indies Station, as chief convoy officer. Breaking his flag on board a converted yacht anchored in the Potomac River near Washington, Grant served in a capacity similar to that of Sims in London.

The American experience of collaboration with the Admiralty in its convoying system had long-ranging effects on the U.S. Navy. Among the most significant were modifications to the building program, which came to promise more destroyers as 1917 wore on.⁸¹ An act of Congress, approved on 6 October 1917, appropriated funds for the construction of 150 destroyers.⁸² Six *Caldwell*-class destroyers, already under construction, entered service in 1917, becoming the prototype for the flush-deck design of the 50 *Wilkes*-class destroyers that had been authorized in the 1916 program. An amendment to that naval act provided another 61 ships to the *Wilkes* class and authorized 162 *Clemson*-class destroyers. These additions brought the total of the two new classes to 273, of which 98 would be launched before the Armistice—an increase that nearly tripled the Navy’s destroyers in service. By the end of hostilities, more than a third of the expanded U.S. destroyer force would see service in the war zone.⁸³

80 Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations*, 199–200.

81 William R. Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1909–1922* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1971), 299–300.

82 Davis, *A Navy Second to None*, 237n.

83 Sondhaus, *The Great War at Sea*, 258–59. The Navy also nearly doubled its submarine force in 1917–18, adding 49 boats to the 50 already in commission at the end of 1916.

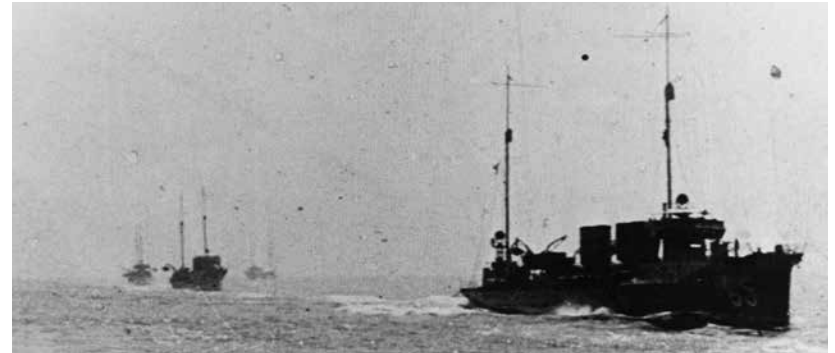
DESTROYERS TO IRELAND

The Eighth Destroyer Division, en route from New York since 24 April 1917, made wireless contact with the British destroyer HMS *Parthian* on 2 May. Even with the exchange of several coded messages concerning position, course, and speed, HMS *Parthian* failed to find the division before dark. Foggy conditions at morning frustrated the next attempt to rendezvous. Finally, around 1:00 p.m., the British destroyer HMS *Mary Rose* encountered Taussig's force. Approaching at high speed, the ship hoisted the international signal, "Welcome to the American colors," and *Wadsworth* replied, "Thank you, I am glad of your company."⁸⁴ Taussig's division then fell in line behind HMS *Mary Rose*, and the seven ships proceeded in company at 15 knots. Taussig later remarked that this rendezvous was the first meeting in war between the Royal Navy and U.S. Navy "with the intention of friendly co-operation, instead of hostile action."⁸⁵

Increasing speed, the destroyers steamed for the lightship at Daunt Rock, off Ireland's southern coast, and thence for nearby Queenstown. The division stopped just before entering the harbor to take on British officers as pilots. Along with the pilot for *Wadsworth*, four others boarded the ship: Commander Edward R. G. R. Evans, RN, Lieutenant Commander Babcock, Paymaster Eugene C. Tobey, and Vice Consul Harry T. Sherman.⁸⁶ After entering the harbor, *Wadsworth* and *Conyngham* moored to the oiling jetty and began to refuel immediately, while the others waited their turn. Taussig then dispatched a signal directing the destroyer captains to report on board *Wadsworth* in advance of official calls ashore.⁸⁷

Taussig also received two correspondences from Sims, who had been called unexpectedly to Paris. One was a missive "of advice, information, and instructions."⁸⁸ The other was Operation Order No. 1. Dated 29 April 1917, it informed Taussig that enemy submarines were operating against Allied shipping in increasing numbers and that his force was to "co-operate

with, and operate under, direct command of Vice Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, RN, Commander of the British naval forces based on Queenstown."



Destroyer Division Eight under Commander Joseph K. Taussig arrives at Queenstown, Ireland, on 4 May 1917 and becomes the first U.S. naval force to operate in the war zone. *Davis* (Destroyer No. 65) is in the foreground (NHHHC, NH 60209).

After assembling, Taussig and his officers went ashore to call at Admiralty House, Bayly's headquarters.⁸⁹ An officer present recalled the exchange. Bayly asked, "Captain Taussig, at what time will your vessels be ready for sea?" Taussig replied, "I shall be ready when fueled." The Admiral then asked, "Do you require any repairs?" Taussig answered, "No sir." The Admiral's third and last question was, "Do you require any stores?" Taussig answered, "No sir! Each vessel now has on board sufficient stores to last for seventy days." The Admiral concluded the interview with the order, "You will take four days' rest. Good Morning."⁹⁰

89 Still, *Crisis at Sea*, 91; Taussig, "Destroyer Experiences," *Proceedings* 48, no. 12 (1922), 2032–34, 2036. Cf. Taussig, *Queenstown Patrol, 1917: The Diary of Commander Joseph K. Taussig*, U.S. Navy, ed. William N. Still Jr. (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1996), 188n84; Lewis Bayly, *Pull Together! The Memoirs of Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly* (London: George G. Harrap, 1939), 219–20.

90 Taussig, "Destroyer Experiences," *Proceedings* 48, no. 12 (1922), 2036. See also Taussig, *The Queenstown Patrol*, 188n84: "Obviously, Taussig was not aware after his call on Vice Admiral Bayly that he had just played a principal role in an incident that subsequently became a legend. In naval folklore, the legendary reply . . . is, 'We are ready now, sir.' Although the officer is not named, all evidence points to Tobey, who was on Sims's staff, as the source. He accompanied Taussig on the call on Bayly. On page 70A of the diary, Taussig Papers, Taussig states that Tobey 'says he heard me say this!'" Bayly made no reference to this exchange in his memoirs, *Pull Together* (op. cit.). Taussig did recall later, "Had the exigencies demanded, all destroyers could have gone to sea that evening, as soon as fueling was completed." Taussig, "Destroyer Experiences," *Proceedings* 48, no. 12 (1922), 2032.

84 Taussig, *Queenstown Patrol*, 17–18.

85 Taussig, "Destroyer Experiences," *Proceedings* 48, no. 12 (1922), 2029.

86 Taussig, *Queenstown Patrol*, 19. Commander Evans was commanding officer of the destroyer HMS *Broke*; Lieutenant Commander Babcock, Sims's aide; Paymaster Tobey, on special duty as assistant to the U.S. Naval Attaché to Britain; and Vice Consul Sherman represented U.S. interests at Antwerp.

87 Taussig, *Queenstown Patrol*, 20.

88 Taussig, "Destroyer Experiences," *Proceedings* 48, no. 12 (1922), 2034.



Commander Joseph K. Taussig leaving *Wadsworth* (Destroyer No. 60) at Queenstown, Ireland, on 4 May 1917 (NHHC, NH 387).



Vice Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, RN, *right*, with his back to the camera, greets the commanding officers of the U.S. destroyers at Admiralty House, Queenstown, Ireland, on 4 May 1917 (NHHC, NH 52743).

The following day, 5 May 1917, Bayly again met with Taussig's destroyer captains and told them that ASW was "a different kind of fighting" and that they must not underrate the German submarine commanders. The captains' three duties, according to Bayly, were to destroy submarines, to protect and escort merchantmen, and to save the crews and passengers of torpedoed ships—"the destruction of submarines being the most important," he added.⁹¹ Continuing, Bayly stressed the dangers ahead:

When you pass beyond the defenses of the harbor, you face death and live in danger of death until you return behind such defenses. You must presume from the moment you pass out that you are seen by a submarine and that at no time until you return can you be sure that you are not being watched. You may proceed safely and may grow careless in your watching; but, let me impress upon you the fact that if you do relax for a moment, if you cease to be vigilant, then you will find yourself destroyed, your vessel sunk, your men drowned.⁹²



Vice Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, RN, Commanding Forces, Queenstown, Ireland (NHHC, NH 872).

Writing in his diary, Taussig recalled, "The gravity of the situation had been brought home to us in more ways than one, and realizing how little we knew about submarine warfare, all hands set to in earnest to

⁹¹ Bayly, *Pull Together*, 220–21.

⁹² Address by Vice Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, Commander, Coast of Ireland, to U.S. Destroyer Captains in the Destroyer Division Eight, 5 May 1917, Record Group 45, Entry 517, National Archives, Washington, DC. The speech is also quoted in Taussig, "Destroyer Experiences," *Proceedings* 49, no. 1 (1923), 47–48.

learn what we could, and to get our destroyers in the best possible shape.” Acknowledging their unpreparedness, Taussig noted that “everybody else connected with the United States destroyers, both officers and men, were working like beavers. There was so much to do and so much to learn. . . . It was simply a case of my going to the Admiral and saying . . . we will go and do whatever in your judgment you deem proper.”⁹³

Two conditions had to be met before the U.S. destroyers deployed for their first patrols. The first was physical readiness, the other was communications. Although Taussig had told Bayly that his destroyers did not require any yard work, the British put all the facilities at the Haulbowline Dockyard, across from Queenstown proper, at the division’s disposal. Taussig’s crews offloaded all excess stores; only those items deemed likely to meet requirements remained on board. The dockyard force also installed depth charges. This task alone took four days. Levers on the bridge operated the releasing apparatus for the stern-mounted depth charge racks. Two factors, however, undermined the weapon’s potential effectiveness. First, there was an insufficient supply of the newly developed ordnance, so each destroyer received only two charges for the initial patrol. Second, U.S. crews did not yet know how to employ the new weapons effectively.⁹⁴

Physical readiness and ordnance training aside, in order for U.S. and British ships to cooperate effectively, they would have to be able to communicate with each other. A Royal Navy officer conducted a wireless school for U.S. signal officers and radio operators to instruct them in British methods and in practices for encoding and decoding, which had to be taught quickly, given the short interval between the U.S. crews’ arrival in Ireland and their first patrols.⁹⁵ Destroyerman Blackford recalled, “Much of our time in port was taken up learning British ways of doing things. The radiomen learned the British system of handling messages, the quartermasters had their lessons in the British system of visual

93 Taussig, “Destroyer Experiences,” *Proceedings* 49, no. 1 (1923), 41.

94 *Ibid.*, 43–45. The situation would change in succeeding months as the production of tens of thousands of depth charges allowed for the placement of more of the weapons on patrol vessels, resulting in greater willingness to employ the weapons, which in turn built greater competence in their use and led to the development of new delivery equipment, techniques, and tactics, such as the depth charge barrage.

95 Taussig, *Queenstown Patrol*, 27.

signaling, which was so complicated, the British claimed, that it took [the Royal Navy] seven years to train a signalman. Our men learned it in less than two weeks.”⁹⁶

In making these preparations, the U.S. and British officers came to appreciate each other’s professionalism. Taussig noted, “We were fortunate in having had detailed to us, as liaison officer, Commander E. R. G. R. Evans of the Royal Navy. . . . Evans was indefatigable in answering the hundreds of questions that were put to him by the officers of our destroyers.”⁹⁷ Of the Americans, Evans would recall, “Those in the first six destroyers lost no time in getting themselves ready for their patrol work; in fact, they expressed their readiness to go out on patrol directly after their boats had oiled, but the Admiral kept them at Queenstown for four days.” Evans found Taussig, in particular, to be “full of brains and go, and I was very much impressed by him,” and yet, “the same may be said of all the destroyer captains who came over with these six splendidly suitable vessels.”⁹⁸



Depth charges fitted onto *McCall* (Destroyer No. 28) after the ship’s arrival at Queenstown, Ireland (NHHC, NH 123838)

96 Blackford, *Torpedoboat Sailor*, 77.

97 Taussig, “Destroyer Experiences,” *Proceedings* 49, no. 1 (1923), 43.

98 Edward R. G. R. Evans, *Keeping the Seas* (New York: Frederick Warne, 1920), 146–47.

U.S. Destroyers in the War Zone

Four types of U.S. destroyers served in the war zone: the 420-ton *Bainbridge*-class, the 740-ton “flivvers,” the 1,000-tonners, and the 1,200-ton flush-deckers. As the oldest destroyers in the Navy, the 420-tonners were obsolete and barely seaworthy, but the latter three types received unexpected acclaim. The U.S. destroyers operating with the Entente navies naturally prompted comparisons, particularly with the destroyers of the Royal Navy. The British destroyers were deemed faster and more maneuverable than the Yankee destroyers—a decided advantage in anti-submarine warfare. In testimony before the General Board, U.S. officers attributed the British destroyers’ superior maneuverability to their shorter hulls, flat sterns, and tighter turning radii.¹ British shipwrights designed the Royal Navy’s destroyers with the intent to maximize tactical capability while the destroyers were operating with the battle line. This effort, in conjunction with the expectation that destroyers would be operating in relative proximity to their homeports, led the Admiralty to sacrifice endurance and habitability for performance. U.S. shipwrights likewise expected destroyers to operate with the battle line, but the destroyers’ projected areas of operation were to be on distant service in the Pacific, Far East, and West Indies. As a result, while they may have lacked the agility of British destroyers, the larger U.S. ships were more comfortable for the crews and had greater fuel and stores capacity, enabling them to remain at sea far longer.²

After the arrival of the 740-ton flivvers and 1,000-tonners in Ireland, the British expressed concern over these ships’ sea-keeping qualities, especially during the upcoming winter months. Bayly wrote to Jellicoe in October 1917, “I am afraid that the number of U.S. destroyers will not loom so large in the winter. They will not stand the weather like ours.” Sims, too, believed the flivvers to be too small and lacking sufficient fuel capacity to operate from Queenstown. He recommended their transfer elsewhere. Much to Sims and Jellicoe’s surprise, however, the U.S. destroyers performed extremely well in the Western Approaches during the winter of 1917–18. The 740-tonners proved to be good

1 William N. Still Jr., *Crisis at Sea: The United States Navy in European Waters in World War I* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006), 310.

2 Sims, *Victory at Sea*, 48.

vessels even in the short, heavy seas, and the 1,000-tonners, given their mechanical efficiency, rated high with both navies’ officers. The U.S. destroyers, in fact, tended to weather storms that kept their Royal Navy counterparts in port. Lieutenant Aaron S. “Tip” Merrill, on board *Conyngham*, recalled British destroyers dispatching messages on 14 November 1917 declaring the Irish Sea “too rough for destroyers,” yet “none of our boats suffered.”³ Two U.S. destroyer captains wrote to the Bureau of Construction and Repair that during this period no U.S. destroyers “ever turned back or returned to port before the completion of assigned duty, except in cases of breakdown.”⁴

Admiralty officials and Royal Navy officers who observed the U.S. ships underway were eventually convinced of their suitability, commenting favorably on their guns, machinery, and seaworthiness. The British were especially impressed by the speed, guns, and fire control systems of the 1,200-ton *Caldwell*- and *Wilkes*-class flush-deckers. Ironically, many U.S. Navy officers who took command of them found them disappointing given their hasty, poor construction and their too often inferior performance. Lieutenant (j.g.) Robert B. Carney, Torpedo and Gunnery Officer of *Fanning* and later Chief of Naval Operations, “never did think much of them.”⁵

Initial British concerns notwithstanding, the U.S. destroyers deployed to European waters proved their durability and utility. At sea conducting antisubmarine patrols and convoy escorts 66 percent of the time during the war, the U.S. destroyers, regardless of type, became the most employed and desired U.S. naval vessels in the war zone.

3 Still, *Crisis at Sea*, 310.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

The Admiralty, in March 1917, had initiated a redesigned patrol system concentrating on the narrow lanes used by ships approaching British ports. The idea was to reduce the patrol area to a manageable level.⁹⁹ The Queenstown-based units' area extended as far into the Western Approaches as longitude 20° west and then eastward into the Irish Sea. For purposes of designating patrol assignments and enabling the reporting of positions, the entire area was divided into squares roughly 50 miles on each side, each identified by a letter and a number. A destroyer's patrol sector could include between one and three squares. With insufficient vessels to patrol the entire area effectively, Queenstown Command based the patrol priorities on either the sectors that had shipping transiting through them or other areas indicated by the intelligence concerning the U-boats' probable locations. There were also several inshore patrol areas shown on the confidential map as straight lines. Designated only by a letter, these patrol areas extended from Tuskar, on Ireland's east coast, to Blaskets, on the Atlantic. It was along these inside patrol routes near the coast that scattered, unescorted ships had to concentrate in order to enter their respective port destinations.¹⁰⁰ The U-boat captains knew of this practice, however, so they focused their efforts in the same waters.

The revised system, therefore, worked little better than the one it had replaced. With the patrol area still too large for the available naval vessels, patrols very rarely saw, much less attacked and sank, U-boats. Sims acknowledged this failure, emphasizing in his communications to Washington Jellicoe's pleas for light vessels to boost the patrols.¹⁰¹ Sims wrote the Navy Department on 11 May 1917, "The only apparent solution to the submarine issue lies in numbers of anti-submarine craft with a view of sufficiently dispersing the enemy submarine effort so that shipping losses will be reduced below the critical point." While Sims and the Navy Department did not question British ASW strategy at the time, Ensign John L. Leighton, an intelligence officer on Sims's staff, assessed the system

99 Still, *Crisis at Sea*, 339.

100 Taussig, "Destroyer Experiences," *Proceedings* 49, no. 1 (1923), 53.

101 Sims wrote, "I urge the immediate sailing of all available destroyers followed at earliest possible moment by reinforcement of destroyers and all light-draft craft available." Still, *Crisis at Sea*, 339.

as severely overstretched and beyond the capabilities of the Royal Navy even after reinforcement with U.S. destroyers.¹⁰² Historian Peter Kemp has judged the system even more bluntly: "For all the rest of the seaborne trade to and from Britain, specified routes were laid down, patrolled by sloops, trawlers, Q-ships and such destroyers as could be spared from more urgent duties. The protection afforded by this patrolling was less than nothing, for as well as failing to intercept U-boats, the activity of patrol craft revealed to the U-boat captains the route along which the merchant ships would be sailing."¹⁰³ Despite its dysfunction, the U.S. destroyers were integrated into this system.



Queenstown, Ireland, the location of Base No. 6 (NHHC, NH 121456)

Taussig's division received its first patrol operation orders on 8 May 1917. Bayly had said he was going to try to have the U.S. destroyers spend six days out and two days in port, but for the first sortie, *Wadsworth* and *McDougal* were out for four days, *Conyngham* and *Davis* for six, and *Porter* and *Wainwright* for eight. After the fact, Taussig concluded that the U-boats were avoiding the patrol vessels and only attacking unescorted

102 Ibid.; John L. Leighton, *SIMSADUS: London—The American Navy in Europe* (New York: Henry Holt, 1920), 5–6.

103 Peter Kemp, "Jellicoe and the Convoy Controversy," in *The Marshall Cavendish Illustrated Encyclopedia of World War I*, ed. Peter Young (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1986), 2095.

merchantmen. Anticipating the strategy that eventually emerged to counter the threat, Taussig then astutely observed, “The best defense will be to have so many patrol vessels that all valuable ships can be escorted as soon as they get in the danger area. . . . If enough patrol vessels become available to keep the submarines down or make it extremely dangerous for them to attack merchant vessels, then [the U-boats’] operations become a failure from their point of view.”¹⁰⁴

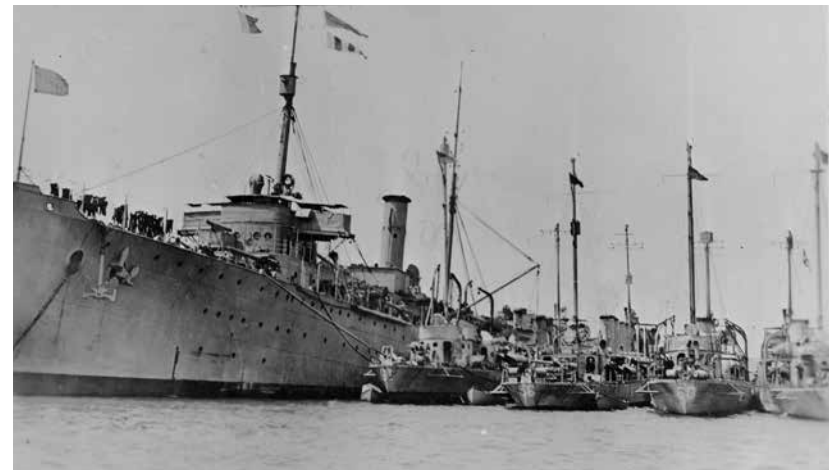
Fortunately, three more destroyer divisions got underway from the United States in May, Division Seven from Boston on the 7th, Division Six from New York on the 13th, and Division Five from Boston on the 21st.¹⁰⁵ By summer, the U.S. destroyer force at Queenstown stood at 34, enough to allow the Royal Navy to transfer the last of Bayly’s British destroyers to other commands, including the base at Devonport near Plymouth, England.¹⁰⁶

Considering the number of U.S. destroyers being sent to Queenstown, Sims urged the Navy Department to make logistical support a priority: “I cannot exaggerate the importance of our forces being followed

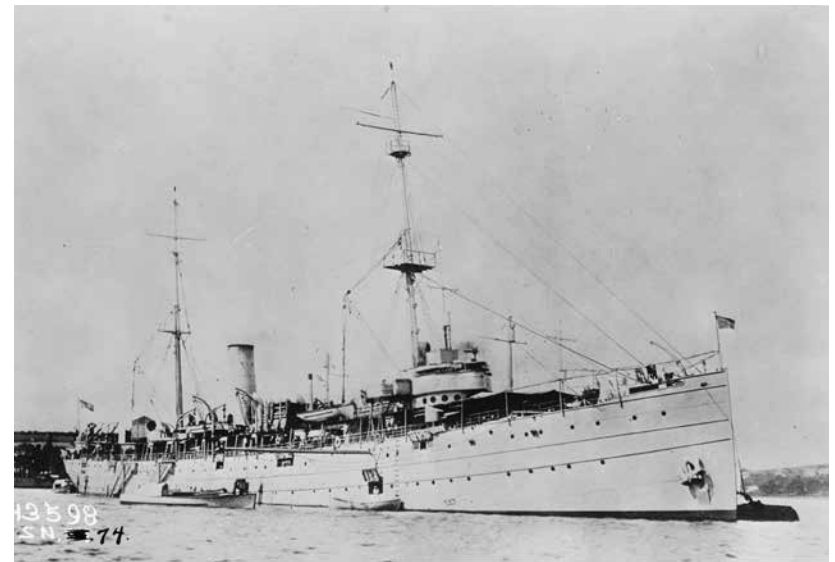
¹⁰⁴ Taussig, *Queenstown Patrol*, 30–31.

¹⁰⁵ Robert J. Cressman, S. Matthew Cheser, and Christopher B. Havern Sr., “*Tucker I* (Destroyer No. 57), 1916–1936,” in *DANFS*, 20 May 2017, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/t/tucker-i.html>; Havern, Cressman, and Paul J. Marcello, “*O’Brien II* (Destroyer No. 51), 1915–1935,” in *DANFS*, 21 September 2017, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/o/o-brien-dd-51-ii.html>; Cheser and Teresa R. Hasson, “*Sampson I* (Destroyer No. 63), 1916–1936,” in *DANFS*, 8 March 2017, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/s/sampson-i.html>; Havern, “*Patterson I* (Destroyer No. 36), 1911–1934,” in *DANFS*, 29 June 2017, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/p/patterson-i.html>. Division Seven consisted of *Rowan* (Destroyer No. 64) as flagship, *Cassin* (Destroyer No. 43), *Ericsson* (Destroyer No. 56), *Jacob Jones* (Destroyer No. 61), *Tucker* (Destroyer No. 57), and *Winslow* (Destroyer No. 53). Division Six consisted of *Cushing* (Destroyer No. 55) as flagship, *O’Brien* (Destroyer No. 51), *Benham* (Destroyer No. 49), *Cummings* (Destroyer No. 44), *Nicholson* (Destroyer No. 52), and *Sampson* (Destroyer No. 63). Division Five consisted of *Patterson* (Destroyer No. 36) as flagship, *Drayton* (Destroyer No. 23), *Jenkins* (Destroyer No. 42), *Paulding* (Destroyer No. 22), and *Trippe* (Destroyer No. 33).

¹⁰⁶ Sondhaus, *German Submarine Warfare*, 124. The Allied Naval War Council, established on 29 November 1917, determined that submarine chasers should be concentrated at Plymouth, in addition to Queenstown, to patrol the enclosed waters of the North Channel, the Irish Sea, St. George’s Channel, and the English Channel. In April 1918, Sims ordered Captain Richard H. Leigh to establish a submarine chaser detachment at Plymouth. The boats’ patrol area included the English Channel from Start Point to Lizard Head. Lisle A. Rose, *America’s Sailors in the Great War: Seas, Skies, and Submarines* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2017), 202.



Melville (Destroyer Tender No. 2) tending destroyers at Queenstown, Ireland. *Melville* is the largest ship. Lined up alongside, left to right: *Jacob Jones* (Destroyer No. 61), *Ericsson* (Destroyer No. 56), and *Wadsworth* (Destroyer No. 60). The identity of the rightmost ship is unknown (NHHHC, NH 46396).



Dixie (Destroyer Tender No. 1) at Queenstown, Ireland (NHHHC, NH 54515).

immediately by adequate repair and supply facilities, particularly for all special repairs and needs peculiar to our ships. Facilities at Queenstown and neighboring bases [are] greatly overstrained by [the] volume of work and [the] lack of labor.” The Admiralty, for its part, had also made it clear to the Navy Department that the U.S. Navy’s forces in European waters would have to be self-sufficient. (A fundamental principle of U.S. naval policy moving forward would be a reliance on the Navy’s own logistical resources.) Nevertheless, although the Navy would bolster manpower and secure contracts for added storage and logistics capabilities, a policy of complete self-sufficiency proved impracticable. The Navy was forced to depend on its Entente partners, however limited their capabilities after more than three years of war.¹⁰⁷

In light of these pressures, it became increasingly important to get U.S. Navy auxiliary ships to Ireland as soon as possible. Therefore, even as Taussig’s destroyers completed their inaugural patrols, *Melville* (Destroyer Tender No. 2), the first unit intended to support Taussig’s destroyers on distant service, was transiting the Atlantic under Commander Henry B. Price. *Melville* reached Queenstown, now designated Base No. 6, on 22 May and was to serve as the repair ship for the U.S. destroyers operating in Ireland. With approximately 3,000 tons of cargo, *Melville* contained a year’s supply of screws, bolts, and nuts.¹⁰⁸

To augment the U.S. logistical presence in Ireland, *Dixie* (Destroyer Tender No. 1), under Commander Joel R. P. Pringle, arrived at Queenstown on 12 June 1917. *Dixie* “came to act as mothership to the U.S. destroyers and carried on board an invaluable stock of machinery and stores for the purpose,” as Bayly put it.¹⁰⁹ Pringle and Price, of *Melville*, exchanged commands on 20 June 1917. The next day, 21 June, *Dixie*, with Price as its commanding officer, departed in company with the newly arrived destroyers of Destroyer Division Six. Bound for Berehaven (Castletownbere), on Ireland’s southwestern edge, they arrived later that same day and took

107 Still, *Crisis at Sea*, 92–93.

108 Mark L. Evans and Paul J. Marcello, “*Melville* I (Destroyer Tender No. 2), 1915–1947,” in *DANFS*, 14 August 2017, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/m/melville-i.html>.

109 Bayly, *Pull Together*, 222.

up station on 22 June. *Dixie* would serve as the support ship for the U.S. vessels operating from Bantry Bay.¹¹⁰

Meanwhile, in addition to commanding *Melville*, Pringle was designated Sims’s aide on 28 June 1917. Sims would later refer to him as a “man of marked ability” who had been responsible for administering, supplying, and maintaining the U.S. destroyer divisions in Ireland. Pringle, perhaps more so than anyone else, ensured that the U.S. units at Queenstown cooperated so successfully with the British.¹¹¹ As the U.S. Senior Officer Present (SOP), he also adjudicated all disciplinary matters for U.S. Sailors, thus mitigating potential friction with Bayly’s command.¹¹² Later, on 24 July, Bayly designated Pringle as his U.S. Chief of Staff and entered him in the Admiralty’s Navy List, the first time a foreign naval officer had enjoyed such a distinction.¹¹³



Captain Joel R. P. Pringle
(NHHHC, NH 47245)

110 Christopher B. Havern Sr. “*Dixie* I (Auxiliary Cruiser), 1898–1922,” in *DANFS*, 11 January 2019, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/d/dixie-i.html>.

111 Sims, *Victory at Sea*, 140.

112 Bayly, *Pull Together*, 222.

113 Evans and Marcello, “*Melville* I (Destroyer Tender No. 2), 1915–1947.”

YACHTS AND TROOPS TO FRANCE

The U.S. entry into the war prompted negotiations between U.S. and French naval authorities in Washington and Paris. On 14 April 1917, the French received assurances that the U.S. Navy would send patrol vessels to the French coast as soon as possible.¹¹⁴ As most of the French Navy had deployed to the Mediterranean as part of its agreement with the British, the handful of small patrol vessels operating on France's Atlantic coast was incapable of countering the U-boats in the Bay of Biscay. The French believed their western shores would be secured by the U.S. Navy, but with most of the deployable U.S. destroyers assigned to patrolling the Western Approaches based from Ireland, there were few available for service in France. This, in conjunction with the Navy's desire to maintain the Atlantic Fleet in the western hemisphere, produced indecision in the Navy Department. While Benson had favored French bases and initially agreed to station destroyers and other warships there, he began to hedge in regard to that commitment. Meanwhile, Admiral Lucien Lacaze, the French Minister of Marine, presumed that the United States had agreed to base patrol vessels in France, likely at Brest and possibly at Bordeaux. As a result, Daniels sent a telegram to Commander William R. Sayles, U.S. naval attaché in Paris, on 21 May, informing him that "the Department will send ten or more yachts for service against submarines off the coast of France."¹¹⁵ Though an improvised force, this was but the initial deployment of a vast assemblage of patrol and support vessels to France.¹¹⁶ The absence of destroyers notwithstanding, the Navy Department was living up to its commitment to reinforce France's naval presence in the Atlantic.

Captain William B. Fletcher received orders on 1 June 1917 to assume command of eight armed yachts then being fitted out for foreign

service. These were *Corsair* (S.P. 159), *Aphrodite* (S.P. 135), *Harvard* (S.P. 209), *Sultana* (S.P. 134), *Christabel* (S.P. 162), *Kanawha II* (S.P. 130, later renamed *Piqua*), *Vedette* (S.P. 163), and *Noma* (S.P. 131). In order to establish areas of responsibility for the units deployed on distant service, the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations informed Sims on 6 June of the establishment of the organization destined to be known as the U.S. Naval Forces Operating in European Waters. The command was then subdivided, with the destroyers in Ireland being designated the U.S. Destroyer Flotilla Operating in European Waters and the yachts and other small craft as the U.S. Patrol Squadrons Operating in European Waters. Benson also informed Sims that while the small craft fell under his general command, it was the Navy Department's desire that the French-based forces be under Fletcher.¹¹⁷ That command was later renamed U.S. Naval Forces Operating in France.¹¹⁸ Before deploying to France, on 4 June 1917, *Aphrodite* and *Corsair* received orders to detach from Fletcher's force and report to Rear Admiral Gleaves, then Commander, Convoy Operations in the Atlantic, for temporary duty.¹¹⁹ Minus these two vessels, Fletcher, on board his flagship *Noma*, cleared New York on 9 June in company with *Christabel*, *Harvard*, *Kanawha*, *Sultana*, and *Vedette*. Transiting the Atlantic via the Azores, the squadron arrived at Ponta Delgada on 26 June and then departed on the 29th for Brest.¹²⁰

Upon arrival on 4 July, Fletcher, having been promoted to Rear Admiral, was designated the SOP, and his staff secured quarters ashore colocated with those of French navy Commodore Antoine Schwerer, Chief of the Division of Patrols, Brittany, and Rear Admiral Frédéric Moreau,

117 Ibid.

118 Christopher B. Havern Sr., "Corsair I (S.P. 159), 1917-1919," in *DANFS*, 28 February 2020, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/c/corsair-i.html>.

119 Gleaves's billet was later redesignated Commander, Cruiser and Transport Force.

120 Upon deploying forces to Europe, the Navy recognized the Azores' strategic position on the shipping routes, halfway between the United States and Europe. As a result, Ponta Delgada evolved from a coaling depot into a full-fledged naval facility. (Sims had suggested in May 1917 that the Germans might seize the islands or even establish a clandestine base there, so the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations ordered the coal-burning Destroyer Division One to the archipelago.) By 11 August, all the destroyers were present to conduct antisubmarine patrols. Christopher B. Havern Sr., "Reid I (Destroyer No. 21) 1909-1919," in *DANFS*, 25 October 2017, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/r/reid-i.html>.

114 Still, *Crisis at Sea*, 110.

115 Daniels to Sayles, 21 May 1917, Record Group 45, Entry 517, National Archives, Washington, DC, available at <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/research/publications/documentary-histories/wwi/may-1917/secretary-of-the-nav-7.html>. Initially, when the Navy acquired the yachts equivalent in size to destroyers, the vessels were to be deployed for patrols only along the U.S. Atlantic coast, but the acute need in spring 1917 saw most of them dispatched to French waters. Still, *Crisis at Sea*, 311.

116 Memorandum from William S. Benson to William S. Sims, About Organization of U.S. Forces operating on European Waters, 6 June 1917, Reel 1, ME-11, Navy Department Library, Washington, DC.

Converted Yachts in the War Zone

Even before the United States declared war, the Navy Department recognized the deficiency in patrol craft and, as it had for the war with Spain in 1898, dispatched agents to identify vessels capable of being adapted to naval purposes. Ocean-going yachts were deemed the most capable, and the service began to acquire these vessels. The Navy secured 26 yachts equivalent in size to destroyers during the war. These vessels were initially only to be deployed for patrols along the U.S. Atlantic coast, but the acute need saw most of them dispatched to French waters.¹

Formerly the property of the great magnates of the day, the yachts underwent substantial modification for naval service. Furniture and decorations were offloaded. Carpenters removed the mahogany, teak, and oak panels and added mountings for rifles on bulkheads. The hulls received coats of haze gray paint, and storm shutters replaced plate glass. Crews improvised berthing, often building racks in four tiers. Yachts with sails had their masts shortened or removed and canvas-screened platforms or crow's nests erected. Galleys were enlarged to feed the increased crews. The bows, quarterdecks, and fantails now mounted guns, depth charge racks, and other equipment of war.

In quality and utility, the yachts were a mixed bag. Rear Admiral Henry B. Wilson, who commanded U.S. Naval Forces in France, said that they differed "materially from each other in size, seagoing qualities, and speed."² *Corsair*, for example, was a large seagoing yacht capable of up to 18 knots, while *Christabel*, at only 248 tons, made nine knots at best. In truth, most of the yachts were too slow and light for antisubmarine work beyond coastal waters. Moreover, although they had been strengthened to carry deck guns and depth charges before deployment, the yachts' fragility and slowness generally made them "unfit for the heavy duties assigned them." Some were so slow that in anything but a moderate seaway, dropping a depth charge off the stern could seriously damage or even sink the vessel. Secretary Daniels later wrote that he had accepted the yachts "under protest," knowing "that they had not been constructed for the purpose for which we needed them." Daniels went on to explain that he nonetheless "appointed a board . . . to inspect them and buy those that were best. It was a case of either buying them or having no ships of that character to help us until our destroyer program could enable us to send much larger [ships]."³ Limitations aside, 17 converted yachts were operating in France by July 1918.

One action of note occurred on 21 May 1918. The tiny *Christabel* was escorting the British steamer *Danae*, which had dropped behind a northbound convoy from La Pallice to

1 William N. Still Jr., *Crisis at Sea: The United States Navy in European Waters in World War* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2006), 311.

2 Henry B. Wilson, *An Account of the Operations of the American Navy in France during the War with Germany* (n.p., 1919), 23.

3 Daniels to Sims, 15 December 1917, Box 23, Sims Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Quiberon Bay. At 5:20 p.m., the lookout sighted a wake about 600 yards off the port quarter. *Christabel* headed for it at full speed, whereupon the wake disappeared. The yacht then maneuvered to a position ahead of the suspected U-boat and dropped a depth charge at 5:24 p.m. but with no result. After a course change, *Christabel* again sighted a periscope at 8:52 p.m. The yacht maneuvered to engage and at 8:55 p.m. dropped two additional depth charges where the periscope had been. Nothing followed the explosion of the first, but after the second, there was a third, very violent explosion that threw up debris. Circling, *Christabel* found a heavy black oil slick and splintered wood.

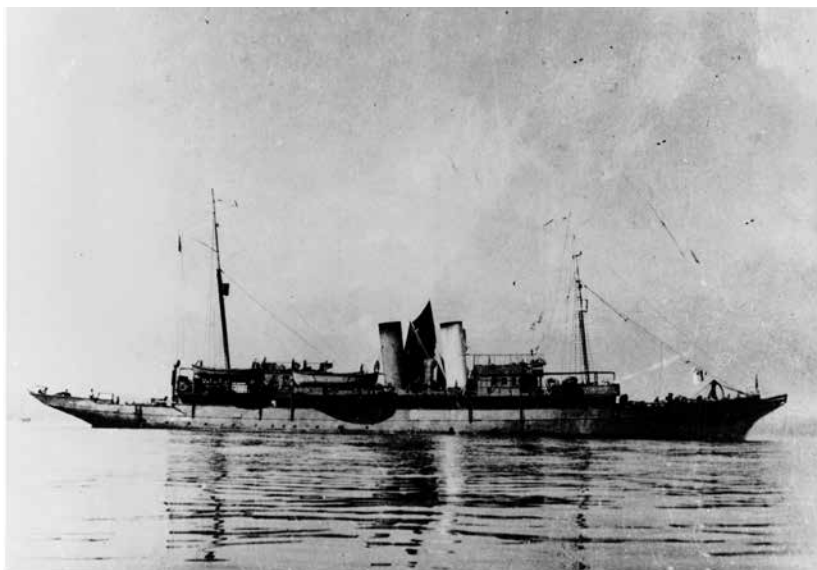
The second depth charge had rendered *UC-56* hors de combat. Incapable of returning to its base at Zeebrugge, in occupied Belgium, the U-boat headed for neutral Spain. Upon arriving at Santander on 24 May 1918, the boat was interned by Spanish authorities. The Admiralty issued a memorandum on 25 June 1918 to confirm that the "submarine attacked by the *Christabel* was the *UC-56* and it has been interned at Santander, Spain." Admiral Wilson then authorized, on 12 September, the painting of a white star on the *Christabel's* smokestack to signal her successful engagement of *UC-56*, effectively placing the U-boat out of action.⁴ So, in spite of their inadequacies, the yachts dutifully sought to engage the enemy and in so doing were able to achieve some level of success.



Smokestack, *Christabel* (S.P. 162). The painted star represents the German submarine the yacht was then credited with having sunk. (NHHHC, NH 55162).

4 Christopher B. Havern Sr., "Christabel (S.P. 162) 1917-1919," in *DANFS*, 28 September 2017, <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/c/christabel.html>. Ultimately, the U-boat sinking credited to *Christabel* would be adjudicated otherwise, and *Fanning* remained the only U.S. naval vessel with a confirmed U-boat sinking during World War I.

Maritime Prefect of the 2nd Arrondissement, the senior Allied naval officer at Brest. The U.S. units began their first active cooperation with the French navy on 14 July 1917. Although both navies worked together closely, U.S. naval forces in France always remained under their own command, very different from the arrangement established by Sims and Bayly at Queenstown. Also in contrast to the situation in Queenstown, the French in Brest were unable, due to shortages of ships, men, and experience, to orient the U.S. crews or prepare them for the dangers they faced.



Noma (S.P. 131) photographed during World War I, probably in French waters. Another vessel's sails are visible between the smokestacks (NHHC, NH 60294).

Fletcher dispatched Operation Order No. 1 on 12 July, and four days later, his yachts and their crews commenced operations, conducting patrols and convoying cargo vessels. Through July and into August 1917, the yachts' crews received a sobering introduction to their duties, with almost constant patrolling of their assigned sectors. *Noma* reported the first actual engagement on 16 August. Upon sighting a U-boat seemingly charging its batteries, *Noma's* crew went to general quarters. The yacht soon closed on its target and engaged with the port gun, firing 10 rounds.

The U-boat returned fire with three missed shots and then submerged. *Noma* proceeded to the vicinity and then resumed its course when it became clear that the U-boat could not be located.¹²¹

While the yachts were being made ready for distant service, the Navy simultaneously prepared for what Daniels considered to be “not only the most important but the most successful operation of the war”: the safe transportation of more than 2 million troops of the AEF to France.¹²² Rear Admiral Albert Gleaves was summoned to Washington, DC, on 23 May 1917. Upon his arrival, Daniels informed him of his selection to command the first expedition to France. Having broken his flag on board *Seattle* (Armored Cruiser No. 11) as Commander of Convoy Operations in the Atlantic, Gleaves reached New York on 3 June.¹²³ There he inspected his command, recommended postponing departure from 9 June to 14 June, and worked to expedite preparations.

Gleaves's staff organized the 36 ships into four groups. Each group of transports was to consist of ships of similar speed and to be escorted by a cruiser as flagship and several patrol vessels.¹²⁴ So that the escorting

121 Report of Engagement, USS *Noma*, 8 September 1917. Record Group 45, Entry 520, Box 1260, National Archives, Washington, DC.

122 Lloyd George: “It is a race between Wilson and Hindenburg. Could America land enough soldiers in France in time to check the German offensive? That was the one vital question.” Quoted in Daniels, *Our Navy at War*, 70.

123 Gleaves's command would later be designated the U.S. Cruiser and Transport Force.

124 Gleaves was embarked on board *Seattle*, the convoy flagship, in Group I. The balance of the group consisted of the transports USAT *Saratoga*, USAT *Havana*, USAT *Tenadores*, USAT *Pastores*, escorted by the auxiliary cruiser *DeKalb* (Id. No. 3010), *Corsair*, *Wilkes* (Destroyer No. 67), *Terry* (Destroyer No. 25), and *Roe* (Destroyer No. 24). Group II consisted of *Birmingham* (Scout Cruiser No. 2) as flagship, USAT *Momus*, USAT *Antilles*, USAT *Lenape*, *Henderson* (Troop Transport No. 1), *Aphrodite*, *Burrows* (Destroyer No. 29), *Fanning* (Destroyer No. 37), and *Lamson* (Destroyer No. 18). Group III was *Charleston* (Cruiser No. 22) as flagship, USAT *Henry R. Mallory*, USAT *Finland*, USAT *San Jacinto*, escorted by *Allen* (Destroyer No. 66), *McCall* (Destroyer No. 28), *Preston* (Destroyer No. 19), and *Cyclops* (Fuel Ship No. 4). Group IV, which largely consisted of those Army transports carrying animals and supplies, was constituted by *St. Louis* (Cruiser No. 20) as flagship, USAT *Montanan*, USAT *Dakotan*, *El Occidente*, and *Edward Luckenbach*, escorted by *Hancock* (Troop Transport), *Shaw* (Destroyer No. 68), *Parker* (Destroyer No. 48), *Ammen* (Destroyer No. 35), *Flusser* (Destroyer No. 20), and *Kanawha* (Fuel Ship No. 13). Albert Gleaves, *A History of the Transport Service: Adventures and Experiences of United States Transports and Cruisers in the World War* (New York: George H. Doran, 1921), 36. Although *DeKalb*, *Henderson*, and *Hancock* transported the Fifth Marine Regiment, they were classified escorts in this convoy. Benedict Crowell and Robert Forrest Wilson, *The Road to France*, vol. 2, *The Transportation of Troops and Military Supplies, 1917–1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), 397.

destroyers might refuel at sea, *Maumee* (Fuel Ship No. 14), escorted by *Henley* (Destroyer No. 39), steamed to a secret rendezvous on the convoy route.¹²⁵

The first three groups were to clear New York at two-hour intervals starting at 6:00 a.m. on 14 June 1917. Group IV was to depart early on the 16th. During the first leg of the passage, all the groups were to keep within the same lane. At the designated mid-ocean point, the routes diverged so that if a U-boat encountered a preceding group, the U-boat could not lie in ambush in that vicinity to attack groups that may follow. The first group proceeded at 15 knots, the second at 14, the third at 11, and the last at 11. As Gleaves recalled, “their departure was timed to avoid congestion at the eastern terminus. It is obvious that as the expedition advanced the intervals between the groups opened out, thus increasing the difficulties of submarines lying in wait to attack.”¹²⁶ As intelligence indicated that U-boat activity was focused about 500 miles east of the Azores, each group was routed to avoid this area. This first troop convoy was to be the most strongly protected during the war. Daniels wrote, “Their protection was our supreme duty. Before they left, I cabled Admiral Sims: ‘I hereby instruct you to furnish escorts, to consist of one division of destroyers for each convoy group from the point of meeting to the point of debarkation.’”¹²⁷

Despite foggy conditions, each of the first three groups departed as scheduled on 14 July 1917.¹²⁸ The Navy Department, however, delayed the fourth’s departure until the 17th for belated dispatches and stores. As the convoy proceeded to cross the Atlantic, *Maumee* rendezvoused with the groups en route and refueled the destroyers as required.¹²⁹ Meanwhile, at Queenstown on 18 June, the U.S. destroyer captains received Operation Order No. 2. The order directed them to meet the incoming ships as “far

125 Thomas G. Frothingham, *The Naval History of the World War: The United States in the War, 1917-1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 134.

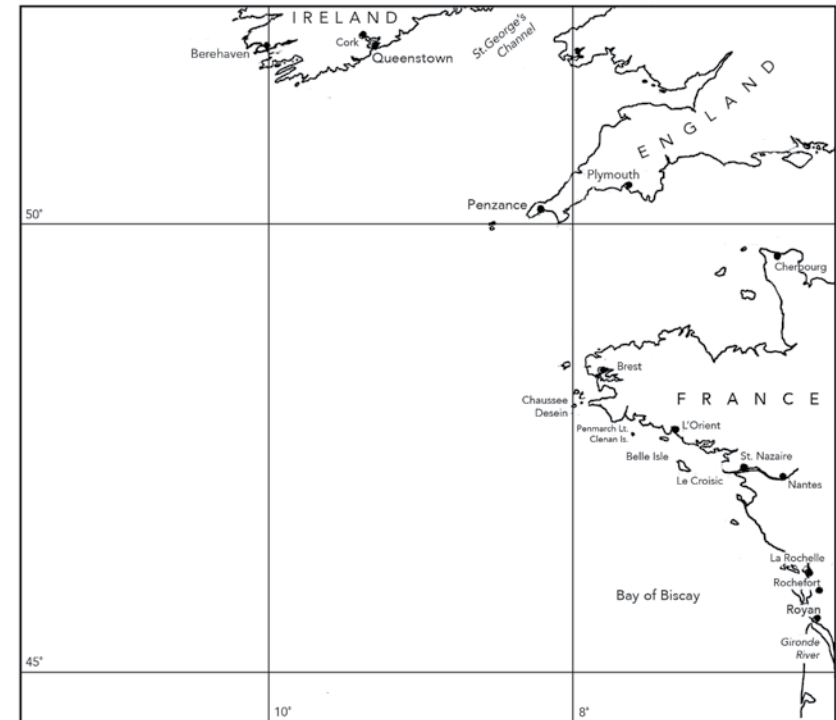
126 Gleaves, *Transport Service*, 41.

127 Daniels, *Our Navy at War*, 73.

128 *Terry*, having fouled the torpedo net at the harbor’s entrance, was forced to divert to the New York Navy Yard. The destroyer was repaired in time to escort Group IV. Crowell and Wilson, *Road to France*, 2:400.

129 Havern, “*Corsair* I (S.P. 159), 1917-1919.”

to westward as possible, convoy them to St. Nazaire, and return to Queenstown.”¹³⁰



Atlantic coast of France

Taussig recalled his destroyer group’s sortie. The destroyers rendezvoused with the inbound Group II during the morning of 24 June. When they joined company, the transports moved into a line formation with the destroyers in a position ahead. “In this formation,” according to Taussig, “it would be very difficult for a submarine to get by the destroyers and then maneuver so as to get in position for firing a torpedo.” They found it impracticable, however, to keep position at night, so the transports formed into a column with the escorts on the flanks. Taussig further recalled that “the speed of the transports was from 13 to 14 knots, and they zigzagged

130 Taussig, *Queenstown Patrol*, 66-67.

in accordance with prearranged plans. The destroyers maintained a speed of 2 knots greater than that of the transports and zigzagged so as to cover the entire area ahead of the convoy.”¹³¹

As the four groups made their respective crossings, three reported encountering U-boats, but the convoy suffered no losses.¹³² Group I stood in to St. Nazaire (Base No. 8) on 26 June 1917, followed by Group II on the 27th and Group III on the 28th. Group IV did not steam into port until 2 July. Despite the staggered schedule, Gleaves noted that “the arrival of so many transports within so short a space of time caused great congestion in St. Nazaire’s small harbor. . . . The unloading of all vessels and quick preparations for the return voyage presented a perplexing problem with the poor facilities available and the shortage of labor.”¹³³ After shepherding their respective convoys into St. Nazaire, the destroyers that had made the crossing with the convoy steamed to Queenstown and reported to Bayly. After preparatory briefings and equipment modifications, they too began conducting patrols and escorting convoys from Base No. 6.

The first augmentation of yachts in France arrived in late August 1917. Initially rendezvousing at Newport, Rhode Island, the force, led by Commander Frederic N. Freeman and consisting of *Alcedo* (S.P. 166), *Remlik* (S.P. 157), *Wanderer* (S.P. 132), *Carola* (S.P. 812), *Corona* (S.P. 813), *Emeline* (S.P. 175), and *Guinevere* (S.P. 512), cleared Narragansett Bay on 6 August 1917. They arrived at St. John’s, Newfoundland, on 11 August and departed the next day for the Azores, where they remained from the 19th until the 22nd. *Guinevere* and *Carola* were the first to reach Brest, on 29 August. The following day, the rest of the yachts stood in, delayed

131 Ibid, 68–70.

132 Sims cabled Daniels on 30 June to report attacks on Groups I and II. The ships took evasive action. Gleaves reported Group III’s transit as being uneventful. *Kanawha* in Group IV fired 10 rounds on what was believed to be a U-boat on 28 June. Daniels, *Our Navy at War*, 73–76.

133 Gleaves, *Transport Service*, 48–49.

by storms and with badly leaking decks. Despite the arduous crossing, Commander Freeman reported for duty at Fletcher’s headquarters.¹³⁴

Additional reinforcements arrived on 18 September in the form of six 110-foot submarine chasers under the French flag, along with Squadron Four, Patrol Forces, commanded by Captain Thomas P. Magruder and consisting of the yacht *Wakiva* (S.P. 160), the supply ship *Bath* (Id. No. 1997), and 10 converted Menhaden trawlers. Though intended as escorts, the trawlers proved useless to the ASW effort and were soon refitted for minesweeping.¹³⁵ As Ensign Joseph Husband remembered, “The first six months of our activities on the French coast were in a large part a period of experiment. The force was entirely inadequate,” with vessels that “soon proved unsuited for the work required” and “officers and men of the reserve force” as yet unready for the tasks at hand.¹³⁶

With the expansion of U.S. forces and increased escort duties, it became clear that a more extensive organization along the French coast was necessary. Brest was the logical site for the U.S. naval presence, as the area possessed one of the finest deep-water anchorages in the world and housed the largest French naval facility on the Atlantic coast.¹³⁷ Lines of command, communication, and cooperation radiated from the port and helped to integrate the U.S. presence in France with the French forces. This network spanned U.S. bases and offices and the French naval commanders on the coast; the U.S. naval representatives and naval attaché in Paris and the French Ministry of Marine; the superintendents of ports and coding officers to U.S. Army officials; those in charge of troops and supply transport; the Chief of Aviation and U.S. and French aviation units; and Sims’s Headquarters in London.

134 This improvised force was further augmented by *Nokomis* (S.P. 609), *May* (S.P. 164), and *Rambler* (S.P. 211), as well as the minesweeper *Hubbard* (S.P. 416). Together with the few French vessels present, the yachts bore the patrolling burden during the first months. Christopher B. Havern Sr., “*Alcedo* (S.P. 166), 1917,” in *DANFS*, 16 June 2017, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/a/alcedo.html>; Wilson, *American Navy in France*, 24, 26.

135 Husband, *Coast of France*, 6–12. The trawlers were *Anderton* (S.P. 530), *Lewes* (S.P. 383), *Courtney* (S.P. 375), *McNeal* (S.P. 312), *Cahill* (S.P. 493), *James* (S.P. 429), *Rehoboth* (S.P. 384), *Douglas* (S.P. 313), *Hinton* (S.P. 485), and *Bauman* (S.P. 377).

136 Ibid., 14.

137 Still, *Crisis at Sea*, 109–10.

Second to the protection of troop transports was the protection and management of the ships loaded with munitions, supplies, and other matériel for the AEF in France. With many of the yachts having been judged to be of lesser military value, Sims, from London, established a special division of six yachts, *Aphrodite*, *Corsair*, *Alcedo*, *Wakiva*, *Noma*, and *Kanawha*, under Commander Freeman, on 17 October 1917. The yachts were redeployed in stages after preparatory overhauls to escort those convoys steaming along the French coast from Brest, Verdon, Bordeaux, Pauillac, and other points up the Gironde River, as well as from St. Nazaire on Quiberon Bay.¹³⁸ The yachts also escorted those convoys bound for England and points west, as well as points south, including Gibraltar (Base No. 9) and the French Mediterranean ports.¹³⁹ Rear Admiral Henry B. Wilson assumed command at Brest on 1 November, and Captain Magruder was subsequently reassigned as the SOP at L'Orient (Base No. 19) to command the division of minesweepers required to clear the approaches to St. Nazaire. Captain (later Rear Admiral) Newton A. McCully was assigned to command the Rochefort District, which extended from L'Orient to the Spanish coast.¹⁴⁰

138 Wilson, *American Navy in France*, 18. The reason for the staggered redeployment was that each of the yachts underwent overhaul in preparation en route to its new assignment. Between 31 January and 19 February 1918, *Corsair*, *Noma*, *Wakiva*, *May*, *Nokomis* and *Aphrodite* transferred to Rochefort (Base No. 20), on the Atlantic coast outside the Gironde estuary, in order to serve convoys bound for Bordeaux (Base No. 14) or Pauillac.

139 The Gibraltar-based ships, dubbed ocean escorts, shepherded convoys between “The Rock” and ports in Wales and western England. The Coast Guard cutter *Tampa*, Captain Charles Satterlee, USCG, commanding, had departed Gibraltar when a single torpedo struck amidships on 26 September 1918. All were lost: 111 U.S. Coast Guard officers and men, 4 U.S. Navy Sailors, and 14 British passengers. *Tampa*'s sinking was the Navy's single greatest combat loss in World War I. (With the U.S. declaration of war against Germany, the U.S. Coast Guard had transferred to the Department of the Navy by executive order.) Alex R. Larzelere, *The Coast Guard in World War I: An Untold Story* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2003), 50–51; Christopher B. Havern Sr., “*Tampa* I (Coast Guard Cutter), 1912–1918,” in *DANFS*, 10 September 2018, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/t/tampa-i.html>.

140 Wilson, *American Navy in France*, 18–20.

DESTROYERS TO FRANCE

The number of convoys in European waters depended on the availability of ships to escort them through the danger zone. Destroyers were the only satisfactory type of vessel for this work. Therefore, until the war's end, the number of destroyers available for this duty required planning accordingly.¹⁴¹ The operations in France, Rear Admiral Wilson recalled, might “be classified as belonging to the period when the American forces consisted of auxiliary craft such as yachts and mine-sweepers, and the period when the forces were augmented by destroyers.”¹⁴² The feasibility of transferring destroyers, however, depended not only on the number available—very few—but also on the availability of fuel oil. As Brest was the sole source, which was of limited capacity, the first U.S. destroyers transferred to France were the coal-burning ones already based nearby in the Azores.¹⁴³ The destroyer tender *Panther* joined this first contingent. Serving as a repair ship, *Panther* helped solve the problem of labor shortages at the French navy yard.¹⁴⁴

While there was no announced policy, it was understood that reassignment of destroyers from other bases, primarily Queenstown, would be necessary. *Warrington* (Destroyer No. 30), which reached Brest on 29 November, was one of the first from Base No. 6.¹⁴⁵ Further reinforcements

141 *Ibid.*, 45.

142 *Ibid.*, 22.

143 *Ibid.*, 26. The First Destroyer Division—*Flusser* (Destroyer No. 20), *Lamson* (Destroyer No. 18), *Preston* (Destroyer No. 19), *Reid* (Destroyer No. 21), and *Smith* (Destroyer No. 17)—arrived at Queenstown in late September 1917. Next, *Monaghan* (Destroyer No. 32) and *Roe* (Destroyer No. 24), accompanying *San Diego* (Armored Cruiser No. 6), the flagship for Troop Convoy Group 11, joined from New York on 27 November. Christopher B. Havern Sr., “*Monaghan* I (Destroyer No. 32) 1911–1934,” in *DANFS*, 1 November 2016, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/m/monaghan-i.html>.

144 Wilson, *American Navy in France*, 28.

145 Christopher B. Havern Sr., “*Warrington* I (Destroyer No. 30), 1911–1935,” in *DANFS*, 30 January 2017, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/w/warrington-i.html>.

came from the British Isles and the United States between February and July 1918.¹⁴⁶

Closed by order of the French government to transatlantic vessels, Brest had the requisite capacity for U.S. ships based in the area. The port's particular position, closer than any other French port to the United States, also made it an ideal base for escorts, which could now meet transatlantic convoys at points in the Atlantic along the shortest routes available. The question of the port's fuel capacity would be solved by anticipating requirements and careful management. As a result, the Navy ensured that the port's facilities would be capable of supporting additional ships, especially escorts. Brest therefore became the most extensive American establishment in France.¹⁴⁷

The conduct of operations based in France was akin to those based in the British Isles, but the operational goal was markedly different. At Queenstown, Bayly deemed the destruction of submarines to be the U.S. destroyer captains' most important duty, whereas in France, Rear Admiral Wilson based mission success on ensuring the safe passage of troopships and loaded storeships, both into and out of French ports.¹⁴⁸ In sharp contrast to Bayly, Wilson never deemed the sinking of U-boats to be a priority. These divergent approaches to the U-boat threat reflected a fundamental change in the understanding of the dynamics of the antisubmarine war and resulted in the determination of a new calculus for victory. The war would be won with the secure passage of men and supplies to the Continent, where they could then tip the balance on the Western Front in favor of the Allies. To safeguard that lifeline and prevent its interdiction, escorts did not need to sink U-boats. Rather, it was necessary for the escorts only to limit the U-boats' ability to sink transports and merchant

146 These reinforcements included *Benham* (Destroyer No. 49), *Conner* (Destroyer No. 72), *Cummings* (Destroyer No. 44), *Cushing* (Destroyer No. 55), *Drayton* (Destroyer No. 23), *Ericsson* (Destroyer No. 56), *Jarvis* (Destroyer No. 38), *Little* (Destroyer No. 79), *Macdonough* (Destroyer No. 9), *Nicholson* (Destroyer No. 52), *O'Brien* (Destroyer No. 51), *Stewart* (Destroyer No. 13), *Truxtun* (Destroyer No. 14), *Whipple* (Destroyer No. 15), *Winslow* (Destroyer No. 53), and *Worden* (Destroyer No. 16), as well as the destroyers *Fanning*, *McDougal*, *Porter*, *Tucker*, *Wadsworth*, and *Wainwright*. Wilson, *American Navy in France*, 29–30.

147 Still, *Crisis at Sea*, 109–10.

148 Sondhaus, *German Submarine Warfare*, 31.

ships. The concentration of ships into convoys cleared the seas, and the presence of escorts kept the U-boats from engaging targets at their advantage on the surface. Escorts would keep the slower U-boats submerged, allowing the convoys to pass through the danger zone with very few losses. Once the troop and storeships stood in to port, their contents—both men and matériel—could be unloaded and transported to the front, where they could be brought to bear on the German army.¹⁴⁹

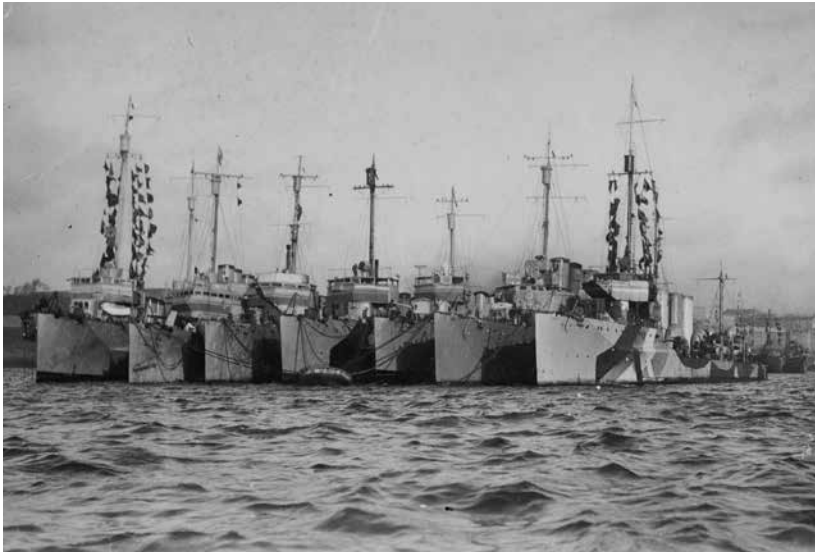


Rear Admiral Henry B. Wilson and Commodore Antoine Schwerer, the French navy's Chief of the Division of Patrols, Brittany, at Brest, France (NHHHC, NH 156)

As the buildup of the AEF in France intensified, the demand for destroyer escorts intensified. With the number of troop transports increasing, the regular convoys, run at 10-day intervals, were now interspersed with small, high-speed convoys of between 17 and 20 knots.

149 The potential of this dynamic became evident to Taussig as early as July 1917: "The more I see of the submarine business, the more I am convinced that it will be a failure from the German point of view. They will not succeed with it even if we do not succeed in destroying their submarines. If no submarines are destroyed it means that they are not coming into contact with the patrol vessels; and if they do not come into contact with the patrol vessels it means that they are not coming into contact with a great many merchant ships." Taussig, *Queenstown Patrol*, 76.

Escorted by the Queenstown-based destroyers to French coastal waters, these fast convoys were then met by the units based in France.¹⁵⁰ Finally, in June 1918, to relieve pressure on the Queenstown-based destroyers, Sims proposed the assignment of nine to twelve additional destroyers to the French coast. The Navy Department concurred and ordered that all additional destroyers be assigned to Brest and Gibraltar.¹⁵¹ Wilson's command received five of these destroyers before the Armistice.¹⁵²



A group of U.S. destroyer at Brest, France, 1918 (NHHHC, NH 109555)

The destroyers based in France, unlike those at Queenstown, had to escort outbound convoys. Even so, these destroyers soon became adept at meeting their operational timetables for westbound and eastbound

¹⁵⁰ Wilson, *American Navy in France*, 45.

¹⁵¹ The requirement for additional destroyers at Gibraltar stemmed from the Army having begun routing more ships to French Mediterranean ports.

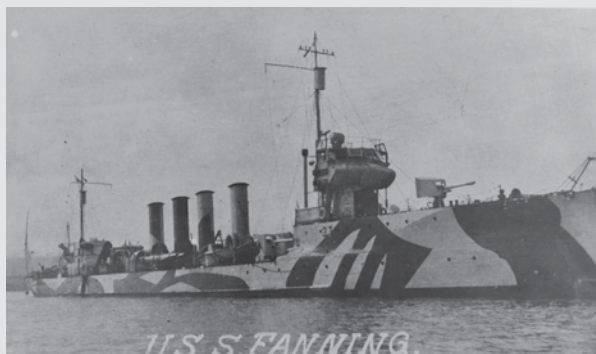
¹⁵² Wilson, *American Navy in France*, 26–30. His command received *Taylor* (Destroyer No. 94) on 20 September, *Stringham* (Destroyer No. 83) on 3 October, *Bell* (Destroyer No. 95) on 15 October, *Murray* (Destroyer No. 97) on 20 October, and *Fairfax* (Destroyer No. 93) on 30 October.

passages. A typical iteration would begin 24 hours before a convoy's departure, when a special messenger would deliver a sealed envelope to the captain of each transport and escort. Contained therein were the names of the ships that would sail, the name of the convoy's commander, the hour and day of sailing, the name of the vessel carrying the escort commander, the names of the destroyers forming the escort, and information about the convoy's projected speed. An envelope containing routing instructions would then be prepared for each convoy and escort vessel, to be dispatched by the operations office on the convoy's departure date—this to allow for route assignments based on the latest intelligence on U-boat activity. This second envelope also contained information about all the convoys that might be encountered along the route. An additional sealed envelope, enclosed in the second envelope, held instructions to the incoming group or groups to be met, the route for bringing them to France, and information on other procedures. After further coordination with the flag office, the convoy commander, usually the senior officer of both the convoy and the escort, would call a conference for troopship and escort commanding officers to confirm details—formations, special signals, and responses to U-boat attacks in accordance with established doctrine. There was to be minimal wireless communication after the convoy had cleared port.

The destroyers would slip their moorings in advance of the scheduled departure. With the course set, the convoy would zigzag in all cases except during times of darkness or fog. More radical variations to the course became necessary during dawn and dusk, the U-boat captains' preferred times to attack. The escort normally remained with the convoy for 48 hours. On the evening that the escort was to part with the outbound convoy, the escort commander would contact the ocean escort or the commander of the inbound convoy to inquire whether it was on schedule. The escort would then part after dark from the outbound convoy, which dispersed in accordance with its orders, and maneuver to rendezvous with the inbound convoy.

Victory and Loss beyond the Harbor's Defenses

Fanning (Destroyer No. 37), Lieutenant Arthur S. Carpender commanding, was south of Ireland escorting convoy OQ 20 on 17 November 1917. Having been at sea for about five hours, Coxswain Daniel D. Loomis, the bridge lookout, spotted a periscope projecting from the water at 4:20 p.m. Initially sighted 400 yards distant, the U-boat, later identified as *U-58*, crossed the destroyer's bow. Lieutenant Walter O. Henry, the officer of the deck, rang down "full speed" and maneuvered the ship to give chase. Once above the U-boat's presumed location, the destroyer dropped a solitary depth charge that wrecked *U-58*'s motors, diving gear, and oil leads. *U-58* plunged to 200 feet before blowing its ballast, whereupon the hurried ascent exposed the boat's conning tower.



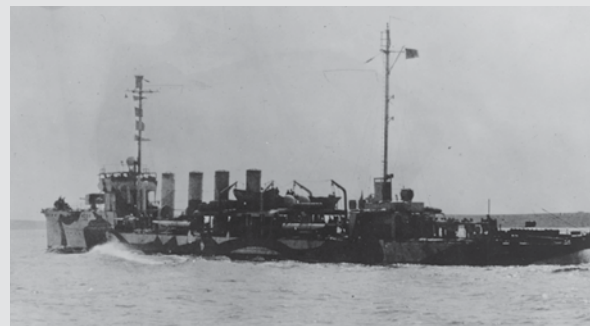
Fanning (Destroyer No. 37) in "dazzle" camouflage (NHHC, NH 54057).

Meanwhile, the escort flagship *Nicholson* (Destroyer No. 52) maneuvered close aboard *U-58* and dropped a second depth charge, scoring another hit. The destroyer's crew then opened fire with the after 4-inch gun. *Fanning* followed suit and scored several more hits. After the third round from one of *Fanning*'s 3-inch guns, the U-boat's hatch flew open and life-belted German sailors quickly clambered onto the deck as their boat began to sink.

Fanning maneuvered alongside *U-58* at 4:28 p.m. The German crew jumped into the water and began to swim toward the destroyer. The destroyermen threw lines to the survivors, but the U-boat's chief engineer proved too weak to be able to help himself to safety. Although two U.S. Sailors jumped into the icy water to assist, the German drowned before being hauled on board the destroyer. Resuscitation proved fruitless.

The ship now had 39 prisoners: the U-boat's commanding officer, three additional officers, and 35 enlisted men. Interrogation of the officers confirmed that *Fanning*'s depth charge had severely damaged *U-58*'s machinery and forced the boat to surface. While the

German sailors remained under guard, they were treated well, receiving hot coffee, sandwiches, and tobacco. The Germans showed their appreciation by cheering *Fanning*'s crew when they disembarked at Queenstown.



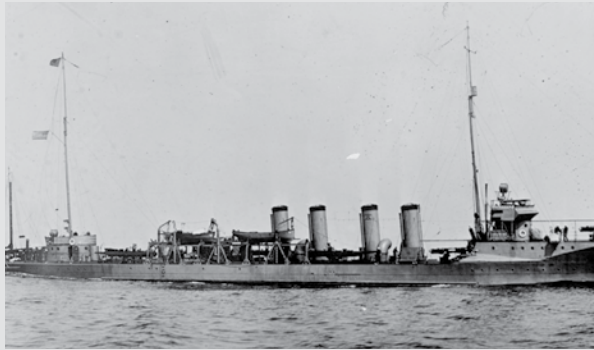
Nicholson (Destroyer No. 52) in "dazzle" camouflage (NHHC, NH 89413).



After being damaged by depth charges from both *Fanning* and *Nicholson*, German U-boat *U-58* was forced to surface and surrender to *Fanning* (NHHC, NH 111035).

This victory prompted celebrations. Vice Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly came on board on 19 November 1917 and read a congratulatory cablegram from the Admiralty. Commander Joel R. P. Pringle, USN, also visited, reading similar cables from CNO Admiral William S. Benson and Vice Admiral William S. Sims. Bayly authorized *Fanning*'s crew to paint the coveted white star on her forward funnel as a symbol of the ship's victory. For his part, the

Carpender received the Distinguished Service Medal. *Fanning* departed Queenstown the next day to escort convoy OQ 21.¹



Jacob Jones (Destroyer No. 61) underway in 1916, soon after completion (NHHHC, NH 52123).

As one of the other escorts for convoy OQ 20, *Jacob Jones* (Destroyer No. 61), Lieutenant Commander David W. Bagley commanding, had witnessed the sinking of *U-58* on 17 November. A few weeks later, on 6 December 1917, *Jacob Jones* parted company with a convoy off Brest and steamed for Queenstown. While en route, the crew conducted target practice during the afternoon, and the gunfire attracted *U-53*, which then pursued the destroyer unseen. Having closed to a range of about 1,000 yards, the U-boat attacked.

"Torpedo!" rang out at 4:21 p.m., when a wake was spotted off the starboard beam, and the crew sprang to action. Lieutenant (j.g.) Stanton F. Kalk, the officer on duty, ordered the rudder put hard left, and Commander Bagley rang up emergency speed. As the ship began to swing, the torpedo struck three feet below the waterline. Compartments began taking on water, and the ship settled aft. Bagley attempted to dispatch an SOS, but the explosion from the torpedo hit had dislodged the ship's antenna.

Officers and men raced to cut loose lifebelts, life rafts, and boats. Chief Electrician's Mate Lawrence J. Kelly stayed with the sinking vessel to free as much life-preserving equipment as possible and later received credit for saving several lives. Lieutenant Norman Scott, the executive officer, gave orders to shut off steam and release lifeboats and equipment.² Seaman Second Class Philip J. Burger struggled to release the motor-sailer

1 S. Matthew Cheser, Christopher B. Havern Sr., Teresa R. Hasson, and Robert J. Cressman, "Fanning I (Destroyer No. 37), 1912-1934," in *DANFS*, 17 November 2017, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/f/Fanning-i.html>.

2 Lieutenant Scott, later Rear Admiral Scott, would receive the Medal of Honor posthumously for his actions on 11-12 October 1942, when he led his force to victory in the Battle of Cape Esperance, as well as for his actions during the naval component of the Battle of Guadalcanal (12-13 November 1942).

but refused to give up until the suction pulled him down with the sinking ship. Able to resurface, he swam to the boats. In a final attempt to draw the attention of friendly vessels, the Number 4 gun fired two shots. Only eight minutes after being torpedoed, *Jacob Jones* plunged stern first.

The survivors' ordeal continued, however. The sinking released depth charges that exploded, killing several men in the water and injuring more. Crewmembers endeavored to keep their shipmates alive, and there were multiple acts of self-sacrifice. As the survivors struggled, *U-53* surfaced and brought two U.S. Sailors on board before submerging again. Lieutenant Hans Rose, *U-53's* commanding officer, dispatched an SOS to Land's End, England, and provided the survivors' location.

Three and a half hours after the sinking, the British steamer *Catalina* recovered seven of *Jacob Jones's* crew and radioed for help. The Royal Navy sloop *Camellia* responded and recovered the main group of survivors in three boats at 8:30 a.m. the following day. Of the 110-man crew, 62 died.³



Painting by F. Luis Mora depicting Lieutenant (j.g.) Stanton F. Kalk assisting survivors of *Jacob Jones* after it had been sunk by *U-53* off the Scilly Isles on 6 December 1917. A plaque accompanying this painting reads, "The *Jacob Jones* was sunk by an enemy torpedo between Brest and Queenstown. Lieutenant (j.g.) S. F. Kalk rendered conspicuous and gallant services after the ship sank by helping men from one raft to another so as to equalize the weight on the rafts. He died of exposure and exhaustion in order to save others." Kalk received the Distinguished Service Medal posthumously (NHHHC, NH 86495).

3 S. Matthew Cheser, "Jacob Jones I (Destroyer No. 61), 1916-1917," in *DANFS*, 25 January 2017, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/j/jacob-jones-i.html>.

After crossing the Atlantic, the inbound convoy maintained a set speed and course to steam for a point off the French coast that would bring the inbound convoy into contact with the approaching escort. Before meeting it, however, the inbound convoy had to cross a predetermined longitude, designated the standard meridian, at a certain hour on a certain day. The rendezvous and courses, once determined, required close adherence in order to effect a meeting, in part because this stage of the process usually proceeded in darkness. At daybreak, the escort would form a single scouting line and steam along a course opposite that of the inbound convoy. At visual contact with the convoy, the escort would fall in with it, at which point the responsibility for the convoy would pass from the ocean escort to U.S. Naval Forces in France.

Now in charge of the convoy, the escort commander would set a new course, typically different from that which the convoy had been following, and update the inbound group commander regarding the destination port, the routes and, if the group were to divide, where that parting would occur. He also passed on intelligence regarding reported U-boat activity and the presence of mines or hazards to navigation. All of this would have been communicated by visual signals. The convoy would then be shepherded into port by the destroyers.¹⁵³ The arrival of a troop convoy also had to be closely coordinated with the Army command at the designated port to arrange for the transportation by rail of the disembarked troops.¹⁵⁴

Despite having to escort both outbound and inbound convoys, commanders managed to meet their operational timetables. Success resulted in the expansion of the duties required of Wilson's command. Destroyers were typically at sea two-thirds of every month, working in all conditions and steaming about 7,700 miles per month. In July 1918 alone, eight convoys containing 52 troopships stood in to French ports (as compared to the three troop convoys containing only seven troopships that had reached France in January). On just one day in summer 1918, five outbound convoys had to be escorted from three different ports and kept clear not only of U-boats but also of each other and other convoys steaming

153 Ibid., 40–44.

154 Ibid., 33–36.

north, south, and east. These movements also had to be coordinated so that escorts could carry the outgoing convoys to their release points and still have time to join the incoming convoys far enough into the Western Approaches before they steamed into the danger zone.

These challenges notwithstanding, the conveying of the AEF to France stands as the Navy's greatest success during World War I, for while there were several transports lost to torpedoes during the war, none was of a loaded, inbound troopship.

CONCLUSION

Given its comprehensive nature, the convoy system would not be fully implemented until the end of 1917, yet the extent of the successes was apparent by September of that year. Allied losses were declining fast, from 696,725 tons in June to 555,510 tons in July, to 472,370 in August, to 353,600 in September.¹⁵⁵ While losses rose again in the month of October, the downward trend continued in the months following. In November, the toll taken by U-boats fell to 302,600 tons, the lowest monthly total in more than a year. The Germans, it turned out, had underestimated the Allies' ratio of tonnage required to tonnage available—that is, the surplus capacity of Allied shipping. Unrestricted submarine warfare as a war-winning strategy for Germany was proving a false hope.

The Germans' shrinking returns occurred in spite of the German navy's deployment of increased numbers of more capable U-boats like the new Type *U-93* and the first U-cruisers, capable of reaching U.S. territorial waters. Even with the extension of range into operating areas well beyond the declared war zone (north to above the Arctic Circle, west to the waters around the Azores, and south to the African coast), the Germans were finding less success. U-boat losses began to increase. Whereas the Germans had lost only 20 U-boats during the first half of 1917, that figure more than doubled to 43 during the latter half of the year.¹⁵⁶ Another rise

155 Sondhaus, *German Submarine Warfare*, 158.

156 Robert M. Grant, *U-boats Destroyed: The Effect of Anti-Submarine Warfare, 1914–1918* (London: Putnam, 1964), 41; Trask, *Captains and Cabinets*, 81.

in Allied tonnage sunk during December 1917 (411,770 tons) could not dispel the increasing doubts about Germany's USW campaign.¹⁵⁷

The potential of convoying as a war-winning strategy was now evident. Supported by improvements to the Allies' ASW technologies and tactics, the convoy system was now reversing the dynamic of this "First Battle of the Atlantic." From October to December 1917, as the convoy system solidified, German submariners managed to locate only 39 of the total 219 convoys on the Atlantic.¹⁵⁸ Karl Dönitz, later to command Germany's U-boat force in World War II, recalled that with the introduction of convoying, "the oceans at once became bare and empty; for long periods of time the U-boats, operating individually, would see nothing at all, and then suddenly up would loom a huge concourse of ships . . . surrounded by a strong escort of warships of all types. The solitary U-boat, which most probably had sighted the convoy purely by chance, would then attack" and "might well sink one or two of the ships" before "the convoy would steam on . . . bringing a rich cargo of foodstuffs and raw materials safely to port."¹⁵⁹

Two factors, therefore, were paramount in determining the outcome of Germany's USW campaign of 1917–18. The first was the Allies' employment of sufficient numbers of ships, those that transported men and supplies and those that escorted them; the second was the management of shipping and port logistics on a global scale in the midst of total war. In protecting ships steaming to and from ports around the world, the deployment of convoys and its triumph over unrestricted submarine warfare became the most important factors in winning the supply war and, by extension, the war itself.

The infusion of the antisubmarine patrol vessels into the maritime war zones in the Western Approaches, in the Irish Channel, in the Bay

of Biscay, and in the Mediterranean blunted the U-boat threat decisively in the period between May 1917 and the Armistice of 11 November 1918.¹⁶⁰ Although there was only one confirmed U-boat kill, that of *U-58* by *Fanning* in conjunction with *Nicholson* (Destroyer No. 52) on 17 November 1917, that statistic belies the contribution to victory made by the U.S. Patrol Forces in European Waters.

Convoying produced three advantages over U-boats:

- Convoying emptied the seas by concentrating ships and thereby decreased the likelihood of U-boats finding targets.
- Convoying with escorts deterred single U-boat commanders from surfacing to engage with the deck gun, the preferred method of attack, thereby forcing them to keep their boats submerged and rely on torpedoes, which were of limited range and number.
- Convoying concentrated antisubmarine forces where U-boats were certain to operate and thereby allowed for a shift in ASW strategy from defense to offense. This shift, in turn, introduced a new and more appropriate metric of success: What mattered now was not the number of U-boats destroyed but rather the number of convoys that reached their destinations.¹⁶¹

The safe arrival of the AEF in Europe was testament to these new successes. By the end of the war, 1,142 troopship sailings had transported 2,079,880 troops of the AEF to Europe.

¹⁶⁰ Rose, *America's Sailors in the Great War*, 50.

¹⁶¹ See Taffrail [Taprell Dorling], *Endless Story: Being an Account of the Work of the Destroyers, Flotilla-Leaders, Torpedo-Boats and Patrol Boats in the Great War* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931), 284. Taussig later noted that "the great value of the destroyer on patrol was its ability to keep the submarines down at times when it was necessary for them to be on the surface in order to make successful attacks on merchant vessels." Taussig, "Destroyer Experiences," *Proceedings* 49, no. 1 (1923), 60.

¹⁵⁷ Sondhaus, *German Submarine Warfare*, 144; Sondhaus, *The Great War at Sea*, 260.

¹⁵⁸ Breemer, *Defeating the U-boat*, 63.

¹⁵⁹ Karl Dönitz, *Memoirs: Ten Years and Twenty Days*, translated by R. H. Stevens (New York: World Publishing, 1959), 4, quoted in Sondhaus, *German Submarine Warfare*, 144–45.

Means of transport for AEF troops	AEF troops transported	Percentage of total AEF troops
British ship	1,006,987	48
U.S. Navy transport	911,047	44
British-leased ship	68,246	3
U.S. ship (non-Navy)	41,534	2
Other ship	52,066	3

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Source: Albert Gleaves, *A History of the Transport Service: Adventures and Experiences of United States Transports and Cruisers in the World War* (New York: George H. Doran, 1921), 30–31.

Of the 81 troopship convoy groups that sailed between 14 June 1917 and 4 November 1918, only 24 made reported contacts and engaged U-boats.¹⁶² Most importantly, not a single troop transport inbound to France or Britain was lost to U-boat attack.¹⁶³ These figures give credence to Secretary Daniels's assertion that the transport of the AEF was "not only the most important but the most successful operation of the war."¹⁶⁴

Safeguarding these transports through the convoy system directed from Whitehall and enacted in European and North American waters marked the first time in U.S. Navy history that the service engaged in coalition warfare with an allied force in the conduct of fleet operations. The U.S.–British–French cooperation in the danger zones around the British Isles, the Bay of Biscay, and the Mediterranean was a true Allied effort toward the achievement of a common war aim, Germany's defeat. Though the arrangement saw divergent interests and various difficulties, it resulted in the development of mutual respect and a commonality of

¹⁶² Gleaves, *Transport Service*, 167–74; Crowell and Wilson, *Road to France*, 2:603–20.

¹⁶³ Three troop transports—USACT *Antilles*, USAT *President Lincoln*, and USAT *Covington* (Id. No. 1409)—were torpedoed and sunk on their outbound voyages from France to the United States. *Finland* (Id. No. 4503) and *Mount Vernon* (Id. No. 4508) were also torpedoed, but they were able to make it back into port.

¹⁶⁴ Daniels, *Our Navy at War*, 70. Lloyd George also noted, "It is a race between Wilson and Hindenburg. Could America land enough soldiers in France in time to check the German offensive? That was the one vital question."

purpose and practice that not only produced victory, but prefigured later cooperation—in the next world war and afterward.

An illustration of this dynamic on a personal level was the rapport among Sims, Bayly, and Pringle. Despite their well-earned reputations as prickly personalities, these three officers worked together seamlessly and developed personal bonds that held beyond the war years. Bayly's designation of Pringle as his aide and Pringle's unprecedented placement in the Admiralty's Navy List cemented the bond between the British and Americans. While Bayly maintained his purview in the exercise of operational decisions, he was astute enough to realize that matters of discipline in connection with the conduct of Yankee Sailors were best handled by Pringle in accordance with U.S. Navy regulations. The manifestation of this cohesion at Queenstown was exemplified by the signal board secured to the bulkhead abreast the deck gangway landing of *Melville*: "PULL TOGETHER."¹⁶⁵

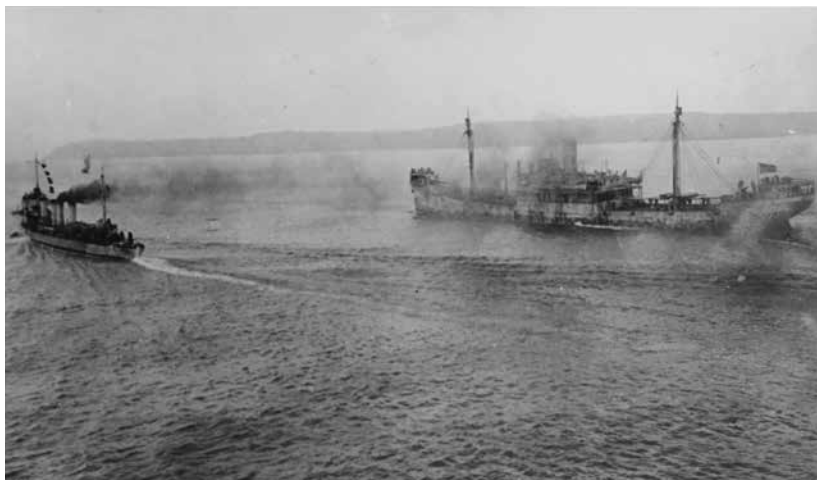
The cooperation with the Entente also allowed the Navy to conduct comparative evaluations of U.S. technologies under combat conditions, including everything from ships and machinery, to ordnance, optics, and communications equipment and practices. In so doing, U.S. observers found favorable results in some instances: The new flush-deck U.S. destroyers, for example, were superior to their Royal Navy counterparts. In other cases, U.S. equipment was found wanting.

As a result of its operational experience, primarily with the British but also with the French, the U.S. Navy emerged from the Great War not only as a more technically sophisticated force, but also as a more professionally proficient and capable one as well. Upon arrival in Ireland, U.S. Sailors had been eager to engage the enemy, yet they were ill-prepared to do so. Unfamiliar and inexperienced with the conduct of ASW, they acknowledged their collective ignorance and willingly submitted themselves to British operational control and instruction on the best practices of ASW, availing themselves of the Royal Navy's almost three years of experience at war. They enthusiastically applied that instruction in the grinding and dangerous conduct of repeated patrols and convoy escort missions.

¹⁶⁵ Walter S. Delany, *Bayly's Navy* (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Foundation, 1980), i.

Through the ensuing months, moreover, they modified practices and used their operational experience to hone their tactics and increase their proficiency. Like their ships, U.S. Sailors were often pushed to their limits.

The basing of units overseas also provided the Navy with valuable experience in long-distance logistics and support. The demands on the Patrol Forces greatly exceeded the U.S. commitment of naval vessels to the various foreign stations during the 19th century. Now, on an unprecedented scale, the Navy Department had to develop and deploy the means to provide fuel, spare parts, stores, and provisions thousands of miles away. The forward basing of the maintenance and support vessels, along with auxiliaries like tugs, oilers, colliers, and lighters, foreshadowed the vast logistical effort that would be required to conduct the much larger amphibious and expeditionary campaigns of World War II. Thus, in keeping Wilhelm II's U-boats at bay and ensuring the lifeline to victory, the Patrol Forces in European Waters played an integral role in the U.S. Navy's emergence as the world's foremost sea power in the 20th century.



Convoy, escorted by U.S. destroyers, entering the harbor at Brest, France (NHHC, NH 109448)

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