

= German battleship Tirpitz =

Tirpitz was the second of two Bismarck class battleships built for Nazi Germany's Kriegsmarine (navy) during World War II . Named after Grand Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz , the architect of the Kaiserliche Marine (Imperial Navy) , the ship was laid down at the Kriegsmarinewerft Wilhelmshaven in November 1936 and her hull was launched two and a half years later . Work was completed in February 1941 , when she was commissioned into the German fleet . Like her sister ship Bismarck , Tirpitz was armed with a main battery of eight 38 cm (15 in) guns in four twin turrets . After a series of wartime modifications she was 22,000 tonnes (22,000 long tons) heavier than Bismarck , making her the heaviest battleship ever built by a European navy .

After completing sea trials in early 1941 , Tirpitz briefly served as the centrepiece of the Baltic Fleet , which was intended to prevent a possible breakout attempt by the Soviet Baltic Fleet . In early 1942 , the ship sailed to Norway to act as a deterrent against an Allied invasion . While stationed in Norway , Tirpitz was also intended to be used to intercept Allied convoys to the Soviet Union , and two such missions were attempted in 1942 . Tirpitz acted as a fleet in being , forcing the British Royal Navy to retain significant naval forces in the area to contain the battleship .

In September 1943 , Tirpitz , along with the battleship Scharnhorst , bombarded Allied positions on Spitzbergen , the only time the ship used her main battery in an offensive role . Shortly thereafter , the ship was damaged in an attack by British mini submarines and subsequently subjected to a series of large scale air raids . On 12 November 1944 , British Lancaster bombers equipped with 12,000 lb (5,400 kg) " Tallboy " bombs scored two direct hits and a near miss which caused the ship to capsize rapidly . A deck fire spread to the ammunition magazine for one of the main battery turrets , which caused a large explosion . Figures for the number of men killed in the attack range from 950 to 1,204 . Between 1948 and 1957 the wreck was broken up by a joint Norwegian and German salvage operation .

= = Construction and characteristics = =

Tirpitz was ordered as Ersatz Schleswig Holstein as a replacement for the old pre dreadnought Schleswig Holstein , under the contract name " G " . The Kriegsmarinewerft shipyard in Wilhelmshaven was awarded the contract , where the keel was laid on 20 October 1936 . The hull was launched on 1 April 1939 ; during the elaborate ceremonies , the ship was christened by the daughter of Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz , the ship 's namesake . Adolf von Trotha , a former admiral in the Imperial German Navy , spoke at the ship 's launching , which was also attended by Adolf Hitler . Fitting out work followed her launch , and was completed by February 1941 . British bombers repeatedly attacked the harbour in which the ship was being built ; no bombs struck Tirpitz , but the attacks did slow construction work . Tirpitz was commissioned into the fleet on 25 February for sea trials , which were conducted in the Baltic .

Tirpitz displaced 42,900 t (42,200 long tons) as built and 52,600 tonnes (51,800 long tons) fully loaded , with a length of 251 m (823 ft 6 in) , a beam of 36 m (118 ft 1 in) and a maximum draft of 10.6 m (34 ft 9 in) . She was powered by three Brown , Boveri & Cie geared steam turbines and twelve oil fired Wagner superheated boilers , which developed a total of 163,023 PS (160,793 shp ; 119,903 kW) and yielded a maximum speed of 30.8 knots (57.0 km / h ; 35.4 mph) on speed trials . Her standard crew numbered 103 officers and 1,962 enlisted men ; during the war this was increased to 108 officers and 2,500 men . As built , Tirpitz was equipped with Model 23 search radars mounted on the forward , foretop , and rear rangefinders . These were later replaced with Model 27 and then Model 26 radars , which had a larger antenna array . A Model 30 radar , known as the Hohentwiel , was mounted in 1944 in her topmast , and a Model 213 Würzburg fire control radar was added on her stern 10.5 cm (4.1 in) Flak rangefinders .

She was armed with eight 38 cm SK C / 34 L / 52 guns arranged in four twin gun turrets : two superfiring turrets forward ? Anton and Bruno ? and two aft ? Caesar and Dora . Her secondary

armament consisted of twelve 15 cm L / 55 guns , sixteen 10 @. @ 5 cm L / 65 and sixteen 3 @. @ 7 cm (1 @. @ 5 in) L / 83 , and initially twelve 2 cm (0 @. @ 79 in) antiaircraft guns . The number of 2 cm guns was eventually increased to 58 . After 1942 , eight 53 @. @ 3 cm (21 @. @ 0 in) above @-@ water torpedo tubes were installed in two quadruple mounts , one mount on each side of the ship . The ship 's main belt was 320 mm (13 in) thick and was covered by a pair of upper and main armoured decks that were 50 mm (2 @. @ 0 in) and 100 to 120 mm (3 @. @ 9 to 4 @. @ 7 in) thick , respectively . The 38 cm turrets were protected by 360 mm (14 in) thick faces and 220 mm (8 @. @ 7 in) thick sides .

= = Service history = =

After sea trials , Tirpitz was stationed in Kiel and performed intensive training in the Baltic . While the ship was in Kiel , Germany invaded the Soviet Union . A temporary Baltic Fleet was created to prevent the possible break @-@ out of the Soviet fleet based in Leningrad . Tirpitz was briefly made the flagship of the squadron , which consisted of the heavy cruiser Admiral Scheer , the light cruisers Köln , Nürnberg , Leipzig , and Emden , several destroyers , and two flotillas of minesweepers . The Baltic Fleet , under the command of Vice Admiral Otto Ciliax , patrolled off the Aaland Islands from 23 to 26 September 1941 , after which the unit disbanded and Tirpitz resumed training . During the training period , Tirpitz tested her primary and secondary guns on the old pre @-@ dreadnought battleship Hessen , which had been converted into a radio @-@ controlled target ship . The British Royal Air Force (RAF) continued to launch unsuccessful bombing raids on Tirpitz while she was stationed in Kiel .

= = = Deployment to Norway = = =

Grand Admiral Erich Raeder , the commander of the Kriegsmarine , proposed on 13 November that Tirpitz be deployed to Norway . The ship would be able to attack convoys bound for the Soviet Union , as well as act as a fleet in being to tie down British naval assets and deter an Allied invasion of Norway . Hitler , who had forbidden an Atlantic sortie after the loss of Bismarck , agreed to the proposal . The ship was taken into dock for modifications for the deployment . The ship 's antiaircraft battery was strengthened , and the 10 @. @ 5 cm guns on the superstructure next to the catapult were moved outboard to increase their field of fire . The two quadruple 53 @. @ 3 cm torpedo tube mounts were also installed during this refit . The ship 's commander , Kapitän zur See (KzS ? Captain at Sea) Karl Topp , pronounced the ship ready for combat operations on 10 January 1942 . The following day , Tirpitz left for Wilhelmshaven , a move designed to conceal her actual destination .

The ship left Wilhelmshaven at 23 : 00 on 14 January and made for Trondheim . British military intelligence , which was capable of decrypting the Enigma messages sent by the German navy , detected the departure of the vessel , but poor weather in Britain prevented action by the RAF . Admiral John Tovey , the commander in chief of the British Home Fleet , was not made aware of Tirpitz 's activities until 17 January , well after the ship had arrived in Norway . On 16 January , British aerial reconnaissance located the ship in Trondheim . Tirpitz then moved to the Fættenfjord , just north of Trondheim . The movement was codenamed Operation Polarnacht (Polar Night) ; the battleship was escorted by the destroyers Z4 Richard Beitzen , Z5 Paul Jakobi , Z8 Bruno Heinemann and Z29 for the voyage . She was moored next to a cliff , which protected the ship from air attacks from the southwest . The ship 's crew cut down trees and placed them aboard Tirpitz to camouflage her . Additional antiaircraft batteries were installed around the fjord , as were anti @-@ torpedo nets and heavy booms in the entrance to the anchorage . Life for the crew of Tirpitz was very monotonous during the deployment to Norway . Frequent fuel shortages curtailed training and kept the battleship and her escorts moored behind their protective netting . The crew was primarily occupied with maintaining the ship and continuously manning antiaircraft defences . Sports activities were organised to keep the crew occupied and physically fit .

= = = Operations against Allied convoys = = =

Several factors served to restrain Tirpitz 's freedom of operation in Norway . The most pressing were shortages of fuel and the withdrawal of the German destroyer forces to support Operation Cerberus , the movement of the battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau and the heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen up through the English Channel . These caused a planned attack against the outbound convoy PQ 8 at the end of January to be abandoned . A planned British air attack at the end of January by four @-@ engined heavy bombers was disrupted by poor weather over the target , which prevented the aircraft from finding the ship . In early February , Tirpitz took part in the deceptions that distracted the British in the run @-@ up to Operation Cerberus . These included steaming out of the fjord and the appearance of preparations for a sortie into the North Sea . Later that month , the ship was reinforced by the heavy cruisers Admiral Scheer and Prinz Eugen and several destroyers . Prinz Eugen had been torpedoed by a British submarine at the entrance to the Fættenfjord , and was therefore temporarily out of action .

In March 1942 Tirpitz and Admiral Scheer , along with the destroyers Z14 Friedrich Ihn , Z5 Paul Jakobi , Z7 Hermann Schoemann and Z25 and a pair of torpedo boats , were intended to attack the homebound convoy QP 8 and the outbound Convoy PQ 12 as part of Operation Sportpalast (Sports Palace) . Admiral Scheer , with a design speed of 26 knots (48 km / h ; 30 mph) , was too slow to operate with Tirpitz , and was left in port , as was the destroyer Paul Jakobi . The two torpedo boats were also released from the operation . On 5 March , Luftwaffe reconnaissance aircraft spotted PQ 12 near Jan Mayen Island ; the reconnaissance failed to note the battleship HMS Duke of York or the battlecruiser HMS Renown , both of which escorted the convoy , along with four destroyers . Unknown to the Germans , Admiral Tovey provided distant support to the convoys with the battleship HMS King George V , the aircraft carrier HMS Victorious , the heavy cruiser HMS Berwick , and six destroyers . Enigma intercepts again forewarned the British of Tirpitz 's attack , which allowed them to reroute the convoys . Admiral Tovey attempted to pursue Tirpitz on 9 March , but Admiral Otto Ciliax , the commander of the German squadron , had decided to return to port the previous evening . An air attack was launched early on the 9th ; twelve Fairey Albacore torpedo bombers attacked the ship in three groups , and Tirpitz successfully evaded the torpedoes . Only three men were wounded in the attack . Tirpitz 's anti @-@ aircraft gunners shot down two of the British aircraft . After the conclusion of the attack , Tirpitz made for Vestfjord , and from there to Trondheim , arriving on the evening of 13 March . On 30 March , thirty @-@ three Halifax bombers attacked the ship ; they scored no hits , and five aircraft were shot down . The RAF launched a pair of unsuccessful strikes in late April . On the night of 27 ? 28 April , thirty @-@ one Halifaxes and twelve Lancasters ; five of the bombers were shot down . Another raid , composed of twenty @-@ three Halifaxes and eleven Lancasters , took place the following night . Two of the bombers were shot down by the German anti @-@ aircraft defences .

The actions of Tirpitz and her escorting destroyers in March used up 8 @,@ 230 metric tons (8 @,@ 100 long tons) of fuel oil , which greatly reduced the available fuel supply . It took the Germans three months to replenish the fuel spent in the attempt to intercept the two Allied convoys . Convoy PQ 17 , which left Iceland on 27 June bound for the Soviet Union , was the next convoy targeted by Tirpitz and the rest of the German fleet stationed in Norway , during Operation Rösselsprung (Knight 's Move) . Escorting the convoy were the battleships Duke of York and USS Washington and the carrier Victorious . Tirpitz , Admiral Hipper , and six destroyers sortied from Trondheim , while a second task force consisting of Lützow , Admiral Scheer , and six destroyers operated out of Narvik and Bogenfjord . Lützow and three of the destroyers struck uncharted rocks while en route to the rendezvous and had to return to port . Shortly after Tirpitz left Norway , the Soviet submarine K @-@ 21 fired two or four torpedoes at the ship , all of which missed . The Soviets claimed two hits on the battleship . Swedish intelligence had meanwhile reported the German departures to the British Admiralty , which ordered the convoy to disperse . Aware that they had been detected , the Germans aborted the operation and turned over the attack to U @-@ boats and the Luftwaffe . The scattered vessels could no longer be protected by the convoy escorts , and the Germans sank 21 of the 34 isolated transports . Tirpitz returned to Altafjord via the Lofoten

Islands .

Following Operation Rösselsprung , the Germans moved Tirpitz to Bogenfjord near Narvik . By this time , the ship needed a major overhaul . Hitler had forbidden the ship to make the dangerous return to Germany , and so the overhaul was conducted in Trondheim . On 23 October , the ship left Bogenfjord and returned to Fættenfjord outside Trondheim . The defences of the anchorage were further strengthened ; additional anti @-@ aircraft guns were installed , and double anti @-@ torpedo nets were erected around the vessel . The repairs were conducted in limited phases , such that Tirpitz would remain partially operational for the majority of the overhaul . A caisson was built around the stern to allow the replacement of the ship 's rudders . During the repair process , the British attempted to attack the battleship with two Chariot human torpedoes , but before they could be launched , rough seas caused the human torpedoes to break away from the fishing vessel which was towing them . By 28 December , the overhaul had been completed , and Tirpitz began sea trials . She conducted gunnery trials on 4 January 1943 in the Trondheimfjord . On 21 February , Topp was promoted to Rear Admiral and was replaced by Captain Hans Meyer ; five days later the battleship Scharnhorst was ordered to reinforce the fleet in Norway . Vice Admiral Oskar Kummetz was given command of the warships stationed in Norway .

By the time Scharnhorst arrived in Norway in March 1943 , Allied convoys to the Soviet Union had temporarily ceased . To give the ships an opportunity to work together , Admiral Karl Dönitz , who had replaced Raeder in the aftermath of the Battle of the Barents Sea on 31 December 1942 , ordered an attack on the island of Spitzbergen , which housed a British weather station and refuelling base . Several settlements and outposts on Spitzbergen were defended by a garrison of 152 men from the Norwegian Armed Forces in exile . The two battleships , escorted by ten destroyers , left port on 6 September ; in a ruse de guerre , Tirpitz flew the white ensign on the approach to the island the following day . During the bombardment , Tirpitz fired 52 main @-@ battery shells and 82 rounds from her 15 cm secondaries . This was the first and only time the ship fired her main battery at an enemy surface target . An assault force destroyed shore installations and captured 74 prisoners . By 11 : 00 , the battleships had destroyed their targets and headed back to their Norwegian ports .

= = = British attacks on Tirpitz = = =

= = = = Operation Source = = = =

The British were determined to neutralise Tirpitz and remove the threat she posed to Allied lines of communication in the Arctic . Following the repeated , ineffectual bombing attacks and the failed Chariot attack in October 1942 , the British turned to the newly designed X Craft midget submarines . The planned attack , Operation Source , included attacks on Tirpitz , Scharnhorst , and Lützow . The X Craft were towed by large submarines to their destinations , where they could slip under anti @-@ torpedo nets to each drop two powerful 2 tonne mines on the sea bed under the bottom of the target . Ten vessels were assigned to the operation , scheduled for 20 ? 25 September 1943 . Only eight of the vessels reached Norway for the attack , which began early on 22 September . Three of the vessels , X5 , X6 , and X7 , successfully breached Tirpitz 's defences , two of which ? X6 and X7 ? managed to lay their mines . X5 was detected some 200 m (660 ft) from the nets and sunk by a combination of gunfire and depth charges .

The mines caused extensive damage to the ship ; the first exploded abreast of turret Caesar , and the second detonated 45 to 55 m (148 to 180 ft) off the port bow . A fuel oil tank was ruptured , shell plating was torn , a large indentation was formed in the bottom of the ship , and bulkheads in the double bottom buckled . Some 1 @,@ 430 t (1 @,@ 410 long tons) of water flooded the ship in fuel tanks and void spaces in the double bottom of the port side , which caused a list of one to two degrees , which was balanced by counter @-@ flooding on the starboard side . The flooding damaged all of the turbo @-@ generators in generator room No. 2 , and all apart from one generator in generator room No. 1 were disabled by broken steam lines or severed power cables .

Turret Dora was thrown from its bearings and could not be rotated ; this was particularly significant , as there were no heavy @-@ lift cranes in Norway powerful enough to lift the turret and place it back on its bearings . The ship 's two Arado Ar 196 floatplanes were thrown by the explosive concussion and completely destroyed . Repairs were conducted by the repair ship Neumark ; historians William Garzke and Robert Dulin remarked that the successful repair effort was " one of the most notable feats of naval engineering during the Second World War . " Repairs lasted until 2 April 1944 ; full speed trials were scheduled for the following day in Altafjord .

= = = = Operation Tungsten = = = =

The British were aware that Neumark and the repair crews left in March , which intimated Tirpitz was nearly operational . A major air strike ? Operation Tungsten ? involving the fleet carriers Victorious and Furious and the escort carriers Emperor , Fencer , Pursuer , and Searcher , was set for 4 April 1944 , but rescheduled a day earlier when Enigma decrypts revealed that Tirpitz was to depart at 05 : 29 on 3 April for sea trials . The attack consisted of 40 Barracuda dive @-@ bombers carrying 1 @,@ 600 @-@ pound (730 kg) armor @-@ piercing bombs and 40 escorting fighters in two waves , scoring fifteen direct hits and two near misses . The aircraft achieved surprise , and only one was lost in the first wave ; it took twelve to fourteen minutes for all of Tirpitz 's antiaircraft batteries to be fully manned . The first wave struck at 05 : 29 , as tugs were preparing to assist the ship out of her mooring . The second wave arrived over the target an hour later , shortly after 06 : 30 . Despite the alertness of the German antiaircraft gunners , only one other bomber was shot down .

The air strike caused significant damage to the ship and inflicted serious casualties . William Garzke and Robert Dulin report the attack killed 122 men and wounded 316 others , while Hildebrand , Röhr , & Steinmetz report 132 fatalities and 270 wounded men , including the ship 's commander , KzS Hans Meyer . Two of the 15 cm turrets were destroyed by bombs , and both Ar 196 floatplanes were destroyed . Several of the bomb hits caused serious fires aboard the ship . Concussive shock disabled the starboard turbine engine , and saltwater used to fight the fires reached the boilers and contaminated the feed water . Some 2 @,@ 000 t (2 @,@ 000 long tons) of water flooded the ship , primarily through the two holes in the side shell created by shell splinters from near misses . Water used to fight the fires also contributed to the flooding . Dönitz ordered the ship be repaired , regardless of the cost , despite the fact that he understood Tirpitz could no longer be used in a surface action because of insufficient fighter support . Repair work began in early May ; destroyers ferried important equipment and workers from Kiel to Altafjord over the span of three days . By 2 June , the ship was again able to steam under her own power , and by the end of the month gunnery trials were possible . During the repair process , the 15 cm guns were modified to allow their use against aircraft , and specially @-@ fuzed 38 cm shells for barrage antiaircraft fire were supplied .

= = = = Operations Planet , Brawn , Tiger Claw , Mascot and Goodwood = = = =

A series of carrier strikes was planned over the next three months , but bad weather forced their cancellation . A repeat of Operation Tungsten , codenamed Operation Planet , was scheduled for 24 April . Operation Brawn , which was to have been carried out by 27 bombers and 36 fighters from Victorious and Furious , was to have taken place on 15 May , and Operation Tiger Claw was intended for 28 May . Victorious and Furious were joined by Indefatigable for Operation Mascot , which was to have been carried out on 17 July by 62 bombers and 30 fighters . The weather finally broke in late August , which saw the Goodwood series of attacks . Operations Goodwood I and II were launched on 22 August ; a carrier force consisting of the fleet carriers Furious , Indefatigable and Formidable and the escort carriers Nabob and Trumpeter launched a total of 38 bombers and 43 escort fighters between the two raids . The attacks failed to inflict any damage on Tirpitz , and three of the attacking aircraft were shot down . Goodwood III followed on 24 August , composed of aircraft from the fleet carriers only . Forty @-@ eight bombers and 29 fighters attacked the ship and scored two hits which caused minor damage . One , a 1600 @-@ pound bomb , penetrated the

upper and lower armour decks and came to rest in the No. 4 switchboard room . Its fuze had been damaged and the bomb did not detonate . The second , a 500 @-@ pound (230 kg) bomb , exploded but caused only superficial damage . Six planes were shot down in the attack . Goodwood IV followed on the 29th , with 34 bombers and 25 fighters from Formidable and Indefatigable . Heavy fog prevented any hits from being scored . One Firefly and a Corsair were shot down by Tirpitz 's gunners . The battleship expended 54 rounds from her main guns , 161 from the 15 cm guns and up to 20 percent of her light antiaircraft ammunition .

== = Operations Paravane and Obviate == =

The ineffectiveness of the great majority of the strikes launched by the Fleet Air Arm in mid @-@ 1944 led to the task of Tirpitz 's destruction being transferred to the RAF 's No. 5 Group . The RAF used Lancaster bombers to carry 6 @-@ short @-@ ton (5 @.@ 4 t) Tallboy bombs to penetrate the ship 's heavy armour . The first attack , Operation Paravane , took place on 15 September 1944 ; operating from a forward base at Yagodnik in Russia , 23 Lancasters (17 each carrying one Tallboy and six each carrying twelve JW mines) , scored a single hit on the ship 's bow . The Tallboy penetrated the ship , exited the keel , and exploded in the bottom of the fjord . 800 to 1 @,@ 000 t (790 to 980 long tons) of water flooded the bow and caused a serious increase in trim forward . The ship was rendered unseaworthy and was limited to 8 to 10 knots (15 to 19 km / h ; 9 @.@ 2 to 11 @.@ 5 mph) . Concussive shock caused severe damage to fire @-@ control equipment . The damage persuaded the naval command to repair the ship for use only as a floating gun battery . Repair work was estimated to take nine months , but patching of the holes could be effected within a few weeks , allowing Tirpitz to be moved further south to Tromsø . On 15 October , the ship made the 200 nmi (370 km ; 230 mi) trip to Tromsø under her own power , the last voyage of her career .

The RAF made a second attempt on 29 October , after the ship was moored off Håkøya Island outside Tromsø . Thirty @-@ two Lancasters attacked the ship with Tallboys during Operation Obviate . As on Operation Paravane , No. 9 Squadron and No. 617 Squadron carried out the attack together , which resulted in only one near miss , partially the result of bad weather over the target . The underwater explosion damaged the port rudder and shaft and caused some flooding . Tirpitz 's 38 cm fragmentation shells proved ineffective in countering the high @-@ level bombers ; one aircraft was damaged by ground @-@ based anti @-@ aircraft guns . Following the attack , the ship 's anchorage was significantly improved . A large sand bank was constructed under and around the ship to prevent her from capsizing , and anti @-@ torpedo nets were installed . Tirpitz retained a one @-@ degree list to port from earlier damage , and this was not corrected by counter @-@ flooding to retain as much reserve buoyancy as possible . The ship was also prepared for her role as a floating artillery platform : fuel was limited to only what was necessary to power the turbo @-@ generators , and the crew was reduced to 1 @,@ 600 officers and enlisted men .

== = Operation Catechism == =

Operation Catechism , the final British attack on Tirpitz , took place on 12 November 1944 . The ship again used her 38 cm guns against the bombers , which approached the battleship at 09 : 35 ; Tirpitz 's main guns forced the bombers to disperse temporarily , but could not break up the attack . A force of 32 Lancasters from Nos. 9 and 617 Squadrons dropped 29 Tallboys on the ship , with two direct hits and one near miss . Several other bombs landed within the anti @-@ torpedo net barrier and caused significant cratering of the seabed ; this removed much of the sandbank that had been constructed to prevent the ship from capsizing . One bomb penetrated the ship 's deck between turrets Anton and Bruno but failed to explode . A second hit amidships between the aircraft catapult and the funnel and caused severe damage . A very large hole was blown into the ship 's side and bottom ; the entire section of belt armour abreast of the bomb hit was completely destroyed . A third bomb may have struck the ship on the port side of turret Caesar . The amidships hit caused significant flooding and quickly increased the port list to between 15 and 20 degrees . In ten minutes

, the list increased to 30 to 40 degrees ; the captain issued the order to abandon ship . Progressive flooding increased the list to 60 degrees by 09 : 50 , though this appeared to stabilise temporarily . Eight minutes later , a large explosion rocked turret Caesar . The turret roof and part of the rotating structure were thrown 25 m (82 ft) into the air and over into a group of men swimming to shore , crushing them . Tirpitz rapidly rolled over and buried her superstructure in the sea floor .

In the aftermath of the attack , 82 men trapped in the upturned hull were rescued by cutting through the bottom hull plates . Figures for the death toll vary from approximately 950 to 1 @, @ 204 . Approximately 200 survivors of the sinking were transferred to the heavy cruiser Lützow in January 1945 .

The performance of the Luftwaffe in the defence of Tirpitz was heavily criticised after her loss . Major Heinrich Ehrler , the commander of III . / Jagdgeschwader 5 (3rd Group of the 5th Fighter Wing) , was blamed for the Luftwaffe 's failure to intercept the British bombers . He was court @-@ martialled in Oslo and threatened with the death penalty . Evidence was presented that his unit had failed to help the Kriegsmarine when requested . He was sentenced to three years in prison , but was released after a month , demoted , and reassigned to an Me 262 fighter squadron in Germany . Ehrler was exonerated by further investigations which concluded poor communication between the Kriegsmarine and the Luftwaffe had caused the fiasco ; the aircrews had not been informed that Tirpitz had been moved off Håkøya two weeks before the attack .

The wreck of Tirpitz remained in place until after the war , when a joint German @-@ Norwegian company began salvage operations . Work lasted from 1948 until 1957 ; fragments of the ship are still sold by a Norwegian company . Ludovic Kennedy wrote in his history of the vessel that she " lived an invalid 's life and died a cripple 's death " .