

Channel, thirty-six U-Boats were sighted by Coastal Command in the first four days of the assault and twenty-three were attacked. Six were destroyed and four seriously damaged. Sixteen of the attacks were at night. Two of the U-Boats destroyed were sunk on one sortie within 20 minutes by a Liberator of No. 224 Squadron, piloted by Flying Officer Moore. In almost every case the enemy fought back desperately with his anti-aircraft armament, for in those four days the U-Boats were in too much of a hurry to be able to proceed submerged. They inflicted a high proportion of casualties on our attacking aircraft, but very few got through. Prisoners of war from the U-Boats have told us that the penetration of the Channel was a nightmare.

19. After D plus 4 the enemy was forced to change his tactics. During their sojourn in the Bay ports almost all the U-boats had been fitted with the exhaustible air intake (Schnorkel), and from the fourth day of the assault until the end of June sightings mainly consisted of periscopes and "Schnorkels" of U-Boats trying to get through by remaining submerged continuously and by relying on "Schnorkels" to ventilate the boat and charge batteries. The "Schnorkel" is a most difficult target for airborne radar, and it cannot be denied that the enemy's recourse to this cautious method of approach reduced his losses. At the same time, however, the effect of remaining submerged had an adverse effect on the morale of the U-Boat crews and their achievements were notable by their absence. Between D plus 4 and the end of June forty-seven sightings of U-Boats were made by Coastal Command in southern waters and twenty-four were attacked. During this period at least one more U-Boat was sunk by aircraft and two kills were shared with ships of the Royal Navy, who were taking an ever increasing part in the policing of the Channel and its approaches. In addition, aircraft damaged another four U-Boats and shared with the Navy in damaging a fifth.

20. In July the picture was the same. The enemy was still trying to get in amongst our shipping by making the fullest use of his schnorkel device. In all, twenty-two sightings were made and fifteen U-Boats attacked during this month, of which two were sunk and another damaged.

21. By the end of July there was no doubt that the enemy's threat had been beaten. Only a small number of U-Boats had got through to our shipping lanes, and, in the three months from D-Day to the end of August, of the thousands of merchant ships taking part in the Channel operations, only nine were sunk by U-Boat action.

22. Finally, the steady progress of our armies made it obvious to the enemy that he would soon lose the use of the Bay ports. He therefore began to evacuate them during August and to send U-Boats northward to his Norwegian bases. During the month some ferocious actions were fought in the Bay of Biscay almost within sight of land with U-Boats trying to escape, and six were accounted for by Coastal Command aircraft, three of these being shared with the Navy. By early September, the Biscay U-Boat force had withdrawn and was making its passage, underwater nearly all the time, to the Norwegian ports.

23. In the whole battle in the North and the South from mid-May to the end of August, Coastal Command sank twenty-seven U-Boats, damaged another so badly that when it reached its base it was paid off, shared in five more sunk, and damaged another twenty-nine, including two shared with the Royal Navy.

24. In these operations, where skill counted as much as courage, and where both were indispensable, we lost thirty-eight anti-U-Boat aircraft by enemy action and another twenty-two through the hazards of maintaining our patrols in fair weather and in foul. A high proportion of these aircraft were four-engined heavies with large crews.

Anti-Shipping Operations

25. While the U-Boats were being defeated in the south-west and the north-east, Coastal Command was also in action against enemy surface forces. Soon after the assault began, the enemy tried to reinforce his surface craft in the assault areas by bringing up three destroyers from the Gironde. These vessels were attacked by our aircraft while still south of Brest on 6th June, but the damage inflicted did not prevent the enemy from making port. Two days later the ships tried to round the Brest Peninsula, but were brought to action by the Royal Navy. One Seetier class destroyer was driven ashore, the Tjerk Hiddes was sunk, and the second Seetier was forced back to Brest. The beached destroyer was later attacked by Beaufighters with rockets and bombs, and became a total loss. After this the enemy made no further attempts to reinforce his surface craft from the west, and the only serviceable Seetier and Elbing destroyers were withdrawn to the Gironde.

26. In the early stages, as was expected, the enemy operated his light forces on quite a considerable scale against our assault forces in the assault area. E-Boats were the main weapons. Some thirty of these vessels were based between Boulogne and Cherbourg, but the number was later reduced by air attack, by surface action, and by the outstandingly successful attacks by Bomber Command against Le Havre and Boulogne.

27. The operations of Coastal Command against these light forces consisted mainly of continuous anti-shipping patrols in the Channel. Albacores, Avengers, Swordfish, Beaufighters and Wellingtons made a great many attacks, mostly at night, against E-Boats, R-Boats, "M" class minesweepers and trawlers. Wellingtons did a great deal of reconnaissance work, dropping flares and directing naval forces to their targets. Results were naturally extremely difficult to assess, but we know from prisoners of war that hardly an E-Boat put to sea without being spotted and attacked from the air. In the darkness and in the face of flak from other vessels it is almost impossible to investigate the result of a bombing attack on an E-Boat flotilla, but there is no doubt that the menace of the enemy's light forces was held in check by the operations of the Royal Navy and Coastal Command.

28. The enemy made no use of his major units in the Baltic. Moreover, with the exception of one or two flotillas of E-Boats, he never attempted to reinforce the Channel from the East, in spite of the fact that he had a