

ships under command of the RN took part in landing operations in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy and finally in the landing in France. But convoy escort in the North Atlantic remained its major responsibility. Indeed, during the last three years of the war Canadian naval ships were the preponderant force in the escort of supply convoys all the way from North America to Britain. This underlines the importance of St. John's, along with Halifax, in the continuing Battle of the Atlantic.

*Naval Command*⁴³

The early pattern of naval relations (between Britain and the United States on the Atlantic) had been largely set by the agreement between Roosevelt and Churchill at Argentia in 1941 that strategic direction of the war in the Western Atlantic, including protection of convoys, should be the responsibility of the United States, while Britain would continue to be responsible for the Eastern Atlantic. Hitherto the Newfoundland Escort Force which Newfoundland had been instrumental in supporting and, to some extent, supplying, had operated under British direction. It would now be under United States naval command at Argentia.⁴⁴ Canada had not been invited to the Atlantic Conference; nor, it would appear, had there been any formal consultation with Canada about the proposed transfer to American naval command of the convoy escort forces it had serving with the British in the Atlantic. But what might have been a source of friction was overcome by the good sense and tact of the American and Canadian naval commanders concerned.

American convoy escort forces were almost entirely withdrawn from the North Atlantic route for a time after Pearl Harbour. This raised again the question of command in the Atlantic. Although American naval authorities were at first reluctant to see a separate Canadian command established, this was agreed to in 1943 and a separate Canadian operational command (The Canadian North-West Atlantic Command) with command responsibility for all trade convoys in the Western Atlantic north of the latitude of New York City was established, subject to the United States retaining strategic direction of the war in the Western Atlantic—a largely academic proviso once the North African campaign had run its course. This arrangement continued for the duration of the war. Thus, for the first time, the RCN was awarded command responsibilities appropriate to its actual role in the Battle of the Atlantic. The RN, with which the RCN was serving, and which had much wider responsibilities ranging from Murmansk to Dakar, retained command in the Eastern Atlantic.

The Battle of the Atlantic was at its height during the years 1942-43 and much of the battle raged off Newfoundland's shores. During 1942 alone, some 956 ships were sunk in the North Atlantic by U-Boat action. In the same year twenty-one ships were sunk in the River and Gulf of St. Lawrence,

⁴³ Stacey, C. P. *op. cit.* p. 313-319 and Dziuban, Stanley W. *op. cit.* p. 175.

⁴⁴ See Chapter I, Part 5, Section c and Tucker, G. N. T. *op. cit.* p. 402-417.