

WWI by 1917 the German U-boat fleet was sinking 30% of all British merchant shipping, mainly due to Admiralty incomprehension of the U-boat menace. At the brink of Britain's defeat by starvation, institutional paralysis was overcome and convoy operations (a technique dating back to before the Napoleonic wars) were introduced. Losses immediately fell to less than 1%. Shaken by this brush with catastrophe, the Admiralty was ready with convoy plans the moment WW2 began.

There was a major problem with the Admiralty's plans: there weren't enough escorts. This was partly because of Britain's failure to build enough warships before the war, and partly due to a reluctance to divert destroyers away from defence of the home waters after the Fall of France. RN losses associated with the Fall of Norway only exacerbated the problem

<http://www.nels.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/GURPS/WWII/ConvoyOps.htm>

<http://www.worldwar1atsea.net>

WORLD WAR 1 and its DEVELOPMENT INTO A MILITARY/MARITIME WAR

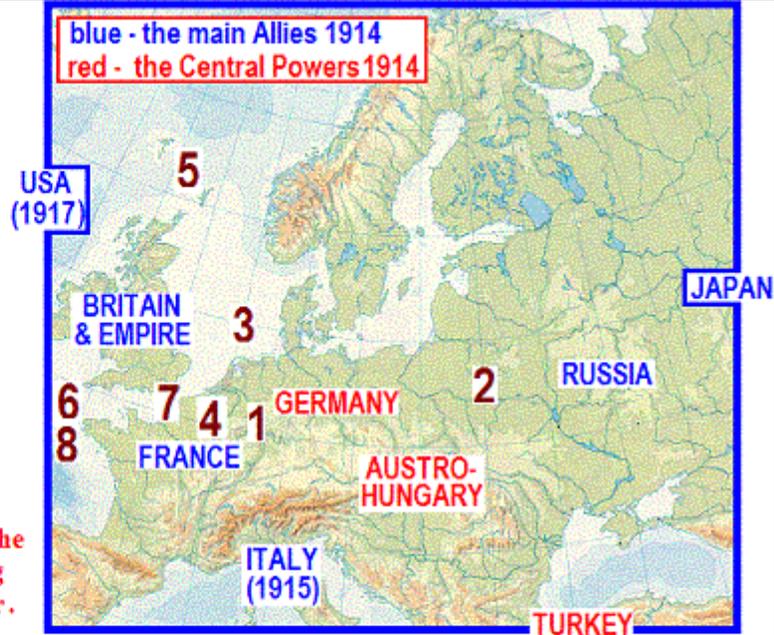
GERMAN MILITARY AIMS – with powerful and professional Army, and “interior lines” of communication:

- 1 Invade and defeat France before Russia mobilises
- 2 Transfer Army to Eastern Front to defeat Russia
- 3 Role of German High Seas Fleet to challenge Royal Navy and support German claim for additional colonies –a “place in the sun”.

- 4 Once the German Army’s advance had been halted by the French and smaller British Army in the West and a long war ensued, WW1 became an increasingly maritime war.

To continue war on Western Front:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Britain had to protect its oceanic trade routes and blockade Germany 6 British Empire troops carried to Britain (and other parts of the Empire) from Canada, South Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7 British and Empire troops transported to France and supplied 8 Later still, US troops and munitions carried across the Atlantic |
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Most of the Allied war at sea was fought by the Royal Navy as can be gauged from the number of ships and men; also those lost and killed:

SCALE OF MARITIME WAR - ROYAL NAVY 1914-1918

**50 Dreadnoughts and battlecruisers,
41 Pre-dreadnoughts
58 Large Cruisers
119 Light cruisers
17 Aircraft carriers
550 Destroyers
109 Torpedo boats
171 Submarines
272 Sloops
39 Monitors**

**plus armed merchant cruisers, armed boarding ships,
river gunboats, patrol boats, coastal motor boats,
trawlers, drifters, whalers etc**

**Total of 11,000 British warships and auxiliaries of which 250
warships and 850 auxiliaries lost**

640,000 officers and men served:

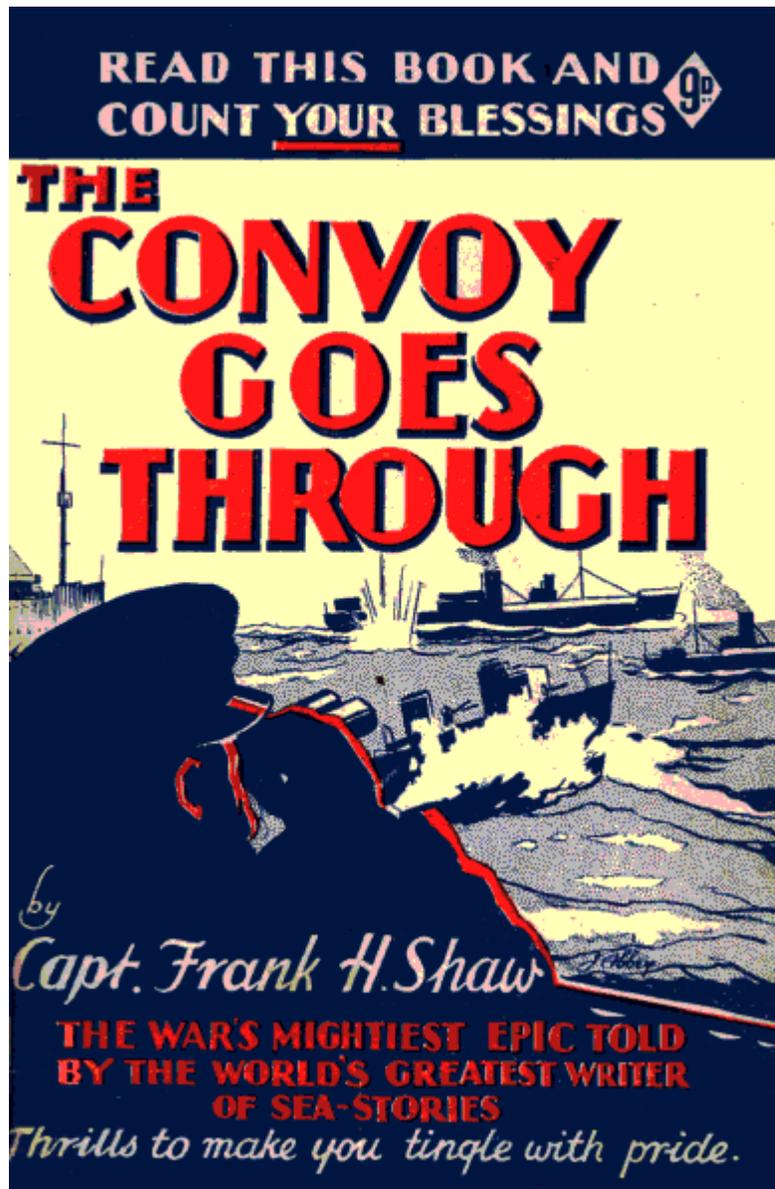
**34,654 killed or died plus 8,590 in RN division
5,158 wounded or injured plus 20,165 in RN division
1,256 POW or interned plus 4,466 in RN division**

**Royal Navy total = 74,289 casualties (50,000 in WW2)
plus 15,313 (30,000 in WW2) merchant navy and fishing crews lost**

<http://www.convoyweb.org.uk/extras/index.html>

'The old practice of enemy submarines was to stalk a convoy from behind the skyline, tracking it by the great smoke-canopy that accompanied it; to hurry well ahead during hours of darkness, to lie in wait in its track at dawn, submerged to periscope-depth; and then to let fly as many torpedoes as could be fired from this position, afterwards diving under the convoy, where the attacking craft were

moderately safe from escort depth-charges, as an indiscriminate use of these destructive engines was apt to blow in the sides of the convoy freighters as the enemy underwater craft.' Quote from The Convoy Goes Through by Frank H Shaw



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