

U-boat 576 Factsheet

U-576

Place Built: Hamburg, Germany

Shipyard: Blohm und Voss

Launched: April 30, 1941

Commissioned: June 26, 1941

Captain: Kapitanleutnant Hans-Dieter Heinicke

Crew: 45

Number of deployments: 5 (September 1941 – July 1942)

Totals ships sunk: Five

Date lost: July 15, 1942 (all hands)

Dimensions: Length overall: 220 feet. Beam: 20.3 feet



U-576 was commissioned under the command of Captain-lieutenant Hans-Dieter Heinicke and conducted its first two war patrols in the Arctic and North Sea between September and December of 1941. Neither of these patrols was successful in sinking any vessels. The remainder of U-576 war patrols were focused on the American coast as Heinicke joined Operation Paukenschlag and sailed for the U.S. coast on Jan. 20, 1942.

While in U.S. waters during its third deployment, U-576 sunk its first victim, British merchant vessel, *Empire Spring*, which lost all 53 crew members off Sable Island, Nova Scotia. U-576 also sunk the freighter, *Pipestone County*, off Cape Henry, Virginia, and the Norwegian merchant ship, *Taborfjell*, off Cape Cod, Massachusetts

U-576 departed for its fifth and final war deployment on June 16, 1942, from St. Nazaire, France, ultimately bound for Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. During this period, U-576 pursued several ships and attempted to coordinate an attack with another German submarine. On July 13, U-576 radioed U-boat command in France that it had sustained damage to the main ballast tank. The following day, U-576 reported that the damage was irreparable and indicated the submarine would be heading home. However, on July 15, 1942, U-576 came across convoy KS-520.

The convoy, consisting of 19 merchant vessel and five military escorts, was rounding Cape Hatteras around 4:15 p.m. when Heinicke and his crew fired four torpedoes into the mass of ships. Two of the torpedoes struck the *Chilore*; a minute later, another struck the convoy flagship, *J.A. Mowinckel*; and finally, the last torpedo struck the Nicaraguan freighter, *Bluefields*.

U-576, already damaged, suddenly surfaced in the middle of the convoy. Immediately, the U.S. Navy Armed Guard crew aboard the merchant vessel, *Unicoi*, opened fire and scored a hit on the submarine. Two U.S. Navy Kingfisher aircraft straddled the U-576 with depth charges and sent it to the bottom with all 45 crew members.