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STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT OF ALLIED NAVAL FORCES  
IN THE ATLANTIC IN WORLD WAR II

Lecture by

Vice Admiral Francis S. Low, USN

Naval War College  
18 December 1952



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**DEPARTMENT OF INTELLIGENCE**

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NAVAL OPERATIONS (LOGISTICS)**

**THE NAVAL WAR COLLEGE**

**Newport, Rhode Island**

**18 DECEMBER 1952**

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**THE STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT OF ALLIED NAVAL FORCES IN THE ATLANTIC  
IN WORLD WAR II**

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THE SUBJECT ASSIGNED ME BY YOUR PRESIDENT IS OF SUCH SCOPE THAT  
IT ~~CHALLENGES ME TO DEAL WITH IT ADEQUATELY~~ <sup>Challenges me to deal with it adequately</sup> IN THE TIME  
AVAILABLE.

WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO OUR OWN NAVAL FORCES, THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF A PATTERN OF STRATEGIC DISPOSITIONS DURING THE YEAR  
PRECEDING OUR ENTRY INTO THE WAR IS MOST IMPORTANT.

THIS PATTERN CAN BEST BE TRACED THROUGH THE OPERATION PLANS  
OF THE ATLANTIC FLEET, BEGINNING WITH OP-PLAN 3-41 OF  
18 APRIL 1941 AND CONCLUDING WITH OP-PLAN 8-41 OF  
20 DECEMBER 1941.

I SHALL REFER ONLY TO THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS WHICH REVEAL THE  
PROCESS OF THOUGHT AND DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THESE TWO DATES.

I SHALL, HOWEVER, TAKE A CONSIDERABLE PART OF THE TIME ALLOTTED  
TO DEVELOP THESE MATTERS ~~FOR THE REASONS THAT FOLLOW:~~ <sup>because -</sup>

WHEN ADMIRAL KING TOOK OVER IN THE ATLANTIC IN DECEMBER 1940,  
IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME, IN HIS OPINION, UNTIL THE  
SITUATION WOULD DETERIORATE INTO WAR.

THEREFORE, EVERY ATLANTIC FLEET OPERATION PLAN DRAFTED BETWEEN  
DECEMBER 1940 AND DECEMBER 1941 WAS PREDICATED ON THAT  
ASSUMPTION.

THAT IS WHY YOU WILL SEE LATER THAT THE FINAL OPERATION PLAN  
ISSUED IN DECEMBER 1941 WAS STRATEGICALLY SO FUNDAMENTALLY  
SOUND THAT ONLY MINOR VARIATIONS WERE REQUIRED DURING THE  
COURSE OF THE WAR.

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THIS SHOULD BE A LESSON TO ALL OF US IN THE VIRTUES OF ADVANCED  
PLANNING AND THINKING.

THE OPERATION PLAN OF 18 APRIL 1941 CONTAINED THE FOLLOWING  
GUIDANCE:

- "(A) THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE EXTENDS FROM APPROXIMATELY 26°W.  
WESTWARD TO THE INTERNATIONAL DATE LINE AND, IN THE ATLANTIC,  
INCLUDES ALL OF GREENLAND, ALL OF THE ISLANDS OF THE AZORES,  
THE WHOLE OF THE GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE, THE BAHAMA ISLANDS,  
THE CARIBBEAN SEA AND THE GULF OF MEXICO.
- "(B) ENTRANCE INTO THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE BY NAVAL SHIPS AND  
AIRCRAFT OF BELLIGERENTS, OTHER THAN OF THOSE POWERS  
HAVING SOVEREIGNTY OVER TERRITORY IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE,  
IS TO BE VIEWED AS POSSIBLY ACTUATED BY AN UNFRIENDLY  
INTEREST TOWARD SHIPPING OR TERRITORY IN THE WESTERN  
HEMISPHERE.
- "(C) ANY BELLIGERENT WAR VESSEL OR AIRCRAFT (OTHER THAN OF THOSE  
POWERS WHICH HAVE SOVEREIGNTY OVER WESTERN HEMISPHERE  
TERRITORY) WHICH APPROACHES WITHIN TWENTY-FIVE MILES OF  
ANY WESTERN HEMISPHERE TERRITORY, EXCEPT OF THE AZORES,  
IS TO BE VIEWED AS ACTUATED BY AN INTENTION IMMEDIATELY  
TO ATTACK SUCH TERRITORY.
- "THIS FLEET WILL, IN COOPERATION WITH THE ARMY, WITHIN THE  
WESTERN HEMISPHERE, WARN WESTERN HEMISPHERE POWERS AGAINST  
IMPENDING DANGER AND DEFEND WESTERN HEMISPHERE TERRITORY  
AND UNITED STATES FLAG SHIPPING AGAINST ATTACK."

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THE OPERATION PLAN OF 21 APRIL 1941 (ONLY THREE DAYS LATER)

CONTAINS THESE EARLY SIGNS OF THE TIMES:

"(A) THE POSSIBLE EARLY INTENSIFICATION OF THE LIMITED NATIONAL EMERGENCY REQUIRES THE MAINTENANCE OF MATERIAL AND PERSONNEL IN APPROPRIATE READINESS."

"THIS FLEET WILL MAINTAIN FULL READINESS TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF AN INTENSIFIED EMERGENCY, AND, IN COOPERATION WITH THE ARMY AND WITHIN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE, WARN WESTERN HEMISPHERE POWERS AGAINST POSSIBLE IMPENDING DANGER AND DEFEND UNITED STATES FLAG SHIPPING AGAINST ATTACK."

THE OPERATION PLAN OF 15 JULY 1941 CONTAINS THIS NEW STATEMENT:

"(B) THE OCCUPATION OF ICELAND BY A POWER OTHER THAN ONE WHICH HAS SOVEREIGNTY OVER WESTERN HEMISPHERE TERRITORY WOULD CONSTITUTE A SERIOUS THREAT AGAINST GREENLAND AND THE NORTHERN PORTION OF THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT AND OUTLYING ISLANDS, AGAINST ALL SHIPPING IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC, AND AGAINST THE STEADY FLOW OF MUNITIONS TO BRITAIN."

THE OPERATION PLAN OF SEPTEMBER 1, 1941 REFERS TO THE NEUTRALITY ZONE AND REPEATS REFERENCE TO THE UNLIMITED EMERGENCY IN THESE WORDS:

"(A) A NEUTRALITY ZONE DESCRIBED IN THE DECLARATION OF PANAMA, AND DULY PROCLAIMED, COMPRISES ALL WATERS WITHIN THE LIMITS SET FORTH HEREAFTER EXCEPT THE TERRITORIAL WATERS OF CANADA AND OF THE UNDISPUTED COLONIES AND POSSESSIONS OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WITHIN THESE LIMITS, NAMELY . . ."

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"(E) THE EXISTENCE OF AN UNLIMITED EMERGENCY WAS DULY PROCLAIMED BY THE PRESIDENT ON MAY 27, 1941."

THE OPERATION PLAN OF 22 SEPTEMBER 1941 INJECTS THESE TWO NEW THOUGHTS:

"(C) THE PRESENCE WITHIN THE WESTERN ATLANTIC AREA OF GERMAN OR ITALIAN VESSELS OF WAR (SURFACE, SUBMARINE OR AIRCRAFT) IS DEEMED TO THREATEN THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE DEFENSE OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE.

"(D) THE UNITED STATES IS NOT AT WAR IN THE LEGAL SENSE AND THEREFORE DOES NOT HAVE ANY OF THE SPECIAL BELLIGERENT RIGHTS GENERALLY ACCORDED UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW TO STATES WHICH ARE FORMALLY AT WAR. THE EXISTENCE OF AN UNLIMITED EMERGENCY WAS DULY PROCLAIMED BY THE PRESIDENT ON MAY 27, 1941."

FINALLY, OPERATION PLAN NO. 8-41 OF 20 DECEMBER 1941 BRINGS US INTO THE WAR IN THESE TERMS:

SLIDE 1 - APPENDIX A

"(A) THE UNITED STATES AND ASSOCIATED POWERS ARE AT WAR WITH GERMANY, ITALY, AND JAPAN."

"(C) NAVAL OPERATING BASES NEWFOUNDLAND, BERMUDA AND ICELAND ARE ASSIGNED AS TASK GROUPS OF THE U. S. ATLANTIC FLEET, FOR BOTH TASK AND ADMINISTRATIVE PURPOSES...."

"(D) THE NAVAL COASTAL FRONTIER FORCES OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC, UNDER THEIR RESPECTIVE COMMANDERS, OPERATE IN SUPPORT OF THE OPERATIONS OF THE ATLANTIC FLEET."

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"3. (A) TASK FORCE ONE (PRIMARYLY FOR DUTY AS TROOP CONVOY ESCORTS) WILL MAINTAIN READINESS:

(1) FOR OFFENSIVE ACTION AGAINST HOSTILE SURFACE RAIDERS BY KEEPING APPROPRIATE DETACHMENTS AT ARGENTIA AND IN ICELAND;

(2) TO PROVIDE BATTLESHIP AND/OR CRUISER ESCORT FOR TROOP OR OTHER CONVOYS AS MAY BE REQUIRED;

~~(3) IN ACCORDANCE WITH A SEPARATE (AMPLIFYING) LETTER OF INSTRUCTIONS WHICH WILL BE ISSUED;~~

(4) BY USING ARGENTIA AND ICELAND AS ADVANCED BASES; CASCO BAY AND BOSTON AS HOME BASES.

"(B) TASK FORCE TWO WILL, NORMALLY IN THREE STRIKING GROUPS OF CARRIERS, CRUISERS AND DESTROYERS AT ARGENTIA, BERMUDA, AND HAMPTON ROADS, MAINTAIN READINESS TO SUPPORT TASK FORCES ONE, THREE, AND FOUR. ADVANCED BASES AT ARGENTIA AND BERMUDA; HOME BASE AT HAMPTON ROADS.

"(C) TASK FORCE THREE WILL, NORMALLY IN NOT LESS THAN THREE DETACHMENTS, AND WITH AVAILABLE PATROL PLANES BASED IN EASTERN BRAZIL EXERCISE SURVEILLANCE OVER THE TRADE ROUTES AND TRADE FOCI OF THE EQUATORIAL ATLANTIC WITH ESPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE SEA LANES CARIBBEAN - EASTERN BRAZIL, AND THE LINE BRAZIL - CAPE VERDE ISLANDS. ADVANCED BASES AT RECIFE, BAHIA, NATAL, MACEIO, TRINIDAD; HOME BASES GUANTANAMO BAY, SAN JUAN - CULEBRA AREA.

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"(D) TASK FORCE FOUR WILL:

- (1) ESCORT CONVOYS AND OTHER SHIPPING AND PROVIDE PATROL PLANE COVERAGE THEREFOR IN THE NORTHERN NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN,
- (2) WHEN AVAILABLE, DETAIL ONE OR MORE SUITABLE HUNTING GROUPS TO OPERATE IN CONNECTION WITH REPORTED SUBMARINE CONCENTRATIONS. *(This availability did not occur for about 3yrs)*
- (3) SUPPORT OPERATIONS IN THE LABRADOR - GREENLAND AREA,
- (4) ~~BE~~ ~~GUIDED~~ ~~BY~~ ~~A~~ ~~SEPARATE~~ ~~(AMPLIFYING)~~ ~~LETTER~~ ~~OF~~ ~~INSTRUCTIONS~~ WHICH WILL BE ISSUED,
- (5) USE OPERATING BASES; AT ARGENTIA (CONTROL STATION FOR OCEAN ESCORTS); IN ICELAND AND AT SHELburnE AS NECESSARY; HOME BASES CASCO BAY AND BOSTON.

"(E) TASK FORCE FIVE CONTINUE INTENSIVE MATERIAL PREPARATION AND TRAINING IN READINESS FOR OPERATIONS FROM ADVANCED BASES. EMPHASIZE TRAINING OF RELIEF CREWS. MAINTAIN MINIMUM OF FOUR SUBMARINES AND APPROPRIATE TENDER SERVICES AT BERMUDA. PROVIDE SUBMARINE SERVICES AS REQUIRED FOR ANTI-SUBMARINE TRAINING FOR FORCES BASED ON CASCO BAY OR ELSEWHERE.

"(F) TASK FORCE SIX TAKE ACTION AGAINST ENEMY VESSELS AND ACTIVITIES:

- (1) NORTHERN PATROL IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC IN THE WATERS OF THE COASTAL FRONTIER.

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(2) GULF PATROL IN YUCATAN CHANNEL AND FLORIDA STRAITS, AND APPROACHES THERETO. UNITS ASSIGNED ARE PRIMARILY FOR FLEET SOUND SCHOOL BUT MAY, IN EMERGENCY, BE MADE AVAILABLE TO AUGMENT COASTAL FRONTIER FORCES. OPERATING BASE KEY WEST.

(3) CARIBBEAN PATROL IN THE APPROACHES TO THE CARIBBEAN SEA. MAINTAIN PLANE PATROL OF AREA WITHIN 300 MILES RADIUS FROM CULEBRA, ST. LUCIA, TRINIDAD AND EASTERLY TANGENTS THERETO. ASSIGNED UNITS ARE AVAILABLE FOR COASTAL FRONTIER AND DISTRICT PURPOSES UNTIL AND UNLESS CALLED UPON FOR FLEET TASKS. MAKE PRESCRIBED PLANE FLIGHTS TO OBSERVE MARTINIQUE. OPERATING BASES AT SAN JUAN, TRINIDAD AND GUANTANAMO BAY.

(4) PANAMA PATROL IN THE ATLANTIC APPROACHES TO THE PANAMA CANAL, SUBJECT TO SIMILAR EMPLOYMENT IN GULF OF PANAMA AND APPROACHES THERETO. ASSIGNED UNITS ARE AVAILABLE FOR COASTAL FRONTIER AND DISTRICT PURPOSES UNTIL AND UNLESS CALLED UPON FOR FLEET TASKS. MAINTAIN MINIMUM OF THREE SUBMARINES IN CARIBBEAN PATROL (BASED AT ST. THOMAS). OPERATING BASE AT COCO SOLO.

"(G) TASK FORCE SEVEN. SENIOR OFFICERS PRESENT AFLOAT, IN ADDITION TO NORMAL FUNCTIONS OF SOPA SHALL EXERCISE SUCH CONTROL AS WILL FACILITATE OPERATIONS IN GENERAL AND COMMUNICATIONS IN PARTICULAR. MAINTAIN A FULLY REVISED AND UP TO DATE SOPA PORTFOLIO. SEE TO MAINTENANCE OF SWEEP AND MARKED CHANNELS AND OF OTHER LOCAL DEFENSE MEASURES.

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- "(H) TASK FORCE EIGHT EXPEDITE EQUIPMENT, TRAINING AND OTHER READINESS OF PATROL SQUADRONS. EXERCISE GENERAL SUPERVISION OF CARRIER TRAINING SQUADRONS. MAINTAIN PATROL PLANE DETACHMENTS AT BERMUDA AND ELSEWHERE, AS ORDERED.
- "(I) TASK FORCE NINE FURNISH REQUIRED SERVICES OF ALL KINDS TO ALL TASK FORCES, (INCLUDING SUPPLIES TO ICELAND GARRISON) WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO NEEDS OF NORTHERN OUTLYING BASES AND OF TASK FORCES FOUR, ONE, TWO, THREE. PROVIDE FUEL AS NECESSARY IN ICELAND FOR BRITISH AND CANADIAN ESCORT UNITS, FOR COMMERCIAL VESSELS UNDER NAVAL CONTROL, AND TO U. S. ARMY AND MARINE FORCES BASED THERE.
- "(J) TASK FORCE TEN EXPEDITE TRAINING AND OTHER READINESS OF TROOPS TO CONDUCT AMPHIBIOUS LANDING OPERATIONS IN FORCE. KEEP AS MANY COMBAT TEAMS AS PRACTICABLE AND ASSOCIATED TROOPS TRAINED AND EQUIPPED FOR SERVICE EMBARKED."

THIS, THEN, WAS THE UNITED STATES STRATEGIC DISPOSITION IN THE ATLANTIC, TOGETHER WITH BROAD TASKS, AS WE ENTERED THE WAR.

SLIDE 2 - APPENDIX B

REFERRING TO PREVIOUS MENTION OF THE STRATEGIC SOUNDNESS OF DISPOSITIONS IN DECEMBER 1941, THE SECOND SLIDE SHOWS THE GENERAL STRATEGIC DISPOSITIONS AS PROMULGATED BY LANTFLT OP-PLAN 3-42 OF 8 DECEMBER 1942.

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- T.F. 21 - TAKE OFFENSIVE ACTION - ESCORT TROOP AND OTHER CONVOYS.  
BASES GUANTANAMO, BERMUDA, CASCO.
- T.F. 22 - TAKE OFFENSIVE ACTION PARTICULARLY AGAINST HEAVY  
SURFACE RAIDERS. BASES ARGENTIA, CASCO.
- T.F. 23 - EXERCISE SURVEILLANCE AND CONTROL OVER TRADE ROUTES  
AND TRADE FOCI OF THE WESTERN ATLANTIC AREA BETWEEN 10°N  
AND 40°S. BASES - BRAZIL, URUGUAY, TRINIDAD, GUANTANAMO,  
SAN JUAN.
- T.F. 24 - COORDINATE AND SUPERVISE ESCORT-OF-TRADE CONVOY  
OPERATIONS; PROTECT SHIPPING - MAINTAIN ICELAND SHUTTLE  
SERVICE - DEFEND GREENLAND - ASSIST ARMY AIRCRAFT FERRYING  
OPERATIONS BY SUPPLYING SECURITY SHIPS. MAINTAIN SERVICE  
OF ICE INFORMATION. BASES ARGENTIA, IRELAND, ICELAND,  
GREENLAND, SHELBURNE.
- T.F. 25 - CONDUCT INTENSIVE TRAINING - PROVIDE SS FOR TRAINING  
A/S SHIPS.
- T.F. 26 - ESF - GSF - CARIB SF - PANAMA SF - BERMUDA GROUP -  
ICELAND GROUP - NE AFRICA GROUP. NOB ORAN. MAINTAIN  
READINESS TO EXECUTE FLEET TASKS AS MAY BE REQUIRED TEMPORARILY  
AND FOR PARTICULAR PURPOSES.
- T.F. 27 - IN ADDITION TO SOPA DUTIES, EXERCISE SUCH CONTROL AS  
WILL FACILITATE OPERATIONS IN GENERAL.
- T.F. 28 - EXPEDITE EQUIPMENT, TRAINING AND READINESS OF ALL UNITS.
- T.F. 29 - FURNISH REQUIRED SERVICES OF ALL KINDS TO ALL TASK  
FORCES, WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE NEEDS OF OUTLYING  
BASES.

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**T.F. 30 - ORGANIZE AND TRAIN NAVAL PERSONNEL, SHIPS, AND LANDING CRAFT FOR AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS - INCLUDING U. S. ARMY UNITS AND OTHER FORCES IN ACCORDANCE WITH AGREEMENTS.**

**31 - LANTFLT FLAGSHIPS, COMINCH FLAGSHIP - CERTAIN UNITS NOT UNDER OP-CONTROL OF LANTFLT COMDRS. A/S WARFARE UNIT.**

**AT THIS POINT, IT WOULD BE WELL TO GO BACK AND EXAMINE BRIEFLY THE OVER-ALL ALLIED NAVAL POSITION IN THE ATLANTIC DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF THE WAR.**

- (A) THE AXIS SURFACE MENACE WAS SERIOUS, BUT COULD BE HANDLED. THERE WERE CERTAIN HEAVY AXIS FORCES OF THIS TYPE IN BEING AND THEY OF COURSE TIED DOWN CERTAIN COMPARABLE ALLIED NAVAL FORCES, PARTICULARLY BRITISH UNITS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, AND THESE WERE AUGMENTED AT TIMES BY NEW UNITED STATES BBs, CAs, CVs, AND DDs.**
- (B) THE AXIS U-BOAT THREAT WAS IMPORTANT AND INCREASING IN WEIGHT.**
- (C) THE AXIS AIRCRAFT MENACE WAS ALSO IMPORTANT, AND THIS TIED DOWN IN THE PROTECTION OF SHIPPING (PARTICULARLY IN THE MED) IMPORTANT FORCES THAT OTHERWISE COULD HAVE BEEN SET AGAINST U-BOATS - ALTHOUGH THESE UNITED STATES FORCES ACTUALLY DID PERFORM THE DUAL FUNCTION OF PROTECTING SHIPPING AGAINST AIR ATTACK AS WELL AS ASSISTING OUR ALLIES IN THE BATTLE AGAINST THE U-BOATS IN THE MED.**

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FROM OUR ENTRY INTO THE WAR UNTIL ABOUT APRIL OF 1943, THE U-BOATS BECAME MORE AND MORE EFFECTIVE.

IT WAS IN THE EARLY PART OF THIS SAME PERIOD THAT IT WAS DETERMINED TO BE ESSENTIAL TO STOP THE JAP SOUTHERN MARCH IN THE PACIFIC. THIS, YOU WILL RECALL, WAS ALSO THE PERIOD WHEN THE SHIPS WHICH HAD BEEN DAMAGED AT PEARL HARBOR WERE UNDER REPAIR AND WHEN OUR REMAINING MEAGER FORCES IN THE PACIFIC WERE SUFFERING HEAVY CASUALTIES IN THE GUADALCANAL CAMPAIGN. ALL IN ALL, AS ADMIRAL KING AT ONE TIME SUMMED IT UP, THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF BREAD TO BE COVERED AND PRECIOUS LITTLE BUTTER TO SPREAD ON THE BREAD. HOWEVER, THE SPREAD HAD TO BE MADE, AND MANY SHIPS SORELY NEEDED IN THE ATLANTIC WENT TO THE PACIFIC BECAUSE THEY WERE MORE SORELY NEEDED THERE - AT THAT PARTICULAR TIME.

THIS LATTER SITUATION, I THINK, COMBINED WITH THE FACT THAT AT THIS STAGE INDUSTRY HAD NOT BEEN ABLE (FOR LACK OF TIME) TO DELIVER THE TOOLS WE SO BADLY NEEDED, WAS ONE OF THE REASONS WHY OVERRIDING IMMEDIATE STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS IN THE PACIFIC MADE OUR STRATEGIC, BUT MORE PARTICULARLY OUR TACTICAL, SITUATION TEMPORARILY WEAK IN THE ATLANTIC. IT WAS WHY WE WERE GRATEFUL AT THIS TIME FOR THE LOAN OF SUCH TYPES AS TRAWLERS FROM THE BRITISH AND WHY WE HAD SO TO RELY ON ANTI-SUBMARINE ESCORTS OF LITTLE OR NO VALUE.

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IT WAS ALSO DURING THE EARLY PART OF THIS PERIOD THAT GREAT PRESSURES WERE BEING EXERTED TO EFFECT A LANDING OR LANDINGS IN EUROPE OR NORTH AFRICA - WHICH FINALLY RESULTED IN THE TORCH OPERATION WHICH CULMINATED IN THE NORTH AFRICAN LANDINGS IN NOVEMBER 1942.

HERE AGAIN CAPABILITIES IN THE ATLANTIC WERE STRETCHED TO THE BREAKING POINT.

AS AT GUADALCANAL WHEN THE STRATEGIC GENIUS AND FORESIGHT OF ADMIRAL KING FORCED THE ISSUE AND TURNED THE TIDE AGAINST THE JAPS, SO IN NORTH AFRICA, THE TORCH OPERATION, WHICH WAS CARRIED OUT ON SOMETHING APPROACHING A SHOE STRING, GAVE NEW FORCE AND DIRECTION TO ALL ALLIED OPERATIONS IN THE ATLANTIC.

I THINK IT MAY CORRECTLY BE SAID THAT WITH COMPLETION OF THE ALLIED LANDINGS IN NORTH AFRICA, IN SICILY<sup>and</sup> ITALY, THE ALLIES HAD REACHED A POSITION OF RELATIVE STABILITY WITH RESPECT BOTH TO STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL NAVAL DISPOSITIONS. BY THIS I MEAN THAT THE ISSUE WAS CLEARLY DRAWN AND THE MISSIONS AND TASKS BECAME ALMOST AUTOMATICALLY WELL DEFINED.

THE PRIMARY THREAT NOW WAS THE U-BOAT.

HERE AGAIN THE NATURE AND DEGREE OF THE THREAT QUITE CLEARLY DETERMINED DISPOSITIONS.

THERE WERE ONLY TWO BROAD PARTS TO THE PROBLEM, WHILE STILL FOLLOWING THE GENERAL STRATEGIC DISPOSITIONS OF THE FLEET FORCES ALREADY OUTLINED ON SLIDES 1 AND 2:

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THE ONE WAS THE ESSENTIAL PROTECTION OF SHIPPING, WHICH REQUIRED HEAVIER ESCORT FORCES, WHICH, IF PROPERLY EMPLOYED WOULD (AND DID IN FACT) INSURE MORE KILLS OF U-BOATS AT AND NEAR THE CONVOYS; AND THE SECOND WAS THE EMPLOYMENT OF OTHER ANTI-SUBMARINE FORCES, BOTH SURFACE AND AIR, IN THE KILLING OF U-BOATS BEFORE THEY REACHED THE CONVOYS.

PRIME EXAMPLES OF THE LATTER ARE THE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL BRITISH-CONTROLLED OPERATION IN THE BAY OF BISCAY, IN WHICH AIRCRAFT SATURATED U-BOAT TRANSIT LANES, AND THE HUNTER-KILLER OPERATIONS OF OUR OWN A/S GROUPS, IN WHICH SMALL CARRIERS SUPPORTED BY DESTROYERS AND DE'S, BASING THEIR OPERATIONS ON DF AND OTHER INFORMATION, MADE LIFE MISERABLE FOR U-BOATS IN ALL PARTS OF THE ATLANTIC,

AS PREVIOUSLY STATED, THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE U-BOAT OFFENSIVE STARTED TO TAPER OFF IN THE SPRING OF 1943.

BY THE END OF 1944 IT HAD CEASED TO BE A SERIOUS THREAT, AND ALL STRATEGIC DISPOSITIONS IN THE ATLANTIC WERE TAILORED, FIRST, TO INSURE THE SAFE ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND OF THE PERSONNEL AND MATERIAL THAT WERE OUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE LANDINGS IN NORMANDY <sup>and Southern France</sup> AND, SECOND, TO INSURE ADEQUATE NAVAL SUPPORT TO THAT OPERATION.

A MORE DETAILED REVIEW OF DISPOSITIONS THAN OUR TIME HERE PERMITS WOULD SHOW THAT BEGINNING WITH THE ATLANTIC FLEET OPERATION PLAN 8-41 OF 20 DECEMBER 1941, AND DISREGARDING VARIATIONS THAT OCCURRED FROM TIME TO TIME AS A RESULT OF UNFORESEEN OR UNANTICIPATED MOVEMENTS ON THE PART OF THE ENEMY, THE BASIC CONCEPT OF <sup>+ hose</sup> ~~PLAN~~ PLAN <sup>PROVED</sup> PROVED EFFECTIVE THROUGHOUT THE WAR.

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A PRIME REASON FOR OUR BEING HERE TODAY AND FOR OTHERS LIKE US BEING HERE IN THE FUTURE IS TO TRY TO DEDUCE FROM WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE WHAT MAY FOLLOW.

AS TO THE FUTURE, WE NEED HAVE LITTLE APPREHENSION OF ALLIED ABILITY TO CONTROL SURFACE OPERATIONS.

IT WOULD APPEAR EVIDENT, THEREFORE, THAT STRATEGIC DISPOSITIONS IN THE ATLANTIC IN ANY FUTURE WAR MAY BE EXPECTED TO BE QUITE DIFFERENT THAN THOSE OF WORLD WAR II.

THE U-BOAT MENACE IN A THIRD WORLD WAR, IF CONSIDERED IN NUMERICAL RATIO OF TEN NOW AGAINST THE GERMANS' ONE AT THE BEGINNING OF WORLD WAR II, APPEARS MOST SERIOUS.

I THINK, THOUGH, THAT WE SHOULD NOT ACCEPT ANY SUCH NUMERICAL EVALUATION, FOR WHILE WE CAN NOT FACE THE PROBLEM WITH EQUANIMITY, IT IS HARD-HEADED AND COMPLETELY REALISTIC TO APPLY A DOWNWARD FACTOR (THE EXACT MAGNITUDE OF WHICH NO ONE KNOWS), BASED ON THE QUALITY TO BE EXPECTED OF RUSSIAN U-BOAT OPERATIONS AND U-BOATS AS COMPARED TO THOSE OF THE GERMANS, AS WELL AS THE FACT THAT THE NUMBER OF OCEAN-GOING RUSSIAN SUBMARINES IS ABOUT 83 RATHER THAN 300 ODD.

THE MINE IS POTENTIALLY A FAR MORE SERIOUS MENACE.

ASIDE FROM THE NORMAL DISPOSITIONS THAT PRUDENCE WOULD DICTATE TO ENABLE US TO CARE FOR ALL EVENTUALITIES, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE DISPOSITIONS FOR A NEXT WAR WOULD BE LARGELY DETERMINED BY THE REQUIREMENTS TO OVERCOME THE SUBMARINE AND MINE MENACES.

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HERE I USE THE WORD "LARGELY" RATHER THAN "PRIMARILY".

THE ANTI-SUBMARINE AND ANTI-MINING DISPOSITIONS ARE OF COURSE VITAL, BUT HERE ENTERS THE UNKNOWN EQUATION OF THE EXACT NATURE OF THE NAVAL SUPPORT AND DISPOSITIONS OF THE MEMBERS OF NATO.

THERE IS A PRIME OBLIGATION FOR SACLANT TO SUPPORT SACEUR.

IT INVOLVES AN OVER-ALL SUPPORT, INCLUDING NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN FLANKS, AND ITS EXACT NATURE AND EXTENT CANNOT BE DETERMINED UNTIL SITUATIONS DEVELOP.

FOR THIS REASON, AND PARTICULARLY IN THIS INSTANCE, THE SACLANT PLANS (AS IS CHARACTERISTIC OF ALL SOUND NAVAL PLANS) MUST PROVIDE FOR THE GREATEST OF FLEXIBILITY.

THEY MUST BE OF A SCOPE THAT WILL, FIRST, SATISFY OUR PLANNED OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS; SECOND, ANSWER ANY AND ALL THREATS - AND YET NOT BE BASED ON SPECIFIC PREJUDGED COURSES OF ENEMY ACTION.

A STRATEGIC DISPOSITION AND AN OPERATION, THE NEED FOR WHICH WAS CLEARLY RECOGNIZED IN WORLD WAR II, HAD TO DO WITH ATTACKS AGAINST U-BOAT BASES AND BUILDING YARDS.

FOR REASONS (AND NOT GOOD ONES) THAT IT IS UNNECESSARY TO GO INTO HERE, SUCH OPERATIONS WERE NOT UNDERTAKEN IN THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN.

IT FOLLOWS THAT MANY OF OUR STRATEGIC DISPOSITIONS IN WORLD WAR II IN THE ATLANTIC RESULTED FROM THIS FAILURE.

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FROM THIS IN TURN RESULTED DIVERSIONS AND HENCE WASTAGES IN SHIPS, WEAPONS, AND MEN THAT COULD AND SHOULD HAVE BEEN DIRECTED TO MORE FRUITFUL PURPOSES, BECAUSE IT IS AND ALWAYS WILL BE THE OPERATIONS AGAINST U-BOATS AT SEA THAT INVOLVE THE HUGE OVERHEAD FORCED ON US IN THE LAST WAR.

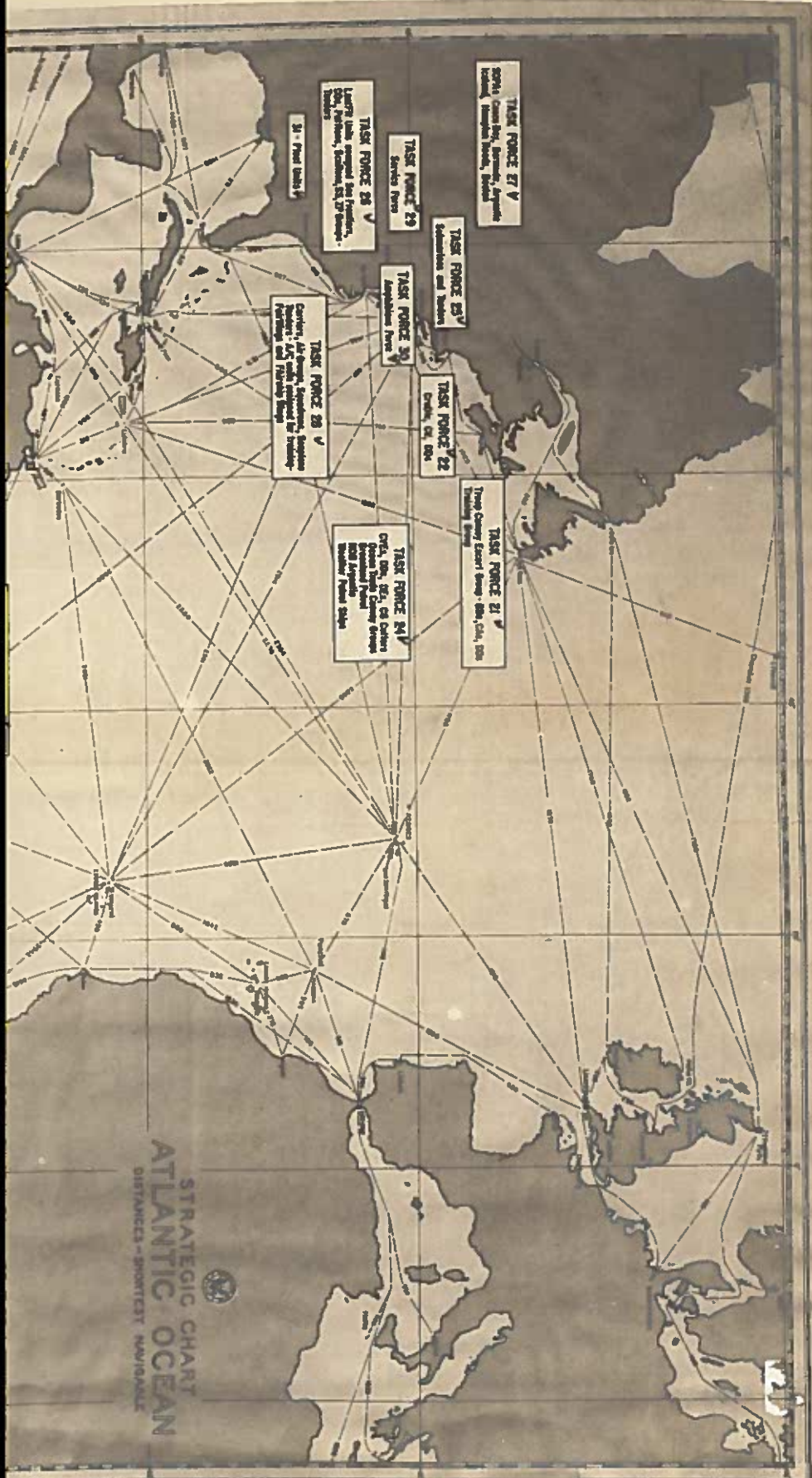
THEREFORE, A PRIME LESSON THAT WE SHOULD ALL LEARN FROM WHAT HAPPENED IN THE ATLANTIC IN WORLD WAR II IS THAT IF WE STRIKE FIRST AND HARD AT BASES AND BUILDING YARDS, WHICH WILL MAKE IT UNNECESSARY TO SPATTER OUR EFFORTS OVER ALL OF THE OCEAN, WE WILL THEREBY BE RELIEVED OF MANY OF THE DIFFICULT SEAGOING PROBLEMS WITH WHICH WE WERE CONFRONTED IN WORLD WAR II.

I AM WELL AWARE THAT THIS HAS BEEN SAID AND WRITTEN MANY TIMES BY MANY PEOPLE.

IT BEARS CONTINUED REPETITION, HOWEVER, FOR THE VERY SIMPLE REASON THAT IN TWO WORLD WARS THE CORRECTNESS OF THE THEORY HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED AND ADVOCATED - BUT NOT ADEQUATELY PRACTICED.

**SECRET**





**TASK FORCE 27 V**  
 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th

**TASK FORCE 29**  
 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th

**TASK FORCE 28 V**  
 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th

**31 - First Unit V**

**TASK FORCE 23 V**  
 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th

**TASK FORCE 30**  
 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th

**TASK FORCE 26 V**  
 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th

**TASK FORCE 22**  
 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th

**TASK FORCE 21 V**  
 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th

**TASK FORCE 24 V**  
 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th

STRATEGIC CHART  
 ATLANTIC OCEAN  
 DISTANCES - SHORTEST NAVIGABLE

