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Research Paper

**Gruppe Monsun –
The U-Boat operations in the Indian and Pacific Oceans during World War II**

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Abstract

During World War II, a small force of German U-Boats (*Gruppe Monsun*) operated in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, to disrupt trade routes to Europe and to exchange personnel, technology, and precious raw material with their ally Japan. Their main operating base was the Japanese held base of Penang (Malaysia). These Oceans were the only place where German and Japanese forces fought in the same theater. Only a small fraction of the 41 U-boats returned from their patrol-/attack- and transport-missions back to Europe. The venture did not have the desired strategic effect.

Keywords: Germany, Gruppe Monsun [Monsoon Group], Indian Ocean, inter-Axis cooperation, Japan, Kriegsmarine [German Navy], Pacific Ocean, raw materials, Southeast Asia, submarine warfare, U-Boats, World War 2

Gruppe Monsun –

The U-Boat operations in the Indian and Pacific Oceans during World War II

Introduction

During World War II, a small force of German U-Boats operated in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. They mainly operated out of the Japanese held base of Penang (Malaysia), which is located near the geo-strategic important Strait of Malacca and the Indian sub-continent.

The Indian and Pacific Oceans were the only place where German and Japanese forces fought in the same theater. Out of the 41 U-boats that the Kriegsmarine [German Navy, 1933-45] sent on patrol-/attack- and transport-missions to the Far East, the majority was lost and only a small fraction returned to Europe.

The name “*Gruppe Monsun*” [Monsoon Group] was associated with this group of submarines.

Did the employment of *Gruppe Monsun* had a strategic effect on the course of the Second World War, did it support the partners Japan and Germany in their war efforts, and was the allocation of resources (Command & Control (C2), men, and material) for *Gruppe Monsun* overall justified?

Thesis statement

The employment of the Kriegsmarine U-boats in the *Gruppe Monsun* did not have the desired (strategic) effect and therefore, the resources should have been used for a more useful purpose.

Scope of this Research Paper

This research paper will examine the German U-Boat operations in the Indian and Pacific Oceans during World War II. Operations in the Atlantic Ocean are mentioned only concerning refueling and supply of the U-Boat on their way to and from the operational area.

Furthermore it will be written about the Italian transport submarines that were used for the same purpose like their German counterparts.

No political assessment or judgement of the nations of Germany and Japan will be made; only the results the operations of *Gruppe Monsun* U-Boats that were in direct connection of those nations will be discussed.

Only documents in English and German languages were used for this paper. They were found online, in my private library and in the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek [German National Library] in Frankfurt, Germany.

Indian Ocean trade routes and economic warfare

While allied shipping in the European theater was conducted by the use of coordinated large convoys with massive protection of naval forces and aircrafts in the North Sea, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, there were only limited forces available to protect shipping between Africa and Australia.

In the later waters, no convoy-routes were established and the merchant ships tried reach their destinations on their own. Very few naval surface ships were available and only thirteen British squadrons with each 15 to 25 planes could cover that entire area.

Early operations of the Kriegsmarine against Allied maritime traffic in the Indian Ocean and the southerly Pacific was limited to the use of so-called *Hilfskreuzer* [armed merchantman] like the *Michel and Thor*, and the auxiliary mine-layer *Doggerbank*. The tanker and tender *Charlotte Schliemann* supported those ships.

During the 1942 and 1943, those three ships sank a total of 11 ships with 71,975 GRT.¹

At the end of 1942, the first U-Boats operated in the Indian Ocean. The four subs that formed the group *Eisbär* [ice bear], sank 25 Allied ships with 182,075 GRT. Until April of

¹ Elmar B. Potter and Chester W. Nimitz, *Seemacht: eine Seekriegsgeschichte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Überarb. Lizenzausg (Herrsching: Pawlak, 1986), 855.

the following year 1943, the following U-Boats of U-Boat group *Seehund* [seal] sent another 43 Allied ships to the ground in the Indian Ocean.²

Those successes came at a time where the British Royal Navy made first preparations to install a convoy system for the trade routes of Indian Ocean. At the same time, the effectiveness of the U-Boat weapon in the Atlantic declined and that led to the concept of setting-up a permanent U-Boat group in to intensify the attacks on British merchant ships in Asia.

This standing group should operate from a U-Boat base within the Indian Ocean and tankers / tenders were made available to increase the range and the deadliness of the subs.

This group was called *Gruppe Monsun*.

Gruppe Monsun - The first wave

At first, only large U-Boats of the class IX D could be sent due to their extended range capabilities to the Indian Ocean. After establishing the U-Boat operational base at the Malayan Penang, smaller U-Boats of the *Typ IX C* [type IX C] were sent too.

The first submarines of the *Monsun-Gruppe* left from the German forward naval base at Lorient, northern France, between June 30 and July 7 1943 to sail to their new operational area.

U-188 left the harbor at June 30, one day later *U-514*. On July 3 *U-168*, *U-183*, *U-509*, *U-532*, and *U-533* received their marching orders.³

On July 06 *U-506* and two days later *U-516* left the base of Lorient. Earlier at 12 June, *U-200* left Kiel, northern Germany carrying a small squad of the famous *Brandenburg* German Special Forces unit that was an intelligence and infiltration asset in support of the *Abwehr* [German (Counter) Military Intelligence]. The task of *U-200* was to bring the SF

² Clay Blair, *Hitler's U-Boat War. 2: The Hunted, 1942 - 1945* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1999), 1090–98.

³ H. T. Lenton, *German Warships of the Second World War*, 1st Ed. (New York: Arco Publishing Co., 1976), 32f.

personnel ashore at South Africa so that they could try to motivate the anti-British Boers (descendants of the Dutch Afrikaner) to fight the British Rule in southern Africa.⁴

Five of the U-Boats were lost in the early phase of the transit enroute to the operational area in the Atlantic: *U-200* sank southeast of Iceland, *U-506* off the coast of Spain, *U-509* near Madeira, Spain and *U-514* shortly after the departure of Lorient in the Bay of Biscay, France due to an air attack.⁵

The plan of the Kriegsmarine was that the boats should arrive and begin their hunt in the operational area after the monsoon; this led to the name of the Gruppe.⁶

Enroute supply

Not only the presence and the resulting danger from enemy forces along the route was a problem for the subs on their way to the South Eastern Asia hunting grounds, the resupply of fuel was even a bigger challenge.

To resupply the U-Boats, the Kriegsmarine sent the tanker-submarine *U-487* (those U-Boats of the Typ XIV were called *Milchkühe* [milk cows] to the southern Atlantic and the surface tanker *Brake* to the Indian Ocean to refuel the U-Boat at the open sea.⁷

However, *U-487* was attacked and sunk by aircraft of the escort carrier *USS Core* on July 13 1943.

As replacement for the lost tanker-submarine *U-487*, *U-160* (a class IX C U-Boat, that left Bordeaux, France at the end of June) was tasked to replenish *U-509* and other subs of *Gruppe Monsun* (*U-506*, *U-532*, and *U-533*, and). By this time, Allied forces already sank *U-509* without knowing of the *Befehlshaber der Unterseeboote (B.d.U.) Admiral Karl Dönitz* [supreme commander of the Kriegsmarine's U-boat Arm].

⁴ Blair, *Hitler's U-Boat War*. 2, 427.

⁵ Martin Brice, *Axis Blockade Runners: Of World War II* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1981), 16ff.

⁶ Jochen Brennecke, *Haie im Paradies: der deutsche U-Boot-Krieg in Asiens Gewässern 1943 - 1945*, 3. Aufl., Sonderausg (Hamburg: Koehler, 2002), 56–68.

⁷ Blair, *Hitler's U-Boat War*. 2, 475–479.

Prior to the rendezvous *U-160* was sunk too, but *U-516* was able to refuel *U-532* and *U-533*, because they could not complete the voyage to South East Asia due to technical difficulties and could therefore spare excess fuel before returning back to France.

The support-tanker-U-Boat *U-155*, refueled three other U-Boats (*U-168*, *U-183*, and *U-188*) enroute.⁸

Reaching the U-boat area Southeast Asia

Out of the originally eleven tasked U-boat from *Gruppe Monsun* only five were able to leave the Atlantic and cross the Cape of Good Hope. The other six were sunk or had to return due to technical and/or logistical problems:

- *U-200* sunk by a British Consolidated B-24H “Liberator” of the 120th wing on June 24 1943, southwest of Iceland. Initially 15 survivors, but none was rescued. 68 dead, including the SF squad of the *Brandenburger*.⁹
- *U-506* sunk by a U.S. Consolidated B-24H “Liberator” of the 1st Anti-Submarine Squadron on July 12 1943, west of Vigo, Spain. The British destroyer Hurricane rescued six of the initially seven survivors three days later.¹⁰
- *U-509* sunk by a U.S. Grumman TBF Avenger bombers from the Navy squadron VC-29 from the escort carrier USS *Santee* on July 15 1943, northwest of Madeira, Spain.¹¹
- *U-514* sunk by a British Consolidated B-24 “Liberator” of 224 Squadron 120th wing on July 08 1943, northeast of Cape Finisterre, Bay of Biscay, France. All 54 sailors dead.¹²

⁸ Brennecke, *Haie im Paradies*, 96.

⁹ Blair, *Hitler's U-Boat War*. 2, 582.

¹⁰ Blair, 582–83.

¹¹ G. Helgason, “The Type IXC Boat U-509,” List of all U-boats, German U-boats of WWII - uboat.net, accessed September 27, 2019, <https://uboat.net/boats/u509.htm>.

¹² Blair, *Hitler's U-Boat War*. 2, 582.

- *U-516* aborted the mission due to technical problems, returned to Lorient on August 23 1943.¹³
- *U-847* aborted the mission, was tasked to supply other submarines, sunk by a U.S. Grumman TBF Avenger bomber from the escort carrier *USS Card* on August 27 1943, in the Sargasso Sea, Atlantic Ocean. All 63 sailors perished.¹⁴

On September 8 1943 all remaining Monsun-U-Boats meet with the German tanker *Brake* to refuel and resupply. Four days later, the U-Boot-Kommandanten [U-Boat commanders] received their new marching orders and sailed to the assigned patrol areas.

- *U-168* sailed into the operational area between Mumbai (formally Bombay), India and the Gulf of Cambay (or Gulf of Khambhat) a part of the Arabian Sea near the northern part of India.
- *U-183* was unsuccessfully seeking ships in the waters of Kenya.
- *U-188* was on patrol in the Gulf of Oman.
- *U-532* was tasked to the southern tip of the Indian sub-continent.
- *U-533* sailed in the Gulf of Aden, between Yemen and Somalia.¹⁵

Unfortunately for the Kriegsmarine and the U-Boats, the British intelligence community successfully broke the Enigma-Codes. With the compromise of the German orders / information exchange, the Allied forces were able to keep track of the German subs and were able to divert their merchant traffic away from them.

This led to only few successes of the first Monsun-U-Boats.¹⁶

On October 16 1943, a British Bisley (Blenheim) light bomber of No. 244 Squadron RAF sank *U-533* 25 nautical miles east of the coast of the Emirate of Fujairah, United Arab Emirates. All but one sailor lost their lives. Matrosengefreiter [Seaman apprentice (U.S.

¹³ Blair, 812–13.

¹⁴ Rainer Busch and Hans-Joachim Röhl, *Der U-Boot-Krieg, 1939-1945* (Hamburg: Mittler & Sohn, 1996), 145.

¹⁵ Lawrence Paterson, *Hitler's Grey Wolves: U-Boats in the Indian Ocean* (London : Mechanicsburg, PA: Greenhill Books ; Stackpole Books, 2004), 126ff.

¹⁶ Blair, *Hitler's U-Boat War*. 2, 475–479.

Navy. E-2) Günther Schmidt was at the conning tower of the sub during the attack and could not manage to get back into the sub once it started to make the defensive dive. He swam to the coast where he was taken „hostage” by local fishermen and was handed over to British soldiers.¹⁷

Stützpunkt Penang

By autumn 1943, the last four U-Boats reached the harbor of Penang, at George Town, the capital city of the Malaysian state of Penang. In the spring of 1942, Japan conquered large parts of Eastern Asian; Malaysian was of major interest due to the vicinity of the geo-strategic important Strait of Malacca and the Indian subcontinent. The Japanese administration made parts of the harbor available for the Kriegsmarine to facilitate their U-Boat fleet in the *Südraum* [South Area]. Under high secrecy and security constraints, the German part of the harbor was transformed into an improvised U-Boat base and military personnel had to wear civilian cloth to disguise their real intentions. The personnel was made up by the former crew of *U-511*, that was presented to the Imperial Japanese Navy where she sailed under the name *Ro-500* until August 1945.¹⁸

Kapitänleutnant [Lieutenant, OF-2, navy] Fritz Schneewind, former commander of *U-511*, relieved Kapitänleutnant Heinrich Schäfer as the commander of *U-183* due to lack of success.¹⁹

The commander of U-boat base Penang was Kapitänleutnant Grützmacher, a former member of the Hilfskreuzer *Michel*. The base was also the home of the *Chef im Südraum* [Chief of the U-Boats in the South Area] Fregattenkapitän [commander, OF-4, navy] Wilhelm Dommers, commandant of *U-178*. Dommers had the operational control over the sub in the

¹⁷ B. Zand, “Untergang Vorm Morgenland [Sinking in Front of the Levant]” (Spiegel Online), accessed September 11, 2019, <https://www.spiegel.de/geschichte/u-boot-wrack-a-948663.html>.

¹⁸ Blair, *Hitler's U-Boat War*. 2, 475–479.

¹⁹ Blair, 475–479.

Südraum, but they officially remained under disciplinary authority of their assigned homebased *Unterseebootsflottille* [U-Boat Flotilla].^{20, 21}

The small and makeshift crew of the Penang base could not uphold the required maintenance levels for the submarines. The envisioned recruitment of Japanese specialists to service and repair the U-Boats failed and the commanders had to use their own personnel for the required works during their port calls. That reduced the compulsory shore leave after a *Feindfahrt* [combat patrol] from a couple of weeks normally under normal circumstances to days.

Furthermore was the acquisition of equipment and material problematic. That led to the long-term effect that only two of the Monsun-U-Boats (U-188 and U-532) that reached Penang, ever reached European waters again.

The “First Wave” of *Gruppe Monsun* U-Boats encountered heavy loss and sank only six surface vessels and another six dhows with a total count of mere 33,800 GRT.

Their commitment fell short of expectations and was considered a failure.^{22, 23}

Further U-Boat bases in Asia

The Japanese enable the Germans to operationally use more bases other than Penang for their combat support:²⁴

- base Singapore
- base Surabaya, Indonesia
- base Jakarta, Indonesia

²⁰ “U-Boote in Ostasien [U-Boats in East Asia]” (Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart [State Library of Württemberg in Stuttgart]), accessed September 4, 2019, <https://www.wlb-stuttgart.de/seekrieg/km/uboote/monsun.htm>.

²¹ Hans H. Hildebrand and Ernest Henriot, *Deutschlands Admirale, 1849-1945: Die Militärischen Werdegänge Der See-, Ingenieur-, Sanitäts-, Waffen- Und Verwaltungsoffiziere Im Admiralsrang*, Deutschlands Generale Und Admirale 1 (Osnabrück: Biblio, 1988).

²² Potter and Nimitz, *Seemacht*, 855.

²³ Brennecke, *Haie im Paradies*, 80ff.

²⁴ Till Philip Koltermann and Abe Yasuko, *Der Untergang Des Dritten Reiches Im Spiegel Der Deutsch-Japanischen Kulturbegegnung 1933-1945*, Freiburger Fernöstliche Forschungen, Bd. 9 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 74.

- base Kure, Japan was used as an anchor /support base for German support-tanker-U-Boats

Reinforcements – The “Second Wave“

On September 18 1943, U-848 under the command of Fregattenkapitän Wilhelm Rollmann left Kiel, Germany in order to reinforce the *Monsun-Boote* at Penang.

While crossing the Atlantic Rollmann decided to sink a British freighter (November 2 1943). This event alarmed the U.S. Navy station at Ascension Island and two Consolidated B-24 “Liberator” traced and sank the sub.

The same fate met *U-849*, which left Kiel on October 02. While reaching the operational area, she was also discovered and destroyed by the Squadron VB 107 that was stationed at Ascension Island.

Between January and June of the 1944, another sixteen U-Boats were tasked to sail to the East Asian operational areas, in order to transport much needed resupply and to reinforce the present U-Boat force.

In the same time, some of the Monsun-U-Boats received their marching orders back to Europe. The task was to transport precious raw materials, like tin, tungsten, quinine, and opium that were scarce for the German war industry and therefore essential to the war effort.²⁵

Codename Aquila

As early as beginning of February of 1943, Karl Dönitz suggested to Adolf Hitler that Italian submarines should be refitted to be used as transport submarines. Dönitz had in mind to use them mainly to transport precious raw material from Asia to Europe to ease the deficit for the German war time industry and the much needed productions in order to have a chance to sustain the war attrition. The code name for the the refit of the subs and following operation was *Aquila*.

²⁵ Paterson, *Hitler's Grey Wolves*, 143ff.

During the journey of the three subs, Mussolini was over-thrown and the subs were detained by Japanese forces once they reached Singapore.²⁶ The Japanese handed the vessels over to the Germans and they assigned new German crews to the boats. Under new names (*UIT-22*, *UIT-23*, and *UIT-24*) they sailed to back to Europe.

The *Aquila* program was a failure. It was discontinued after the U-Boats *UIT-22* and *UIT-23* were already sunk prior leaving the Pacific and *UIT-24* returned back to Penang due to the unavailable refueling capability of the German tanker *Brake*, which was sunk in the meantime.²⁷

Loss of the supply ships

The resupply of subs during their transit from Europe to Asia should have been done by the positioning of the tanker *Charlotte Schliemann* in the Indian Ocean. Due to the decryption of the German radio transmission code, the British forces gained knowledge about the plan and sunk the tanker on February 02 1944. Upon arrival of the sub at the planed refueling area, the loss became obvious and the U-Boats *U-168*, *U-183*, *U-188*, and *U-532* were ordered to rendezvous with the tanker *Brake*. During the rejoin, the submarines and the tanker were forced into a fight with U.S. naval forces and the tanker was sunk on March 03 1944.²⁸

The subsequent sinking of both tankers lead to the believe that the Enigma-codes were not reliable anymore and the coding was modified. As consequence the Allies ordered their units not to use the information from the new codes against the Kriegsmarine for give the enemy a false sense of security.²⁹

²⁶ Eberhard Rössler, *Geschichte Des Deutschen U-Bootbaus. 2: Entwicklung, Bau Und Eigenschaften Der Deutschen U-Boote von 1943 Bis Heute* (Augsburg: Bechtermünz, 1996), 314ff.

²⁷ J. M. Thomàs, "Tungsten in the Second World War: China, Japan, Germany, the Allies and Iberia," *Comillas Journal of International Relations*, Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 10 (2013): 65–90.

²⁸ "U-Bootversorger" (Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart [State Library of Württemberg in Stuttgart]), accessed September 4, 2019, <https://www.wlb-stuttgart.de/seekrieg/km/uboote/monsun.htm>.

²⁹ Blair, *Hitler's U-Boat War*. 2, 621.

New U-Boats for Penang

Many of the sixteen U-Boats that were sent in the first half of the year 1944 to Penang were transporting supplies for the German base in Malaysia. Three of the new *Monsun-Boote* were modern and heavily armed U-Boats of *Typ IX C*, two were torpedo-resupply-U-Boats of the significant smaller *Typ VII F*, and one was an Italian model that was refitted during the *Aquila* program. Most of the subs leaving to Asia were the large *Fern-U-Boote* [far/long distance U-Boats] of *Typ IX D*.³⁰

One of these boats was *U-852* that left Kiel January 1944. The boat was commanded by *Kapitänleutnant* Wilhelm Eck. He interpreted the so-called *Laconia*-order to that effect that for concealment purposes it was acceptable to kill survivors of sinking vessels. Unfortunately, his superiors did not convince him and on his orders, his crew opened fire to kill the castaways of a Greek merchant vessel (*Peleus*). Eck, August Hoffmann (officer of the watch), and Oberstabsarzt [medical officer, OF-3] Walter Weispfennig were tried after the war and were sentenced to death by a British military court.³¹³²

Only six of the Monsun U-Boats of the “Second Wave” reached their destination in South-East Asia, Allied U-Boat hunter units detected and sunk all other *Unterseeboote* destined for Penang.

The end of Gruppe Monsun

The sixteen U-boats of the “Second Wave” and the eight of the original U-boats of *Gruppe Monsun* sank a total of 33 ships with 191,860 GRT.

During the operation eleven U-Boats and the two tankers *Charlotte Schliemann* and *Brake* were sunk. Especially the availability of the tankers was critical to the conduct of the whole operation for the operation of the German U-Boat weapon in the East Asian waters.

³⁰ J. Trudeau, “Torpedoes in Paradise,” *World War II* Jul/Aug 2013, no. 28 (2013): 60–66.

³¹ Theodore P. Savas, ed., *Silent Hunters: German U-Boat Commanders of World War II* (Campbell, Calif: Savas, 1997).

³² John Cameron, *Trial of Heinz Eck, August Hoffmann, Walter Weispfennig, Hans Richard Lenz, W. Schneider. The Peleus Trial*. (UK: Hodge Publishing, 1948).

Without the tankers, termination condition were met and the operation was disbanded. Due to this occurrence, some U-Boats had to abort their voyage to Penang and had to return to Europe.

Only eight of the twenty-four U-Boats managed to reach their destination, six reached Penang and two made it back to France. Those two, *U-188* and *U-178* brought a total of nearly 300 tons of tin, molybdenum, tungsten, rubber, quinine, and opium to Europe.³³ Four subs reached their harbor in Europe after the end of the war.

Nevertheless, the U-Boats were the only way to transport goods between Germany and Japan. Therefore, a final attempt was made to support the ally Japan by sending *U-234* to Japan on the final days of the European war. The sub carried a load of uranium oxide, a disassembled Messerschmitt Me 262 fighter jet, blue prints the Germanys most important weapon programs, and twelve passengers (including two Japanese officers) when she left the base Kristiansand in Norway. The boat surrendered in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.³⁴

Was it worth it?

Patrol-/attack-missions

The Kriegsmarine tasked 863 of their 1,162 U-Boats for combat operations. 784 U-Boats were lost. Out of the 40,000 U-Boat fleet personnel, 30,000 did not return home; that marks the highest fatality rate of all branches of the Wehrmacht throughout the war.

The Allied victory came at a high cost. Between 1939 and 1945, the German U-Boats sunk 2,882 merchant vessels and 175 Allied warships.

That caused the death of approximately 72,000 merchant and naval seamen. The equivalent of 14.3 million GRT were send to the bottom of the sea by the German

Unterseeboote.

³³ Rössler, *Geschichte des Deutschen U-Bootbaus*. 2, 314 ff.

³⁴ "Das Schicksal von U-234 [The Fate of U-234]" (Spiegel Online), accessed September 4, 2019, <https://www.spiegel.de/sptv/special/a-230670.html>.

The overall British losses also included two battleships, one battlecruiser, two aircraft carriers, three escort carriers, and seven cruisers. The German Navy basically lost its whole surface fleet with 4 battleships, 9 cruisers, 7 raiders, and 27 destroyers.³⁵

In 1941, the Kriegsmarine was closest to its strategic goal to isolate Great Britain. Once the U.S. entered the war, Germany from the military and industrial standpoint was no longer able to sustain the six years of naval warfare. The Kriegsmarine was over over-challenged and overextended right from the beginning of the war.

Gruppe Monsun sank 33 vessels with 191,860 GRT. That is 1 % of the ships and 1.35 % of the GRT compared to the whole 'success' of the U-Boats. The little bit higher percentage of the GRT (1.35 % vs. 1 % of the ships) can be explained to the fact that the Monsun submarines did not sink any warships, only merchant ships that are by nature bigger than the average warships.

It is tough to analyze the effectiveness of the German U-Boats in the Atlantic to the U-Boats of *Gruppe Monsun*. As an assumption, each of the 863 German submarines destroyed on average 16,570 GRT over the duration of the war. As a comparison, each *Gruppe Monsun* U-Boats destroyed only 7,995 GRT on average.

This is by no mean a valid method of comparison, since the Allies were able to manage the U-Boat threat by the end of 1942 and defeated them by mid of 1943. The huge successes of 'The Happy Time' between June 1940 and February 1941 were unrepeatable and were never achievable for any U-Boat operation after mid-1943.

Transport-missions

Only 300 tons of raw material were brought back to Germany in time, four subs reached their harbor in Europe after the end of the war.

³⁵ National Museum of the Royal Navy, "British Losses & Losses Inflicted on Axis Navies," Naval History Homepage, n.d., <http://www.naval-history.net/WW2aBritishLosses10tables.htm>.

The effect of *Gruppe Monsun* was too little and too late to have any effect on the German wartime economy. The submarines were never capable in the operational and the transport-capacity sense to have any strategic effect in their envisaged role as enabling factors for raw materials.

The distance between the Axis partners was simply too great. The the ‘global’ U-Boat operation between Germany and the Far East was too complexity and the effort in no relation to the benefit.³⁶

German-Japanese relationship

The operation of the *Gruppe Monsun* was the only effort in a joint environment of the Axis partners Germany and Japan. They fought two separate wars and the only interaction of *Gruppe Monsun* with its allies was to share submarine bases.

The partnership of the two nations was characteristic by misinterpretations and by unfulfilled expectations of the others side intentions and capabilities.

Even the propaganda on both countries did not exploit the (small) successes of the U-Boat operation.³⁷

Conclusion & Validation of Thesis statement

The operation of *Gruppe Monsun* was as good as it could be under the preset unfavorable circumstances. In my opinion, the operation was justified, since the Kriegsmarine saw the declining effectiveness of her U-Boats in the Atlantic and did try something new with the dispatch of the *Gruppe Monsun* U-Boats to the Far East. It is a classical military option to move the “Schwerpunkt” [main point of effort], in order to break a stalemate, to disrupt the enemy, or force the enemy into a new battlefield/situation.

³⁶ J. Rosselli, “The U-Boat War in the Indian Ocean – Forgotten Campaign: The Dutch East Indies Campaign 1941-1942,” accessed August 19, 2019, <https://dutcheastindies.webs.com/u-boatindia.html>.

³⁷ R Kowner, “When Economics, Strategy, and Racial Ideology Meet: Inter-Axis Connections in the Wartime Indian Ocean,” *Journal of Global History* (2017), Cambridge University Press, 12 (2017): 228–50.

However, a strategic effect, by disrupting the Indian Ocean trade route or transporting precious raw materials back to Germany, was never in the reach of those brave sailors.

The defeat of the U-Boat weapon was sealed by mid-1943; therefore the question if the U-Boats could have been used in a more efficient way, or in another area, or tactics-wise is obsolete.

This validates my thesis statement: The employment of the Kriegsmarine U-boats in the Gruppe Monsun did not have the desired (strategic) effect and therefore, the recourses should have been used for a more useful purpose.

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Annex I
Fate of the Gruppe Monsun / Far Eastern Boats

Modified und corrected from <http://www.uboataces.com/articles-fareast-boats6.shtml>

Boat	Commander	First Sailed	Role	Success (in Far East)	Fate
U 178	KK Wilhelm Dommes	France Mar 28 1943	Attack	Sunk 12 (66,911 GRT) Damaged 1 (6,348 GRT)	Successful return France May 24 1944
U 511	KL Fritz Schneewind	France May 10 1943	transferred to IJN (□ Ro-500)	Sunk 2 (14,370 GRT)	Surrendered Aug 1945
U 200	KL Heinrich Schonder	Norway Jun 11 1943	Attack	None	Sunk enroute Jun 24 1943
U 188	KL Siegfried Lüdden	France Jun 30 1943	Attack	Sunk 11 (49,725 GRT) Damaged 1 (9,977 GRT)	Successful return France Jun 19 1944
U 168	KL Helmuth Pich	France Jul 3 1943	Attack	Sunk 3 (8,008 GRT) Damaged 1 (9,804 GRT)	Sunk in Java Sea Oct 6 1944
U 509	KL Werner Witte	France Jul 3 1943	Attack	None	Sunk enroute Jul 15 1943
U 514	KL Hans-Jürgen Auffermann	France Jul 3 1943	Attack	None	Sunk enroute Jul 8 1943
U 532	FK Ottoheinrich Junker	France Jul 3 1943	Attack	Sunk 6 (33,940 GRT) Damaged 2 (13,128 GRT)	Returned to Europe Surrendered May 10 1945
U 183	KK Heinrich Schäfer	France Jul 3 1943	Attack	Sunk 3 (17,671 GRT)	Sunk in Java Sea Apr 23 1945
U 506	KL Erich Würdemann	France Jul 6 1943	Attack	None	Sunk enroute Jul 12 1943
U 533	KL Helmut Hennig	France Jul 6 1943	Attack	None	Sunk in Indian Ocean Oct 16 1943

U 516	KL Hans-Rutger Tillessen	France Jul 8 1943	Attack	None	Mission aborted Returned to France Aug 23 1943
U 847	KL Herbert Kuppish	Norway Jul 29 1943	Attack	None	Sunk enroute Aug 27 1943
U 848	KK Wilhelm Rollman	Germany Sep 18 1943	Attack	Sunk 1 (4,573 GRT)	Sunk enroute Nov 5 1943
U 849	KL Heinz-Otto Schultze	Germany Oct 2 1943	Attack	None	Sunk enroute Nov 25 1943
U 510	KL Alfred Eick	France Oct 3 1943	Attack	Sunk 7 (41,130 GRT)	Returned to Europe Surrendered Apr 24 1945
U 850	KK Klaus Ewerth	Germany Nov 18 1943	Attack	None	Sunk enroute Dec 20 1943
U 177	KL Heinz Buchholz	France Jan 2 1944	Attack	None	Sunk enroute Feb 6 1944
U 1062	OL Karl Albrecht	Norway Jan 3 1944	Transport	Delivered to Penang	Sunk homeward Sep 30 1944
U 852	KL Heinz Wilhelm Eck	Germany Jan 18 1944	Attack	Sunk 2 (9,972 GRT)	Sunk enroute Apr 3 1944
U 1059	OL Günter Leupold	Norway Feb 12 1944	Transport	None	Sunk enroute Mar 19 1944
U 843	KL Oskar Herwartz	France Feb 19 1944	Attack	Sunk 1 (8,261 GRT)	Returned to Europe Sunk in Kattegat Apr 9 1945
U 801	KL Hans-Joachim Brans	France Feb 26 1944	Attack	None	Sunk enroute Mar 16 1944
U 851	KK Hannes Weingärtner	France Feb 26 1944	Attack	None	Sunk enroute Mar 1944
U 181	FK Kurt Freiwald	France Mar 16 1944	Attack	Sunk 5 (35,066 GRT)	Surrendered Aug 1945

U 196	KK Eitel-Friedrich Kentrat	France Mar 16 1944	Attack	Sunk 1 (5,454 GRT)	Sunk in Java Sea Dec 1 1944
U 537	KL Peter Schrewe	France Mar 25 1944	Attack	None	Sunk in Java Sea Nov 9 1944
U 859	KK Johann Jebesen	Germany Apr 4 1944	Attack	Sunk 4 (26,523 GRT)	Sunk off Penang Sep 23 1944
U 860	FK Paul Buchel	Germany Apr 11 1944	Attack	None	Sunk enroute Jun 15 1944
U 198	OL Burkhard Heusinger von Waldegg	France Apr 20 1944	Attack	Sunk 4 (22,912 GRT)	Sunk in Indian Ocean Aug 12 1944
U 861	KL Jürgen Oesten	Germany Apr 20 1944	Attack	Sunk 3 (16,378 GRT) Damaged 1 (8,139 GRT)	Returned to Europe Surrendered Apr 18 1945
U 1224	Japanese crew	Germany April 1944	transferred to IJN (□ Ro-501) Transport	None	Sunk May 13 1944
U 490	OL Wilhelm Gerlach	Norway May 6 1944	Attack	None	Sunk enroute Jun 12 1944
U 862	KL Heinrich Timm	Norway Jun 3 1944	Attack	Sunk 7 (35,489 GRT)	Surrendered Aug 1945
U 863	KL Dietrich von der Esch	Norway Jul 26 1944	Attack	None	Sunk enroute Sep 29 1944
U 180	OL Rolf Riesen	France Aug 20 1944	Transport	None	Sunk enroute Aug 23 1944
U 195	OL Friedrich Steinfeldt	France Aug 20 1944	Transport	Delivered to Japan	Surrendered Aug 1945
U 219	KK Walter Burghagen	Norway Aug 23 1944	Transport	Delivered to Japan	Surrendered Aug 1945

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U 871	KL Erwin Ganzer	Norway Aug 31 1944	Attack	None	Sunk enroute Sep 26 1944
U 864	KK Ralf-Reimar Wolfram	Norway Feb 5 1945	Transport	None	Sunk enroute Feb 9 1945
U 234	KL Johann-Heinrich Fehler	Norway Apr 16 1945	Transport	None	Surrendered May 16 1945

Table 1 List of all U-Boats of the Gruppe Monsun

“Success” column indicates ships attacked as a result of the Far East operation. It does not include successes in the Atlantic or other theaters. Commander column indicates the CO at time of first departure. Several boats had more than one commander while in the Far East.

- OL Oberleutnant zur See [Lieutenant Junior Grade]
- KL Kapitänleutnant [Lieutenant]
- KK Korvettenkapitän [Lieutenant commander]
- FK Fregattenkapitän [Commander]

Annex II
Gruppe Monsun's successful attacks

All Allied ships sunk by Gruppe Monsun U-boats including the march to and from the operational area.

Date	Name of ship	Origin	GRT	U-Boat	Dead	Freight / passengers
Jun 01 1943	<i>Salabangka</i>	Netherlands	6,586	U 178	10	
Jun 27 1943	<i>Sebastian Cermeno</i>	United States	7,194	U 511	5	
Jul 04 1943	<i>Breiviken</i>	Norway	2,669	U 178	3	
Jul 04 1943	<i>Michael Livanos</i>	Greece	4,774	U 178	2	
Jul 11 1943	<i>Mary Livanos</i>	Greece	4,771	U 178	8	
Jul 17 1943	<i>City of Canton</i>	United Kingdom	6,692	U 178	8	
Sep 19 1943	<i>Fort Longueuil</i>	United Kingdom	7,128	U 532	57	
Sep 21 1943	<i>Cornelia P. Spencer</i>	United States	7,176	U 188	2	
Oct 01 1943	<i>Tashina</i>	United Kingdom	7,267	U 532	0	
Oct 02 1943	<i>Haiching</i>	United Kingdom	2,183	U 168	12	
Dez 27 1943	<i>José Navarro</i>	United States	7,244	U 178	0	
Jan 20 1944	<i>Fort Buckingham</i>	United Kingdom	7,122	U 188	38	
Jan 25 1944	<i>Fort la Maure</i>	United Kingdom	7,130	U 188		
Jan 26 1944	<i>Samouri</i>	United Kingdom		U 188	0	
Jan 26 1944	<i>Surada</i>	United Kingdom		U 188	0	
Jan 29 1944	<i>Olga E. Embincos</i>	Greece	4,677	U 188	20	

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Feb 04 1944	<i>Chung Cheng</i>	Taiwan	7,176	U 188	20	
Feb 09 1944	<i>Viva</i>	Norway	3,798	U 188	0	
Feb 29 1944	<i>Palma</i>	United Kingdom		U 183	7	
Mar 13 1944	<i>Peleus</i>	Greece	8,833	U 852	32	
Mar 27 1944	<i>Tulagi</i>	United Kingdom	2,281	U 532	47	
Apr 01 1944	<i>Dahomian</i>	United Kingdom	5,277	U 852	2	
Jun 05 1944	<i>Helen Moller</i>	United Kingdom		U 183	4	
Jul 25 1944	<i>Robin Goodfellow</i>	United States	6,885	U 862	68	8,602 tons of chromium
Aug 13 1944	<i>Radbury</i>	United Kingdom	3,614	U 862	23	4,000 to 5,000 tons of coal
Aug 16 1944	<i>Empire Lancer</i>	United Kingdom	7,037	U 862	42	
Aug 18 1944	<i>Nairung</i>	United Kingdom	5,414	U 862	92	
Aug 19 1944	<i>Wayfarer</i>	United Kingdom	5,068	U 862	51	
Dec 24 1944	<i>Robert J. Walker</i>	United States	7,180	U 862	2	ballast
Feb 06 1945	<i>Peter Silvester</i>	United States	7,176	U 862	33	107 soldiers 317 hinny 2,700 tons of U.S. Army equipment
Mar 10 1945	<i>Baron Jedburgh</i>	United Kingdom	3,656	U 532	1	
Mar 28 1945	<i>Oklahoma</i>	United States	9,298	U 532	50	

Table 2 List of all ships that were sunk by Gruppe Monsun

Annex III Tanker of the Gruppe Monsun

Modified und corrected from <https://www.wlb-stuttgart.de/seekrieg/km/versorgung/z-schiffe.htm> and Jung, D., Maass, M. and Wenzel, B. *Tanker und Versorger der deutschen Flotte*. Motorbuch: Stuttgart, 1981.

The U-Boats of Gruppe Monsun were refueled on the “japanischen Etappe” [Japanese leg] by the tankers *Charlotte Schliemann* (sunk February 12 1944) and *Brake* (sunk March 12 1944).

Date	Location	Tanker	U-Boats	Supply
June 21-26 1943	Indian Ocean	<i>Charlotte Schliemann</i>	<i>U-177, U-178, U-181, U-195, U-196, U-197, U-198</i>	diesel, lubricant, food, ammunition
Jan 1944	Indian Ocean	<i>Charlotte Schliemann</i>	U-168, U-177, U-188, U-532, UIT-24, UIT-25	diesel, lubricant, food, ammunition
January 27 1944	Indian Ocean	<i>Charlotte Schliemann</i>	U-178, U-510	diesel, lubricant, food, ammunition
September 20-25 1944	Indian Ocean	<i>Brake</i>	U-168, U-183, U-188, U-532, U-533	diesel, lubricant, food, ammunition
March 12 1944	Indian Ocean	<i>Brake</i>	U-168, U-188, U-532	diesel, lubricant, food, ammunition

Table 3 Tanker of the Gruppe Monsun