

U-boats to first locate and then home, by means of radio beacons, aircraft on to British convoys in order to attack the ships with bombs and gunfire. This time the process would be reversed. As a result of such a change in tactics, the operation against OG 69 would be the first time in which Germany would systematically use aircraft not to attack a British convoy, but rather to locate the enemy vessels and then by means of radio bearings to direct the U-boats to the British formation. In the battle for OG 69 it would be the task of the GAF aircraft not to attack the ships of the convoy, but rather to shadow the British force while guiding the U-boats, by means of radio bearings, to enemy ships.<sup>20</sup>

At 11.15B on 25 July in 49°24'N, 26°25'W, a German FW 200 aircraft appeared over OG 69. The German aircraft shadowed the British ships, outside of anti-aircraft gun range, until 13.00B. Several minutes after the departure of the German aircraft, the commander of the warships escorting Convoy OG 69, Lieutenant Commander J. Treasure-Jones RNR, received a radio message from the Admiralty stating that the British force had been sighted and reported to the BdU by a German aircraft and that there were several U-boats in the vicinity of the convoy.<sup>21</sup> Obviously Britain had intercepted the radio transmissions made by the German aircraft shadowing OG 69.

When the German FW 200 aircraft sighted OG 69 the aircraft began to transmit radio homing signals.<sup>22</sup> It was standard German operating procedure that when a reconnaissance aircraft sighted a convoy, radio homing signals would be transmitted. The U-boats would then obtain direction finder (D/F) bearings of these transmissions which would in turn be sent by radio to the BdU. In order to obtain the position of a convoy, the U-boat's position, the bearing obtained by the U-boat of the aircraft's radio transmission, and the bearings obtained by German shore-based D/F stations on the aircraft's transmission would all be plotted by the BdU.<sup>23</sup> This was a complex process with many opportunities for making errors. For instance, both the GAF aircrews and the U-boats were notorious for their inability to fix accurately their own positions. When plotting the position of a convoy all the errors of navigation would be further compounded by the inaccuracies of the D/F bearings.

During the afternoon of 25 July, after plotting successive bearings and U-boat positions, the BdU came to the conclusion that several of the U-boats were close enough to OG 69's estimated position to be in sight of the British ships. Therefore, the BdU could 'not understand why none of the boats made contact'.<sup>24</sup> Yet there was no contact on 25 July between the U-boats and OG 69. Five U-boats<sup>25</sup> were ordered to mount a search for the British convoy on an arc of between 170 and 250 degrees along the estimated course of the British ships while three other U-boats<sup>26</sup> were directed to search independently for the missing convoy.<sup>27</sup> Preparations were also undertaken for a FW 200 aircraft to conduct a search for the British ships on 26 July.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, the U-126 was directed, upon intercepting the FW 200 aircraft's radio signals, to home the aircraft, to within eyesight of the U-boat. Then the U-boat would be able to obtain the convoy's position by visual signal from the FW 200 and transmit it by radio to the BdU.<sup>29</sup>

As OG 69 steamed in a southerly direction during the night of 25 July there was no contact between the German and British ships. At 11.02B on 26 July a German FW 200 reconnaissance aircraft again sighted and then shadowed, out of anti-aircraft gun range, the British ships before flying off in an easterly direction. At 13.45B HMS