RG457/NARA photos
Weather-Reporting U-boats in the Atlantic, 1944-45:
The Hunt for U-248

DAVID SYRETT

The Germans lost the Battle of the Atlantic in 1943. Heavy casualties suffered at the hands of Allied convoy escorts forced the U-boats to withdraw from the North Atlantic in May 1943. Then, American hunter-killer groups, built around escort aircraft carriers, drove the U-boats out of the Central Atlantic in the summer and autumn of 1943. In October and November of that same year, Allied forces again drove the wolf packs from the convoy routes of the North Atlantic. But even after the great convoy battles of 1943, the U-boats continued to fight. In the words of Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz, commander in chief of the German Navy, "a delaying action and, with as economic a use of our forces as possible, [to] continue to tie down the forces of the enemy." The result was a maritime guerilla war that lasted until VE Day in 1945. Most U-boats were deployed in British coastal waters, while a few others were dispatched to distant seas, and still others were employed in such tasks as bringing goods through the Allied blockade and making weather reports from the mid-Atlantic. In fact, as the Allies closed in on Germany in 1944-45, supplying meteorological information to the German armed forces became one of the most important military tasks of the U-boat service.

Throughout World War II, the Germans made a sustained effort to obtain meteorological information to support their military operations in Europe. Because weather patterns move from west to east, such information could only come from the North Atlantic. Thus, from the beginning of the war, the Germans employed U-boats, weather ships, and clandestine weather stations in Greenland to obtain meteorological intelligence from the North Atlantic. But because of Allied countermeasures directed at weather ships and clandestine weather stations, by December 1944 the Germans had to rely for the most part on weather-reporting U-boats stationed in the North Atlantic for meteorological information.

The Germans had used weather-reporting U-boats from the beginning of the war, but U-boat meteorological intelligence missions were usually subordinated to regular naval operations in the first years of combat. However, beginning at the end of 1943 and continuing to the end of the war, the Germans stationed two or three U-boats in the North Atlantic for the sole purpose of issuing weather reports. The Atlantic was divided into three zones — north, central, and south — and a U-boat was assigned to each area with the task of producing regular weather reports. The coverage was usually complete, but when a U-boat did not send a weather report, the Befehlshaber der unterseeboote (BdU) was quick to reprimand and demand additional meteorological information. For example, on 6 May 1944, the BdU cautioned that the "omission of weather reports is of great disadvantage to waging of the war." And when the Allies invaded northwest Europe on 6 June 1944, the Germans assigned four additional U-boats, which were not regular weather reporters, to

6. See, for example, Michael L. Hadley, U-boats Against Canada (Kingston, Ontario, 1983), 249-271.
make "urgently needed" weather reports from the mid-Atlantic. 9

In his history of American naval operations in World War II, the late Professor Samuel E. Morison speculated that the Allied naval authorities knew about the weather-reporting U-boats, "but did not appreciate their significance." 10 Morison is only partly correct, for the Allies had been reading the radio transmissions to and from U-boats regularly since February 1942. 11 Also, the Allies knew from the beginning of 1944 that those U-boats assigned to make weather reports from the mid-Atlantic transmitted their meteorological data by means of the "short-weather cipher" two or three times each day at more or less regularly set times. Early in the summer of 1944, however, fearing that the Allies would locate the weather-reporting U-boats by D/F, 12 the Germans abandoned fixed schedules for transmitting. Instead, the U-boats were directed to "transmit irregularly in order to make it difficult for enemy D/F service to gain knowledge . . . ." and no attempt was to be made "to get through more than three times in succession." 13

In the first sixteen days of December 1944, meteorological intelligence from the mid-Atlantic became very important strategically to the Germans. They were planning a huge counteroffensive in the Ardennes which required a period of at least ten days of continuous bad weather with very poor visibility to negate superior Allied air power. 14 To obtain the required meteorological information, the number of weather reports transmitted by the U-boats in the mid-Atlantic was increased from two or three per day to fifteen on 15 December, the day before the German offensive began. 15 Allied naval intelligence most likely noted this increase, but did not understand the importance of these weather reports. 16 However, after the German tanks came out of the fog in the Ardennes at dawn on 16 December 1944, U-boat weather reports from the mid-Atlantic took on a new significance. The point was further emphasized on 19 December when the Allies intercepted and read a radio transmission from the BdU to the weather-reporting U-boats saying that "your recent weather reports contributed decisively to determining the beginning of our great offensive in the West on 16/12." 17

Consequently, on 25 December 1944, the commander in chief of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet decided to hunt down and sink one of the weather-reporting U-boats. The objective of this hunt was the U-1053. 18 However, this order was easier given than carried out, for a U-boat is very small and the sea is a huge place. Searching for and finding a single U-boat in the North Atlantic was in fact a very formidable task, similar in many respects to hunting for the proverbial "needle in a haystack." Finding and then sinking the U-1053 depended greatly on the skill of American naval intelligence in providing good information on the location of the U-boat, which was an absolute prerequisite for the success of the intended operation.

Radio communications between the U-boat and the BdU provided the only way that American naval intelligence could find the U-1053. The U-boat usually transmitted weather reports several times a day and from time to time received orders and directions from the BdU. The Americans could use these radio transmissions to locate the U-boat in three ways: by using D/F, by identifying the transmitter by means of the characteristics of the intercepted transmission, and by obtaining the contents of a radio communication through decryption. 19 In the hunt for the weather-reporting U-boat, the most important of these sources of information would be D/F.

German U-boat radio transmissions were picked up by a string of intercept stations along the east coast of the United States. After interception, the information was sent to Washington, D.C. for analysis. Enciphered U-boat radio messages were decrypted by the U.S. Navy's OP-20-GY(A) 20 at 3801 Nebraska Avenue in Washington. After being translated into English, the decrypts were sent by the hand of an officer or by a special secure teleprinter to the F-21 section of the Combat Intelligence Section in the

---


12. Direction finding.


20. OP of the Chief of Naval Operations

20 Communications Division

G Communications Intelligence

Y Cryptanalysis

A Atlantic
Office of Commander-in-Chief U.S. Fleet (COMINCH). Adjoining F-21’s main Submarine Tracking Room was F-211, the “Secret Room.” Only five persons were permitted regularly into the Secret Room, plus several high-ranking officers such as Admirals King, Edwards, and Low. Both the Secret Room and OP-20-GY(A) were in close contact by radio and teleprinter with the Naval Section of the Government Code and Cipher School at Bletchley Park in England and with the Operational Intelligence Center’s Submarine Tracking Room in the Admiralty in London. In the Secret Room, the contents of the decrypts were entered into a total intelligence picture. Intelligence, with its sources of information hidden, was moved out of the Secret Room to F-21’s Submarine Tracking Room, to the Tenth Fleet’s Convoy and Routing Section, and to various combat commands. The decryption of enemy radio transmissions and the operations of the Secret Room were the most closely-guarded secrets in wartime Washington, with the single exception of the work on the atom bomb.

The intelligence obtained by the Navy from decrypts of German radio messages and from D/F fixes of U-boat radio transmissions was good, but very imperfect for hunting down and sinking a single weather-reporting U-boat. On 24 December 1944, using decrypts and D/F fixes, F-211 placed the location of the U-1053 at about 54°30’N 27°30’W. This position was approximate, however, and in some respects an educated guess. The U-1053 gave her position in each of the weather reports she sent, and these reports were decrypted and read by the Americans. But in many cases, owing to the difficulties of navigation in a U-boat, these positions were nothing more than a dead reckoning position and could be miles off the true location of the vessel. D/F fixes were not much more accurate. The experience level of the D/F operator, the weather, and the ionosphere could all produce D/F errors.

With six or seven bearings it was possible at long range to locate a transmitter at sea within twenty-five or thirty miles. Thus, shore-based D/F fixes and information from decrypts could guide the hunters of the U-1053 to the general area where the U-boat was operating. But to locate the U-1053 within this general area required a shipborne locating device of greater range than radar and sonar and of more precision than German dead reckoning navigation and shore-based D/F fixes.

The Americans hoped that, upon arriving in the general area where the U-1053 was operating, they would be able to track down the U-boat with shipborne HF/DF. The general idea was for the hunters of the U-1053 to use shore-based D/F to get “within favorable ground wave distance” of the U-boat and then track her down by taking bearings on her radio transmissions with HF/DF. HF/DF, like radar, was a spin-off from research into the nature of the ionosphere by means of cathode-ray tubes. HF/DF sets incorporated a cathode-ray tube which could give an accurate visual bearing on a ground wave of a radio transmission very quickly. The Germans believed that if U-boat transmissions, such as weather reports, were very short in length — thirty seconds — they could not be picked up on conventional D/F equipment. The Germans did not know of HF/DF until after the war and thought that the Allies could not locate the source of their very short radio transmissions. So the Americans intended to exploit the Germans’ lack of knowledge of HF/DF by deploying ships equipped with the latest type of HF/DF sets, known as “DAQ,” to hunt for the U-1053.

On 19 December 1944, the U-1053 and two other U-boats were congratulated for their role in the Ardennes counteroffensive. During the next nine days, the U-1053 made twenty-four weather reports which were intercepted by the Americans. These weather reports followed a pattern. The transmissions were made during the morning.

21. Commander Kenneth Knowles, USN, Commander F-21; Lieutenant John E. Parsons, USNR, Commander Secret Room; Lieutenant (jg) John V. Boland, USNR; Ensign R. B. Chevalier, USNR; Yeoman Samuel P. Livochhi, USN.
22. Admiral Ernest J. King, USN, Chief of Naval Operations (COMINCH).
23. Vice Admiral Richard S. Edwards, USN, Deputy CNO, Deputy COMINCH.
24. Rear Admiral Francis S. Low, USN, Chief of Staff, Tenth Fleet.
25. David Kahn, Seizing the Enigma: The Race to Break the German U-Boat Codes, 1939-1943 (Boston, 1991), 237-244. "Functions of the Secret Room" (F-211) of COMINCH Combat Intelligence, Section Anti-Submarine Warfare, WWII. (Undated), NA, RG 257, SRMN-038.
at midday, and late at night. The morning and night
transmissions were "just off 54 meters" and the midday
transmission was on 24 meters. Some transmissions were
"just off 36 meters." For example, on 21 December the U-
1053 sent three weather reports — at 0229Z, 1228Z, and
2049Z, just off 54, 24, and 54 meters. In these reports, the
U-1053 gave its position as ranging between 54°30′N
27°30′W and 57°30′N 26°30′W (see figure 1), while
American D/F fixes placed the vessel between 54°00′N
28°00′W and 55°30′N 25°00′W. 31 The U-1053’s weather
report radio transmissions were a model of regularity
which presented the Americans with a clear target.

However, the U.S. Navy would not hunt down the U-
1053, for she was relieved by another U-boat. On 21
December the U-248, commanded by Johann Loos, was
ordered to 50°30′N 24°15′W to "ACT AS WEATHER
U/B BECAUSE PLANNED RELIEF IS
UNAVAILABLE." 32 Then, on 23 December, the U-248
was ordered to "OCCUPY SQ ((BD 5664:46.57N —
29.55W))" and to make weather reports three times a day.
This message was decoded by the Americans at 1100 on
25 December, 33 and on 26 December the U-248
transmitted her first weather report from 51°30′N
18°30′W. 34 The position of the U-248 was some four
degrees south and six degrees east of the position of the
U-1053. 35 On 28 December the U-1053 was ordered to
"SEND REPORTS ON RETURN CRUISE." 36 and she
then began to head northeast towards her base in Norway.
On 1 January 1945 the U-1053 was ordered to cease trans-
mitting weather reports. 37

31. NA, RG 457, SRGN-001-45668, ff. 43008, 43090, 43103,
43104, 43116, 43117, 43129, 43130, 43144, 43145, 43155, 43157,
43167, 43179, 43182, 43199, 43202, 43206, 43207, 43212, 43213,
43220, 43223, 43231, 43141, 43251, 43260, 43279, 43282, 43292,
43296, 43297, 43308, 43316, 43321, 43352, 43353, 43364, 43366.

32. Ibid., f. 43144.
33. Ibid., f. 43215.
34. Ibid., f. 43302.
35. Ibid., f. 43308.
36. Ibid., f. 43356.
37. Ibid., f. 43538.
After taking up the duties of a weather-reporting U-boat on 26 December, the U-248 moved steadily south, transmitting two or three weather reports a day on either 30, 24, or 54 meters. By 6 January 1945, she had taken up a position in an area north of the Azores which she calculated as 45°30'N 30°30'W. American D/F fixes placed the U-248 somewhere between 46°30'N 29°00'W and 48°30'N 28°00'W. The radio transmissions of the U-248 were almost as regular as those of the U-1053, so she also presented the Americans with a very tempting target.

On 26 December 1944, the destroyer escort USS _Oster_, USS _Hubbard_, and USS _Varian_ sailed from Casco Bay, Maine "to hunt and kill [an] enemy weather-reporting submarine" which was operating north of the Azores. The Group would be joined later in the Azores by the destroyer escort USS _Hayter_. The plan was for the three destroyer escorts, known as Task Group (TG) 22.8, commanded by Commander J.F. Bowling, to proceed to Argentia to "top-off" their fuel and then steam to a point about five hundred miles north of the Azores to begin the search for the weather-reporting U-boat. However, when the three destroyer escorts were some sixty miles southwest of Argentia, the weather was so bad that Bowling decided not to enter that port, but to go to the Azores to refuel. On 3 January 1945, the three American destroyer escorts were refueled from a tanker in the lee of Fajal Island in the Azores group, and then the American warships headed north to hunt for the U-248.

Bowling's plan was to proceed to the area where shore-based D/F had last obtained a fix on the U-248. The three destroyer escorts would approach in a line abreast formation, with a distance of between 20,000 to 25,000 yards between each ship. They would attempt to get a HF/D/F fix on the U-248 from the USS _Oster_ and USS _Hubbard_, which carried the latest form of this equipment. Upon reaching the location of the latest shore-based D/F fix, which would be supplied by COMINCH, the three warships would then systematically search an area of one hundred by seventy miles with HF/D/F for the U-248. On 4 January, COMINCH estimated that the U-248 was located at approximately 47°30'N 38°30'W.

On the evening of 4 January 1945, as the three destroyer escorts were nearing the position of the latest COMINCH D/F fix, the USS _Hubbard_ obtained a radar contact. This contact was considered "questionable." Nevertheless, the American destroyer escorts began to search for the U-boat because they had not obtained a good HF/D/F bearing on the U-248 during the approach to the area. The hunt went on all night, and the region around COMINCH's latest D/F fix was also searched, but without result.

On the afternoon of 5 January, the American warships began a sweep to cover an area of some fifty miles around 47°00'N 28°00'W. At 0129Z on 6 January, the U-248 issued a weather report which was placed by shore-based D/F fixes at 47°30'N 28°00'W. This information was sent by radio to TG 22.8, and the search was extended northward and then back to the southwest. Only one poor HF/D/F bearing was obtained, but Bowling decided nonetheless to extend the hunt during the night to an area thirty to one hundred miles west of 47°30'N 28°00'W. The Americans thought that while sweeping this area they had passed within twenty-five miles of the U-248 at least twice and perhaps a third time as well. At 0205Z the USS _Hubbard_ ran over a whale, "demolishing" her sonar dome and projector. Nevertheless, the hunt continued. Between 1000Z and 1500Z on 7 January, while sweeping to the south southwest to 48°27'N 28°00'W, the task group obtained a good HF/D/F fix. The Americans estimated that the U-248 was within forty miles, and the three destroyer escorts conducted a sweep with sonar down the bearings. Some forty-five miles along these bearings a sonar contact was obtained, and at 1845Z the USS _Oster_ and _Varian_ made a hedgehog attack without result. The contact was judged false.

It appeared from information sent by COMINCH and from the few HF/D/F bearings that had been obtained that the U-248 was moving northward along the 29th meridian. Therefore, Bowling decided next to search a forty-five-mile large square centered around 48°40'N 28°45'W. The search began at 2100Z on 7 January. Several hours later, at 1247Z on 8 January, the USS _Hubbard_ and USS _Oster_.
obtained "Class A HF/DF bearings" at 013°T and 003°T, respectively, and concluded that the U-248 was twenty miles from the American warships at 48°45′N 29°12′W. This area was searched with sonar until the morning of 9 January, when the Americans then proceeded to Horta in the Azores for refuelling. The Americans did not know it, but on 7 and 8 January they were sighted by the U-248, and the U-boat fired a torpedo which missed one of the destroyer escorts.47

When the three destroyer escorts of TG 22.8 arrived on 10 January at Horta in the Azores, they found the destroyer escort USS Hayter at anchor, waiting to join them after a six-day voyage from Boston, Massachusetts.48 The ships were refuelled, and Bowling held a conference with his captains to discuss the tactics they would employ when the hunt resumed.

For a week TG 22.8 had hunted the U-248 without success. Several times the Americans thought that they had been close to the U-boat, but they were unable to make contact, in part because the number of weather reports transmitted by the U-248 appears to have dropped off.49 But on 9 January, the BdU ordered the U-248 to "CONTINUE WEATHER REPORTS. THEY ARE

47. NA RG 457, SRGN-001-49668, f. 4388.
48. War Diary of USS Hayter, 2-10 January 1945 (Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.).
49. See NA RG 457, SRGN-001-49668, f. 43765-4388.
URGENTLY NEEDED." Bowling and his captains thought that they had to remain "on the stalk for longer than the three or four days permitted by the current fuel consumption." They also felt that they had to obtain "good HF/DF fixes more frequently and regularly," and that they should use "a tactical disposition of the ships which would be optimum for HF/DF purposes." While conducting the search itself, the American ships had to be in radar contact with each other and to maintain good communications between the ships, both to ensure "mobility and efficiency during the search, and...[to] expedite converting any contact to a sound contact and attack."\(^\text{51}\)

The American officers decided that, in order to save fuel while approaching the HF/DF search area, the destroyer escorts would steam at only twelve knots and that all radar and HF DF searches would be conducted at the speed of ten knots. The destroyer escorts would advance to the search area in a very wide line abreast formation, covering a front of 180 miles to obtain better HF/DF bearings. In the center of this formation would be the USS Hubbard, whose stern was damaged and out of action but who was equipped with HF/DF. accompanied by the USS Varian, whose stern was working, but who was not equipped with HF/DF. The USS Otter would be stationed ninety miles east of the USS Hubbard and USS Varian, and the USS Hayter ninety miles west. All four ships would steam at twelve knots on the same course, thus placing three HF/DF sets on a front of 180 miles to obtain bearings during the advance to the area to be searched. When the four destroyer escorts reached the search area, the four warships would then redeploy into what Bowling called a "Delta" formation (see figure 2 on page 23) for conducting HF/DF searches. This formation was an equilateral triangle, each side being 15.8 miles long. The USS Varian, not being equipped with HF/DF, would take up a position inside the triangle at equal distances of nine miles from each of the three corners. The other three destroyer escorts would take up stations at each corner of the triangle. The purpose of this formation was to place the USS Varian in radar and/or visual range and also in contact by high-frequency voice radio with the USS Otter, USS Hayter, and USS Hubbard at all times. It was the task of the USS Varian, using radar and visual bearings, to keep an accurate plot of the positions of the other three destroyer escorts for the purpose of calculating HF/DF fixes. This triangle formation would form a base line for HF/DF triangulation of about thirteen miles when the bearing was at the least desirable angle. Bowling and his captains thought that this formation would produce the best HF/DF bearings while permitting the most accurate calculation of the fixes possible.\(^\text{52}\)

50. NA, RG 457, SGN-47, 4-ee44, f. 43875.
51. "General Narrative," 3
At 0220Z on 12 January, TG 22.8 departed from Horta. The American warships formed up in a line-abreast formation to cover a 180-mile front and headed north. Bowling had obtained from the British at Teriberia two D/F bearings on the U-248 which placed the U-boat 35°7' T and 007°7' T from the Azores. By means of D/F, COMINCH placed the U-248 in the following positions: 0229Z, 48°7'N 30°7'W; 1648Z, 47°30'N 29°30'W; and 2328Z, 49°7'N 27°30'W. However, on the voyage northward the ships of TG 22.8 did not obtain any worthwhile HF/D/F bearings.55

At 1700Z on 13 January, the American warships made a rendezvous at 47°0' T 29°0' W. After the various captains discussed tactics using bullhorns, TG 22.8 formed itself into the “Delta” formation and began to hunt for the U-248 with radar and HF/D/F. At 1830Z, a D/F fix was received from COMINCH placing the U-248 at 43°7' T 29°0' W, and the course was changed so that the group would sweep over this spot. At 2348Z all three ships obtained HF/D/F bearings at 70°7' T, 74°7' T, and 77°7' T, but a fix could not be plotted. A sweep was conducted to the east northeast without result.56

The search continued on 14 January. At 0956Z the U-248 transmitted a weather report. Shore-based D/F placed the source of this transmission at 47°30' T 27°00' W.57 All three destroyer escorts got HF/D/F bearing on this transmission at 148°7' T, 097°7' T, and 140°7' T, and they decided to search to the southeast along the two bearings which almost coincided. This search was negative. At 1800Z the USS Otter picked up an HF/D/F bearing at 350°7' T, and the American destroyer escorts then conducted a search to the north without result.58 And then at 0209Z on 15 January, the USS Otter and the USS Hubbard picked up HF/D/F bearings at 205°7' T and 220°7' T, and the search was then extended south, again without result. The American destroyer escorts continued to search the area for another day without obtaining any new HF/D/F bearings.59

At 2229Z on 15 January, the U-248 transmitted a weather report. Shore-based D/F fixes from COMINCH placed the source of this transmission at 47°45' T 27°30' W.60 After studying this information, Bowling came to the conclusion that the U-248 was east of her normal

---

53. NA, RG 457, SRGN-001-49668, ff. 43621, 43658, 43711, 43730, 43742, 43769, 43788.
54. "Summary and Recommendations Submitted by CTG 22.8 Pursuant to Operations against Weather Reporting German U-boat Commencing . . .; Summary of HF/D/F Operations while a Unit of Task Group #22.8, period 26 December 1944 to 17 January 1945 (Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.).
56. Ibid., 6, 11.
57. NA, RG 457, SRGN-001-49668, f. 44036.
60. NA, RG 457, SRGN-001-49668, f. 44089.
station and most likely would move west to regain her station. At 0055Z on 16 January, TG 22.8 began to search to the west. At 0948Z, the U-248 transmitted another weather report “just off 36 meters” which was placed by shore based D/F at 47°30’N 27°00’W. The USS Otter, USS Hubbard, and USS Hayter picked up this transmission on their HF/DF sets with the bearings at 333°T, 012°T, and 339°T. The position of the American ships was 47°33’N 26°34’W (see figure 1 on page 19). The USS Otter, USS Hayter, and USS Varian, in an attack formation, began at 0905Z to conduct a sonar search down a course of 335° to close with the contact.

At 1110Z, the USS Hayter obtained a sonar contact at a range of 450 yards bearing 286°T. The contact was classified as a U-boat. It was the U-248. While the USS Hubbard, whose sonar was not working, stood off maintaining a radar watch, the other three destroyer escorts of TG 22.8 attacked the U-248. The attacks lasted for some four hours, with the American ships losing sonar contact, then regaining it, and then attacking with hedgehogs and depth charges. At 1305Z, the USS Hayter attacked with depth charges, and after the depth charges exploded water “appeared to boil up . . . as though [a] U-boat was blowing tanks attempting to surface.” After a depth charge attack by the USS Otter at 1317Z, air bubbles and oil appeared on the surface of the sea. Nine minutes later the USS Otter again attacked, dropping depth charges on the spot where the oil had appeared on the surface. The Americans saw more oil and air bubbles on the surface after this attack, and they did not regain sonar contact. They sighted debris on the surface, and at 1345Z there were several minor underwater explosions, followed four minutes later by a “violent underwater explosion, very deep such as collapsing of main pressure hull.” At 1545Z, the USS Otter picked up part of a man’s back and other “pieces of human flesh,” and then traced the oil slick to its origin and saw oil rising out of the sea “in quantities.” This was the end of the U-248.

The destruction of the U-248 at the beginning of 1945 shows why the German U-boat fleet was doomed to defeat at the hands of the Allies. By the end of 1944, the German U-boat service had lost the technological war. The Allies were using the products of advancing technology to sink more and more U-boats by means which the Germans understood barely, if at all. Nowhere was this more true than in the field of electronic warfare. During the Second World War, the Germans were confounded by a number of Allied electronic devices, such as radar, HF/DF, and magnetic anomaly detectors, which were almost impossible for them to counter. In fact, the Germans did not even know of some of the Allied advances in the use of electronic devices in antisubmarine warfare. The sinking of the U-248 is a striking example of the utilization of electronic warfare by the Allies. Specifically, the U-248 was hunted down and sunk because the Germans never understood the great dangers involved in making repeated radio transmissions. Shore-based D/F told the Americans the general location of the U-248. The Germans should have known about the dangers of D/F to a U-boat which made repeated radio transmissions from the same area. The Germans were not aware of shipborne HF/DF, which enabled the American hunters of the U-248 to narrow further the area of the search. And the last weather report sent by the U-248, at 0948Z on 16 January 1945, sealed the fate of the German U-boat, for after intercepting this radio transmission, the task confronting the Americans was one of simply hunting down the U-248 with sonar and destroying it.


David Syrett received his doctorate from the University of London and is presently a professor of history at Queens College, City University of New York. His articles have appeared in The Mariner’s Mirror, Naval War College Review, Armed Forces and Society, and others, as well as The American Neptune. His most recent Neptune articles include “The Sinking of HMS Firedrake and the Battle for Convoy ON 153” (Spring, 1991) and “The Safe and Timely Arrival of Convoy SC 130” (Summer, 1990).