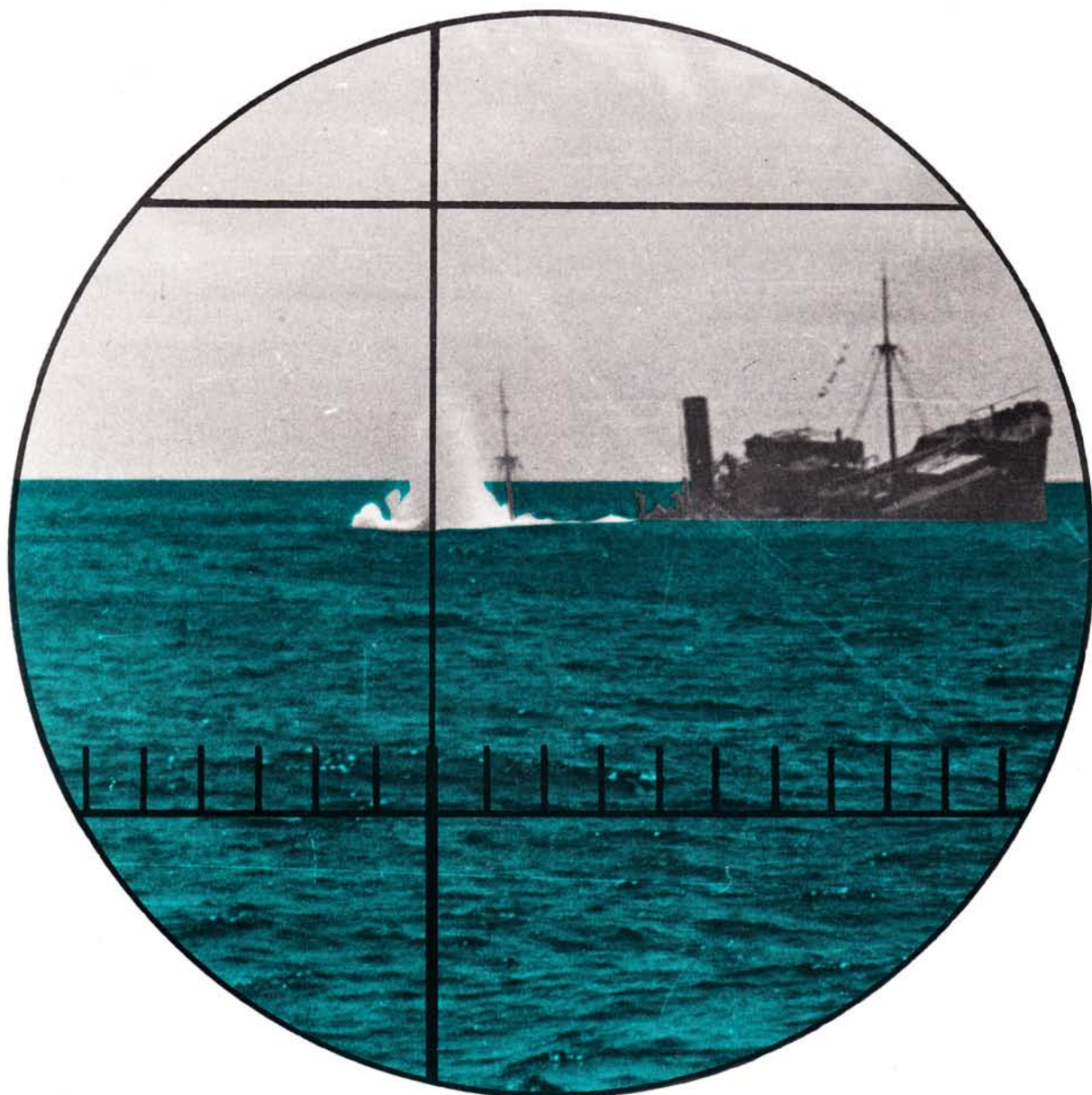


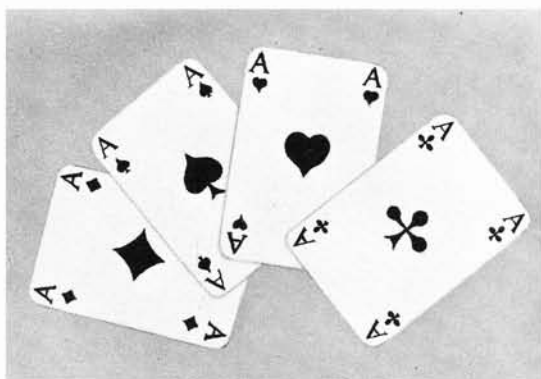
Profile **Warship**

Kriegsmarine U-107/Submarine

by Dr Jürgen Rohwer

8





ADDITIONAL GLOSSARY—U107

'Winter-garden' close-range weapon sponson.

Schnorchel a breathing tube, extendible like a periscope, through which air can be drawn in for use by the Diesel engines. A submarine can thereby remain dived indefinitely because, by running her diesels when submerged, the main batteries can be charged without the submarine having to surface.

Jumping-wires a case-hardened steel wire rope leading from the stem, across the bridge and down to the stern, to deflect and sever mine mooring-wires and to cut through harbour defence protective netting.

G.R.T. Gross Registered Tonnage.

Wolf pack a concentration of numbers of U-boats who would trail a convoy, perhaps for days, before deciding upon the right moment to attack. The battle could be prolonged because, after a surface night attack, the U-boats (whose surface speed was much faster than the mean speed of advance of the convoys) would press on ahead again to gain bearing for another attack. Admiral Dönitz developed the Wolf Pack tactics.

Fan salvo/shot in order to hit, a torpedo must be fired at an angle ahead of the target ship. The size of this Director Angle depends upon (1) course and speed of target, (2) course and speed of torpedo, and (3) the 'distance-off-track' of the submarine from the target.

British torpedoes were designed primarily to run on a straight line directly from the torpedo tubes, so that the submarine had to be pointing in the same direction as that along which the torpedo would run. The U-boat, however, was fortunate in being equipped with torpedoes which could be reliably and accurately angled so that, after leaving the tube, the torpedo would steer a set course and run on that already predetermined. Each torpedo could be angled with different settings. The submarine did not, therefore, have to be pointing accurately along the firing angle of the target. This was a tremendous advantage for the submarine C.O.

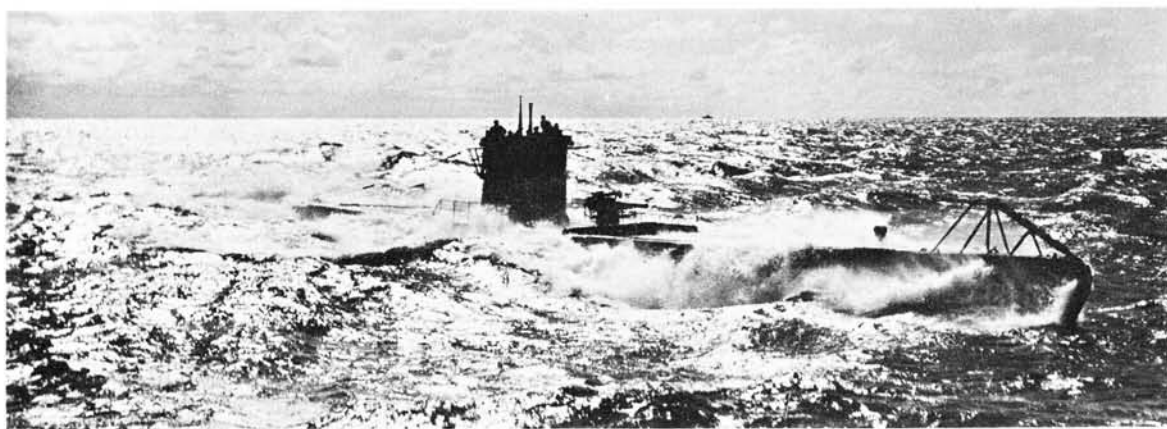
A 'fan' was a U-boat's salvo of generally three or four torpedoes, each set on diverging courses in order to increase the chance of a hit. To achieve much the same effect, a British submarine would have had to fire with the boat 'on the swing'; the U-boat, however, needed only to steer a steady course in the general direction of the target: the torpedoes would do the rest, provided the correct angles were set.

B.d.U. (British: 'F.O.S/M.'). Flag Officer, Submarines.

HF/DF High Frequency Direction Finding, ('Huff Duff') One of the most successful counter measures against the U-boats to be secretly introduced by the British. A chain of monitoring stations was built to girdle the northern Atlantic; a U-boat had but to transmit a few seconds for his transmission bearing to be recorded. It needed only three stations to obtain an accurate fix of the U-boat's position.

Homing-torpedo a torpedo which would either acoustically or magnetically follow a target until it hit, even if the target was to take violent evasive alterations of course.

'Gnat' The British counter-measure to the acoustic homing torpedo: a contraption at the end of a long towing-wire which, through the action of water upon its vanes, made an infernal racket, louder than the towing ship's own noises. The torpedo would be fooled and explode on the Gnat instead of the towing ship.



A U-boat of the IX-B Class on patrol in the Atlantic

(BfZ/Dressler)

Kriegsmarine U-107

by Dr Jürgen Rohwer

The German U-Boat, U-107

U-107 has been selected as the Warship Profile of a German U-boat because, though not particularly well-known, she lays claim to special regard on several grounds. She belonged to the IX B class, the 14 boats of which, with a tally of more than 1.4 million GRT (Gross Registered Tons) sunk, scored roughly ten per cent of the total German U-boat successes and therefore represented the most successful class. With a total of 750 days at sea *U-107* was, among German U-boats, the submarine with the longest record of operational patrols during the Second World War; in addition, her score in the spring of 1941 of 14 ships sunk, totalling 86,699 GRT, represented the most successful achievement of a single patrol throughout the war period. A score of 38 ships and 217,751 GRT placed her in fifth place after *U-48*, *U-99*, *U-103* and *U-124* in the list of successful U-boats of the Second World War.

Eventually, in her 13 patrols from 1941 to 1944 she had participated in every type of U-boat operation known in the Battle of the Atlantic: attacks on convoys on the North Atlantic, Gibraltar and West Africa routes; successful individual operations off Freetown, the east coast of the United States and in the Caribbean

as far as the straits of Yucatan. She sailed on a mine-laying operation off the U.S. east coast and also played a part in bringing the first Schnorkel-fitted U-boats into action in this area. She was refuelled and replenished from surface vessels and submarine tankers, and participated in the first use of the 'Zaunkönig' ('Jenny Wren') guided-missile torpedo.

The U-boat Class IX B: Development

Before the Second World War, the German Navy developed three classes of U-boat to operational readiness:

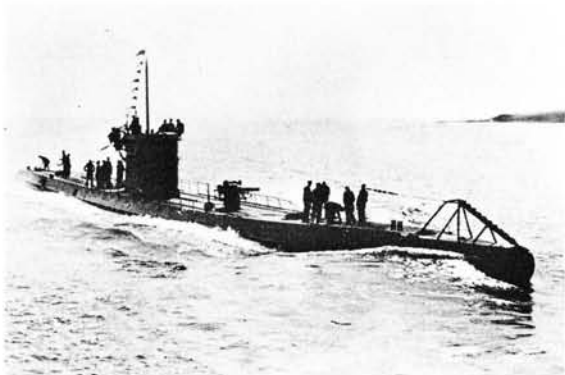
- (i) a small coastal U-boat (Class II A, B, C) of 254–291 tons;
- (ii) a medium-sized U-boat (Class VII A, B) of 626 and 753 tons respectively, which, in a further development as Class VII C, was later to bear the main burden of the convoy battles;
- (iii) for long-range patrols, a large boat (Class IA, IXA) of 862 and 1051 tons respectively.

The design of the large boat had its origin in a design for a 750-ton U-boat worked out in 1927 by the German U-boat design office 'Ingenieurskantoor voor Scheepsbouw' at the Hague; with German financial backing

Class IX was developed from Class I-A; here the Class-boat, U-37, who, between 1939 and 1941, achieved great success under her Captains: Lt-Cdr Hartmann, Snr.Lt Oehrn and Snr.Lt Clausen

(BfZ/Dressler)





A Class IX U-boat returns to her base from a successful operation in the Atlantic, with 8 pendants (BfZ/Dressler)



Bridge of a U-boat, 1943: Aft of the Captain, the opening for the LW-DF aerial (also MW); immediately behind the opening for rod-aerial. Aerial-target periscope retracted (middle opening); surface-target periscope raised. Behind, 2 MG 151. In front, opening for the retracted 'Hohentwiel' radar aerial (upper side of the beam aerial recognisable). Left of the Captain, round dipole aerial of the 'Naxos' radio-location apparatus
From 1943, the bridge of U-107 was similar (BfZ/Gröner)

From her antecedents: The Class-boat of Class I-A, U-25, developed from the U-boat Gür, built in Spain and bought by Turkey (BfZ/Dressler)



A 1XC U-boat at the surrender in May 1945.

The picture shows the final form of the tower, to starboard. On the lower open bridge, the 3.7cm AA M/42 with armoured shield; ammunition lockers behind. On the upper open bridge (hidden by people), two 2cm twin AA guns. The tube below the bridge is the connection from the snorkel-mast folded down in the upper deck to the diesel air inlet and outlet shafts under the upper open bridge. The upper deck has been levelled out forward to reduce diving time (sticking effect). (Probably no longer on U-107!) Otherwise in August 1944 the U-107 as on this U-boat; see also second photograph with port side (BfZ/Krulle)

U-805 is surrendered. Port side of tower: the armour-plating on front of open bridge is extended to take the 'Hohentwiel' radar apparatus; below, the extension for the cable-chute (BfZ/Krulle)



and material prepared in Holland, this design was then translated into the U-boat, *E1*, at the Spanish Echevarrieta shipyard in Cadiz; after completing her trials with a German crew in 1931. She was sold to the Turkish Navy under the name *Gür*.

The two German U-boats, *U-25* and *U-26* (Class IA), were built in 1935–36 in accordance with the improved plans of *Gür*. The results of trials with this class culminated in a demand for greater range. This was realised in the not inconsiderably enlarged Class IX A.

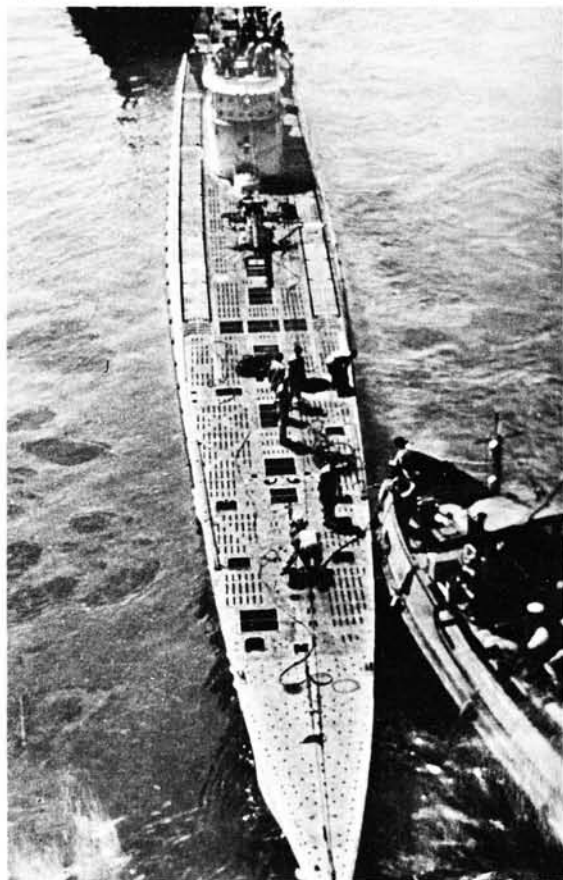
These boats showed improved sailing qualities, thanks to better lines and higher speed, in spite of the increase in size due to the more powerful diesels installed. The difference between this Class IX A (*U-37* to *U-44*) and the following series of Class IX B consisted primarily of a further increase in the fuel supply from 154 cu. m to 165 cu. m and a consequent increase in the range at 10 knots from 10,500 to 12,000 sea miles.

TECHNICAL DETAILS OF THE IX B CLASS

1 Dimensions

Standard displacement surfaced 1051 tons, submerged 1232 tons. Length overall: 76.50m; beam 6.76m; draught 4.70m; diameter of pressure-hull 4.40m; height from keel to upper rim of conning-tower 9.60m.

Forward deck of a Class IX U-boat. Alongside the tower are the rails for handling torpedoes from the on-deck tubes. Forward of the tower is the 10.5cm surface gun. On the bridge railings are the dipoles of the permanently-fitted GEMA-Seetakt 80cm radar apparatus (BfZ/Dressler)



The midship section of the Class IX U-boat. On the left the 3.7cm AA C/30; on the open bridge, a 2cm AA C/30, and below, the air inlet and outlet shafts for the diesel engines. On the bridge, is the centre forward spray deflector; above is the wind deflector. Above the bulwarks to the left is the attack periscope; to the right, the air-all-round periscope. Forward of the tower is the 10.5cm surface gun. Aerials for the radio-apparatus are mounted on the upper edge of the tower which served as net deflectors (BfZ/Dressler)

2 Propulsion:

Surfaced: 2 MAN, 9 cyl., 4 stroke diesel engines, each of 2200h.p. at 470r.p.m. on both shafts, max. speed 18.2 knots. Submerged: 2 SSW electric motors, supplied from 2 banks of accumulators with 62+62 cells, 740W at 11,300Ah. Range: surfaced: 12,000 sea miles at 10 knots; with diesel-electric propulsion 12,400 sea miles; 3800 sea miles at maximum speed. Submerged: 64 sea miles at 4 knots, 134 sea miles at 2 knots. Maximum oil supply: 165 tons; normal: 129 tons. Diving time 35 seconds. Diving depth 100m, with 2½ times safety factor (250m). From 1944, Schnorkel fitted on starboard side of conning-tower.

After-deck of a Class IX U-boat. Under the side, removable upper-deck gratings housed the air-tight on-deck tubes for reserve torpedoes. The torpedoes were brought into the boat through the torpedo-hatches (rear centre). In the middle, in front of the lower structure, the 3.7cm AA gun C/30 was removed (BfZ/Dressler)





U-107 (foreground) and U-38 (background) in the large construction dock of the Lorient shipyard
(Grützemacher Collection)

3 Armament

Torpedoes: 4 bow and 2 stern torpedo-tubes, 53-3cm; 10 reserve torpedoes in boat, 9 more in pressure-tight on-deck compartments (from 1943 onwards, mostly no longer on board). TMA, TMB and/or TMC torpedo mines could be laid (2 TMA or TMC, 3 TMB per tube) from the torpedo tubes.

Guns: 1×10-5cm L/45 forward of the conning-tower; 1×3-7cm AA C/30 aft of the conning-tower; 1×2cm AA C/32 on the conning-tower (180, 2625 and 2125 rounds respectively). From 1942 (in some cases not until 1943) the 3-7cm and 10-5cm guns were removed and the AA guns reinforced; first, on the upper and lower open bridges one each 2cm AA C/38; 1943 on lower open bridge 1×2cm AA four-barrel gun; on upper open bridge, 2×2cm AA C/38 single-barrel; end of 1943/start 1944 in some instances, instead of 2cm four-barrel AA gun, 1×3-7cm AA M/42 or M/43 was mounted on the lower open bridge; 2×2cm AA twin-barrel guns on the upper open bridge; in some instances 4×MG-34 or Aircraft MG-151 were fitted on the bridge.

4 Communications Equipment:

Radio transmitters: 1 Short-wave transmitter, 200W, 3-75-15MHz; 1 Long-wave transmitter, 150W, 300-500kHz; 1 Short-wave transmitter, 40W, 5-16-7MHz. Radio receivers: 1 Short-wave receiver, 1-5-25MHz; 1 all-wave receiver, 15-20,000kHz, 1-2 broadcast receivers.

Radio Direction Finder: In some instances, rod aerial for reception submerged at periscope depth. The U-boats U-103, U-104 and U-124 were, under pre-war plans, intended as leaders for U-boat packs and therefore carried additional communication equipment on board (in part removed during the war).

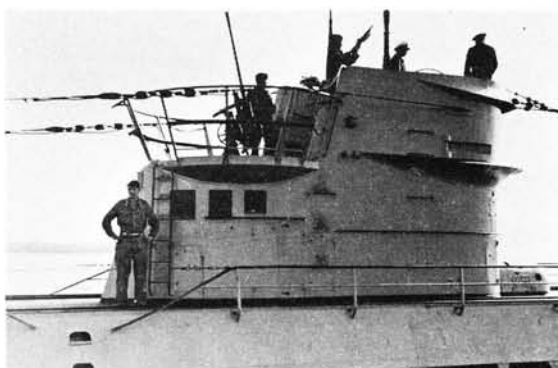
Radar: Until 1943, individual boats were fitted with the 80cm wavelength GEMA equipment, dipoles (8-12) rigidly projecting from forward edge of bridge. These were not effective because of pounding in bad weather. From 1943, retractable aerial (mattress) 'Hohentwiel' on 556MHz, fitted to retract into a shaft on the port side of the bridge.

Radar Observation Equipment: From August 1942 to summer 1943, Metox R.600, after August 1943 replaced by Hagenuk wave-detector WANZ I, in part 'Borkum'. From November 1943, the fixed WANZ II covering the whole horizon. From the end of 1943 onwards, the 'Naxos' was installed for the 8-12cm band.

U-107 Dimensions:

Length overall: 76-50m; greatest width of the hull: 6-76m; average draught with keel: 4-70m; diameter of pressure hull/body: 4-40m; height from bottom of keel to top of standards: 9-40m. Surface displacement: 1051 3/m; dive displacement: 1178 3/m; Total moulded displacement: 1430 3/m.

A Class IX U-boat returns to Lorient. In the foreground is the 3-7cm AA C/30. Alongside the deck, are the cover plates for the on-deck torpedo tubes (BfZ/Dressler)



Conning tower of a Class IX U-boat before the AA guns had been increased. On the open bridge is a 2cm AA C/30. Below the open bridge, are the air inlet and outlet shafts for the diesel engines. On the front of the tower, in the centre, is the spray deflector; above is the wind deflector
(BfZ/Dressler)

Type IX B

Engines: 2 Diesel engines, 2200 h.p. 2 Main electric motors, 500 h.p. 2 Storage battery, 62 cells. No silent running electric motors. No diesel dynamo. Fuel oil: 165-45 tons. Fuel: Nil. Surface maximum cruising speed: 18-2 knots; dived maximum cruising speed: 7-3 knots. Surface range: 12,000 miles at 10 knots; dived range: 64 miles at 4 knots.

Armament: 4 Bow tubes with torpedoes. 2 Stern tubes. No side tubes. 16 Reserve torpedoes. Guns: 1×3-7cm HA; 2×2cm twin close range weapons.

U-107: Commissioning and Trials

On 8 October 1940, Senior Lieutenant Günter Hessler commissioned U-107, in Bremen. Until March 1940, he had been captain of the torpedo-boat *Falke* and in this ship had participated in mine-laying, trade-war and escort duties before he applied for transfer to the submarine branch, the Flag-Officer of which, then Rear-Admiral Karl Dönitz, was his father-in-law. Between April and October 1940, Senior Lieutenant Hessler attended the usual U-boat training course, before joining his new command.

U-107, like all her sister-ships was attached to the 2nd U-boat Flotilla. Her home base was Wilhelmshaven but, as early as June 1940, operational H.Q. staff had moved to the new base at Lorient and in June 1941, the remaining H.Q. personnel had followed. Those boats of the flotilla still in training were 'farmed off' on to the training flotillas stationed in the Baltic during their trials and training period. Until the end of 1940, U-107 steadily completed her schedule of trials and work-up before she was declared fully operational at the beginning of 1941.

THE FIRST PATROL:

25 January to 1 March 1941 in the North Atlantic (See map p. 177)

Delayed by ice conditions, U-107 finally sailed on 25 January 1941 from Heligoland in company with U-48, hitherto the most successful U-boat, with a score of 248,020 GRT. Three days earlier the battle-cruisers, *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, had slipped out of Kiel through the Kattegat and Skagerrak into the Atlantic. On their first attempt to break out south of Iceland, they had encountered the British cruiser, *Naiad*, during the night of 29 January, but were able to shake her off and make contact with the tanker, *Adria*, waiting in the North Sea.

The Group North responsible for Operation 'Berlin' now strove to enlist U-107 and U-48, at that moment



Alongside a lighter in Lorient, a Class IX U-boat is being fitted out for patrol. In the background is the hulk of the former cruiser, Strasbourg, the one-time German, Regensburg, who went to France as reparations in 1920 (BfZ/Dressler)

CONSTRUCTIONAL DETAILS OF THE IX B CLASS BOATS

U-boat	Contract	Building No.	Keel laid	Launched	Commissioned	Operational	Lost
U-64	16 7 37	952	15 11 38	20 9 39	16 12 39	6 4 40	13 4 40*
U-65	16 7 37	953	6 12 38	6 11 39	15 2 40	9 4 40	28 4 41*
U-122 (ex U-66)	15 12 37	954	5 3 39	30 12 39	30 3 40	15 5 40	21 6 40*
U-123 (ex U-67)	15 12 37	955	15 4 39	2 3 40	30 5 40	21 9 40	19 8 44*
U-124 (ex U-68)	15 12 37	956	11 8 39	9 3 40	11 6 40	20 8 40	2 4 43*
U-103	24 5 38	966	6 9 39	12 4 40	5 7 40	21 9 40	1 44*
U-104	10 3 39	967	10 11 39	25 5 40	19 8 40	12 11 40	21 11 40*
U-105	10 3 39	968	16 11 39	15 6 40	10 9 40	24 12 40	2 6 43*
U-106	10 3 39	969	26 11 39	17 6 40	24 9 40	4 1 41	2 8 43*
U-107	10 3 39	970	6 12 39	2 7 40	8 10 40	25 1 41	18 8 44*
U-108	10 3 39	971	27 12 39	15 7 40	22 10 40	16 2 41	11 4 44*
U-109	10 3 39	972	9 3 40	14 9 40	5 12 40	8 5 41	7 5 43*
U-110	10 3 39	973	1 2 40	25 8 40	21 11 40	12 3 41	9 5 41*
U-111	8 8 38	976	20 2 40	6 9 40	19 12 40	5 5 41	4 10 41*

* Shipyard for all boats : Deutsche Schiffs- und Maschinenbau A.G., Bremen.

PATROLS, DAYS AT SEA AND SUCCESSES OF CLASS IX B BOATS

U-boat	Patrols	Days at sea	Sinkings	Sinkings shared with others	Damaged
U-64	1	8	—	—	—
U-65	6	203	12/ 68,051 GRT	1/28,124 GRT	3/ 19,490 GRT
U-122	2	16	1/ 5911,,	—	—
U-123	13	703	1 Submarine 40/ 203,424,,	4/15,646,,	6/ 53,568,,
U-124	11	472	1 Corvette 46/ 218,275,,	—	4/ 26,167,,
U-103	11	595	42/ 220,060,,	—	3/ 28,158,,
U-104	1	9	1/ 8240,,	—	1/ 10,516,,
U-105	9	460	1 Sloop 22/ 126,876,,	—	—
U-106	10	483	21/ 131,703,,	—	1 Battleship 2/ 12,885,,
U-107	14	750	38/ 217,751,,	—	3/ 25,490,,
U-108	11	459	25/ 127,990,,	—	—
U-109	9	419	14/ 88,830,,	—	1/ 6548,,
U-110	2	41	3/ 10,056,,	—	2/ 8675,,
U-111	2	110	5/ 30,171,,	—	—
	88	3978	270/1,457,338 GRT	5/43,770 GRT	25/191,497 GRT



The Italian submarine Bianchi who, with U-107, co-operated to sink the British Ocean Boarding Vessel, Manistee, on 24 February 1941

sailing out north of the Shetlands into the open ocean, to help as scouts against a fresh attempt by the Home Fleet to check the break out. The 'B.d.U.' (Flag Officer, U-Boats) rejected this operation on the grounds that U-Boats were demonstrably ill-suited for such a task on account of their lack of manoeuvrability and their restricted horizon, particularly when air-reconnaissance could be employed in the same area. The battle-cruisers did in fact succeed in breaking out unnoticed through the Denmark Straits on 3/4 February and, after taking on fresh supplies south of Greenland from the tanker, *Schlettstadt*, began their operations on 7 February along the Halifax-England (HX) convoy route.

First Blood

In the meantime U-107 and U-48 when ordered to join forces on 29 January with U-106, U-94, U-103, U-52, U-93 and U-101 to the north-west of Ireland; the pack was to be ready for wide-ranging east-to-west aggressive sweeps to detect convoys, in conjunction with

aerial reconnaissance by the four-engined FW 200 (Condor) aircraft of the 1st K.G. 40.

On 3 February, shortly after midnight, while cruising at the north-western tip of the pack, U-107 sighted the British steamship, *Empire Citizen* (4683GRT), the former German *Wahehe* of the German African line; she was steering a solitary course south-west in an attempt to link up with her convoy, OB.279. After an abortive approach run, one torpedo stopped the ship and a final hit sank her.

In the evening, Senior Lieutenant Hessler overtook the convoy. On receiving his report that he was shadowing, the B.d.U. brought the nearest boats, U-52, U-103 with U-96 and U-123 (on weather duty) into action. During the night's shadowing, U-107 fired a torpedo at the 'Ocean Boarding Vessel', *Crispin* (5051 GRT), who was steaming apart from the convoy which was under destroyer escort. Her boilers exploded and the ship disappeared. The convoy had now reached 20° W longitude and broke up—as was then the practice—before the other U-boats could arrive on the scene.

In the mist of the Newfoundland Banks, the battle-cruisers, Gneisenau (forward, a 10.5cm AA tower) and Scharnhorst (an Arado Ar-196 ready to take off from the catapult), search for convoy HX in February 1941



U-Boat Alert

The Admiralty issued a U-boat warning and the next convoys (e.g. SC.20 coming from the west) were diverted. At noon on 6 February one of the stragglers from this convoy, the Canadian, *Maplecourt* (3388GRT), steamed right ahead of *U-107* who had returned to her operational area; the first torpedo missed, but Hessler sank the ship in a submerged attack.

The U-boat attacks were not the only threat to force the Admiralty to divert the convoy traffic. The appearance of heavy German surface-units on the HX and HG/SL routes threw the North Atlantic convoy timetable into confusion. On 8 February, the battleship, *Ramillies*, sighted one of the two German battle-cruisers lying in wait to attack convoy HX.108. They turned away and *Ramillies* reported the enemy as a heavy cruiser.

The Admiralty immediately dispersed the Home Fleet in three groups to intercept the heavy cruisers presumed to be making for home (only *Admiral Scheer* or *Admiral Hipper*, in fact, passed through the area from 20 to 24 March). *Admiral Hipper*, after refuelling from the tanker, *Spichern*, had first hunted along the HX-route from 7–10 February and then been brought into action against convoy HG.53; this convoy had been reported by *U-37* who then attacked in combination with FW 200s of the 1st K.G. 40. *Hipper* had found only one straggler before the unescorted convoy SLS.65 steamed into her path on the morning of 12 February; the convoy lost seven of its 14 ships.

In the meantime, on 9 February the U-boat pack had moved off northwards towards Iceland but, including the Italian submarines operating to the south, the pack destroyed only stragglers from convoys HX.106 and SC.21; and then more stragglers from HX.107 after a further move close to the Icelandic coastline. No convoy-sightings were reported.

CONVOY BATTLE: OB.287

At last, at noon on 19 February, one of the FW 200s flying from Bordeaux to Stavanger reported convoy OB.287 north-west of the Hebrides; this consisted of 45 ships, two of whom the aircraft had bombed and sunk. The B.d.U. immediately ordered *U-73*, *U-107*, *U-48*, *U-96* and *U-69*, and the Italians, *Bianchi*, *Marcello* and *Barbarigo*, to form a line across the convoy's course. OB.287 succeeded in penetrating the line in the south, where the Italian submarines had not yet taken up their positions.

On 20 February, three FW 200s attacked the convoy and damaged four ships, but their position reports varied so widely that the patrol line could be directed

A Focke-Wulf FW200 C-1 (Condor of the 1st K.G.40) as used in February 1941 to reconnoitre convoys HG.53, OB.287 and OB.288 for the U-boats (BfZ/Eckert)



On 2 July 1941, *U-107* returned to Lorient with 14 pendants. With white cap-cover, the Captain, Snr.Lt Hessler; in front, the 1st Officer of the Watch, Jnr.Lt Helmut Witte, who later had great success as Captain of *U-159*. On the tower is the ship's badge: 4 Aces (Helmut Witte)

to a new position based only on estimates. On 21 February, a FW 200 scored bomb-hits on a tanker just west of the line, and *U-96* was then able to sink her. The U-boats did not find the convoy, though the destroyer, *Montgomery*, sank the *Marcello*.

Meanwhile another FW 200 had sighted west of Ireland the next convoy, OB.288, and had damaged two ships. *U-73*, *U-69*, *U-96*, *U-107*, *U-552*, *U-97*, *Barbarigo* and *Bianchi* formed a line of interception; the most northerly boat, *U-73*, made only a brief contact in the evening, so that on 23 February a new line had to be formed. Through this line on 24 February, the convoy duly steamed; *U-96*, *U-69* and the newly-arrived *U-95*

Through the morning haze, the Officer of the Watch and First Mate watch a freighter sink after a successful shot (Bundesarchiv)





The transfer of on-deck torpedoes was hard work. Booms and cranes had to be set up and firmly lashed, so that with the help of blocks and tackles the heavy torpedoes could be lowered through the narrow, sloping hatch into the fore-ends, even when the boat was rolling in a swell



When the first torpedo did not have sufficient effect and other torpedoes had to be economised, the 10.5cm gun came into action, as seen here against the Eskdene. On the foredeck, aft of the jumping-wire, the T-shaped head of the underwater sound location device can be recognised (Bundesarchiv)

sank four ships before the convoy dispersed in the morning at 20° W; U-95, U-96, U-73 and *Bianchi* were each able to sink one more ship.

A Stubborn Adversary

Before midnight on 23 February Senior Lieutenant Hessler had sighted near the convoy the Ocean Boarding Vessel, *Manistee* (5368 GRT); shortly afterwards, *Bianchi*, commanded by Lt.-Cdr. Giovannini, also made contact from the other side. The first torpedo of a double fan shot from U-107 hit the *Manistee* on the port side, but the crew succeeded in getting the ship under way again at 8 knots within 30 minutes. A hit by the *Bianchi* showed little effect and three fired shortly afterwards by U-107 were duds. Only in the morning of 24 February, after a number of further attempted attacks by U-107 and *Bianchi*, whom the skilfully handled British ship out-manoeuvred again and again, did Senior Lieutenant Hessler succeed in sinking the *Manistee* with a double fan salvo. Having fired all her ammunition, U-107 had to return to base and sailed into Lorient on 1 March, with a tally of four ships sunk, a total of 18,490 GRT.

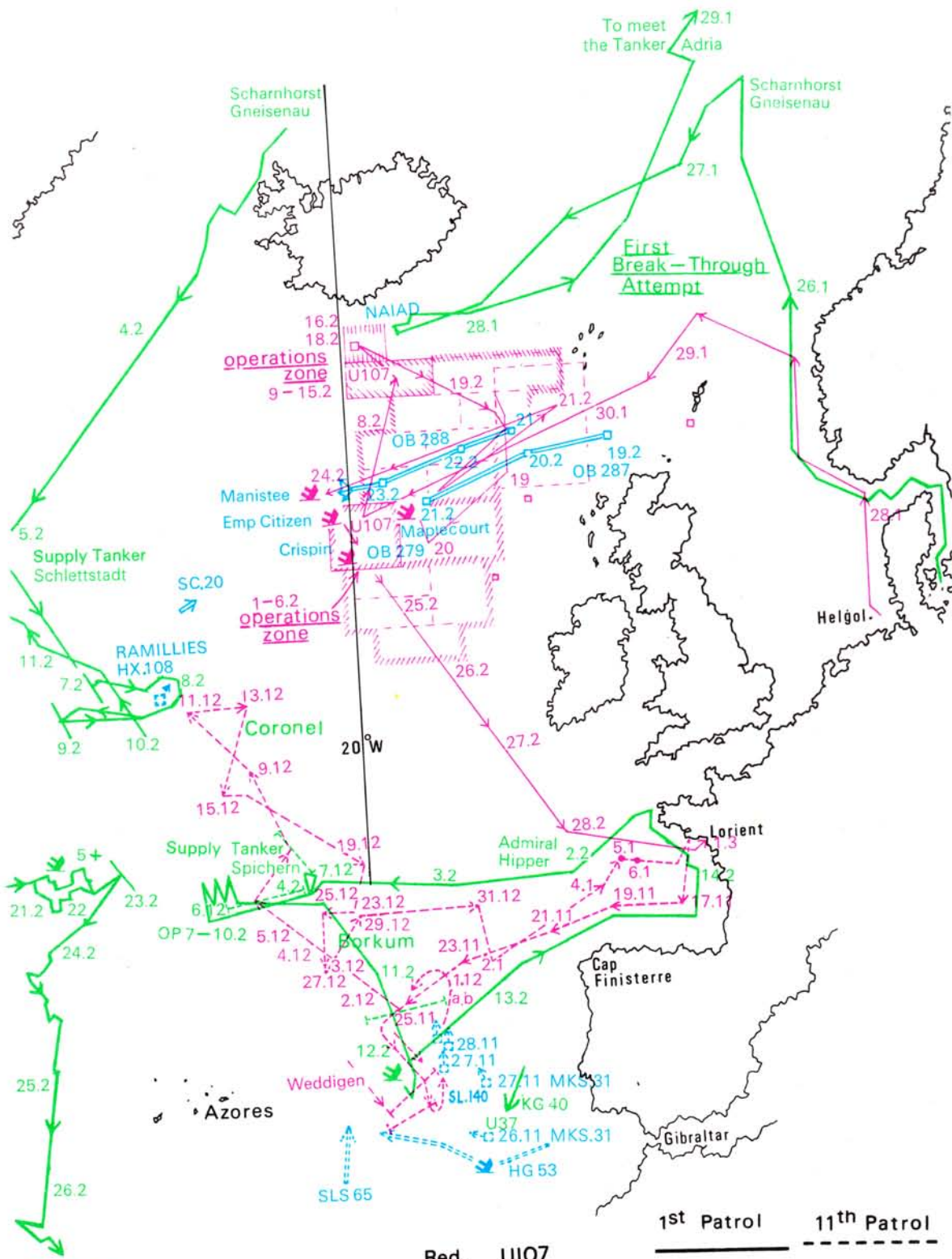
THE SECOND PATROL: 29 March—2 July 1941 off Freetown (See map p. 184)





The operational readiness of the first large series of Class IX boats; the near-peace-time traffic condition prevailing according to available reports; and the

favourable refuelling and provisioning situation existing as a result of the supply-ships sent out into the Atlantic in connection with operations of heavy naval forces; all these factors combined to decide the B.d.U. to dispatch operational Class IX boats from Lorient to the neighbourhood of Freetown, beginning in March 1941. In the summer of 1940, the *UA*, built in Kiel for Turkey, had returned from this area with a score of seven ships sunk (40,706 GRT) and in January 1941, U-65 had sunk no less than eight ships (47,785 GRT) and one damaged by torpedo.

At the end of February, U-105, U-124 and U-106 sailed and, after refuelling from the German tanker, *Charlotte Schliemann* ('Culebra') lying in Las Palmas, set parallel courses southwards on longitude 20°, 21° and 22° respectively. After only two days, on 7 March, the report was received from the battle-cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, who were operating in this area that, after sighting the battleship, *Malaya*, they had broken off their attack on convoy SL.67, which they had sighted 300 miles north-east of the Cape Verde Islands.

U-105 and U-124 were brought into the attack on the following night and sank five ships in the convoy. They did not sight *Malaya*, so that the German battle-cruisers could not renew the attack. A fortnight later, U-106 succeeded in calling up U-105 to attack the next convoy, SL.68, and, in a model joint operation—relieving each other in turn—they sank seven ships between them; U-106 fired torpedoes at *Malaya* and damaged her in position 20° 02'N and 25° 55'W.



	1st Patrol	11th Patrol
Red. U107	_____	_____
Green. German Units	_____	_____
Blue. Allied Forces	_____	_____
Sinkings		
Convoy Tracks (see p.192)		



On the return from the most successful patrol, the Flag-Officer U-boats, Vice-Admiral Dönitz, decorates his son-in-law with the Ritterkreuz; to date Snr.Lt Hessler had sunk 22 ships of 105,189 GRT (Bundesarchiv)

Success in Warm Waters

The next boat to sail, *U-107*, set course southwards at the beginning of April, west of longitudes 24° and 25°, hoping if possible to catch the next convoy making a wider sweep westwards. This disposition did not succeed, but, in compensation, Senior Lieutenant Hessler struck a trade-route north-west of the Canaries and, in underwater attacks on 8 and 9 April, was able to sink the British steamships, *Eskdene* (3829 GRT), *Helena Margaretha* (3316 GRT), *Harpathian* (4671 GRT) and the British tanker, *Duffield* (8516 GRT).

Two other attacks on 13 and 14 April further to the south, although failures, and several sightings, led Senior Lieutenant Hessler to radio the B.d.U. on 17 April, pointing out the favourable traffic conditions

In mid-Atlantic on 18 March 1941, *U-124* (Snr.Lt Schulz, on the bridge, with forage-cap) met the heavy cruiser, Admiral Scheer (left), returning from the Indian Ocean, to hand over crystals for the cruiser's radar apparatus. In the background, the auxiliary cruiser, *Schiff 41-Kormoran*, from whom *U-124* replenished her fuel and torpedoes (W. Schulz)



north of the Cape Verde Islands, between 24° and 28° W, so the B.d.U. allowed the U-boat to operate in these waters.

But traffic now ceased and, apart from the British freighter, *Calchas* (10,305 GRT), who was sunk by two submerged attacks, nothing more came into view. On 28 April Hessler was forced to leave his billet to reach the 'Andalusian' refuelling area punctually on 3 May, where he was due to replenish his fuel supplies at point 'Red' from the supply-ship, *Nordmark*. On passage, *U-107* encountered the British motor-vessel, *Lassell* (7417 GRT), on 30 April, and sank her in a submerged attack.

On 5 May, *U-105* and *U-107* were able to report completion of revictualling and refuelling from the *Nordmark*. But while *U-105*, who had replenished her stock of torpedoes at the last refuelling returned to her billet between Freetown and Dakar, *U-107*, with only one torpedo unfired, had to await the arrival of the supply-ship, *Egerland*, on 9 May. On 11 May she too was able to sail for Freetown.

On 17 and 18 May, while still en route, she sank the Dutch tanker, *Marisa* (8029 GRT), and the British ship, *Piako* (8286 GRT), during night surface-attacks in which her guns also played a part. After *U-105* had also sunk five ships further to the north by 17 May, the C-in-C., South Atlantic, halted the traffic and for a time sightings ceased.

Off Freetown

The B.d.U. ordered *U-105* and *U-107*, and *U-38*, *U-103* and *U-106*, who had sailed by 21 May from Andalusia, after refuelling from the *Egerland*, to intercept convoys off Freetown and to harry them over a considerable distance. The disposition was fruitless.

Reinforced by the *UA*, they were from 27 May allotted new operational areas in east-west patrols off Freetown against ships travelling independently. There was immediate success against the traffic which was beginning to build up again. *U-38* and *U-107* sank five ships each; *U-103* four, *U-106* three and *U-105* one; only the trouble-prone, *UA*, came away empty-handed.

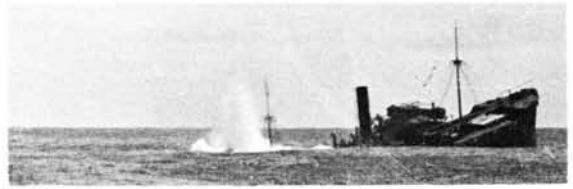
Soon after midnight on 27 May, *U-107* sank the British ship, *Colonial* (15108 GRT), in a surface attack, the Greek ship, *Papalemos* (3748 GRT), in the afternoon of 28 May in a submerged attack: the British ship,

The Flag-Officer U-boats, Vice-Admiral Dönitz, awaits one of the boats returning from Freetown in July 1941; *U-38* (Snr.Lt Liebe) with 8 pendants (Dressler Collection)

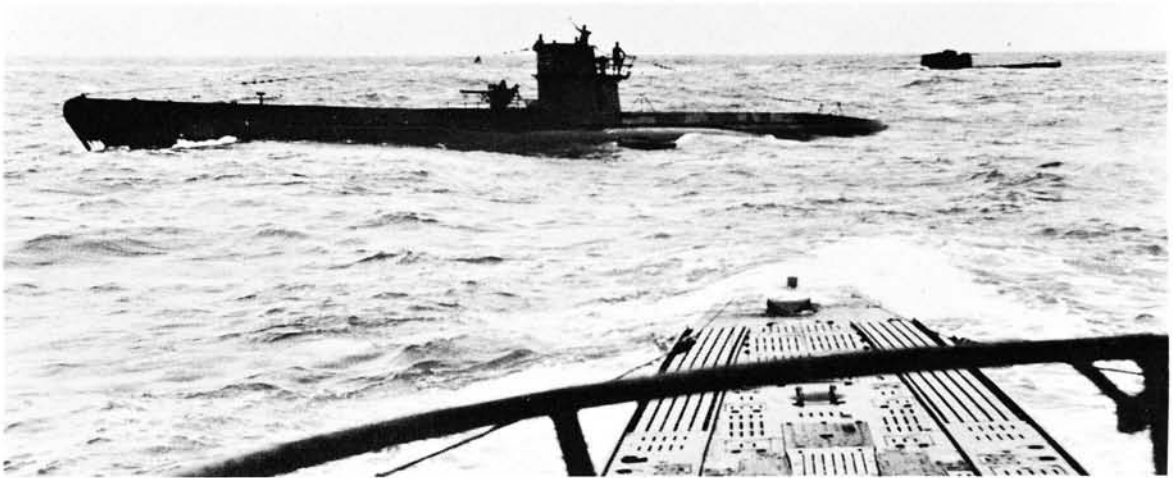




During the convoy action against HX.112, the destroyer, Bulldog, succeeded in boarding U-110, who had been forced to the surface by depth-charges and abandoned. Bulldog took the boat in tow. The secret information thus obtained was of the greatest importance in eliminating the German supply-ships in May and June 1941 (IWM)



After one hit amidships, the Piako was abandoned. Another hit aft caused her to sink by the stern (Bundesarchiv)



On 18 and 19 June U-103, U-107, the Class VII-C boat, U-69 (centre), and the former Turkish boat, UA, wait in vain for the tanker, Lothringen, who four days previously had fallen a victim to British reconnaissance (Bundesarchiv)

A boat with survivors from the Marisa comes alongside. Lt Hessler (white shorts) questions the shipwrecked sailors and gives them course directions (Bundesarchiv)

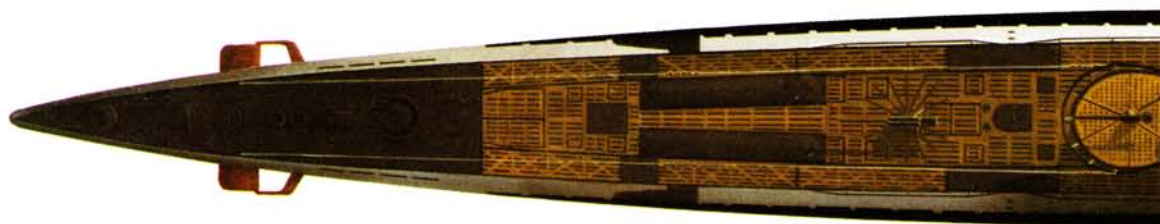
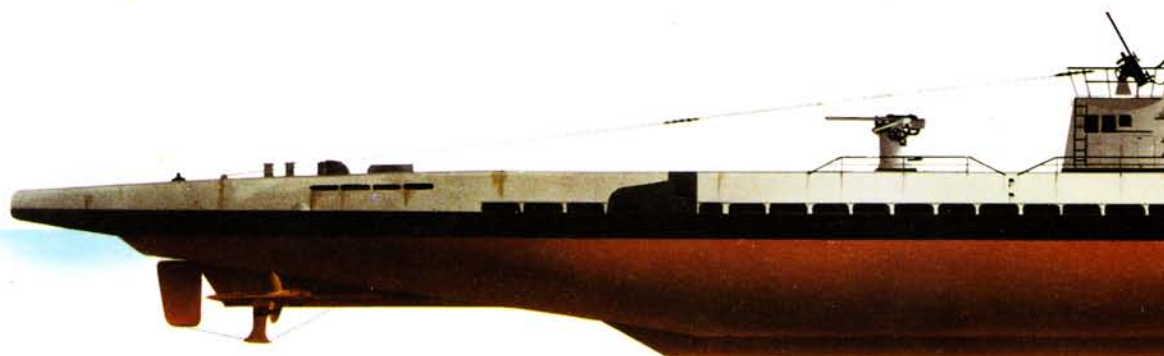


U.107

The 'Four Aces' was the insignia of U.107 who, on her second patrol off Freetown, sank more tonnage than any other U-boat of the Second World War.

This Type IXB U-boat is shown here as she appeared after anti-fouling on return from patrol in 1941.

D. Johnson © Profile Publications Ltd



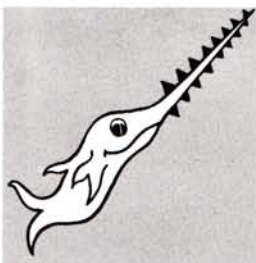
U.47 (Kl. Prien)
The Bull of Scapa Flow.
This badge was carried not only by the U.47 but by all the other submarines of the 7th U-flotilla.



U.108 (Kl. Schultz)
The coat-of-arms of Danzig.



U.106 (Kl. Rasch)
The Swordfish is white against the colour of the conning tower.

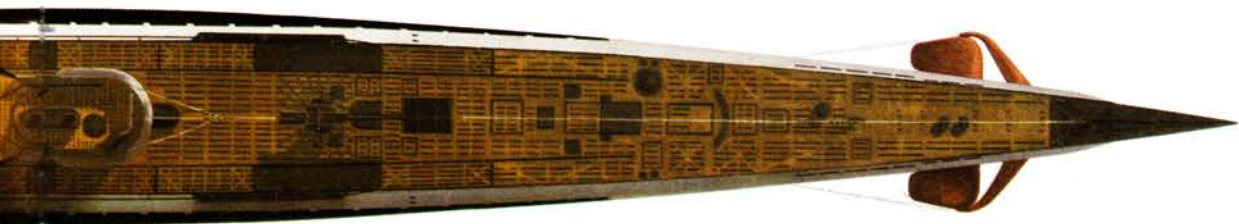
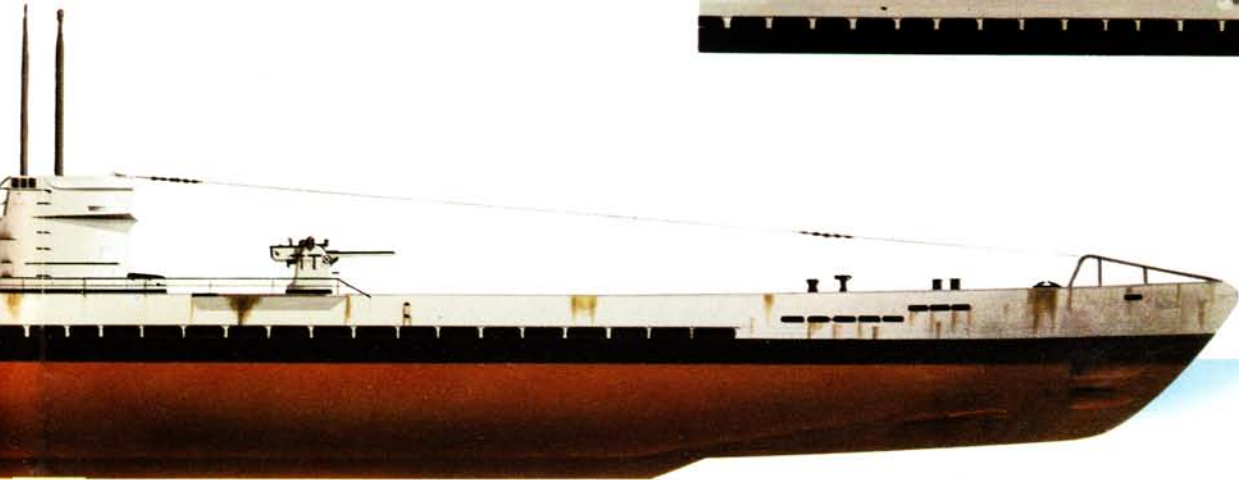
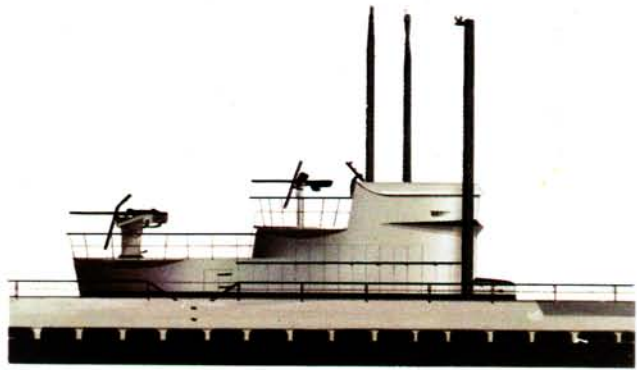


U.564 (Kk. Suhren)
'Three times black tom-cat' is painted against the standard colour of the conning tower.



To contest Coastal Command in the Bay of Biscay in 1943, extra close-range anti-aircraft weapons were mounted in the 'winter-garden' fitted abaft of the bridge. The two 10.5cm guns were removed at this time from the fore and after casing.

The W/T mast is obscured by the Schnorchel, depicted here in its raised position, which was fitted in 1944.



U.123 (KI. Mochle. Hardegen)

A steel helmet, swords and laurel wreath were painted in gold against the tower surround

U.552 (KI. Topp)
The Black Devil.



U.130 (Kk. Kals 1941/3)

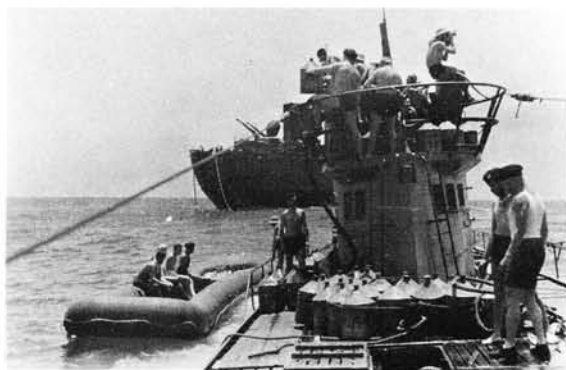
The Knight's Helmet. The insignia is correct but the colouring is an assessment.



U.404

The Bows of a Viking Ship. The insignia is correct but the colouring is an assessment.





On 5 May 1941, U-107 took on supplies in mid-Atlantic from the supply-ship, Nordmark, sister-ship of the famous Altmark. While fuel is taken aboard through fire-hoses, rubber dinghies bring cans of lubricant. The lookout must not be relaxed (Bundesarchiv)



On 5 May 1941, in mid-Atlantic, U-107 met the supply-ship Nordmark, sister-ship of the famous Altmark, to replenish fuel. The towing-hawser and the fire-hoses for taking on fuel are prepared (Bundesarchiv)



In the summer of 1941, there was still no danger from the air in the open Atlantic. The crew of U-107 at physical training in the fresh air and sun. In the foreground, the 10.5cm gun (Bundesarchiv)

The British M/T Duffield, had already been hit five times before she broke up and exploded after the sixth shot which hit on the port quarter (Dressler Collection)



Sire (5664GRT), who sailed into sight on the morning of 31 May; at midday on 1 June the British motor-vessel, *Alfred Jones* (5013 GRT), who was thought to be an auxiliary cruiser and who sank only after the second finishing shot; and on the morning of 8 June the British ship, *Adda*, (7816 GRT). After taking on further supplies from the *Egerland* or the *Lothringen*, who were to arrive during the middle of June, U-38, U-103, U-107, UA and the Class VII C boat U-69, who had mined the ports of Lagos and Takoradi, all intended to carry on their operations off Freetown—but, this was not to be.

THE DEATH OF THE SUPPLY SYSTEM

On 7 May and 10 May, the destroyers, *Somali* and *Bulldog*, had succeeded in boarding the sinking German weather-ship, *München*, and U-110, respectively. The encoding and decoding documents captured in these actions enabled the British Y-Service to tap the German radio-traffic; this set-back provided the decisive foothold for mopping up the German supply system after the sinking of the battleship, *Bismarck*.

On 28 May, in the South Atlantic the blockade-runner, *Lech*; on 29 May, in the North Atlantic the weather-ships, *August Wriedt* and *Heinrich Freese*; on 3 June, in the Davis Straits the tanker, *Belchen*, while refuelling the U-93; on 4 June, north of Azores, the supply-ship, *Gonzenheim*; on 4 and 5 June, in the 'Andalusian' supply area, the supply-ships, *Esso Hamburg* and *Egerland*; on 6 June, near the Azores the blockade-runner, *Elbe*; on 12 June, north-west of Cape Finisterre the tanker, *Friedrich Breme*, and, on 15 June, while sailing out to the supply area in the mid-Atlantic, the U-boat supply-ship, *Lothringen*. All these vessels fell victims in these operations.

U-38 reported on 7 June the sinking of the *Egerland* before refuelling had been carried out; U-103, U-107, UA and U-69 waited in vain for the *Lothringen* on 18/19 June. The B.d.U. was then forced to break off the operations and to order the boats to return, using the 'Culebra' supply facilities as appropriate.

U-107, who, while sailing to the supply-rendezvous had still managed to sink the Greek ship, *Pandias* (4981 GRT), on 13 June, immediately set course for home; she was already lying too far to the north to take part in the operation against convoy SL.76 sighted by U-69 on the way to Las Palmas.

On 2 July Hessler sailed into Lorient after sinking 14 ships, with a total of 86,699 GRT. This was the most successful operational patrol of any U-boat during the Second World War.

THE THIRD PATROL:

30 August to 11 November off Freetown

The loss of the supply-ships and the diversion of the British traffic into the Pan-American Security Zone and its concentration (see Warship Profile No. 5) into convoys led in July to the complete failure of the operations of *U-123*, *U-109* and *U-66*. Even the attempt at the end of July to intercept SL convoys off the West African coast with a 'rake' composed of *U-124*, *U-93* and *U-94* met with no success.

The B.d.U. therefore dispatched stronger forces to intercept the SL convoys. *U-107* operated for six weeks in this area.

U-boats in company with U-107: U-68, 67, 66, 103, 108 and 125.

Convoy: SL 87: first sighted by U-107 on 21 September.

Escorts: Bideford, Gorleston, Gardenia, Commandant Duboc.

Sinkings: Silverbelle (5302)—U-68; Niceto de Larrinaga (5591)—U-103; Edward Blyden (5003)—U-103; St Clair (3753)—U-67; Dixcove (3790)—U-107; John Holt (4975)—U-107; Lafian (4876)—U-107, (the last three all on 24 September).

At the end of patrol, Hessler was relieved by Junior Lieutenant Harald Gelhaus.

THE FOURTH PATROL:

10-26 December 1941, against Convoy HG.76

The development of the crisis in the Mediterranean (the heavy losses of supply ships for the German-Italian Africa Army and the offensive of the British 8th Army against Cyrenaica) had forced the German Naval Operations Command (seekriegsleitung) to reinforce heavily the German U-boats transferred to the Mediterranean; and also, at the cost of temporary dislocation of the Atlantic operations, from the middle of November 1941 the B.d.U. was compelled to concentrate to the west of Gibraltar all available U-boats.

The Forces Gather

U-107, sailing from Lorient on 10 December, was directed to these waters where an HG convoy was



In the restricted Commanding Officer's cabin, the Captain, Snr. Lt Hessler, works on his patrol report before returning to base
(Bundesarchiv)

expected. On 14 December, German agents in Algieras reported the departure of the convoy, which passed Cape Tarifa at 2045. This was HG.76 with 32 merchant ships, escorted by the 36th Escort Group under Commander Walker: the sloops *Stork*, *Deptford*, with the corvettes *Rhododendron*, *Marigold*, *Convolvulus*, *Pentstemon*, *Gardenia*, *Samphire* and *Vetch*. They were joined by the first escort-carrier, *Audacity*, and a Support Group, with the escorting destroyers *Blankney*, *Exmoor* and *Stanley*. Simultaneously, a U-boat hunting group of Force H, with the destroyers *Gurkha*, *Foxhound*, *Croome* and *Nestor*, had slipped out; to this force, *U-127* fell victim on 15 December. In addition a Near-East convoy was approaching, with four ships escorted by one destroyer and three corvettes.

On receipt of the agents' reports, the B.d.U. brought *U-107*, *U-127*, *U-574*, *U-67*, *U-108* and *U-131*, waiting west of Gibraltar, into action as the 'Seeräuber' ('Corsair') group, directing them to form a patrol line south of Cape St Vincent. At midnight on

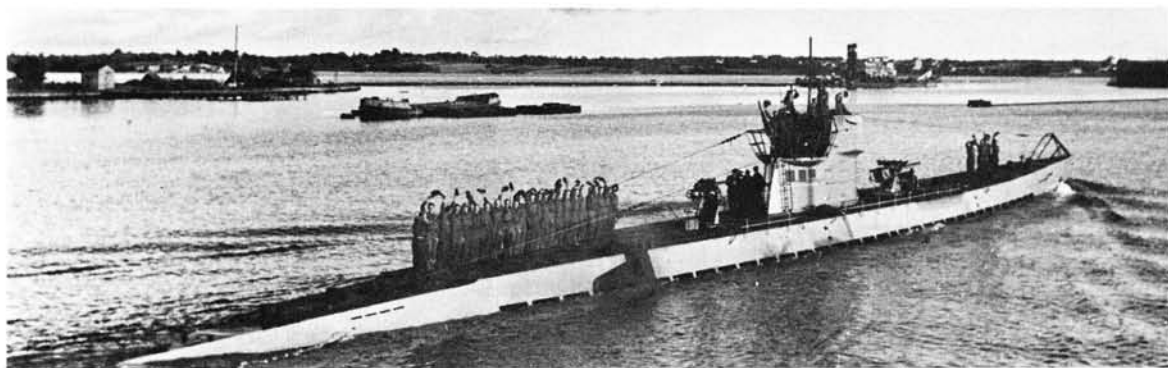
The Free-French dispatch-boat, Commandant Duboc who, with three British ships, escorted Convoy SL.87 that was attacked by U-107 in September 1941 (IWM)



The Commanding Officer of HMS Hesperus, Commander D. G. F. W. Macintyre, DSO, RN, on the bridge







On 30 August 1941, Snr.Lt Hessler (waving his white cap) left Lorient with U-107 for the third patrol (Bundesarchiv)

14/15 December U-74, on course for the Mediterranean, sighted the Near-East convoy and shortly afterwards one of its freighters, the *Empire Barracuda*, was sunk by U-77, also sailing under orders to the Mediterranean. On 15 December, FW 200 aircraft of the 1st/K.G. 40 were dispatched to reconnoitre in support of the U-boats; however, they did not find the convoy. Because of the concentration of U-boats that had been spotted, the British command had ordered the convoy to swing south, close under the Moroccan coast.

Only at 11.15 hrs. on 16 December did a FW 200 aircraft sight the convoy far to the south of the U-boat patrol line, which had meanwhile moved westwards and been reinforced by U-434. At 1731, U-108, the most southerly boat, reported contact and, after the arrival of U-67 at 2030, attacked at 2119 hrs. After one quadruple and one double fan salvo, she heard several detonations, but these were probably depth-charges from the escorts because no ship was hit.

Battle is Joined

At 0645 on 17 December, U-131 also reported contact but, after a number of attacks by *Swordfish* aircraft, one of which she shot down, the boat could not dive. After a long hunt by *Stork*, *Blankney*, *Exmoor* and *Stanley*, she was forced to scuttle. At 1008, U-108 came up with the convoy once more and at 1347 summoned U-107, who shadowed until 0051.

In the morning of 18 December, U-434, the only boat still in touch with the convoy, was detected by the destroyers *Blankney* and *Stanley* and at 1055, after a long depth-charge counter-attack, she was forced to surface and abandon ship.

Although the Martlet fighters of the *Audacity* were continuously in action in an attempt to deter the German reconnaissance aircraft, between 1200 and 1500 on 18 December, four FW 200s were able to pass enemy reports of the convoy; this first brought up U-107 at 2000, but the boat was immediately forced to dive by the corvette, *Pentstemon*. At 2132, U-67 attempted to torpedo the *Convolvulus* but was driven off by the ship. During the night of 18/19 December, at 0315 U-574 and at 0455, U-108 made contact and were both able to work their way in to a firing course: at 0515 U-574 sank the destroyer, *Stanley*, but in a counter-attack was rammed and destroyed by Commander Walker in the *Stork*. U-108 sank the freighter, *Ruckinge* (2869 GRT), with a triple fan salvo.

SECOND ROUND: Loss of *Audacity*

At 1230 on 19 December, the first FW 200 shadowing aircraft was shot down by a Martlet; the second FW 200, before being driven away, at once passed her enemy report and transmitted a D/F signal at 1330; the third aircraft was shot down at 1700. At 1653, U-107 had found the enemy convoy again, and Junior Lieutenant Gelhaus now hung on grimly, even trying—though without success—to sink a corvette with a quadruple fan salvo at 0617 on 20 December. Thanks to his running reports until 2330, U-108 and U-67, and later U-567, U-751 and U-71, who were on their way out and had been thrown into the battle on the same day, came up one after the other.

At 1010 on 21 December U-67 was driven off by an aircraft from *Audacity*, and two others at 1632 and 2250 by the corvettes, *Marigold* and *Samphire*. In the meantime, Senior Lieutenant Endrass in U-567 had closed and sunk the freighter, *Annavore* (3324 GRT), with a fan salvo. In the resultant confusion of the hunt, to which Endrass fell victim, Senior Lieutenant Bigalk in U-751 managed to get in a shot at the detached carrier, *Audacity*, who sank after two hits from a fan salvo, finally and a finishing shot. An attack by U-67 at 0008 failed.

U-71 (and U-125, who was on her way to America) shadowed during 22 December; U-751, who had missed a destroyer with a quadruple fan salvo, also maintained contact, but the last two boats were driven off by the corvette, *Vetch*, and the reinforcing destroyers, *Vanquisher* and *Witch*.

U-107 had broken off the engagement on the morning of 21 December when she turned for home; she sailed into Lorient on 26 December.

The *Stork*. Bow view of the sloop, *Stork*



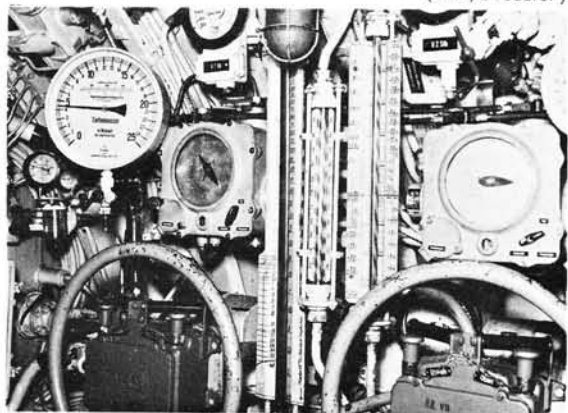


HMS Audacity



With a 'cunning book', a volume of Talbot-Booth's Merchant Ships, the experts try to identify a ship just sunk

The depth-keeping panel of a U-boat. Two 'plane' wheels for the fore and after hydroplanes, with the hydroplane indicators and depth-indicator (to 250m). In the centre, the Papenberg trim-indicator and the depth-indicator for shallow depths, which was specially important for accurate trimming at periscope depth (BfZ/Dressler)



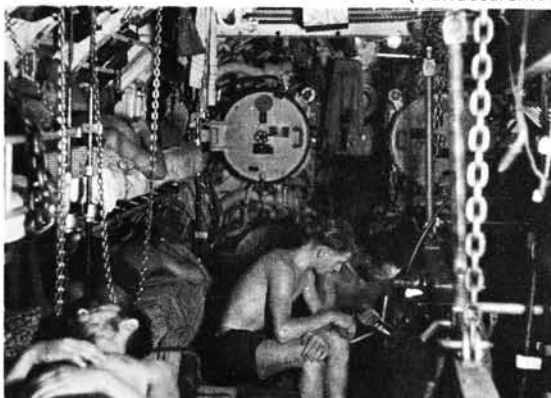
A Class IX U-boat returns to Lorient with empty bunkers



After the unsuccessful operation against Convoy SL.122, the boats of the 'Iltis' group reached the U-boat tanker U-460 (left) on 26 September 1942, to continue operations off Freetown with full tanks (BfZ/Dressler)

In the for'd tube space. In the foreground are the rear doors of the four torpedo-tubes; the spare torpedoes are stowed under the deck-plates. In these crowded, cramped quarters those off duty live and sleep while, alongside, the 'torpedo-mixer' adjusts a torpedo

(Bundesarchiv)



The commander of the 2nd U-boat Flotilla, Lt-Cdr Schütze, formerly captain of U-25 and U-103, greets U-107 on her return from operations against Convoy HG.76; on the left is her second captain, Jnr.Lt Gelhaus

(Bundesarchiv)



THE FIFTH PATROL: 7 January to 7 March 1942, off the east coast of the USA

Although Hitler had declared war on the USA on 11 December 1941, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, this development came as a complete surprise to the U-boat command. The U-boats were still concentrated off Gibraltar because of the Mediterranean situation and it was only in the second half of December that the first five U-boats could sail for 'Drumbeat', an operation which had been planned to open hostilities with an impact.

From 11 January to 7 February they sank 26 ships, with a total of 163,021 GRT—*U-123* alone sank nine ships totalling 53,173 GRT.

Between 3 and 9 January these ships were followed by a second wave, consisting of *U-103*, *U-106*, *U-108* and *U-128*. Junior Lieutenant Gelhaus sailed on 7 January and steamed on a great-circle course across the North Atlantic, at his most economical speed to his first target-area, CB 60. On 26 January the B.d.U. radioed their operational areas to the boats.

U-boats: U-106, U-107.

Area: Delaware Bay to Cape Hatteras.

Sinkings: San Arcadio (7419)—U-107 (31 Jan.); Major Wheeler (3431)—U-107 (6 Feb.).

On completion of this operation and whilst going alongside a class VII boat to refuel, *U-107* was rammed by *U-564* whose bow caps were damaged. After many frustrations and missed opportunities (*U-107* could only damage the Norwegian tanker, *Egda*, 10,068 GRT), both boats finally returned to base at Lorient.

THE SIXTH PATROL: 21 April to 11 July 1942 in the Caribbean

In March and April, the German U-boats had continued to score notable successes off the east coast of the U.S.A. against the individual traffic which was still dense. So *U-107*, who had sailed again on 21 April, was instructed by radio on 5 May to set course for square CA 79, off Cape Hatteras. In the first days of May successes slumped drastically in these previously profitable waters. On 9 May *U-558* reported the first convoy in this area. In fact, after long hesitation, and in response to British pressure the U.S. Navy had at long last begun the introduction of compulsory convoy traffic off the east coast.

To obtain detailed information about the new traffic routes, the B.d.U. ordered *U-593*, *U-455* and *U-107* on 14 May to occupy the entrances to New York, Delaware Bay and Chesapeake Bay. Gelhaus, now a Senior Lieutenant, pushed in from the south-east as far as the Diamond Shoal lightship; he waited submerged by day and cruised at night northwards towards Cape Henry, but, apart from coastguard vessels and two guardships, nothing was sighted. Repeated cruising off Chesapeake Bay brought nothing either. On 19 May, Senior Lieutenant Gelhaus was given freedom of manoeuvre southwards and he requested the Yucatan Straits as his operational area. As other boats were already operating there, the B.d.U. allocated to him the area south of Cuba and announced refuelling arrangements for his return voyage.

On the voyage down the middle of the Florida Straits, *U-107* sighted no traffic, nor naval activity; there was, however, plenty of aerial reconnaissance—though

inexperienced. Even in the Santaren Channel no traffic was found, but, in the old Bahama Channel, small coastal vessels were running close in to the Cuban shore. At last, after negotiating the Windward Passage on 28 May, *U-107* sighted during the next night the small British freighter, *Western Head* (2599 GRT), on a closing course. After two hits she disappeared in 30 seconds.

Sink at Sight

On 30 May *U-107* reached her operational area, west of Jamaica. The next day, in three submerged attacks, she sank the Panamanian freighter, *Bushranger* (4536 GRT), who was making for the Yucatan Straits; she also sank in 30 seconds.

On 4 June, south of the western tip of Cuba, *U-107* sighted a passenger ship making for the Yucatan Straits at 16 knots but the U-boat could not overtake her. The following day, south of the Cayman Islands, there appeared a convoy of four freight-liners escorted by two destroyers and a flying-boat. The convoy was steering a south-easterly course, but Gelhaus could not approach within firing range. Before first light on 7 June *U-107* sank in a surface attack the Honduran freighter, *Castilla* (3910 GRT), south-west of the Island of Pinos. On 8 June, Gelhaus tried to close within range of a freighter off the east coast of Yucatan, but he was driven off by an escorting corvette and a flying-boat. In the night of 8/9 June the U.S. freighter, *Suweid* (3249 GRT), heading for the Yucatan Straits, sailed across the boat's tubes and was sunk. During the same evening the freighter, *Merrimack*, (2606 GRT) suffered the same fate.

These sinkings, including the operations further north of the *U-504* (five ships), led to the traffic being stopped. After three days of frustration, Gelhaus investigated on his own initiative, the south coast of Jamaica but he sighted nothing except aircraft. On 15 June, he had to leave for home in order to reach his supply-ship at the appointed time.

Homeward Run

On 23 June, when already homeward bound, *U-107* sighted a fast freighter steaming westward, but a quadruple fan salvo fired from a position astern could not reach the target. In accordance with his orders, Gelhaus consequently searched in these waters for signs of a traffic artery, but in vain. Continuing on his course to rendezvous with the supply-ship, he ran across the Dutch liner, *Jagersfontein* (10,083 GRT), a troop transport; on the evening of 26 June, in spite of the great range, she was stopped with a double fan salvo and sunk by a finishing shot.

The captain, Snr.Lt Gelhaus, watches the 1st Officer of the Watch, Jnr.Lt Rauch, casting off for the seventh patrol
(Bundesarchiv)



The next day, *U-107* made contact with the U-tanker *U-459*; by 28 June, with the Class VII boats, *U-437*, *U-571*, *U-84*, *U-134* and *U-575*, she had taken on sufficient supplies for the homeward run to Lorient where she arrived after an uneventful run on 11 July.

THE SEVENTH PATROL: 15 August to 18 November 1942 off Freetown: RAF Retaliation

The equipping of British anti-submarine aircraft with the ASV II radar had made the crossing of the Bay of Biscay increasingly dangerous for the German U-boats. From August 1942, therefore, they were fitted with an improvised device, the 'Metox'*—known to the crews as the 'Biscay Cross'.

U-107 was one of the first boats to be so fitted and, after sailing across the Bay from 15 to 21 August, Senior Lieutenant Gelhaus was able to report by radio that his boat had dived four times at night and twice by day: as a result of advance warnings of enemy approach, he had not been attacked. On the evening of 24 August, *U-107* with the *U-214*, *U-566* and *U-406*, were constituted the 'Blücher' group; they were to form a 'rake' to sweep once more the SL convoy route.

During the evening of the next day, *U-214* sighted SL.119 and called up first, *U-107*, and then, the remaining two boats of the group. The B.d.U. decided to call into the battle the 'Eisbar' ('Polar-bear') group, which was sailing on course in the vicinity. Before the 'Seekriegsleitung' (Naval Operations Command) could countermand this diversion of forces and order the 'Eisbar' back on to course for South Africa, *U-156* had sunk a straggler. After the convoy had temporarily shaken off the 'Blücher' boats with a sharp tack to the east, first *U-406* and then *U-107* again made contact in the afternoon of 26 August; however, *U-107* was kept down in an eight-hour depth-charge counter-attack. On 27 and 28 August, *U-566*, *U-406* and *U-214* maintained contact in turn, but all their attempts to attack, whether by day or by night, were frustrated by the alert escort. Finally in the evening of 28 August, *U-566* was able to sink two ships. The following night contact was finally lost.

Lisbon, Sierra Leone and Freetown

The still fully-operational *U-214* and *U-107* were next ordered into the Lisbon area. Here, on the morning of 3 September, Gelhaus succeeded after several approach runs in sinking the British freighters, *Hollinside* (4172 GRT) and *Penrose* (4393 GRT), who were in a group of four ships with one escort vessel.

After a U-boat pack had assembled from 9 September onwards off the west coast of Spain, *U-590*, *U-87*, *U-333*, *U-107* and *U-214* were ordered to sail southwards on a reconnaissance sweep down the SL-route.

* An 'Identification—Friend or Foe' radar receiver.

The attack periscope of a U-boat during a daytime underwater attack was scarcely visible at great distances (Dressler Collection)



At varying speeds, and easing up while convoys SL.120 and SL.121 were going through, the 'Iltis' group passed the Canaries and reached a point roughly halfway to the Cape Verde Islands before, on 21 September, *U-87* reported the SL.122; the convoy, however, could not be contacted again, in spite of days of searching. The boats were therefore released on 23 September to refuel from *U-460*.

On about 1 October, *U-107*, *U-87*, *U-590* and *U-333* arrived off Freetown, where *U-506*, *U-156* and *U-125*, as well as the Italian, *Barbarigo* and *Archimede*, were already operating; *U-126*, *U-128* and *U-161* were expected in the following days. There was immediate success. *U-125* sank five, and *U-506*, one ship. On 6 October, Gelhaus sighted two ships whom he followed for almost 18 hours before he succeeded, on the next night, in halting the British liner *Andalusia Star* (14,943 GRT) with a triple fan salvo. He sank her with a finishing shot. On the same day, 6 October, Lt.-Cdr. Grossi in the *Barbarigo* reported sinking an American battleship; after the war it was discovered that he had missed the corvette, *Petunia*, and had mistaken her depth charges for torpedo explosions!

Near disaster: U-333 and Crocus

During the same night, 70 miles west of Freetown, *U-333*, in rain and bad visibility was picked up by the corvette, *Crocus*. The U-boat spotted the corvette bearing down on her at a distance of only 500 metres. The whole of the bridge-watch fell under the concentrated fire of every gun *Crocus* could bring to bear. The severely wounded captain, Senior Lieutenant Cremer, evaded every attempt at ramming during a wild chase and finally dived at a favourable moment. After a 45 minute depth-charge attack Cremer surfaced and, thanks to his superior speed, escaped from the corvette.

The B.d.U. directed the boat to the supply-boat *U-459*, whose doctor tended the many wounded; at the same time, *U-107* was brought up so that the trainee captain she was carrying aboard, Junior Lieutenant Schwaff, could be transferred to sail the damaged boat home.

U-107 returned to the operational area, where the Italian submarine, *Archimede*, had sunk the large liner, *Oronsay* (20,043 GRT) on 9 September; the next day, she just missed the *Nea Hellas* (16,699 GRT), while the big Class IX-D2 boat *U-178*, on course for South Africa, sank the *Duchess of Atholl* (20,019 GRT); *U-87* sank a freighter on the next day. These losses at last forced the C.-in-C., South Atlantic, to halt all traffic and from 12 October onwards sightings suddenly stopped.

On 16 October all boats, including *U-107*, reported 'No traffic'. On 23 and 24 October, Gelhaus once more sighted an escort vessel and a dummy warship, but no rewarding target; so, on 26 October, he too set course for home. After refuelling at the same time as *U-156*, *U-590* and *U-87*, from *U-462* west of the Cape Verde Islands *U-107* returned to Lorient on 18 November.

THE EIGHTH PATROL: 30 January to 25 March 1943, between Portugal and the Azores

Because of the threat from Allied aircraft, Senior Lieutenant Gelhaus sailed through the Bay of Biscay, making all speed southwards during the first days of February. On 5 February he joined the 'Hartherz'



The leader of Escort Group B.2, the destroyer leader, *Hesperus*, returns with buckled stem after the operation against the 'Elbe' U-boat group; in a dramatic underwater duel in defence of Convoy SC.129 on 12 May 1943, she had rammed and grazed U-223. On 14 May, Cdr Macintyre in *Hesperus* drove off U-107 (IWM)



The British escort-carrier, *Biter*, with her Swordfish aircraft, played a considerable part in the defeat of the U-boats attacking Convoys HX.237 and SC.129. U-107 sighted her on 13 May 1943, but did not approach within firing range (IWM)

U-boat pack of 10 U-boats waiting for KMF and MKF convoys to the west of the Bay of Biscay. On 16 February, *U-107* joined the 'Robbe' group for four weeks.

U-boats: U-437, U-445, U-410, U-103, U-382, U-569, U-511.

Area: Portugal, Azores, Morocco.

Convoys: UGS.5, KMS.10, OS.44.

Sinkings: Roxborough Castle (7801) independent, 22 Feb —U-107; Marcella (4592)—U-107; Clan Alpine (5442)—U-107; Oporto (2352)—U-107; Sembilang (4990)—U-107, (all from OS.44 on 13 March).

THE NINTH PATROL: 24 April to 26 May 1943, in the North Atlantic

(See map p. 184)

The Crisis

It was at this period that the U-boat war reached its peak. At the beginning of May there were more than 130 U-boats at sea, 85 of these being on the North Atlantic convoy routes alone. To achieve this high U-boat concentration the B.d.U. had to employ in these waters even the big Class IX boats. Having sailed from Lorient on 24 April, *U-107* received orders to cross the North Atlantic at high cruising speed and join the 'Amsel' ('Blackbird') group which, since 26 April, had been sailing to intercept convoy SC.127. Even as he was crossing the southerly HX-route, Gelhaus caught the fast British refrigerated ship, *Port Victor* (12,411 GRT); she was sailing alone and running right across his bows during the night of 30 April/1 May; she was sunk in a skilful 'snap' attack.

Heavy Losses and a Determined Adversary

The 'Amsel' group had by now reached Newfoundland waters where they waited, with the 'Specht' ('Woodpecker') group for SC.128; the convoy was sighted on 1 May but was immediately lost again. From 3 May onwards these boats and the 'Star' ('Starling') boats, who were watching for the westbound convoy ONS.5, concentrated further north to form the 'Fink' ('Chaffinch') group. This new group, with some of the 'Amsel' boats, attacked the convoy from 4-6 May, sinking 12 ships. Fog suddenly descended and in one night six U-boats were lost.

U-107 could not join up in time for this action. On 8 May she joined the remaining boats to form the 'Elbe' group in order to attack HX.237. But convoy HX.237 had slipped past the linking 'Rhein' group to

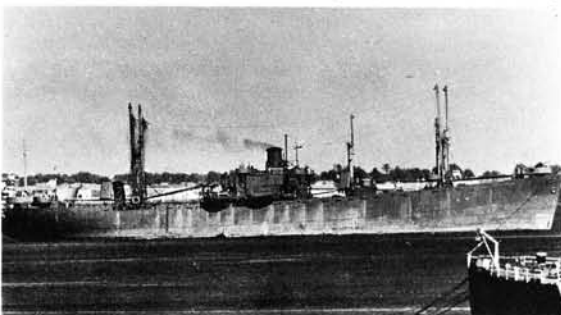
the south and was only picked up again further to the eastward by U-boats sailing outwards. Meanwhile on 11 May, *U-504*, one of the patrol line 'Elbe 2' stationed near *U-107*, sighted convoy SC.129 which was protected by the particularly experienced Escort Group, B.2, under Commander Macintyre. Although on 12 May, with wind and sea abating, no less than 11 U-boats, including *U-107*, made contact with the convoy, Cdr. Macintyre made skilful use of fixes from the HF/DF equipment of his destroyer leader, *Hesperus*, on the shadowing-signals of the German U-boats. He succeeded not only in sinking the shadowing *U-186* but also in driving off all the other boats before dusk fell.

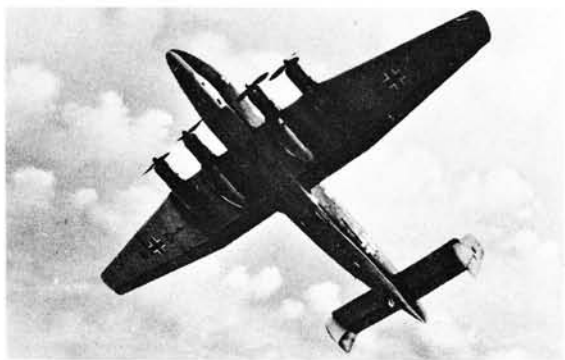
On 13 May, the 5th Support Group with the escort-carrier, *Biter*, coming from convoy HX.237, joined Macintyre's Escort Group. Her Swordfish aircraft forced the new shadower, *U-403*, and the U-boats closing up astern, to remain submerged. Gelhaus in *U-107* had sighted the carrier but because of the long range, had been unable to fire. By following the carrier group, *U-107* came up with the convoy again on 14 May but was driven off by the *Hesperus* and plastered with depth-charges.

The B.d.U. was forced to order the engagement to be broken off. *U-107* set course for home and reached Lorient on 26 May in spite of innumerable aircraft alerts in the Bay of Biscay. This was two days after the B.d.U., because of the complete failure of the 'Donau' ('Danube') group's operations against convoys HX.238 and SC.130, had broken off for the time being the war against convoys in the North Atlantic.

An American Liberty-ship in harbour at Gibraltar. From 1943 these freighters, more than a thousand of which were built, formed an ever-increasing part of the convoys. The last merchant ship to be hit by *U-107* (with a dud) the *Albert Gallatin*, belonged to this class

(BfZ/Gröner Collection)





A Ju 290 A-5 sea-reconnaissance plane of the 5th Long-range Reconnaissance Group, reconnoitred regularly in November 1943 for the 'Weddigen' U-boat Group against convoys on the route between Gibraltar and the North Channel; and on the eastward part of the North Atlantic convoy route (BfZ/Eckert)



One of the frigates of the 4th Support Group—a Destroyer/Escort delivered by the USA under the terms of the Lend-Lease Act—returns from the operation against the 'Weddigen' Group in November 1943. U-107 fired a guided-missile torpedo against one of these frigates. At the masthead can be seen the Adcock aerial of the HF/DF apparatus, that played such a vital role in the convoy battles by 'fixing' the bearings of the operating signals from the U-boats (BZf/Dressler Collection)

THE TENTH PATROL: 28 July to 3 October 1943, Mine-laying Operations

On returning to base, Senior Lieutenant Gelhaus was transferred to the Seekriegsleitung as a staff officer, and the Executive Officer, Junior Lieutenant Volker Simmermacher, who had already been First Lieutenant of U-107 since November 1941, took over command. For his first trip he was given the task of laying 12 sea-bed magnetic mines (TMB) off Charleston which had no successes.

THE ELEVENTH PATROL: 16 November 1943 to 8 January 1944, in the North Atlantic (See map p. 177)

Against British radar detection on the 9cm band, the U-boats had been equipped with the 'Naxos' radar observation apparatus; by its warning, they were once more able in comparative safety to cross the Bay of Biscay by night on the surface. In addition on the lower open bridge they had all acquired a 2cm A.A. quadruple gun and, above this, two 2cm A.A. twin-gun mountings. By surfacing simultaneously close to the convoy and by using the concentrated A.A. fire, they should be able to force a way through the air-cover. They would launch their homing-torpedoes ('Zaunkönig') against the escorting destroyers and

The sloop, Wild Goose, one of the ships in Captain Walker's famous 2nd Support Group, encountered U-107 on the outward run of her 10th patrol in West Biscay and on her 11th patrol in the convoy operation against MKS.31/SL.140. Walker's leader, Starling, and the Kite and Magpie were sister-ships. At the masthead is the HF/DF aerial; aft on the trellis mast is the aerial-reflector of the 9cm radar apparatus in its housing (IWM)



corvettes and finally come within range of the merchant ships.

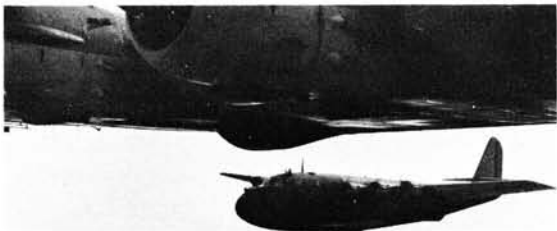
After the first apparent success in September against convoys ON.202 and ONS.18, there were failures on the North Atlantic route in October which indicated that a running fight against the convoys was no longer possible. For this reason, the B.d.U. had changed over to operations directed against the U.K.-Gibraltar route. With the help of aerial reconnaissance, there was a possibility that the groups could be deployed at short notice to attack the convoys during the night sections of their runs.

Old hands at the game

So U-107, having sailed on 16 November, was attached to the 'Weddigen' group. This pack was trying between Cape Finisterre and the Azores to pick up the combined KMS.30/OS.59 convoys steaming out to the west. The group was thwarted on 23-24 November by the 4th Support Group with its frigates, *Bazely*, *Byard*, *Blackwood*, *Drury*, *Bentinck* and *Berry*, supported by Wellington night-bombers of 179 Squadron R.A.F. from Gibraltar.

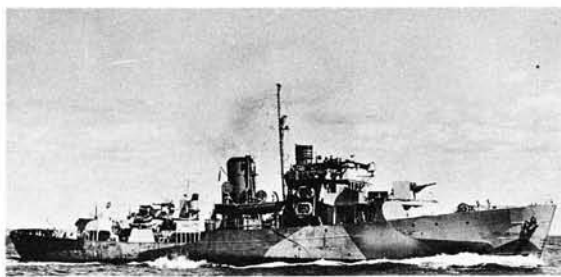
After Simmermacher in U-107 had joined the patrol line on the previous day, on 26 November, a FW 200 reported convoy MKS.31 with Escort Group B.1, west of Cape St Vincent. The enemy was spotted again the next day, after it had combined with the

On the operation against Convoys MKS.31/SL.140, one of the six-engined flying-boats BV-222 of the 1(F)/S.A.G. 129 kept in contact for five hours on 27 November and, by means of direction-finding signals, brought six U-boats up with the convoy, including U-107, who narrowly missed a frigate of the 4th Support Group with a T-5 torpedo





In 1944, the Allied Convoy Control succeeded with increased certainty to guide the convoys around the known U-boat positions. There were few ships sailing independently; occasionally a small fishing-smack was sighted, such as the last ship that U-107 sank on 13 June (BfZ/Dressler)



A British corvette of the Flower Class who encountered U-107 in almost every convoy battle from 1941 to 1943. On the bridge the 9cm radar apparatus that came into service from 1942. The Crocus belonged to this class (BfZ/Dressler)

SL.140; as additional escort there was the 4th Support Group and Captain Walker's 2nd Support Group with the sloops, *Starling*, *Kite*, *Wild Goose* and *Magpie*.

In the evening, one of the big six-engined BV 222 flying-boats of the 1st (F)/S.A.G. 129 succeeded in sending homing-signals over the convoy for five hours and in this way concentrated six U-boats. *U-107* was in the most favourable position, but her fix was very indefinite; as a result, the U-boats pushed on past the convoy or were driven off by the strong night air-cover, although they shot down two aircraft with their A.A. guns. Only *U-764* and *U-107* managed to fire their 'Zaunkönig' torpedoes against frigates of the 4th Support Group, but these had been fired at too great a range and, outmanoeuvred, they exploded at the end of their run. Simmermacher was able to elude the ineffective depth-charge attack.

On 30 November and 1 December, the 'Weddigen' group re-formed once more in the same area with its eight remaining boats to attack the MKS.34/OS.60 convoys, but the aerial reconnaissance forces employed found nothing and the operation failed. In the same way, on 6 December, an attempt to combine with the 'Coronel' group to the north, in a limited night encampment to trap convoy ONS.24, also failed.

Help from the Luftwaffe

The aerial reconnaissance effort began on 4 December with two of the big new and heavily-armed long-range reconnaissance aircraft Ju 290; on the next day, a Ju 290, a BV 222 and a FW 200 failed to find the convoy swinging far out to the north. Neither long-range reconnaissance aircraft nor the U-boats could find either convoy HX.268—detected by radio monitoring—which sailed past to the north on 8 December, or, between 11–13 December, ON.214 swinging southwards.

The Borkum Pack: A difficult Operation

From 20 December, *U-107* and 12 other boats were detached as the 'Borkum' group to waters west of the Bay of Biscay, in order to attack convoys MKS.33/SL.142. In the bad weather of 21 December, neither five FW 200s by day nor a BV 222 by night could sight anything; on the two following days, however, they reported a group with the U.S. escort-carrier, *Card*, and three destroyers who had been thrown into battle against the 'Borkum' group by the Allied Command.

The B.d.U. ordered the U-boats to engage the carrier

group, as it represented a threat to the blockade-runners, *Osorno* and *Alsterufer*, who were expected in the next few days from the Far East. On 24–25 December, the 'Borkum' group U-boats attacked the carrier and the destroyers, the *Leary* falling a victim; on the next night, the U-boats sank the *Hurricane*, destroyer-leader of the B.1 Escort Group from Convoys KMS.36/OS.62. Six German destroyers and six torpedo-boats later succeeded in meeting the *Osorno* and bringing her in to port.

The second similar operation failed on 27 December, when the *Alsterufer* was sunk by a Czech Liberator bomber. The destroyer, *Z-27*, and the torpedo-boats, *T-25* and *T-26*, were sunk in an engagement with the cruisers, *Glasgow* and *Enterprise*.

On this day, *U-107* sighted star-shell from the escort of convoys KMS.36/OS.62 but, through lack of fuel, she had to break off and was unable to summon other U-boats.

On the homeward passage, *U-107* was attacked twice by aircraft on 5 and 6 January; she dived just in time and returned to Lorient on 8 January without serious damage.

THE TWELFTH PATROL:

10 May–22 July 1944, off the US east coast

After her return, *U-107* was fitted with a Schnorkel, an air-intake mast which allowed the diesel engines to be used at periscope depth for driving the generators and charging the batteries. After one false start, due to one of the very frequent breakdowns with these early Schnorkels, Simmermacher, now promoted Senior Lieutenant, set out with *U-107* on 10 May for an operation in the waters off New York. The patrol was uneventful and she returned to her base in Lorient on 22 July 1944.

U-boat: *U-107*

Area: Nova Scotia and New York.

Convoys: Nil.

Sinkings: Nil.

LAST PATROL:

16 to 18 August 1944, Transfer Operation

Three days later, on 25 July after their route had been cleared by a carpet of 1500 heavy bombs, the divisions of the U.S. VIII Corps broke through the German positions west of St Lo. On 27/28 July, the exhausted German 7th Army had to break off the battle. The



A Sunderland flying-boat has straddled a U-boat with a stick of bombs

(Dressler Collection)

road into Brittany lay open for the U.S. 1st Army; on 31 July it passed through Avranches: Lorient was directly threatened.

With extreme urgency the U-boats lying in the port were prepared for passage, ready to be transferred to Norway. But first, a number of boats had to be fitted with Schnorkels. Those concerned were drawn in from Brest, St Nazaire and Lorient and ordered to La Pallice, which was not so immediately threatened.

U-107, whose captain, Senior Lieutenant Simmermacher, failed to return in time from an official journey, was ordered to load on board all the Schnorkels available in Lorient and, under the command of a

Lieutenant Karl-Hernz Fritz from *U-103*, to transfer them to La Pallice. Thence she was to sail on her transfer passage to Norway.

On 16 August 1944, *U-107* sailed from Lorient. She did not arrive as anticipated in La Pallice two days later. On 18 August, in position at 46° 46' N/03° 39' W, south-west of Belle Isle, she had fallen victim to a Sunderland flying-boat of 201 Squadron R.A.F. *U-107* took her whole crew with her to the bottom.

A Sunderland flying-boat attacks a U-boat. It was a Sunderland which destroyed U-107

(Dressler Collection)



Type	Code	Route
Ocean Homeward	HG	Gibraltar—UK
Ocean Homeward	HX	Halifax—UK
'Torch'	MK	N. Africa—UK
'Torch'	KMF	UK—N. Africa
Ocean Outward	OB	Liverpool outwards
Ocean Outward	ON	UK—N. America
Ocean Outward	OS	UK—W. Africa
Ocean Homeward	SC	Halifax—UK
Ocean Homeward	SL	Freetown, Sierra Leone—UK
Ocean Homeward	KMS	Military, UK—N. Africa
Ocean Outward	UC	UK—Caribbean (Tankers)
'Torch'	UGS	USA—N. Africa

(F denotes fast convoy)
(S denotes slow convoy)

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