

- Front page
- The U-boats
- The Men
- The Allies
- Forums
- Articles
- Gallery
- Movies
- Books

Front page - The U-boats- **Operations**

The U-boats

- List of all U-boats
 - Most successful
- U-boat Patrols
- U-boat Types
- Operations
 - Convoy battles
 - Successful patrols
 - Wolfpacks
 - Maps
- U-boat Fates
 - Losses by year
- Flotillas
 - U-boat bases
- Shipyards
- Technologies
- U-boat Emblems

Events on this day

What happened on
28 January?

Commander file

Monsun boats

U-boats in the Indian Ocean and the Far East

by Marcin Jedrzejewski

The Monsun U-boats were perhaps the most special "wolfpack" in the war as they operated very far from Germany and its occupied countries, namely in the Indian Ocean out of Japanese provided bases in Indonesia. They operated out of Penang, Jakarta and Sabang in 1943-1945 and scored some hits against allied shipping.

In the beginning the Monsun operations were almost like the "Happy Days" or better as most shipping in the Indian Ocean was conducted like in peacetime, however in 1943 this started to change and eventually these waters became just as dangerous as the North Atlantic.

1. Introduction

Why did the boats venture into these distant waters and when did it begin? Also general overview on the operations.

2. Pre-Monsun U-boats

The U-boat actions around Madagaskar and Cape Town areas and the very first penetrations into the Indian Ocean.

3. The Monsun boats

The history of the boats while stationed in the Far East and their journeys from Europe and back.

4. Evacuation

Covers the Monsun U-boats during the last few months of the war and the attempts to return to Europe.

Map of the Indian Ocean

U-boat Operations

From the Gallery

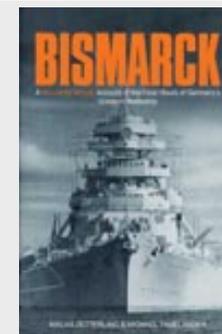


U-505 being moved in 2004

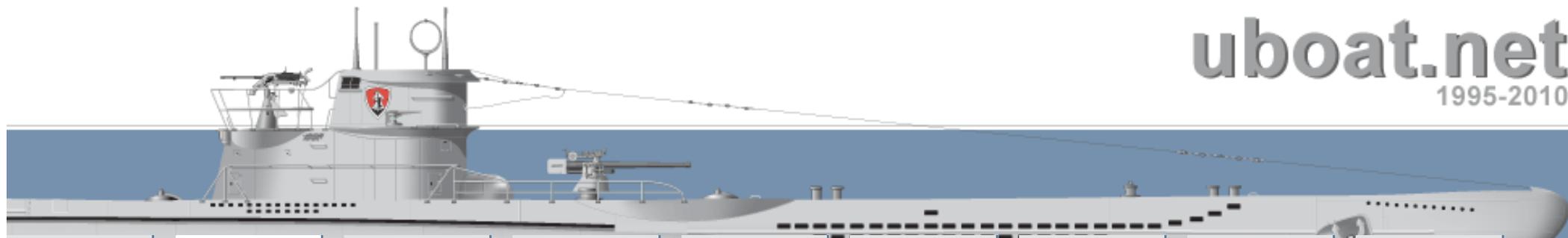


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Bismarck
A Minute by Minute
Account of the Final



- Front page
- The U-boats
- The Men
- The Allies
- Forums
- Articles
- Gallery
- Movies
- Books

Front page - The U-boats- **Operations**

The U-boats

- List of all U-boats
 - Most successful
- U-boat Patrols
- U-boat Types
- Operations
 - Convoy battles
 - Successful patrols
 - Wolfpacks
 - Maps
- U-boat Fates
 - Losses by year
- Flotillas
 - U-boat bases
- Shipyards
- Technologies
- U-boat Emblems

Events on this day

What happened on
28 January?

Commander file

The Monsun boats

1. Introduction

U-boat deployment in the Far East had been reviewed since 1941. However, serious technical and logistic difficulties were encountered. Also, it was considered as an unnecessary diversion from the North Atlantic Tonnage War.

In the second half of 1942 the first wave of boats was sent to the Cape Town area. This was later continued but U-boats always came back to Europe at that time.

From May 1943 onwards a complicated programme of the Italian transports, Japanese movements and so-called Monsun U-boats was carried out. Unlike previous U-boats operating in the Indian Ocean, Monsun boats were to be stationed in the Far East bases provided by the Japanese. Gradually the effort moved from combat missions to transport missions. However, only 4 U-boats out of 14 stationed ever in the Far East managed to reach back Europe.

Mainly German U-boats are described here. Italian submarine transports (so-called Merkator boats) were assigned mainly to transport duties and carried stores for the Monsun bases in the Far East.

The Monsun boats

From the Gallery

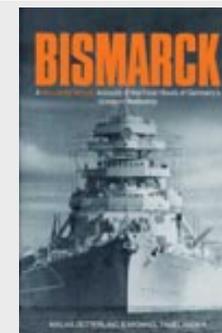


Model of U-2511, a type XXI boat

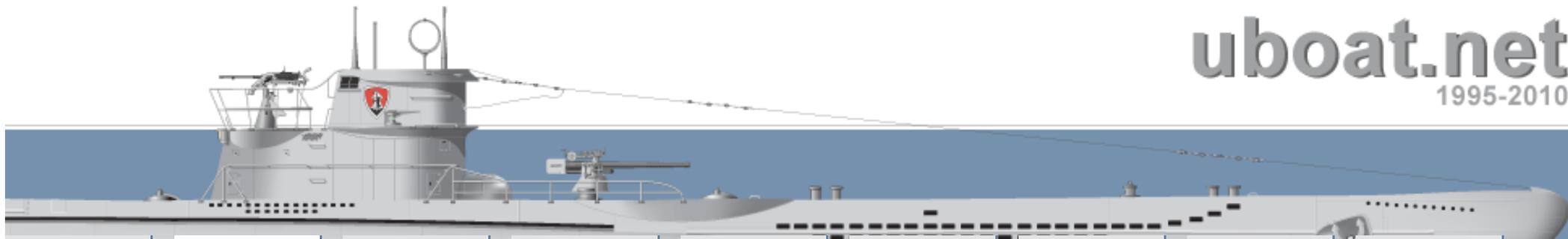


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Bismarck
A Minute by Minute



- Front page
- The U-boats
- The Men
- The Allies
- Forums
- Articles
- Gallery
- Movies
- Books
- WWI

Front page - The U-boats- **Operations**

The U-boats

- List of all U-boats
 - Most successful
- U-boat Patrols
- U-boat Types
- Operations
 - Convoy battles
 - Successful patrols
 - Wolfpacks
 - Maps
- U-boat Fates
 - Losses by year
- Flotillas
 - U-boat bases
- Shipyards
- Technologies
- U-boat Emblems

Events on this day

What happened on 28 January?

Commander file

The Monsun boats

2. Pre-Monsun Boats

2.1 First reconnaissance

In April 1942 U-68 and U-505 brought some intelligence about Capetown-Freetown ship traffic. This drew to the conclusion of sending several type IXC boats supported by a U-tanker to the Capetown area.

Formerly this area was exclusively allocated for surface raiders and blockade-runners. On the 25/07/42 however it was decided to send U-boats to the Capetown area. Conditions similar to the original attack on the US coastal shipping were expected. However, the Japanese action off Madagascar already gave a warning.

2.2 Eisbär group - the first wave of type IXC boats

In August 1942 group of the following boats sailed to the Capetown area:

boat	commander	sailed	returned
U-172	Kptlt. Carl Emmermann	France 19/08/42	France 27/12/42
U-504	Krvkpt. Fritz Poske	France 19/08/42	France 11/12/42
U-156	Krvkpt. Werner Hartenstein	France 20/08/42	France 16/11/42
U-68	Krvkpt. Karl-Friedrich Merten	France 20/08/42	France 6/12/42

The group was accompanied by the Milk Cow U-459.

While on the way south U-156 of the Eisbär group torpedoed the British liner Laconia on 12/09/42 with the well-known consequences. In course of the Laconia incident U-156 was replaced by U-159 (originally intended for the Congo Delta) which headed south together with the remaining Eisbär boats:

boat	commander	sailed	returned
U-159	Kptlt. Helmut Witte	France 24/08/42	France 5/01/43

From the Gallery

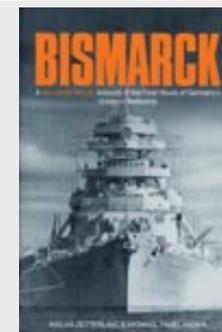


Model of U-617 at sea



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Bismarck
A Minute by Minute Account of the Final



Paul Brasack
(U-737)

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U-boat of the Day

U-17 - 4 patrols
3 ships sunk (1,825 tons)

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28 January, 2010
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While moving south Eisbär boats sighted a few independent ships but were not allowed to attack them.

Eisbär boats refuelled from U-459 600 miles south of St Helena around 23/09/42.

On 8/10/42 Eisbär boats arrived at Capetown but found the anchorage empty. The Allied took some precautions after the Japanese action off Madagascar. However, the boats found targets in the area.

In mid October U-172 and U-68 started their home journey not expending all the torpedoes due to bad weather conditions and resulting fuel shortages. U-159 and U-504 carried on around Durban with some success. Eisbär boats were gradually replaced by the arriving U-cruisers.

U-172 and U-159 were refuelled by the Milk Cow U-461 around 7/12/42 when returning from the Cape via the Brazilian coast. U-172 later intercepted a convoy there and scored hits on 12/12/42.

2.3 The arrival of U-cruisers

In the meantime the first wave of U-Cruisers (type IXD/2 long-distance boats) was despatched to the Capetown area:

boat	commander	sailed	returned
U-179	Frgkpt. Ernst Sobe	Germany 15/08/42	sunk 8/10/42
U-178	KptzS Hans Ibbeken	Germany 8/09/42	France 9/01/43
U-181	Kptlt. Wolfgang Lüth	Germany 12/09/42	France 18/01/43
U-177	Kptlt. Robert Gysae	Germany 17/09/42	France 22/01/43

U-cruisers' immense radius of action meant no refuelling was necessary even when operating as far as Capetown and Durban area. All the boats were on their first war cruises after commissioning but they were commanded by experienced skippers.

U-179 arrived in the area on 8/10/42, as Eisbär boats, but was promptly sunk after torpedoing just one ship. This was the only U-boat sunk in the area till summer 1943. The others arrived in the second half of October so the return of the Eisbär group did not ease the pressure on shipping.

After the return of the Eisbär boats only U-177, U-178 and U-181 were in the area. They operated as far as Laurencio Marques but by the end of 1942 all were on the way home.

In early January 1943 while returning home U-181 was included in the group operating against the tanker convoy TM-1 but did not score hits. U-182 on her way to the Cape area was also involved in this operation. Further operations with U-cruisers were delayed till April 1943 because of problems with their fast-running diesel engines (with the exception of U-182).

2.4 Seehund group - second wave of type IXC boats

Experience with Eisbär group had shown that type IXC boats, even when supported by a U-tanker, could not operate around the Cape for time long enough to expend all the torpedoes. However, as no U-cruisers were available at the time, it was decided to send another wave of type IXC boats to put constant pressure on traffic there:

boat	commander	sailed	returned
U-506	Kptlt. Erich Würdemann	France 14/12/42	France 8/05/43
U-509	Kptlt. Werner Witte	France 23/12/42	France 11/05/43
U-516	Krvkpt. Gerhard Wiebe	France 23/12/42	France 3/05/43

Hours of Germany's
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Zetterling, Niklas

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U-160	Kptlt. Georg Lassen	France 6/01/43	France 10/05/43
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The group was once again supported by the tanker U-459. The group was joined by U-182, the only type IXD/2 U-cruiser available at that time:

boat	commander	sailed	returned
U-182	Kptlt. Nicolai Clausen	Norway 9/12/42	sunk 16/05/43

The Seehund boats refuelled 600 miles south of St. Helena between 29 Jan and 4 Feb, 1943. Together with U-182 they started operating around the Cape from mid February 1943. All the boats eventually scored hits but the situation had completely changed since December 1942. The single ship traffic ceased and instead convoys protected by surface and air escort were encountered. The traffic was directed close to the coast so land radar stations were also employed against the approaching U-boats.

By the end of February 1943 the group was moved eastwards to Durban and Laureco Marques. There on 3 March, 1943 U-160 attacked the first convoy located south of Durban with great success. However, other Seehund boats were less successful and were moved backward to the Cape area because of fuel shortage. By the beginning of April 1943 Seehund group activity (as well as U-182) ended and the boats headed home. They were refuelled from **U-117** between 23 and 29 April, 1943.

The Seehund group experience was generally unsatisfactory. Additionally, **U-182** was sunk with all hands (61) on the way home on 16 May, 1943.

2.5 The second wave of U-cruisers

Before the unsatisfactory results of Seehund boats were known, another group of U<-cruisers was sent to the Cape area:

boat	commander	sailed	returned
U-180	Frgkpt. Werner Musenberg	Germany 9/02/43	France 2/07/43
U-198	Frgkpt. Werner Hartmann	Germany 9/03/43	France 25/09/43
U-196	Krvkpt. Eitel-Friedrich Kentrat	Germany 13/03/43	France 28/10/43
U-195	Kptlt. Heinz Buchholz	Germany 20/03/43	France 23/07/43
U-181	Krvkpt. Wolfgang Lüth	France 23/03/43	France 14/10/43
U-178	Krvkpt. Wilhelm Dommès	France 28/03/43	Penang 26/08/43
U-177	Krvkpt. Robert Gysae	France 1/04/43	France 1/10/43
U-197	Krvkpt. Robert Bartels	Germany 3/04/43	sunk 20/08/43

U-180 and U-195 were of type IXD/1 and the rest of IXD/2. As these boats carried large quantities of fuel it was decided to send them as far as Madagascar and probe the traffic there instead of the empty Cape area.



U-180 was on the first east-bound U-boat transport expedition. She carried 2 passengers (2 Indian nationalists, including Subhas Chandras Bose pictured on the left), plans and samples of new developments (including Bold). On 26-27 April, 1943 rendez vous 180 miles south-east of Madagascar and transshipment with I-2 9 took place.



The remaining boats arrived to the area in May 1943 (with the exception of U-197 which was late and arrived in June 1943). They took pre-arranged routes to survey the traffic 600 to 700 miles off the African coast. U-177 carried out experiments with **Bachstelze** - a small helicopter with an observer towed by the U-boat. 30 flights were made but not a single ship was sighted. Miserable results were achieved when patrolling off south-east Africa in May 1943.

U-195 soon returned home while the remaining 6 U-cruisers carried on operations and moved eastwards to a position 600 miles south of Mauritius. Here the group was refuelled and reprovisioned on 23 June, 1943 from the surface tanker **Charlotte Schliemann** sent from Japan. Special security measures were undertaken.

After replenishing the boats took the following positions:

U-178 and U-196	the Mozambique Channel
U-181	off Mauritius
U-197 and U-198	south of the Mozambique Channel
U-177	south of Madagascar

U-177 once again tried **Bachstelze** because of little air activity in the region. The Greek ship **Eithalia Mari** was spotted and subsequently sunk this way on 5 Aug, 1943 (the **only** sinking resulting from a **Bachstelze** observation).

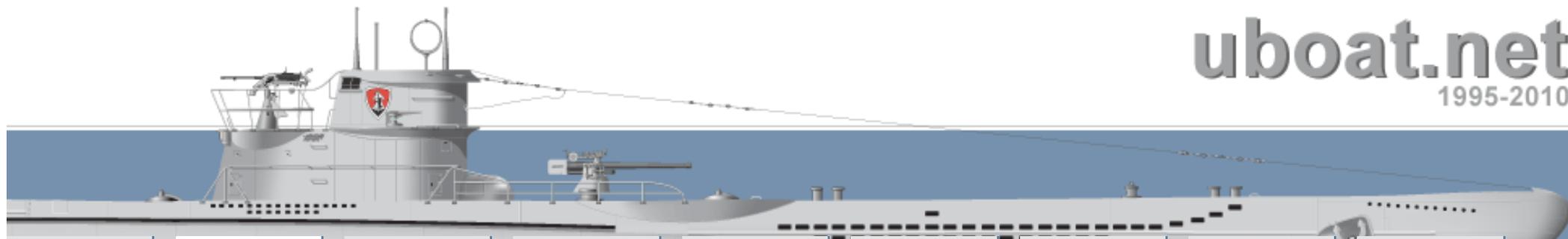
Surprisingly good results were achieved after the area relocation and a number of ships were sunk, mainly off Madagascar. In mid August 1943 the last U-cruiser started the return passage. On 20 Aug, 1943 U-197 was damaged by an aircraft and sunk before U-196 and U-181 arrived to the spot to give assistance. There were no survivors (the first casualty in the Cape area since 8 Oct, 1942).

Unlike the rest of the group, U-178 was sent to Penang where she arrived in late August 1943. Dommes became the commander at the German naval base at Penang with the satellite facilities at **Singapore, Djakarta, Surabaya** and **Kobe**. The base was to serve for the coming Monsun boats and Dommes was to acquire some experience of the base. The decision of sending U-178 to Penang was made on 5 April, 1943, after she sailed from France.

Although all the boats scored hits, the overall result of this group was moderate, taking into account the time and resources involved.

With exception of U-178 all the boats listed in the section Pre-Monsun boats were intended to return and not to be stationed in the Indian Ocean. U-178 eventually arrived at Penang but initially she was also to come back to Europe. Pre-Monsun boats did not penetrate into the Indian Ocean too much.

The Monsun boats



- Front page
- The U-boats
- The Men
- The Allies
- Forums
- Articles
- Gallery
- Movies
- Books

Front page - The U-boats- **Operations**

The U-boats

- List of all U-boats
 - Most successful
- U-boat Patrols
- U-boat Types
- Operations
 - Convoy battles
 - Successful patrols
 - Wolfpacks
 - Maps
- U-boat Fates
 - Losses by year
- Flotillas
 - U-boat bases
- Shipyards
- Technologies
- U-boat Emblems

Events on this day

What happened on
28 January?

Commander file

The Monsun boats

3. Monsun boats

3.1 Origins

The idea of stationing German U-boats in Penang or Sabang for operations in the Indian Ocean was first proposed by the Japanese in December 1942. As no supplies were available at either location the idea was turned down (although a number of U-cruisers from the first wave operated around the Cape at the time).

The idea was raised again in the spring 1943. Additionally, the Japanese requested 2 U-boats to be handed over for copying. Although Doenitz saw no point in such a handover, it was decided to give a type IXC boat.

As long as targets were available in the Atlantic, Doenitz considered sending U-boats on a large scale to the Far East as unprofitable. However, on 5 April, 1943 it was decided to send U-178 to Penang to establish the naval base there. U-511 sailed soon after to be eventually given to the Japanese in return for rubber:

boat	commander	sailed	returned
U-511	Kptlt. Fritz Schneewind	France 10/05/43	Kure 7/08/43

It is also reported that U-511 arrived at Penang around 17 July, 1943 as the first German U-boat to enter the base (before U-178).

U-511 scored some success while on the passage to Japan. The boat carried Vice-Admiral Nomura (the Japanese Naval Attache) and in September 1943 was recommissioned as **RO-500**. U-511's crew was to be a spare crew for the boats which were later to operate from the Japanese-held bases.

After the May 1943 crisis it was decided to look for less strongly defended areas and the idea of sending boats to the Far East was finally approved. Indian Ocean was the only region with almost peace-time shipping arrangement and still with U-boats radius of action.

As the result arrangements were made to replenish U-cruisers still operating around the Cape and to send a new wave of boats for the attack in the Arabian Sea. The latter was scheduled for the end of

From the Gallery



U-2540 at Bremerhaven, Germany



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Bismarck
A Minute by Minute



Fritz Frauenheim
(U-21, U-101)

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U-boat of the Day

U-17 - 4 patrols
3 ships sunk (1,825 tons)

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28 January, 2010
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September 1943 - right after the monsoon period. Because of this the group was named Monsun. The group was to sail in June 1943 at the latest.

3.2 The first wave of Monsun boats

9 type IXC and 2 type IXD/2 boats were scheduled for the attack in the Arabian Sea and sailed as group Monsun:

boat	commander	sailed	returned
U-200	Kptlt. Heinrich Schoder	Norway 11/06/43	sunk 24/06/43
U-188	Kptlt. Siegfried Ludden	France 30/06/43	Penang 31/10/43
U-168	Kptlt. Helmuth Pich	France 3/07/43	Penang 11/11/43
U-509	Kptlt. Werner Witte	France 3/07/43	sunk 15/07/43
U-514	Kptlt. Hans-Jurgen Auffermann	France 3/07/43	sunk 8/07/43
U-532	Frgkpt. Ottoheinrich Junker	France 3/07/43	Penang 31/10/43
U-183	Krvkpt. Heinrich Schafer	France 07/43	Penang 27/10/43
U-506	Kptlt. Erich Wurdemann	France 6/07/43	sunk 12/07/43
U-533	Kptlt. Helmut Hennig	France 6/07/43	sunk 16/10/43
U-516	Kptlt. Hans-Rutger Tillessen	France 8/07/43	France 23/08/43
U-847	Kptlt. Herbert Kuppish	Norway 29/07/43	sunk 27/08/43

Initially [U-462](#) was assigned to the group for refuelling some 300 miles east of St Paul's Rock. A second replenishment was scheduled south of Mauritius from a surface tanker. However, U-462 did not break through the Bay of Biscay in 2 attempts being damaged by aircraft and returned for long repairs on 6/07/43. As most of the Monsun boats were already on the way another tanker, [U-487](#) was assigned but she was sunk on 13 July, 1943 without refuelling Monsun boats.

U-200 was sunk south-west of Iceland while on the outward passage on 24 June, 1943. While in transit U-514 was sunk on 8/07/43, U-506 was sunk on 12/07/43 and U-509 on 15/07/43 - all by aircraft.

After the massacre of U-tankers in the summer 1943 emergency fuelling arrangements were needed for U-boats concentrated around the Azores (including Monsun boats).

It was decided to replenish Monsun boats by employing type IXC boats: U-155 and U-160. U-160 was initially diverted to transfer fuel to U-487 (which was short on fuel after numerous refuelling) but arrived too late and was sunk on 14/07/43 - a day after U-487. Eventually U-516 of the Monsun boats was diverted on emergency refuelling duties. The refuelling of the remaining Monsun boats took place 600 miles WNW of Cape Verde Islands between 21/07 and 27/07/43. U-155 transferred fuel to U-183, U-188 and U-168 while U-516 refuelled U-532 and U-533. Both boats came back to France in August 1943.

U-847 was damaged by ice in the Denmark Strait headed for France but it was decided to use her as a tanker. Between 12/08 and 24/08/43 she refuelled the following boats: U-66, U-415, U-230, U-653, U-257, U-172 and U-508. U-847 was a rather inexperienced boat on her first was cruise (having only sailed from Germany to Norway 6/07 - 20/07/43). An excessive use of radio was reported by commanders of refuelled boats. [U-847](#) was sunk by aircraft on 27 Aug, 1943.

Of the initial 11 Monsun U-boats 4 were destroyed in transit and 2 diverted on emergency refuelling duties (1 of which sunk) so effectively only 5 boats managed to break through: U-168, U-183, U-188, U-532 and U-533. They reached the Indian Ocean without further trouble. Between 11/09 and 13/09/43 they took on fuel from the surface tanker Brake, sent from Penang. The rendezvous took place 450 miles south of Mauritius without incident.

Meanwhile the Japanese already started operating in the Arabian Sea (August 1943) and certain arrangements were made

Account of the Final Hours of Germany's Greatest Battleship [Zetterling, Niklas](#)

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to avoid incidents between U-boats and Japanese submarines (attacks on other submarines strictly forbidden). Eventually the Monsun boats were allocated as follows:

U-168	off Bombay (sank 1 ship)
U-183	between Seychelles and the African Coast
U-188	Gulf of Oman (sank 3 ships, also convoy attack)
U-532	south and west coast of India (sank 5 ships)
U-533	Gulf of Aden (lost there)

U-188 experienced torpedo failures due to the hot climate affecting torpedo batteries. All the remaining 4 Monsun boats (after the loss of U-533) entered Penang by the beginning of November 1943. The commanders of U-168 and U-183 had been affected by the strain of the long voyage and the commander of U-183 was later replaced by Kptlt. Fritz Schneewind of U-511.

3.3 Further Monsun operations

After sending the first wave of Monsun boats it was decided to send further boats to make up for the loses of the first wave:

boat	commander	sailed	returned
U-219	Krvkpt. Walter Burghagen	Norway 22/10/43	France 1/01/44
U-510	Kptlt. Alfred Eick	France 3/11/43	Penang 5/04/44
U-848	Krvkpt. Wilhelm Rollman	Germany 18/09/43	sunk 5/11/43
U-849	Kptlt. Heinz-Otto Schultze	Germany 2/10/43	sunk 25/11/43
U-850	Krvkpt. Klaus Ewerth	Germany 18/11/43	sunk 20/12/43

U-219 was due to lay mines off Cape Town and Colombo but was recalled as a tanker. U-848 and U-849 were destroyed off Ascension while U-850 off the Azores - all by aircraft. U-510 refuelled from U-219 and reached the Indian Ocean where in February and March 1944 she scored hits.

While in the Indian Ocean U-510 joined the boats operating from Penang:

boat	commander	sailed	returned
U-178	Kptlt. Wilhelm Spahr	Penang 27/11/43	France 24/05/44
U-532	Frgkpt. Ottoheinrich Junker	Penang 4/01/44	Penang 19/04/44
U-188	Kptlt. Siegfried Ludden	Penang 9/01/44	France 19/06/44
U-168	Kptlt. Helmuth Pich	Penang 7/02/44	Jakarta 24/03/44
U-183	Kptlt. Fritz Schneewind	Penang 10/02/44	Penang 21/03/44

The first boat to operate from Penang was U-178, later joined by 4 Monsun boats and U-510 coming from France. U-178 and U-510 refuelled from the surface tanker **Charlotte Schliemann** on 28 Jan, 1944 stationed 100 miles south-east of Mauritius. U-510 achieved some success in the Indian Ocean. She attacked convoy PA-69 on 23 Feb, 1944 in the Gulf of Aden and scored hits.

The size of Penang flotilla was limited to 5 U-boats due to the dockyard capacity. The Monsun boats were so short of torpedoes that U-532, U-188 and U-183 were ordered to embark strategic materials and come home via the patrol areas in the Indian Ocean.

U-532 was also to refuel from **Charlotte Schliemann** but bad weather prevented that on 11 Feb, 1944 when 950 miles east of Madagascar. The tanker was then detected by the Allied while refueling U-532 and forced to scuttle. 41 survivors were captured by the British destroyer **HMS Relentless** and others rescued by U-532. She later was under depth-charge attacks for 3 days.

U-178 transferred some fuel to U-532 on 26 Feb, 1944 and left for France. U-178 was later attacked by aircraft on 8 March, 1944 off the Cape of Good Hope but survived. She was later to meet the eastbound transport **UIT-22** but the latter was sunk by aircraft on 11 March, 1944. She arrived at Bordeaux, France with engines almost out of order.

The remaining 5 boats (4 Monsun from Penang and **U-510**) carried on operations. Another refuelling was scheduled from the tanker **Brake** in March 1944. This time U-532, U-188 and U-168 searched the area for some time before. On 12/03/44 U-188 and U-532 refuelled but bad weather again interrupted the operation. Later during the day Brake was detected and forced to scuttle. The survivors were rescued by U-168. The boats had to share fuel among themselves. Eventually U-168, U-532 and U-183 were forced to stay in the Far East due to the fuel shortage. Only U-188 could proceed back to Europe where she was paid off.

3.4 More boats sent to the Far East

One of the reasons for disappointing results was the quality and quantity of torpedoes available at Penang. They were derived from German armed merchant cruisers and blockade-runners and suffered badly from the long storage in the tropics. To make up for this special torpedo transports of type **VIIF** were sent with torpedoes and spares. Also further operational boats were systematically sent to the Far East:

boat	commander	sailed	returned
U-177	Kptlt. Heinz Buchholz	France 2/01/44	sunk 6/02/44
U-1062	Oblt. Karl Albrecht	Bergen 3/01/44	Penang 19/04/44
U-852	Kptlt. Heinz-Wilhelm Eck	Kiel 18/01/44	sunk 3/04/44
U-1059	Oblt. Güter Leupold	Norway 12/02/44	sunk 19/03/44
U-843	Kptlt. Oskar Herwartz	France 19/02/44	Jakarta 11/06/44
U-801	Kptlt. Hans-Joachim Brans	France 26/02/44	sunk 16/03/44
U-851	Krvkpt. Hannes Weingärtner	France 26/02/44	sunk 03/44
U-181	Frgkpt. Kurt Freiwald	France 16/03/44	Penang 8/08/44
U-196	Krvkpt. Eitel-Friedrich Kentrat	France 16/03/44	Penang 10/08/44
U-537	Kptlt. Peter Schrewe	France 25/03/44	Jakarta 2/08/44
U-859	Kptlt. Johann Jebesen	Kiel 4/04/44	sunk 23/09/44
U-860	Frgkpt. Paul Buchel	Kiel 11/04/44	sunk 15/06/44
U-198	Oblt. Burkhard Heusinger v. Waldegg	France 20/04/44	sunk 12/08/44
U-861	Kptlt. Jürgen Oesten	Kiel 20/04/44	Penang 22/09/44
U-490	Oblt. Wilhelm Gerlach	Norway 6/05/44	sunk 12/06/44
U-862	Kptlt. Heinrich Timm	Norway 3/06/44	Penang 9/09/44
U-863	Kptlt. Dietrich von der Esch	Norway 26/07/44	sunk 29/09/44
U-180	Oblt. Rolf Riesen	France 20/08/44	sunk 22/08/44
U-195	Oblt. Friedrich Steinfeldt	France 20/08/44	Jakarta 28/12/44

U-219	Krvkpt. Walter Burghagen	France 23/08/44	Jakarta 11/12/44
U-871	Kptlt. Erwin Ganzer	Norway 31/08/44	sunk 26/09/44
U-864	Krvkpt. Ralf-Reimar Wolfram	Bergen 5/02/45	sunk 9/02/45
U-234	Kptlt. Johann-Heinrich Fehler	1/04/45	surrendered

U-852 sank the Greek ship Peleus on 13/03/44 and survivors were machine-gunned in the water. The commander and officers of U-852 were later captured and after a trial sentenced to death. This was the only proven case of machine-gunning survivors by a German U-boat.

Not all the boats were equipped with schnorkel. Those equipped include: U-180, U-195, U-219, U-863, U-864, U-234.

U-198 reached the Indian Ocean, scored some hits but was sunk by A/S vessels with aircraft assistance. U-859 also survived the Atlantic passage and the Indian Ocean patrol where she scored hits but was sunk by a British submarine off Penang.

U-843 was damaged by aircraft in the Atlantic but reached Penang.

U-859 was torpedoed by an Allied submarine off Penang after a 6 month patrol when she scored hits.

U-180 and U-195 were the only type IXD/1 boats with unreliable experimental fast-running diesel engines. They were completely converted to transports with new diesels. Together with U-219, a minelayer also adapted as a transport, they sailed as a part of the evacuation from French ports. They were bound for the Far East. U-180 was mined but the others reached Jakarta.

U-490 was sent to the Far East to make up for the loss of supply ships in the Indian Ocean.

U-861 initially operated off the Brazilian coast.

U-537 was refuelled by U-183 around 25/06/44.

Of the boats listed above U-852, U-198, U-181, U-537, U-196, U-862, U-861 and U-859 scored hits. The sinkings in the Indian Ocean started on 1/04/44 and ceased in September 1944 when all the boats were either in port or destroyed. The peak moment came in July and August 1944.

It can be seen that the effort was gradually shifted from combat missions to transport missions. Some of the boats were even permanently converted to transports like U-180, U-195, U-219, U-234 and others. How important the transport missions were can be judged from the fact that even in the spring 1945 U-boats were still sailing to the Far East. Some of them with interesting cargoes indeed - like well-known U-234. U-874 and U-875 were loading some 170 tons of mercury, lead and optical glass but never left European waters.

3.5 Operations from Penang

Very few patrols with the intention to return back to the Far East bases were attempted by the Monsun boats. U-168, U-183 and U-532 all made a patrol early in 1944 but in fact U-183 and U-532 were intended to sail to Europe. Further actions include:

boat	commander	sailed	returned
U-183	Kptlt. Fritz Schneewind	Penang 17/05/44	Penang 7/07/44
U-181	Frgkpt. Kurt Freiwald	Penang 19/10/44	Jakarta 5/01/45
U-862	Krvkpt. Heinrich Timm	Jakarta 18/11/44	Jakarta 15/02/45

U-183 operated off the south coast of India. Around 25 June, 1944 she refuelled eastbound U-537. She sank just 1 ship. U-181 sank 1 ship (and arrived at Penang according to the evacuation orders given meanwhile to the Far East U-boat flotilla.



Left: Kptlt. Heinrich Timm of U-862

U-862 operated in the Pacific off Australia and came close to Sydney as she sank the 7180-ton American steamer **Robert J. Walker** off the southern New South Wales coast off Montague Island about 160 miles from Sydney on 24 Dec 1944. After which U-862 did not venture further north, to the Sydney area, rather she retraced her route back to the Indian Ocean. U-862 was the **only** U-boat to operate in the Pacific.

The Monsun boats

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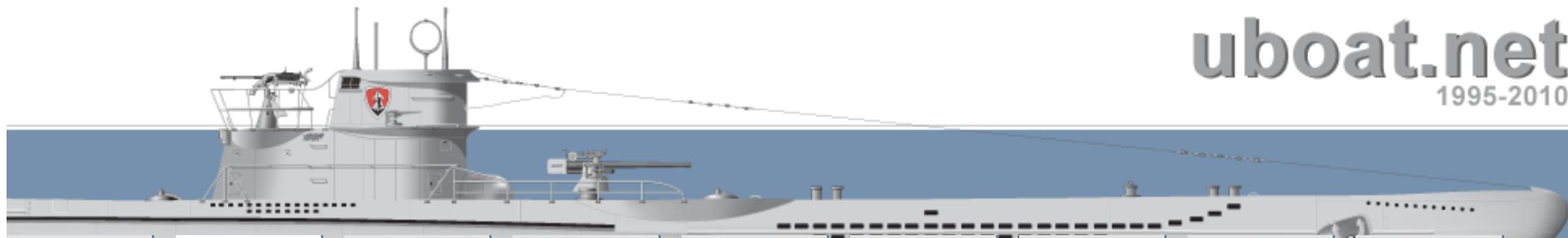
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- List of all U-boats
 - Most successful
- U-boat Patrols
- U-boat Types
- Operations
 - Convoy battles
 - Successful patrols
 - Wolfpacks
 - Maps
- U-boat Fates
 - Losses by year
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Events on this day
What happened on 28 January?

Commander file

The Monsun boats

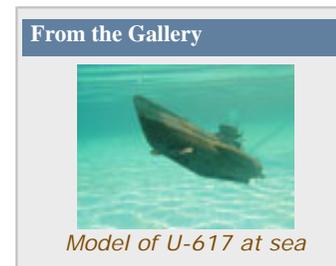
4. Evacuation

The Indian Ocean had become as dangerous for U-boats as the Atlantic. The base at Penang had very limited resources that affected operations. Supply ships could no longer operate in the Far East. This meant that U-boats had to spend too much time on pass age and very little in the operation area. Penang commander, Frgkpt. Dommies, was ordered to move to Jakarta which gave better access to oil and the Indian Ocean. All the boats were to be prepared for sea, packed with as much cargo and torpedoes as possible and to be sent home. As the French ports were not available any more, U-boats were to go to Norway, being refuelled by other submarines when necessary.

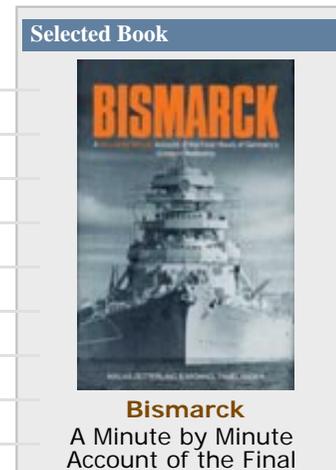
How difficult it was to get back from the Far East could be seen from the experience of first wave Monsun boats early in 1944. Only U-188 made it home while U-183 and U-532 had to return to the Far East bases due to fuel difficulties. U-178 while on the way back was attacked by aircraft.

Since early 1944 the way back to Europe had become increasingly dangerous and only few boats made it. The inherent danger came from the fact that most of the Monsun boats were not equipped with schnorkel (U-862, U-195, U-532, U-510, U-861, U-843 certainly were not). Also, they lacked the most advanced radar and radar-detection equipment and AA armament was often inadequate.

boat	commander	sailed	returned
U-1062	Oblt. Karl Albrecht	Penang 6/07/44	sunk 5/10/44
U-168	Kptlt. Helmeut Pich	Jakarta 4/10/44	sunk 6/10/44
U-181	Frgkpt. Kurt Freiwald	Jakarta 19/10/44	Jakarta 5/01/45
U-537	Kptlt. Peter Schrewe	Jakarta 8/11/44	sunk 9/11/44
U-196	Oblt. Werner Striegler	Jakarta 11/11/44	sunk 30/11/44
U-510	Kptlt. Alfred Eick	Jakarta 26/11/44	Jakarta 3/12/44
U-843	Kptlt. Oskar Herwartz	Jakarta 10/12/44	Bergen 3/04/45
U-510	Kptlt. Alfred Eick	Jakarta 11/01/45	France 24/04/45



uboat.net Web





Ralph Kapitzky
(U-615)

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U-boat of the Day

U-17 - 4 patrols
3 ships sunk (1,825 tons)

U-boat Finder

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U-532	Frgkpt. Ottoheinrich Junker	Jakarta 13/01/45	surrendered
U-861	Kptlt. Jürgen Oesten	Jakarta 14/01/45	Norway 18/04/45
U-195	Oblt. Friedrich Steinfeldt	Jakarta 17/01/45	Jakarta 3/03/45
U-183	Kptlt. Fritz Schneewind	Jakarta 22/04/45	sunk 24/04/45

U-181 got as far as South Africa but had to return due to propeller shaft trouble. She scored 1 ship though. Engine trouble forced **U-510** to come back to Jakarta on her first attempt to return. This demonstrated the outcome of poor labour and poor quality fuel available in the Far East. The second time **U-510** ran out of fuel and had to surrender at St Nazaire.

U-510 had the honour of sinking the last ship to be sunk by U-boats in the Indian Ocean when she torpedoed the 7136-ton Canadian steamer **Point Pleasant Park** on 23 Feb, 1945.

While proceeding home **U-843** refuelled from east-bound **U-195** around 20/12/44. **U-843** arrived safely to Norway but was later sunk when passing Kattegat.

U-532 scored hits on the way home but eventually surrendered at sea and was brought to Liverpool, England where her cargo was unloaded. The cargo consisted of 110 tons of tin ingots, 8 tons of wolfram, 4 tons of molybdenum and smaller amounts of selenium, quinine and crystals plus 8 tons of rubber in tube-like containers. She was refuelled by **U-195** around 20 Feb, 1945. **U-195** then came back to Jakarta since her engines were not fit enough for the long journey home.

The returning Monsun U-boats were often sunk by the Allied submarines patrolling off the bases. This was the case of **U-168** (Dutch submarine Zwaardfish), **U-537** (US submarine Flounder), **U-183** (US submarine Besugo). In case of **U-168** the reason was noisy diesels because of poor quality fuel. Generally, Monsun U-boats lacked schnorkel and advanced radar equipment which made them particularly vulnerable to radar-equipped Allied submarines (apparently **U-168** had schnorkel apparatus fitted in the far east).

For more information on this check out [U-boats Sunk by Allied Subs](#).

In 1944 only 2 U-boats reached Europe from the Far East with cargoes: **U-178** and **U-188** (additionally a Japanese submarine). Plans were for 14 boats. In 1945 again only 2 U-boats came home: **U-843** and **U-861**, each carrying 100 tons of zinc. **U-843** was later sunk in the Belt when transferring to Germany. **U-510** and **U-532** did manage to reach Europe and surrender.

The Monsun boats

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Hans Cohausz
(U-15, U-30, UA)

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U-boat of the Day

U-17 - 4 patrols
3 ships sunk (1,825 tons)

U-boat Finder

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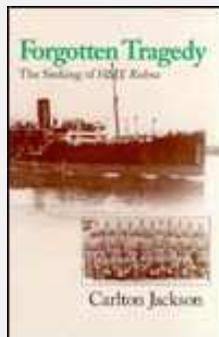
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This is the patrol area of the Far East Monsun boats during 1943 - 1945.



Forgotten Tragedy
Jackson, Carlton

Books dealing with this subject include:

-  Boarding Party. Leasor, James, 1995.
-  Commanders Winn and Knowles. Kohnen, David, 1999.
-  Forgotten Tragedy. Jackson, Carlton, 1997.
-  I Drasi tou Polemikou kai Emporikou Ellinikou Naftikou kata ton B' Pagosmio Polemo. Manolas, Stamatios G., R. Adm. (ret.), Economist - Attorney at Law, 1998.
-  A Submariner's War. Wilson, Michael, 2000.
-  Szare wilki Hitlera U-booty na Oceanie Indyjskim. Paterson, Lawrence, 2005.
-  Telegraphist Air Gunner. Sims, Ken, 1999.
-  Verdreven doch niet Verslagen. Bezemer, K. W. L., 1987.

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