

= German submarine U 39 ( 1938 ) =

German submarine U 39 was a Type IXA U boat of the Kriegsmarine that operated from 1938 to the first few days of World War II .

She was ordered by the Kriegsmarine on 29 July 1936 as part of the re armament program ( Aufrüstung ) in Germany , which was illegal under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles . The keel for U 39 was laid down on 2 June 1937 , by DeSchiMAG AG Weser of Bremen . She was commissioned on 10 December 1938 with Kapitänleutnant Gerhard Glattes in command .

On 14 September 1939 , just 27 days after she began her first patrol , U 39 attempted to sink the British aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal by firing two torpedoes at her . The U 39 was immediately hunted down by three British destroyers , disabled with depth charges , and subsequently sunk . All of the crew members survived and were captured .

U 39 was the first German U boat to be sunk in World War II .

= = Design = =

As one of the eight original German Type IX submarines , later designated IXA , U 39 had a displacement of 1,032 tonnes ( 1,016 long tons ) when at the surface and 1,153 tonnes ( 1,135 long tons ) while submerged . The U boat had a total length of 76.50 m ( 251 ft ) , a pressure hull length of 58.75 m ( 192 ft 9 in ) , a beam of 6.51 m ( 21 ft 4 in ) , a height of 9.40 m ( 30 ft 10 in ) , and a draught of 4.70 m ( 15 ft 5 in ) . The submarine was powered by two MAN M 9 V 40 / 46 supercharged four stroke , nine cylinder diesel engines producing a total of 4,400 metric horsepower ( 3,240 kW ; 4,340 shp ) for use while surfaced , two Siemens Schuckert 2 GU 345 / 34 double acting electric motors producing a total of 1,000 metric horsepower ( 740 kW ; 990 shp ) for use while submerged . She had two shafts and two 1.92 m ( 6 ft ) propellers . The boat was capable of operating at depths of up to 230 metres ( 750 ft ) .

The submarine had a maximum surface speed of 18.2 knots ( 33.7 km / h ; 20.9 mph ) and a maximum submerged speed of 7.7 knots ( 14.3 km / h ; 8.9 mph ) . When submerged , the boat could operate for 65 ? 78 nautical miles ( 120 ? 144 km ; 75 ? 90 mi ) at 4 knots ( 7.4 km / h ; 4.6 mph ) ; when surfaced , she could travel 10,500 nautical miles ( 19,400 km ; 12,000 mi ) at 10 knots ( 19 km / h ; 12 mph ) . U 39 was fitted with six 53.3 cm ( 21 in ) torpedo tubes ( four fitted at the bow and two at the stern ) , 22 torpedoes , one 10.5 cm ( 4.13 in ) SK C / 32 naval gun , 180 rounds , and a 3.7 cm ( 1.5 in ) as well as a 2 cm ( 0.79 in ) anti aircraft gun . The boat had a complement of forty eight .

= = Service history = =

= = Patrol and Sinking = =

U 39 conducted only one war patrol during her entire career , as part of the 6th U boat Flotilla . She left Wilhelmshaven with U 31 , U 32 , U 35 and U 53 all of which were also a part of the 6th Flotilla , on 19 August 1939 , in preparation for the beginning of World War II . She headed into the North Sea and eventually circumnavigated the British Isles . Prior to her sinking , U 39 was attacked in the North Sea on 10 September while en route to the British Isles . She was depth charged by an unidentified British vessel and was forced to dive to 100 meters ( 328 feet ) to escape the attack .

On 14 September 1939 , after only 27 days at sea , U 39 fired two torpedoes at the British aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal off Rockall Bank north west of Scotland . Lookouts spotted the torpedo tracks and Ark Royal turned towards the attack , reducing her cross section and causing both torpedoes to miss and exploded short of their target . Following the failed attack , three

British destroyers in the vicinity of the Ark Royal , HMS Faulknor , Firedrake , and Foxhound detected U @-@ 39 . All three destroyers depth charged the U @-@ boat and seconds after Firedrake released her depth charges , U @-@ 39 surfaced . Foxhound , which was the closest to the U @-@ boat , picked up 25 crew members while Faulknor rescued 11 and Firedrake saved the remaining eight . The crewmen were then taken ashore in Scotland and spent the rest of the war in various prisoner @-@ of @-@ war camps , including the Tower of London , before being shipped to Canada .

U @-@ 39 was the first of many U @-@ boats to be sunk in World War II ; at 58 ° 32 ' N 11 ° 49 ' W.

= = = Aftermath = = =

Four other U @-@ boats joined U @-@ 39 on her ill @-@ fated patrol , U @-@ 31 , U @-@ 32 , U @-@ 53 and U @-@ 55 . According to a report by the Seekriegsleitung ( German Supreme Naval Command ) on 22 September 1939 , U @-@ 32 and U @-@ 53 were heading back to their home port of Kiel while only U @-@ 31 and U @-@ 35 remained in the operational area north of the British Isles . According to plan , U @-@ 39 should also have made for Kiel . However , there had been no contact with the U @-@ boat for several days . A lack of response from U @-@ 39 , despite several requests to give her current location , began to fuel rumours that she was sunk . This belief was later confirmed by a British radio transmission detailing the arrival of the first German prisoners of war who were members of the Kriegsmarine , at a London railway station a few days later .