

material, including 5,000 tanks and over 7,000 aircraft from Britain. The tonnage figures are:

Year	Approximate amount of cargo despatched from U.K. or U.S.A. (tons)	Approximate amount of cargo lost en route. (tons)
1941	300,000	10,000
1942	1,350,000	270,000
1943	450,000	—
1944	1,250,000	10,000
1945	650,000	10,000
Total	4,000,000	300,000

The U.S.S.R. in 1943 expressed their appreciation when M. Maisky, Soviet Ambassador in London, paid this glowing tribute to the men whose courage had made possible the carriage of these vital war supplies to Russia:

"The Russian convoys are a Northern Saga of heroism, bravery, and endurance. This Saga will live for ever, not only in the hearts of your people, but also in the hearts of the Soviet people, who rightly see in it one of the most striking expressions of collaboration between the Allied Governments, without which our common victory would have been impossible."

The following are extracts from Despatches covering the period 1st January, 1942, to 31st December, 1942, submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty by Admiral Sir John C. Tovey, K.C.B., D.S.O., Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet.

EXTRACT FROM DESPATCH COVERING THE PERIOD 1ST JANUARY TO 31ST MARCH, 1942

*Home Fleet,
20th May, 1942.*

Loss of s.s. WAZIRISTAN

1. The year started with the first loss from these convoys; it was brought about by a most unfortunate combination of circumstances. Convoy P.Q.7 was so delayed by defects while assembling at Hvalfiord* that the Admiral Commanding, Iceland, decided to sail it in two parts. The first, which sailed late in December, consisted of only two ships: the cruiser and destroyers of the ocean escort were therefore held back for the second, and larger, part; and the two ships were given two mine-sweepers as ocean escort.

2. These were sailed as usual to join the convoy near Jan Mayen Island but failed to make contact before the local escort of trawlers parted company, or in fact at all. The merchant ships thus arrived south of Bear Island without escort: U-boats, working in this area for the first time, succeeded in sinking the WAZIRISTAN. The COLD HARBOUR, her companion, arrived off the White Sea a week late.

3. That the first appearance of U-boats should coincide with the first unescorted convoy was most unfortunate. In order that escorting cruisers should not be exposed to

U-boat attack at convoy speeds, they were ordered after this attack to part company with their convoys between 14° East and 26° East and pass through this area at high speed, re-joining the convoys when the latter had come through. It was considered unlikely that enemy surface forces would operate in the same area as U-boats.

Loss of H.M.S. MATABELE

4. Convoy P.Q.7B arrived safely, but P.Q.8 was attacked by U-boats north-eastward of the Kola Inlet*. The s.s. HARMATRID was torpedoed on 17th January, but reached harbour in tow: the MATABELE, one of the two escorting destroyers, was torpedoed the next day and lost with only two survivors.

5. The increased enemy effort against the convoys, of which these unfortunate losses were evidence, though expected, was disturbing. The early spring was approaching, with a period of two or three months during which the ice would still compel the convoys to pass through two narrow focal areas close to the enemy coast, without the compensation of foul weather and long darkness to restrict his air activity. It seemed therefore that air attacks, and surface or U-boat attacks made possible by air reconnaissance, might reach a scale beyond the escorting resources of the Home Fleet.

6. I pointed this out to Their Lordships and pressed for strong and continuous Russian patrol activity off the Kola Inlet, to make that area untenable by U-boats, and for short-range and long-range fighter protection. The cruiser could not remain in company with the convoy, in U-boat infested waters, solely to provide the A.A. defence which could come more effectively from fighters. The Rear Admiral Commanding, 10th Cruiser Squadron†, in the NIGERIA, was stationed at Murmansk throughout February to represent these requirements to the Russians, the NIGERIA providing escort for east and westbound convoys between Bear Island and the Kola Inlet.

Surface Threat from Trondheim

7. The presence of the TIRPITZ at Trondheim, where she arrived on 17th January and, still more, her reinforcement on 23rd February by the SCHEER and PRINZ EUGEN, constituted another and more serious threat to these convoys. It seemed probable that the heavy ships, if they attacked, would do so between Jan Mayen and Bear Islands, leaving the eastern section of the route to their U-boats and aircraft. It was therefore necessary to provide heavy cover on this part of the route, even though this could not be done without uncovering to some extent the Northern Passages.

8. To economise the use of this heavy cover, I asked the Admiralty on 26th February that the convoys should be sailed simultaneously from each end, so that their passage through the danger area should be synchronised. This would entail a 14-day cycle. I also asked for four more destroyers, to enable the covering force to have a proper screen and the convoy a close escort of two destroyers.

Admiralty footnotes:—

* The entrance to Murmansk.

† Rear Admiral H. M. Burrough, C.B.

Admiralty footnote:—

* On the west coast of Iceland.