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Air Ministry News Service

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ANGLO-AMERICAN ATTACKS "KILL" U-BOATS

At an interval of only a few days, two single U-boats were destroyed in the Bay of Biscay recently by combined Anglo-American air attacks. In each case the U-boat was first damaged by a U.S.A.A.F. Liberator and finally despatched by the Coastal Command aircraft. In the latter "kill" the pilot of the British airplane was an American, flying with the R.A.F.

The first U-boat was travelling at full speed on the surface when sighted by the crew of the U.S.A.A.F. Liberator, operating with Coastal Command, Captained by Lieutenant Charles. F. Gallemeir, of Fort Wayne, Indiana. The aircraft met with intense light flak and was hit several times but flew straight in to the attack and dropped a stick of depth charges only a few yards from the U-boat's bow.

"We circled again although one of our engines had been hit and eventually 'packed up'", said the captain. "The U-boat was still under way but making tight circles at reduced speed and appeared to be down at the stern.

"During the run-in our gunners and the navigators saw their bullets hit the U-boat which was firing back at us. Our Assistant Flight Engineer was wounded. When we saw the Halifax arrive I decided to make for base since it was a long haul home and we had only three engines".

"We saw the Liberator below us at the same time as the second pilot shouted that he had seen a U-boat", the Halifax captain, Flight Lieutenant G.A.Sawtell, said. "Although fully surfaced the U-boat was obviously damaged and down by the stern. The crew opened fire at us but when our gunners replied they stopped.

"Then, after about 20 minutes, we saw about 20 of the crew come out of the conning-tower and line up in parade order on the fore deck. We thought they were manning the guns so our gunners kept hard at it, shooting several of the Germans off the deck and driving the rest to cover as we made a run-in to drop our depth charges which we released in a perfect straddle. Some of my crew saw debris and bodies rising high into the air. When the plumes had subsided nothing could be seen of the U-boat, but there were five or six men in a dinghy which had been launched just before the attack, and others swimming around it".

A U.S.A.A.F. Liberator and a Coastal Command Liberator captained by an American shared in the "kill" of the second single U-boat. Both aircraft were damaged badly by flak during the run-up, but persisted in their attacks.

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The American Liberator was returning from patrol when the radio operator sighted the wake of the U-boat. "We dived right in", Lieutenant Arthur J. Hammer, the captain, said. "There was a lot of flak but we dropped our first stick of depth charges, and during the run in our top gunner, Technical Sergeant Bard, kept up a heavy fire, knocking at least three men into the water".

"As we pulled out we saw the British Liberator coming in to attack. It was a beauty; a really wonderful attack. There was no doubt about the 'kill'. We had a grandstand view".

The British Liberator, captained by flying Officer Robert Sweeney, carried out its attack in the face of heavy fire, and like the American aircraft, one of its engines was set on fire and cut-out a few minutes later.

"During the run-in," said one of the crew, "the upper turret was so badly damaged by the U-boat's fire, that ^{the} gunner, Flight Sergeant Graham, continued to operate it manually and directed an accurate fire on the submarine, scoring hits. Two bodies were seen to fall into the sea.

"Our depth charges fell right across the U-boat. Its bow lifted high out of the water and it sank stern first, leaving wreckage and oil on the surface. We saw about ten Germans in yellow life-jackets swimming in a foaming patch of water".

With one engine on fire the Liberator turned for a second attack "to make absolutely sure of the 'kill'" and dropped two more depth charges into the churning sea".

When down to within 20 feet of the sea, his engine cut and F/O Sweeney found he could not gain height. He ordered every movable object in the aircraft to be jettisoned - flares, instruments, even guns - and the wireless operator sent an S.O.S., but, gradually, the captain managed to climb and set course for home.

Both the American and the British Liberators limped home across 400 miles of sea on three engines - and the British one without any defence against a possible roaming enemy fighter, but they had destroyed their U-boat.

For this attack, pressed home in spite of severe damage to his aircraft and in the face of intense flak fire, Flying Officer Sweeney was awarded an immediate D.F.C. and the Wireless Operator and Air Gunner - cousins - were awarded immediate D.F.M.'s.

F/O Sweeney, in the summer of 1937, won the British Amateur Golf championship.

Nearly four years ago the young American and his brother Charles joined their uncle, Colonel Sweeney, in forming the Eagle Squadron. Although he had a civil pilot's licence, Robert Sweeney could not fly as a fighter pilot and therefore remained on the administrative side until about two years ago when he took an R.A.F. flying course and was posted to Coastal Command.

The qualities which made him such a brilliant golfer served him in good stead during this action - endurance, physical fitness and keen co-ordination of hand and eye.

/First attack

FIRST ATTACK:

Crew of U.S.A.A.F. Liberator:- F/19

Captain: 1st Lt. Charles F. GALLEMEIER, Fort Wayne, Indiana.
2nd Pilot 2nd Lt. Robert E. ALLEN, Luling, Texas.
Navigator: 1st Lt. Arnold Z. ROSSOF, Brookline, Mass.
Bombardier: 2nd Lt. William M. YARCUSKO, Cleveland, Ohio.
Engineer: Tec./Sgt. Sebren D. BRISTOW, Vivian, La.
Asst. Eng.: Sgt. Richard L. SKELTZ, Camp Hill, Penn.
Radio Op.: Sgt. Loland M. SILVENS, Oshkosh, Wis.
Asst. Rad. Op.: Corp. John A. BABICH, Taylorville, Ill.
Gunner: Staff Sgt. John M. GRENOBLE, Lewisberg, Penn.
Gunner: Corp. Elsworth G. HIPPLE, Potssville, Penn.

Crew of C.C. Halifax:- E/58

Captain: F/Lt. G.A. SAWHILL, Wembley.
2nd Pilot: P/O. J.M. CLARK, Peterborough, Ontario.
Navigator: F/Sgt. T.R. URQUHART, Aberdeen.
WOP/AG.: F/P. R.M. MARSHALL, Newcastle.
WOP/AG.: Sgt. W.A. TENNANT, 22, Derwas Street, Edmonton, Can.
WOP/AG.: Sgt. B.L. MITCHELL, 579, Rathgar Avenue, Winnipeg.
WOP/AG.: Sgt. L.C. MATTHEWS, St. John's, Newfoundland.
F/Eng.: Sgt. A.G. WILDER, Newbury, Berks.

SECOND ATTACK:

Crew of U.S.A.A.F. Liberator:- N/4

Captain: 1st Lt. Arthur J. HAMMER, Larchmont, N.Y.
Co-Pilot: F/O. Robert J. CONWAY, Woodstock, Ill.
Navigator: 2nd Lt. Walter B. CORKIN, New Rochdelle, N.Y.
Bombardier: 2nd Lt. Arthur A. EDGARLAN, New Britain, Conn.
Radio Op.: Tec./Sgt. Ralph A.A. BRANSEFFTER, Vandalia, Mo.
Asst. Rad. Op.: Staff Sgt. Charles PARYSEK, Long Island.
Aerial Eng.: Tec./Sgt. Howard W. BARD, Madlin, N.Y.
Asst. Aer. Eng.: Staff Sgt. Vernon W. MEYERHOEFFTER, Penn Laud, Va.
Gunner: Staff Sgt. George J. BULLIS, Syracuse, N.Y.
Aim. Gunner: Staff Sgt. George R. FINNEY, Grenada, Miss.

Crew of C.C. Liberator:- W/224

Captain: F/O Robert SWINNEY, N.Y.
2nd Pilot: P/O E. ALLEN, N.Y.
Navigator: P/O R.W. KING, Oppington, Kent.
WOP/AG.: F/Sgt. I.A. GRAHAM, Glasgow
WOP/AG.: Sgt. A.H.G. GRAHAM, Glasgow
WOP/AG.: Sgt. D. DONCASTER, Farnley, Leeds.
WOP/AG.: F/Sgt. E. CHEEK, Hastings
F/Eng.: F/Sgt. W.K. OWEN, Moss Lane Orrell, Bootle.

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