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Supplying the Asia-Pacific Theater: United States Logistics and the American Merchant Marine in World War II

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Supplying the Asia-Pacific Theater: United States Logistics and the American Merchant Marine
in World War II

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History

by

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Abstract

America's victory in World War II came from a number of successes such as production of war materiel, technological advances, and national mobilization on levels not seen before or since. America went into the war behind the Axis Powers both militarily and economically. The Great Depression had a devastating effect on merchant ship building in the United States during the 1930's. In response, the U.S. Congress passed the Merchant Marine Act of 1936, which created the U.S. Maritime Commission whose mission was to modernize and build ships for the looming world war. Originally slated to build fifty ships a year for ten years as a part of the New Deal attack on a sagging economy, the Maritime Commission ended up building over 5,000 ships by the end of 1945. This paper examines the critical role of the civilian United States Merchant Marine in the struggle against the Japanese Empire.

Keywords: United States, Merchant Marine, Pacific, Production

Introduction

At the conclusion of World War II in 1945, the United States emerged as the dominant world power economically, socially, and militarily. America stood as the least damaged of all the major powers involved in World War II, and now with the war over, it could begin to take advantage of the vast wealth it accumulated during the war. Many books, films, and articles have been written discussing how and why the United States arrived in this position. However, most authors and scholars neglect to mention or emphasize a key part of America's victory: the U.S. Merchant Marine. The merchant marine was involved in World War II from the very beginning of the war. When the British were driven back into the sea at Dunkirk after losing the Battle of France, it was the merchant marine that brought a cargo of 1 million American Enfield rifles, 190 million rounds of ammunition, 895 pieces of artillery, and 60,000 machine guns left over from World War I. American Army surplus and war reserves rearmed the shattered British Army.¹

In March 1941, the U.S. Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act allowing the Allies, specifically England, Soviet Union, and China to place orders for war material with the payment deferred. Congress appropriated \$7 billion dollars to get Lend-Lease underway.² It was now the job of the merchant marine to get the war material where it was needed around the world. However, the United States was not yet involved officially in World War II. The merchant marine was being torpedoed and sunk before America was officially drawn into the fighting. Mariners took part in or helped supply every major American and Allied campaign during World

¹ United States., Office of Lend-Lease Administration., *All For One: One For All: The Story of Lend-Lease* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 2-3.

² United States, *All for One*, 4.

War II. For example, merchant ships carried over 16 million tons of cargo to England for the invasion of Normandy in June 1944.³

Despite the contributions of the merchant marine to the war effort, most people do not realize what the merchant marine did or even what it was. These civilian ship officers and sailors, under military control, sailed into dangerous, and often deadly, war zones many times without the benefit of military escort or any means to defend themselves. However, the historiography on the merchant marine and merchant shipping tends to concentrate on events in the Atlantic, while other theaters, such as the Pacific Theater, are ignored. The topic of the merchant marine is large enough to allow for historians to study its experience in both the European and Asia-Pacific theaters. The sheer amount of tonnage moved and the dangers faced by the merchant marine makes the story worth telling.

While this paper will examine the role of the U.S. Merchant Marine and its war in the Asia-Pacific theater, this paper will also give some attention to the other logistical services involved in the Pacific and a summary of the U.S. Merchant Marine's role in Europe to provide background on the maritime service as a whole. It explains its role in supplying Lend-Lease aid to not only to the Soviet Union, but also to China and the British Empire. By the end of 1942, the United States had sent the Soviet Union almost 2,600 planes, more than 3,200 tanks, and 81,000 motor vehicles. The United States had also shipped material to North Africa to support British efforts there. Between February and November 1942, the US sent more than 1,000 planes, more than 500 medium tanks, and 20,000 trucks to North Africa. China also received

³ Robert Carse, "Chapter Eleven," in *The Long Haul: The United States Merchant Service in World War II* (New York: Norton, 1965), 193.

Lend-Lease aid, but due to the loss of the Burma Road, it made getting supplies into China difficult.⁴

The main U.S. adversary in the Asia- Pacific theater was Japan. Japan lacked many of the natural resources needed to drive its economy; it was forced to look for territory outside Japan to get them. Japan was also driven by the ambition to replace the United States as the dominant power in Asia, and to establish a Japanese empire which would be self-sufficient and able to resist any attempt by the Americans or anyone else to retake captured territories. The U.S. Merchant Marine, along with U.S. Navy and Army ships, would play an integral role in helping wrest control of the Asia-Pacific away from Japan and back to the Allies.

Background

While merchant marine is a generic term for a nation's civilian seaborne cargo lift, the term U.S. Merchant Marine refers to an official, government-sanctioned and subsidized merchant fleet used not only to move goods, but also military supplies in times of conflict. In 1936, the United States Congress passed the Merchant Marine Act of 1936, establishing a Merchant Marine Academy for the training of men to manage merchant ships around the world. It also funded fifty merchant ships a year to be built over a period of ten years.⁵ The merchant marine needed more trained ship captains, deck officers, engineers, and communication officers to man all these new ships. The entire U.S. Merchant Marine only had 85,000 men in training or in service by the time the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.⁶ Most of these men had never been to sea before or outside of the United States prior to joining the merchant marine.

⁴ United States, *All for One*, 14.

⁵ Frederic Chapin Lane, *Ships for Victory; a History of Shipbuilding under the United States Maritime Commission in World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), 10-12.

⁶ Carse, *The Long Haul*, 15.

In December 1941, there were only 12 million tons of ocean shipping under United States registration to move men and material to combat the Japanese, Germans, and Italians across the entire world.⁷ American industrial capacity had still only committed 15% to defense in 1941.⁸ The Allies' lack of shipping, particularly in the Asia-Pacific theater, would prove to be one of the key factors in determining when an offensive could be launched against the Japanese. It would be one of the main reasons which forced the Americans on the defensive for the first months of the Asia-Pacific War.

The U.S. Merchant Marine story in the Asia-Pacific war is drastically different from the experience of the Atlantic merchant fleet. Unlike the Atlantic merchant marine, whereas the war went on the safer the ships became, in the Asia-Pacific, the situation became more dangerous as the war stretched into 1944-45 and closer to more Japanese air and naval units. The Japanese Navy never deliberately targeted shipping in the Pacific like the Germans in the Atlantic, so the convoy system, which was so prevalent the Atlantic, was used primarily during the amphibious invasions of Japanese-defended territory, but not in follow-on operations required to build advanced bases.

Japanese Naval submarine doctrine was drastically different from the German Navy's. In the Japanese Navy's 1943 edition of Combined Fleet Tactical Instructions, only one paragraph in the entire piece was dedicated to attacks on the enemy's lines of communication.⁹ The Japanese

⁷ United States., Army Service Forces., *Logistics in World War II: Final Report of the Army Service Forces: A Report to the Under Secretary of War and the Chief of Staff by the Director of the Service, Supply, and Procurement Division, War Department General Staff* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1993), 10.

⁸ Charles Edward. Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present Writing the Victory Plan of 1941* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1992), 73.

⁹ Carl Boyd and Akihiko Yoshida, *The Japanese Submarine Force and World War II* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002), 5.

navy wanted to fight the “decisive battle” against the American navy.¹⁰ The Japanese envisioned a battle in which Japanese submarines would weaken an American fleet sailing across the Pacific before finally destroying the remnants in a repetition of the Battle of Tsushima against the Russians. In essence, the Japanese submarine force was to support the fleet’s battle line.

However, the Japanese were not the only ones planning for a decisive battle. The U.S. Navy had color-coded plans for potential enemies in the interwar era. Japan was the enemy of War Plan Orange. War Plan Orange was tested at the Naval War College 127 times in the interwar era. U.S. Navy Admiral Chester Nimitz later stated: “the courses were so thorough that nothing that happened in the Pacific war was strange or unexpected except the kamikaze tactics towards the end of the war; we had not visualized those.”¹¹ Clearly, both nations were thinking about a major battle, but neither was giving much thought or consideration to what it would take to supply their battle fleets.

The U.S. Navy developed what became known as a “fleet train” or serviceforce to support its fleet on its advance across the Pacific. A fleet train was a group of ships which had the job of supporting the U.S. Navy ships while underway at sea. The ships could consist of AK (cargo), AKN (net cargo), AKS (general stores), AR (ship repair), ARV (aircraft repair), AW (water), and IX (tankers) ships.¹² All of these different ships allowed the fleet to stay at sea to conduct repairs and replenishment while underway or at an advanced anchorage. The fleet train allowed the U.S. Navy to stay on the attack and not have to go back to a naval base to reload.

¹⁰ Boyd, *Japanese Submarine Force*, 4.

¹¹ Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 57.

¹² John Bunker, *Liberty Ships, the Ugly Ducklings of World War II* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1972), 173.

Merchant ships, supporting the U.S. Navy, gave the United States a massive advantage combating the distances of the Asia-Pacific.

The Asia-Pacific mariners faced the vast distances of the Pacific, poor port facilities, and the threat of Japanese air attack. The distances of the Pacific presented a tough dilemma since the merchant fleet would be reliant on port facilities hastily constructed on islands and atolls spread from Australia to Okinawa. The lines of communication between the United States and Australia were also the longest of World War II.¹³

The Atlantic merchantmen usually visited well-established ports in Great Britain and elsewhere. The Pacific merchantmen were sometimes left to anchor offshore and transfer supplies to smaller boats, which were then unloaded over open beaches. By being forced to anchor offshore, the merchant ships were also left vulnerable to attack by Japanese aircraft attempting to thwart the American advance across the Pacific.

Infrastructure and logistics were a massive issue for the merchant marine and other forces in the Asia-Pacific theater.¹⁴ In 1940, the Base Force Train included a total of fifty-one ships of all types. By 1945 the total was 315 vessels. The fourteen tankers, which the entire Navy owned in 1940, had jumped to sixty-two. In addition to the Navy tankers, merchant marine tankers which brought large supplies of oil, aviation gasoline, and diesel fuel to bases where the Navy

¹³ Günter Bischof and Robert L. Dupont, eds. *The Pacific War Revisited* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 3.

¹⁴ John Bunker, *Liberty Ships*, 256-58.

tankers loaded them on board for distribution to the fleet. The U.S. Navy also added twenty-one repair ships of various sizes, which supplanted the two the Navy had five years before.¹⁵

Most U.S. Navy officers were not concerned with logistics at the start of World War II; it was not seen as a prestigious duty which would lead to sea command and promotion in the service. It was identified as supply duty, a category reserved for restricted duty officers. Due to the lack of adequate numbers of supply ships and men to support the shortcomings of the fleet train at the start of the war, the U.S. Navy could only perform 50% of its desired operations.¹⁶ Further hampering U.S. planning even more was the fact that Pearl Harbor, in 1942, was the only base in the Pacific capable of sustaining operations, and it was still recovering from the Japanese surprise attack on December 7th.¹⁷

While many of the merchantmen sinkings in the Asia-Pacific theater were by Japanese kamikaze, bombing, and torpedo attacks by the Japanese, the ships also faced a struggle at home in America. Mariners faced false accusations in the press accusing them of cowardice or greed resulting in them fighting for their rights as seamen both at home and abroad. Walter Winchell falsely accused the merchant marine of “sabotaging American ships and asserting seamen were communist sympathizers putting mercury and emery dust into engines.”¹⁸ Many people believed these allegations, and mariners received little support from the U.S. Navy in fighting the falsehoods.

¹⁵ Worrall Reed Carter, Dan A. Kimball, and Raymond A. Spruance, *The Story of Fleet Logistics Afloat in the Pacific during World War II: Beans, Bullets, and Black Oil* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1952), 18.

¹⁶ Bischof and Dupont, *Pacific War*, 57.

¹⁷ Bischof and Dupont, *Pacific War*, 64.

¹⁸ Brian Herbert, "All the Ships at Sea," in *The Forgotten Heroes: The Heroic Story of the United States Merchant Marine* (New York: Forge, 2004), 28-29.

Another instance of rumor against the Pacific merchant marine included an *Akron Beacon Journal* report of a seaman's strike at Guadalcanal and about sailors refusing to work on Sunday.¹⁹ It was later proven to be a false report, but it was taken as fact by many people both at home in the United States and serving in the armed forces. U.S. merchant seamen played a critical part in the war effort, but their achievements were under attack by members of the press and of the government who were angry over the U.S. Merchant fleet's resistance to being absorbed by the U.S. Navy and remain its own force.

Historiography

Merchant marine writings have been consistently inconsistent since the end of World War II. While government historians were writing about the merchant marine both during and after the war, it took until the 1970's for independent historians to begin serious study of the merchant marine. But, even then it was not until the 1980's and 1990's that additional published works began to show up. However, it was not really until the 2000's that merchant marine historiography became a topic for historians to research, due to being overlooked for more dramatic naval subjects about World War II such as submarine or naval aviation operations.

John Gorley Bunker's book *Liberty Ships: The Ugly Ducklings of World War II* published in 1972, has become an important reference and research book for anyone attempting to do merchant marine research. Bunker argues that few books fully capture what the Liberty ships were and what the ships meant to the merchant marine. Bunker says that "while there are plenty of books about World War II, very few of those books mention Liberty Ships."²⁰ He argues that the Liberty ships are important when talking about the merchant marine because

¹⁹ Felix Riesenber, *Sea War* (New York: Rinehart, 1956), 188.

²⁰ Bunker, *Liberty Ships*, 256-58.

without the Liberty Ships, the United States could not have moved the men and supplies necessary to win World War II. Bunker focuses more on the production and operational history of the Liberty ships than on the actual men who served on the ships. The Allies needed each and every one of the 2,710 Liberty ships built during World War II.²¹

Martin Middlebrook's *Convoy: the Greatest Convoy Battle of the War*, opens with a definition of a convoy. Middlebrook wanted to be sure not only the reader, but also any historian who would read the book, understood the importance of convoys during World War II. His definition was "Convoy: A fleet or number of merchant ships under protection of ships of war, or powerful enough to defend themselves."²² He goes on to give a brief synopsis of the combat operations of the merchant marine that existed from the beginning of World War II to the point in his book when he singles out two specific convoys, SC.122 and HX.229, for their importance in the battle against the German U-boats, or submarines, in the Battle of the Atlantic in March 1943.

Although the Allies lost twenty-two ships during the convoy battle, Allied technology and code breaking techniques finally began to come together to successfully combat the Germans. *Convoy* was important because Middlebrook takes the focus off of the Liberty ships and places it on the actual combat and the convoys that the fighting takes place in. More importantly, Middlebrook was not an American, but was in fact an Englishman writing about the American merchant marine at a time when American historians still are largely ignoring the U.S. Merchant Marine.

²¹ Bunker, *Liberty Ships*, 17.

²² Martin Middlebrook, *Convoy: The Greatest U-boat Battle of the War* (London: Cassell, 2003), X.

Michael Gannon's *Operation Drumbeat The Dramatic True Story of Germany's First U-Boat Attacks Along the American Coast in World War II* stands out because of Gannon's attention to detail in discussing the German Navy's point of view when dealing with convoys and the United States Merchant Marine. Gannon's book was a leap forward in the historiography of the merchant marine because authors and historians no longer were just focusing on the Allies and their ships, men, and losses, but also on the German Navy's ships, men, and losses as well. Another important factor about Gannon's book was that it was published in 1990. This was when historians were beginning to be able to get into substantial German U-boat records that had been under the control of the Soviet Union since the end of World War II and were almost untouchable.

Gannon also argues the early U-boat threat against the United States and its allies should be known as an "Atlantic Pearl Harbor." Gannon believes the term is appropriate due to the heavy tanker and dry cargo ship losses sustained by the Allies during the early U-boat operations against the United States from January 1942 to August 1942.²³ The term "Atlantic Pearl Harbor" has become very famous in merchant marine writings and with surviving merchant marine veterans.

David Kennedy's *The American People in World War II: Freedom from Fear: Part II* explores the political back story of what was facing the United States Merchant Marine during World War II. Kennedy argues not only were the losses being sustained in the Battle of the Atlantic critical, but also they were a "mortal danger" to the successful conclusion of the war for

²³ Michael Gannon, "Prologue," in *Operation Drumbeat: The Dramatic True Story of Germany's First U-boat Attacks along the American Coast in World War II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 18.

the Allies.²⁴ He highlights just how dangerously close the Allies came to losing the Battle of the Atlantic. Churchill himself even said, “The only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril.”²⁵

Kennedy also examines how early American merchant marine losses before the United States was officially involved in World War II turned public opinion away from isolation and not wanting to join in the war, to swaying public opinion to join the fight against the Axis powers. He argues it is because of the early sinkings and losses that the United States Merchant Marine suffered that it began to receive the support it desperately needed in order to successfully turn the tide in the Battle of the Atlantic. His writings represent an attempt by professional historians to better tell the lesser known political games being played by Churchill and Roosevelt. Kennedy shows how important it was for historians to be sure to include the political history as well as the operational history of the merchant marine.

Peter Elphick’s 2001 book *Liberty: The Ships that Won the War* incorporates in one volume as much as someone can about Liberty ships or the merchant marine. Elphick argues that while major advancements in technology during World War II such as radar and sonar have been written about and covered extensively, no one had taken the time to appreciate the Liberty ships in the way they should have been. While the ship did not represent a giant leap forward in ship design, they could be built quickly by inexperienced shipyard workers. Elphick writes, “comparatively little attention has been given to the development of a class of merchant ships

²⁴ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 42.

²⁵ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 207.

past of the largest shipbuilding program that the world has ever seen, without which the Second World War could not have been won.”²⁶

Soon after the arrival of *Liberty*, there was a push by historians to tell the stories of individual Liberty Ships. One of the best books in the new generation of merchant marine books brought on by *Liberty* was *Gallant Ship, Brave Men the Heroic Story of a World War II Liberty Ship* by Herman E. Rosen. *Gallant Ship* covers the career of the SS *John Drayton* and the voyages it had conducted all over the world during World War II. While the merits of covering a specific merchant ship can be debated given just how many ships took part in the war, *Gallant Ship* is an important addition to the historiography of the merchant marine because it presented an occasion to see daily life and routine on a merchant vessel. It offered the reader an opportunity to see how these ships operated and the dangers the ships faced on all too frequent basis.

Rosen made the decision to become a historian and wanted to describe life aboard a Liberty ship as only a veteran of serving on the ships in World War II could. Rosen’s insights into what life was like aboard Liberty Ships have helped not only historians, but also students at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy where it is required reading. As Rosen states in *Gallant Ship*, he makes clear there were three important points about the U.S. Merchant Marine service: “duty, danger, and diversity.”²⁷

Rosen, in no uncertain terms, makes clear that the merchant marine did not care about the color of a person’s skin. As long as that person did his duty, the crew did not raise an issue. He argues that the merchant marine is the one service during the war that race or nationality did not

²⁶ Elphick, *Liberty*, 13.

²⁷ Herman E. Rosen, Preface, in *Gallant Ship, Brave Men* (New York: American Merchant Marine Museum, 2003), XI.

matter especially after Hitler overran Europe and sailors from the conquered countries joined the service to fight back. Compared to the racial policies of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, which limited the role of many nonwhite Americans, this is an important distinction to make.

However, U.S. Merchant Marine historiography has a void. The history of the Asia-Pacific U.S. flagged merchant fleet has been neglected by historians. Research has not uncovered a single source dedicated to specifically talking about the U.S. Merchant Marine in the Asia-Pacific. While this is due to a number of reasons, the story is just not as dramatic when it is compared to a Normandy or Battle of the Bulge. Convoy battles do not grab reader's attentions like the great battles of World War II. Also, the great majority of merchant marine ships sailed in Europe and the Mediterranean Theaters, not the Asia-Pacific so what books are published focus on those areas.

U.S. Merchant Marine Leading Up to World War II

The first American flagged vessel lost in World War II was not lost in the Atlantic theater, but actually went down in the Asia-Pacific theater. The SS *City of Rayville* struck a mine laid by a German submarine and sank off the coast of Australia in June 1940.²⁸ But, the story of the merchant marine during World War II begins well before 1940 when Admiral Emory S. Land was put in charge of the new U.S. shipbuilding program in 1938.²⁹

Admiral Land was a close friend of President Franklin Roosevelt, but he was also the exact right man for the job. He had served in the U.S. Navy's Bureau of Construction and Repair, and understood what would be needed to construct the number of ships the Allies would

²⁸ Bunker, *Liberty Ships*, 4.

²⁹ Lane, *Ships for Victory*, 12.

prove to need.³⁰ Before World War II would end, Admiral Land would oversee the construction of 5,600 merchant ships.³¹ He also would ensure the ships would be able to carry the supplies pouring out of the United States by recruiting 250,000 men to crew the ships.³² Training activity went up 525% on the Atlantic coast and 230% on the Pacific coast to help meet the need for trained personnel for the merchant ships once the U.S. was officially in World War II.³³ Between January 1942-September 1945, U.S. shipyards produced 5,304 ships of all types. In the year of 1944 alone, the U.S. produced 1,677 deep-water ships. The U.S. had produced just nine deep-water ships in 1936.³⁴

While the United States was still technically neutral September 1939- December 1941, its merchant fleet was already involved in what was quickly becoming a global war. When the United States entered the war, American industry was already in the middle of a shipbuilding program to bolster merchant shipping. However, the country could not produce enough ships quickly enough to replace the ships being lost to enemy action. By the spring and summer of 1942 when the United States was officially in World War II, ship losses were averaging 20,000 tons a day.³⁵

To ease the pressure on the merchant fleets, American shipyards began to build more of the Liberty ship class of merchant ship to help combat the losses. The Liberty ships were 441 feet long, traveled at eleven knots, and averaged 10,500 dead weight tons loaded and managed

³⁰ Lane, *Ships for Victory*, 12.

³¹ Emory Scott Land, *Winning the War with Ships Land, Sea and Air--mostly Land* (New York: R.M. McBride, 1958), 159.

³² Land, *Winning the War with Ships*, 165.

³³ C. Bradford Mitchell, *We'll Deliver: Early History of the United States Merchant Marine Academy, 1938-1956* (Kings Point, NY: U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Alumni Association, 1977), 40.

³⁴ John Bunker, *Heroes in Dungarees: The Story of the American Merchant Marine in World War II* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 14.

³⁵ Carse, *The Long Haul*, 74.

by a crew of forty-four.³⁶ The ships could be built using prefabricated sections which could be dropped into place by cranes. Shipyards also started using welding techniques instead of riveting. Not only was it faster to weld the ships together, but welding could be used by people who otherwise did not have the training necessary to build ships. The Liberty ship SS *Robert E. Peary* was built in four days, fifteen hours, and twenty-six minutes in 1942 using these methods, a record which still stands.³⁷ But, strikes in the shipyards also cost the U.S. merchant fleet 150,000 tons of merchant shipping in the critical time period of 1941, leaving the fleet chronically short of ships at the start of the war.³⁸ However, during the course of World War II, U.S. Navy and merchant vessels made up more than 30% of the American war effort making their construction crucial to the conclusion of the war.³⁹

It was in this environment the U.S. Merchant Marine was drawn into World War II and forced to carry the “Arsenal of Democracy” of the United States to combat the Axis powers in Europe and Asia. The U.S. Merchant Marine would be forced to sail through the cold North Atlantic, through the Mediterranean, around the tip of Africa, and into the scorching Pacific to deliver the supplies needed for victory.

U.S. Merchant Marine in Europe

The Atlantic merchant marine shipping took routes that opened them to attacks from German submarine groups known as “wolf packs” which overwhelmed the escort ships defending the convoy from attack. The primary objective of the German attacks was to sink as many merchant ships as possible to prevent American supplies from reaching Great Britain to

³⁶ Carse, *The Long Haul*, 88-89.

³⁷ Arthur Herman, *Freedom's Forge: How American Business Produced Victory in World War II* (New York: Random House, 2012), 190.

³⁸ Herman, *Freedom's Forge*, 184.

³⁹ Phillips Payson O'Brien, *How the War Was Won: Air-sea Power and Allied Victory in World War II* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 58.

keep the island nation in the war and the fighting. The United States implemented “neutrality patrols” on April 16, 1941, before the country was officially in World War II. The U.S. Navy would protect merchant shipping halfway across the Atlantic in order to help the British in their fight against the U-boats.⁴⁰

The “Murmansk Run” to the Soviet Union was the shortest and most direct route for ships carrying supplies to reach the Soviets. During the years 1942-1945, 48,000 merchant vessels sailed to Murmansk in 1,134 convoys.⁴¹ Merchant ships and crews sailing the route suffered against the bitter cold and nearly constant German air, sea, and surface attack. By the end of the war, the ships sailing to Murmansk delivered 7,400 aircraft, 5,200 tanks, 5,000 anti-aircraft guns, and fourteen minesweepers.⁴²

The tide against the German U-boats turned in May 1943 when Allied technological breakthroughs such as radar, sonar, and escort carriers finally began to make it into the Atlantic in numbers to make a difference culminating in the loss of forty-one U-boats in May.⁴³ 199 U-boats were lost in just 1943. By the end of the war, the casualty rate for the U-boat force was 63% and merchant ship losses were one-seventh what they were in 1942.⁴⁴

U.S. Army Transportation Corps during World War II

The U.S. Army entered World War II with only six ships in its transport service. The Army was heavily reliant on the War Shipping Administration and the merchant marine to

⁴⁰ Kirkpatrick, *Unknown Future*, 43.

⁴¹ Jerome T. Hagen, *War in the Pacific* (Honolulu: Hawaii Pacific University, 2005), 9.

⁴² Hagen, *War in the Pacific*, 11.

⁴³ Hagen, *War in the Pacific*, 22.

⁴⁴ Paul M. Kennedy, *Engineers of Victory: The Problem Solvers Who Turned the Tide in the Second World War* (New York: Random House, 2013), 71.

transport it around the world during the war to move its troops to foreign ports.⁴⁵ While the U.S. Army only deployed twenty-one divisions to the Asia-Pacific in World War II, the troops still required a large logistical effort for support.⁴⁶ The U.S. Army was initially resistant over giving so much control to a civilian agency, but the arrangement soon proved to work very well for all parties involved.

While the U.S. Army technically retained control over its own vessels, the Army had to inform the War Shipping Administration what they were planning to do with their ships because the administration might assign return cargoes to be returned on the Army ships.⁴⁷ A total of 1,706 vessels ended up being assigned to the US Army during World War II, but actually only 186 were operated by Army crews making it heavily reliant on civilian merchant marine shipping during the war.⁴⁸ Most of the ships the U.S. Army controlled in World War II did in fact end up being crewed by civilians assigned by the War Shipping Administration.

U.S. Navy Logistics in the Pacific

Admiral Robert L. Ghormley, whom historians criticize for his handling of the Guadalcanal campaign, did understand the logistical challenges facing the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. He stockpiled 400,000 barrels of fuel at Noumea and arranged for 225,000 barrels of fuel to be delivered every month for carrier task forces operating during the Guadalcanal campaign.⁴⁹ However, supplies were always short early in the war. When Admiral Ghormley asked Admiral

⁴⁵ James A. Huston, *The Sinews of War: Army Logistics, 1775-1953*(Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1966), 512.

⁴⁶ Huston, *Sinews of War*, 439.

⁴⁷ Huston, *Sinews of War*, 512.

⁴⁸ Huston, *Sinews of War*, 512.

⁴⁹ Carter, *Bullets Beans and Black Oil*, 35.

Chester Nimitz for ammunition for his 3-inch and 4-inch guns, the unwelcome reply came back: none was available for the 4-inch and only 1,000 rounds were available for the 3-inch.⁵⁰

But, as the U.S. Navy got further away from Pearl Harbor, it was decided land bases would not be enough to supply the fleet. A mobile base of ships would be needed to help supply the ships at sea. Due to the lack of civilian merchant shipping, the Navy decided to create its own fleet of ships. As the U.S. Navy formed its Service Squadrons, each squadron would have a particular job.

Service Squadron Ten's duties were seen as:

Service Squadron Ten, a mobile base, will furnish logistic support, including general stores, provisions, fuel, ammunition, maintenance, repair, salvage, and such other services as necessity may dictate in the support of an advanced major fleet anchorage in the Central Pacific Area. It will furnish similar logistic support to Navy and Marine shore-based units not otherwise provided for in the area, as well as Army units which may be prescribed from time to time by the Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas. When Service Squadron Ten or units of it are at an advanced base, it will furnish such services and supplies as any of our armed forces thereat may require and the existing circumstances and capabilities permit.⁵¹

The combination of vessels, surface craft, and auxiliary equipment making up or under the operational administration of the Service Squadron included: provisions stores ships, barracks ships, oil tankers, hospital ships, destroyer tenders, hydrographic survey ships, net cargo ships, net tenders, repair ships, pontoon assembly ships, submarine chasers, motor torpedo boats, picket boats, rearming boats, buoy boats, harbor tugs, salvage tugs, self-propelled lighters, ammunition barges, salvage barges, garbage barges, repair barges, floating dry-docks, degaussing vessels, floating cranes, salvage vessels, net gate barges, and any other type of ship

⁵⁰ Carter, *Bullets beans and Black Oil*, 38.

⁵¹ Carter, *Bullets Beans and Black Oil*, 87.

considered necessary.⁵² The squadrons had to be ready for any and all unanticipated events, so it made it essential to have the ships required for whatever emergency might arise while the campaign progressed across the Pacific.

The U.S. Navy also deployed naval construction battalions known as “Seabees” to construct bases on islands and atolls across the Pacific. Seabees had 80% of their total strength deployed to the Asia-Pacific theater.⁵³ During the course of World War II, Seabees constructed 111 airstrips, 441 piers, tanks for storage of 100 million gallons of gas, housing for 1.5 million men, and hospitals which could hold 70,000 casualties.⁵⁴

U.S. Merchant Marine in the Asia-Pacific Theater

During World War II, the Imperial Japanese Navy had a standing order to its submarine captains in regards to merchant ship crews. It stated: “Do not stop with the sinking of enemy ships and cargoes at the same time you will carry out the complete destruction of the crew of the enemy’s ships.”⁵⁵ The U.S. Merchant Marine in the Asia-Pacific theater may not have faced as organized a force as the German U-boat “wolf packs,” but the Japanese were much more brutal and sadistic than the Germans when dealing with merchant marine ships.

When war finally came to the United States in December 1941, the Japanese Navy had twenty-five submarines in Hawaiian waters the first week of December ready to strike at American forces.⁵⁶ The Japanese did manage a few successes. The submarine *I-8* torpedoed and sank the tanker *SS Emidio* twenty miles off the coast of California in December 1941, and later in February 1942, a Japanese submarine surfaced off the coast of Santa Barbara, California and

⁵² Carter, *Bullets Beans Black Oil*, 86-87.

⁵³ Kennedy, *Engineers of Victory*, 330.

⁵⁴ Kennedy, *Engineers of Victory*, 330-31.

⁵⁵ Hagen, *War in the Pacific*, 24.

⁵⁶ Boyd, *Japanese Submarine Force*, 25.

shelled the oil fields near Ellwood.⁵⁷ Japan also had a very modern force of submarines by the standards of World War II. The Japanese had invested heavily in their submarine force and intended it to play a major role in the war (against warships). However, the Japanese Navy submarine force was too small to play a role in both commerce raiding and attacks on major American warships.

As a result of its submarine fleet's limited size, the Japanese submarine force was never a consistent major threat to either American civilian merchant ships or naval warships because of the unfocused Japanese submarine policy followed throughout the course of World War II.⁵⁸ The Japanese submarine force only sank 184 ships during the entire war. Historian S.E. Morrison commented that Japan's submarine doctrine in World War II was "verging on the idiotic."⁵⁹

Merchant shipping routes in the Asia-Pacific were much more scattered and dispersed than the routes to Europe and the Mediterranean making transporting supplies more difficult from the United States.⁶⁰ The average voyage from San Francisco to Espiritu Santo took, on average, thirty days.⁶¹ The Pacific Ocean stretches over 9,600 miles-three-fifths of the world's circumference and covers 70 million square miles exacerbating the logistical challenge.⁶²

Even when supplies did arrive at the destination in the Pacific, the lack of proper port facilities made unloading take much longer. On average, cargo unloading took twice as long in the Pacific compared to Europe.⁶³ U.S. Merchant Marine ships made the Allied counteroffensive

⁵⁷ Bunker, *Heroes in Dungarees*, 258-59.

⁵⁸ Boyd, *Japanese Submarine Force*, 188.

⁵⁹ Kennedy, *Engineers of Victory*, 340.

⁶⁰ Carse, *The Long Haul*, 36.

⁶¹ Riesenberg, *Sea War*, 181.

⁶² Gordon L. Rottman, *US World War II Amphibious Tactics: Mediterranean & European Theaters* (Oxford: Osprey, 2006), 3.

⁶³ Hagen, *War in the Pacific*, 23.

possible in the Asia-Pacific theater. A typical merchant ship's cargo could include bombs, trucks, bulldozers, canned Spam, Quonset huts, gasoline, ammunition, clothing, tents, cots, lubricating oil, and most importantly, beer and cigarettes.⁶⁴

By the late fall of 1942, ammunition depots had been created and stocked at Noumea and Espiritu Santo, with a smaller depot at Efate. All three handled aviation ammunition as well as larger material. Fuel-oil supply storage had been constructed on Ducos Peninsula at Noumea, with a capacity of 370,000 barrels of oil and 30,000 barrels of diesel fuel. A pier at which vessels could be unloaded and supplied was also built.⁶⁵ Noumea, before the end of 1942, would almost continuously have over sixty merchant ships at once in its harbor.⁶⁶

On Efate the U.S. had seven 1,000-barrel steel tanks for aviation gasoline, two 10,000-gallon Diesel tanks, and four buried 5,000-gallon aviation-gasoline tanks, while at Havannah eight other buried tanks held 5,000 gallons each. In the Tulagi area the U.S. had ten 1,000-barrel tanks plus 12,000 barrels of aviation gasoline, a 60,000-barrel diesel-oil storage, and a 280,000-barrel fuel-oil farm. Guadalcanal added storage for 1,300,000 gallons of aviation gasoline.⁶⁷

At Tulagi alone during the early months of 1943, motor torpedo boats consumed upwards of 3,000 to 7,000 gallons a day and the airplanes about 1,000. By the end of that year, the PT boats burned about 5,000 gallons a day and the planes 5,000 to 10,000 gallons. Petroleum products carried by ship averaged 219,830 tons, or roughly 1,300,000 barrels a month for the first half of 1943.⁶⁸ One merchant marine tanker, the SS *John D. Archbold*, made over seventy voyages and delivered 9,991,513 barrels of oil between 1939-1945.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Bunker, *Heroes in Dungarees*, 262.

⁶⁵ Carter, *Bullets Beans Black Oil*, 54

⁶⁶ Riesenber, *Sea War*, 179.

⁶⁷ Carter, *Bullets Beans Black Oil*, 54.

⁶⁸ Carter, *Bullets Beans Black Oil*, 55.

⁶⁹ Gleichauf, *Unsung Sailors*, 312.

By late 1943 at the island base of Espiritu Santo, the supply storage unit, besides its sixty 40-by-100-foot warehouses, had extensive outdoor storage space approximating 400,000 square feet filled with supplies of all kinds. The fleet provision unit, with twenty-four large "reefers" (refrigerator boxes or rooms), and five warehouses had been receiving and issuing quantities of both fresh and dry provisions.⁷⁰ The flow of good provisions was critical in order to keep the fleet and land forces moving forward across the Asia-Pacific. The United States was dealing with a supply line stretching over 6,000 miles, so bases were needed to support the fleet.⁷¹

When it came time for Admiral Nimitz's Operation Galvanic in November 1943 (consisting of 116 combat vessels and 75 auxiliaries), the storage became critical for the success of the operation.⁷² The initial loads consisted of, for both combat and auxiliary ships, 120 day supply of dry provisions for ship's crew and forty-five days' supply for embarked troops; fresh provisions to capacity; clothing for ninety days; ship's store, ninety days; general stores, 120 days; fuel and ammunition to authorized capacity.⁷³ These ships would be carrying everything from tanks to toilet paper, but some ships, such as the SS *Virginian*, carried mules to New Guinea for use in the mountainous terrain soldiers were fighting in.⁷⁴

Prior to 1944 much of the fuel had been transported from the west coast of the United States, to Pearl Harbor, forward bases, and finally to the fleet, in tankers. Even though new tankers of larger sizes were being brought into service every month, the demands on them increased so quickly that from the Marshall Islands campaign forward, the fleet oilers were confined to acting primarily as distribution vessels direct to the fleet ships. The long haul from southern California, and the longer haul from the Caribbean through the Panama Canal, was

⁷⁰ Carter, *Bullets Beans Black Oil*, 57.

⁷¹ Riesenberg, *Sea War*, 177.

⁷² Carter, *Bullets Beans Black Oil*, 82.

⁷³ Carter, *Bullets Beans Black Oil*, 83.

⁷⁴ Gleichauf, *Unsung Sailors*, 306.

made almost entirely by an endless chain of large commercial merchant marine tankers, which unloaded into the fleet tankers in anchorages such as Majuro, Eniwetok, and Ulithi.⁷⁵

The need for ammunition of all types became so great that AE-class (cargo capacity 6,000 to 7,000 tons) ships were not available in sufficient numbers, so ten 17-knot Victory merchant ships were commissioned in the U.S. Navy and assigned as additional ammunition carriers. As the war drew to a close, several AK-class cargo ships, with capacity of 4,000 to 5,000 tons in general, were being especially fitted for transferring ammunition at sea.⁷⁶ In the Iwo Jima operation, 22,000,000 gallons of water were supplied to the participating vessels operating off of the island. Toward the end of hostilities special distilling ships were also coming into service. The first two were converted Liberty merchant ships, with distilling capacity of 120,000 gallons a day and storage for 5,040,000 gallons.⁷⁷

Early in 1944, when the logistic requirements grew faster than the U.S. Naval Squadrons could handle, War Shipping Administration vessels were allocated to carry provisions across the Asia-Pacific. These ships were being placed under the operational control of Service Squadron Eight. Each dry-provision Liberty ship carried approximately 5,300 tons or 420,000 cubic feet of bulk provisions, clothing, ship's service supplies, and medical items.⁷⁸ 365 U.S. Navy and merchant marine ships ended up under the control of Service Squadron Eight running supplies to bases from corner to corner of the Asia-Pacific theater by 1945.⁷⁹

These ships in the War Shipping Administration, which were in charge of the transportation of dry provisions, had to be coordinated carefully with the scheduling those of U.S. Navy ships in Squadron Eight in loading at such ports as San Francisco, Oakland, San

⁷⁵ Carter, *Bullets Beans Black Oil*, 90.

⁷⁶ Carter, *Bullets Beans Black Oil*, 91.

⁷⁷ Carter, *Bullets Beans Black Oil*, 92.

⁷⁸ Carter, *Bullets Beans Black Oil*, 93.

⁷⁹ Carter, *Bullets Beans Black Oil*, 94.

Pedro, and Seattle. The vessels also needed coordination at every level to determine when to arrive at major bases and anchorages the across the Asia-Pacific. On many of these vessels the U.S. Navy put Squadron Eight storekeepers and an issuing supply officer.⁸⁰ Shipping had to be tightly controlled because of the shortage of merchant shipping across all theaters.

Merchant marine ships carried men, food, guns, grave markers, and other supplies across the Pacific in support of the United States' island hopping campaign.⁸¹ On average in the Pacific, it took 67.4 pounds of supplies per day to support a single serviceman.⁸² It took 1 pound of clothing, 11.9 pounds of construction materials, and 5.14 pounds of ammunition per man per day in the Pacific, the requirements for the European theater for the same supplies were .426, 7.28, and 3.64 pounds respectively.⁸³ Men serving in the Pacific also suffered higher personnel losses to disease than in Europe making the job of supplying and sustaining the war effort much more difficult.⁸⁴

The war in the Asia-Pacific theater required the Allies have excellent logistics to transport everything the force would need. During the invasion of Iwo Jima in February 1945, seventy-three Liberty and Victory ships helped supply the assault.⁸⁵ On board these ships were rations for the U.S. Marines for sixty days, 6,000 five-gallon cans of water, gasoline for twenty-five days for vehicles, 5,263 pounds of grease, and ammunition and other supplies for the assault force.⁸⁶ The total weight for each Marine was 1,322 pounds. The Fifth Marine Division alone took over 100 million cigarettes and enough food to feed the City of Atlanta for a month.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ Carter, *Bullets Beans Black Oil*, 95.

⁸¹ William L. McGee, "Appendix A," in *Bluejacket Odyssey: Guadalcanal to Bikini, Naval Armed Guard in the Pacific* (Palo Alto, CA: Glencannon Press, 1997), 451.

⁸² Huston, *Sinews of War*, 495.

⁸³ Huston, *Sinews of War*, 495.

⁸⁴ Bischof and Dupont, *Pacific War*, 3.

⁸⁵ Bill D. Ross, *Iwo Jima: Legacy of Valor* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1985), 26.

⁸⁶ Ross, *Iwo Jima*, 26.

⁸⁷ Ross, *Iwo Jima*, 26.

By the time of the Battle of Okinawa in 1945, Japanese kamikaze air attacks reached crisis proportions. During the battle, Japanese kamikazes sank thirty-four warships and damaged 288, including thirty-six carriers, fifteen battleships, eighty-seven destroyers, and nearly thirty merchant ships.⁸⁸ U.S. shipping still delivered 182,821 troops, 746,850 tons of supplies, 503,555 tons of vehicles.⁸⁹

However, in stark contrast to Europe where as the naval war became safer as time went on, Allied merchant shipping becomes, in the Asia-Pacific it becomes much more dangerous due to increased Japanese attacks, such as kamikazes--suicide planes. The following is an excerpt from Cadet-midshipman James Thomas Chaffin's after-action report on the sinking of the SS *Fort Lee* on January 16, 1945, by the German U-boat U-181 in the Indian Ocean:

On 21 October 1944, we departed from Abadan, Iran carrying approximately 100,000 barrels of Navy special fuel oil bound for Brisbane, Australia. We traveled alone, unescorted, and the weather at the time of sinking was moderate. On 2 November 1944 at 2002, the first torpedo hit the vessel. At this time, I was taking positions, dead reckoning, from the chart to give to the radio operator.⁹⁰

Chaffin's account is typical of how sudden an attack could come to merchant vessels. One moment all is calm and silent, and in the blink of an eye, the ship has been torpedoed and has burst into flames. Smoke would have immediately made it nearly impossible to see, and the sense of panic would have been overwhelming. Sailors would have had a limited amount of time to decide whether or not it was necessary to abandon ship or attempt to save it.

Cadet Chaffin was among the survivors of the *Fort Lee*, but other members of his crew were not so lucky. One lifeboat drifted over 2,800 miles during a ten week period of time before washing ashore on a Japanese held island. Eyewitness accounts say three men came ashore, and of the three one died in a hospital and the other two were executed by the Japanese sometime

⁸⁸ Bunker, *Heroes in Dungarees*, 268.

⁸⁹ Bunker, *Liberty Ships*, 159.

⁹⁰ *After-Action Report Volume Two*, U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Museum, 2014.

right before or after the Japanese surrender in 1945.⁹¹ While this story might seem hard to believe, it is one of many which took place in the Asia-Pacific. The Japanese brutality against prisoners of war is well documented, and their treatment of merchant mariners was no exception. Japanese Captain Tatsunosuke Ariizumi was a Japanese submarine commander during World War II. He was known as “The Butcher” due to his brutal treatment of captured merchant seamen.⁹²

On March 26, 1944, Ariizumi ordered the execution of ninety-eight survivors of the Dutch merchant ship *Tjisalak*. He personally executed a number of the ship's officers. He later attacked the SS *Jean Nicolet*, a Liberty ship. He forced the survivors of the ship to board his submarine, and as they did so, some were beaten, shot and then thrown back into the water. They all had their hands tied behind their backs and their feet were bound. The men were forced to remain seated on the deck with their heads bowed. Anyone raising their heads or making any sort of noise were not only beaten with iron pipes, but also slashed with bayonets. The approach of an Allied plane forced the sub to submerge with the men still on the deck. Only seventeen out of 100 men on the *Jean Nicolet* survived. Ariizumi later committed suicide in 1945 before his submarine arrived in Japan after the Japanese surrender.⁹³

On December 28, 1944, the SS *John Burke* was carrying a full load of ammunition in convoy for the invasion of the Philippine Island of Mindoro when it was hit by a kamikaze suicide plane. There were forty merchant mariners and twenty-eight U.S. Naval Armed Guard

⁹¹ Justin F. Gleichauf, "Never Heard from Again," Never Heard from Again, accessed November 10, 2015, <http://www.armed-guard.com/never.html>.

⁹² Justin F. Gleichauf, "Japanese Submarine Warfare," in *Unsung Sailors: The Naval Armed Guard in World War II* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1990), 351-54.

⁹³ Gleichauf, *Unsung Sailors*, 54.

on board when struck. There were no survivors.⁹⁴ The explosion was so enormous, it also sank a U.S. Army transport ship traveling near the *John Burke*. The merchant marine actually suffered more casualties than did the invading landing force.

The merchant marine vessel SS *Cape Constance* was involved in the operations to retake the Philippines. While it was anchored in Leyte Gulf and Tacloban, the ship was forced to go through 300 air raid alerts and 114 attacks by Japanese aircraft and kamikazes.⁹⁵ The ship was missed twice by attacks, but suffered one direct hit on the aft section of the ship. It was forced back to Pearl Harbor because the damage was so severe.

The last civilian Liberty ship lost to a Japanese submarine was the SS *John A. Johnson* on October 30, 1944 to Japanese submarine *I-12*. *I-12* surfaced and began to ram and machinegun the *Johnson's* lifeboats. The Japanese even tried to catch the sailors in the submarine's propellers to kill them.⁹⁶ The war in the Asia-Pacific theater was vicious right up until the very end.

Conclusion

By 1945, American merchant shipping had risen to 54.1 million tons of ships by the end of the war.⁹⁷ These men and ships had helped transport across the world 88,000 tanks and self-propelled guns, 257,000 artillery pieces, 2.4 million trucks, 2.6 million machine guns and 41 billion rounds of ammunition produced by the United States in World War II at a cost of \$183

⁹⁴ Arthur R. Moore, *"A Careless Word-- a Needless Sinking": A History of the Staggering Losses Suffered by the U.S. Merchant Marine, Both in Ships and Personnel during World War II* (Kings Point, NY: American Merchant Marine Museum, 1983), 152.

⁹⁵ Hagan, *War in the Pacific*, 23.

⁹⁶ Gleichauf, *Unsung Sailors*, 356.

⁹⁷ US Army, *Logistics in World War II*, 143.

billion.⁹⁸ However, this massive wartime merchant fleet controlled by the United States would soon be sold off as surplus, and the American merchant marine began to shrink in size. In both the Atlantic and the Asia-Pacific, ships were still being lost by mines left over from the war. In some cases, ships were lost even as late as 1950. As the world tried to move on from the war, the exploits of the merchant marine were overshadowed by larger events such as the Soviet Union's explosion of a nuclear weapon in 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950.

The Japanese submarine fleet only managed to sink just over 100,000 tons of merchant shipping during the critical time period of 1942-43. The U.S. Navy submarine force destroyed 300,000 tons of Japanese shipping in January 1944 alone.⁹⁹ The Japanese submarine force only managed to sink or damage forty-eight American merchant ships in World War II. The U.S. destroyed 2,346 Japanese merchant ships totaling 8,618,109 tons killing nearly 30,000 Japanese merchant seamen.¹⁰⁰ The failure of the Japanese Navy to not only attack American merchant shipping, but also protect their own, was one of its greatest mistakes of World War II.

The U.S. Merchant Marine lost their biggest ally in Washington when President Roosevelt died. President Roosevelt had been pushing for a GI Bill of Rights for merchant mariners, but when he died the idea died with him. Many mariners were left with nothing to show for their service in World War II.

Brian Herbert in *The Forgotten Heroes, the Heroic Story of the United States Merchant Marine* argued against the injustices committed against the merchant marine before, during, and after World War II. He argues, "It is one of the great calamities of American history that these

⁹⁸ Herman, *Freedom's Forge*, 335-36.

⁹⁹ Gleichauf, *Unsung Sailors*, 302.

¹⁰⁰ Gleichauf, *Unsung Sailors*, 323.

valiant seamen, who were so vital to our victory against the Axis forces have never received the recognition or the benefits they deserve.”¹⁰¹ *Forgotten Heroes* said the merchant marine and merchant mariners should share in a larger piece of the glory from World War II. Herbert claimed members of the civilian merchant marine service should have gotten at least the GI Bill benefits every other American service member had access to following the end of hostilities in World War II.

However, *Forgotten Heroes* did say some of the damage done to the Merchant Marine during the war was self-inflicted. Herbert argues “the Merchant Marine Unions were shortsighted accepting increased wages for membership and gaining only a short-term advantage this bargain would eventually exact a price higher than anyone ever imagined.”¹⁰² It is argued because the mariners did not give up their higher wages that they were not entitled to receive veterans’ benefits and healthcare. Herbert argues while yes, the merchant marine did not allow itself to be taken over by the United States Navy, it did enough to be treated as equals and given benefits that would be appropriate to their contributions.

Although the European merchant seamen have enjoyed more recognition in recent years by scholars, the Asia-Pacific mariners are still woefully understudied. Hurting the merchant marine even further is the fact the service lost “only” 9,500 sailors in World War II. Due in part to the rumors surrounding the U.S. Merchant Marine during the war, merchant marine veterans were not given veterans rights until 1988, but only after a protracted and ugly court battle against the U.S. Government. Also hurting the U.S. Merchant Marine is the fact the service does not have one uniform set of records which can be used for reliable information. In fact, the U.S.

¹⁰¹ Herbert, *Forgotten Heroes*, 15.

¹⁰² Herbert, *Forgotten Heroes*, 31.

Merchant Marine was the only service not to have an official historian during the war documenting the war as it happened.

Hopefully, in the coming years, more people will tackle the issue of the Asia-Pacific U.S. Merchant Marine and give it the attention and study it desperately needs. While doing the research for this paper, it has become apparent more work needs to be done on the study of logistical forces, on both sides of the conflict, in the Asia-Pacific during World War II. World War II was a war won and lost by a nation's commitment to its economy, civilian population, and its ability to move material quickly and efficiently into a warzone when and where it was needed at the crucial moment faster than the other side could. The U.S. Merchant Marine gave the United States and its allies an advantage the Axis powers could never hope to match, and proved to be one of the decisive factors in victory in World War II.

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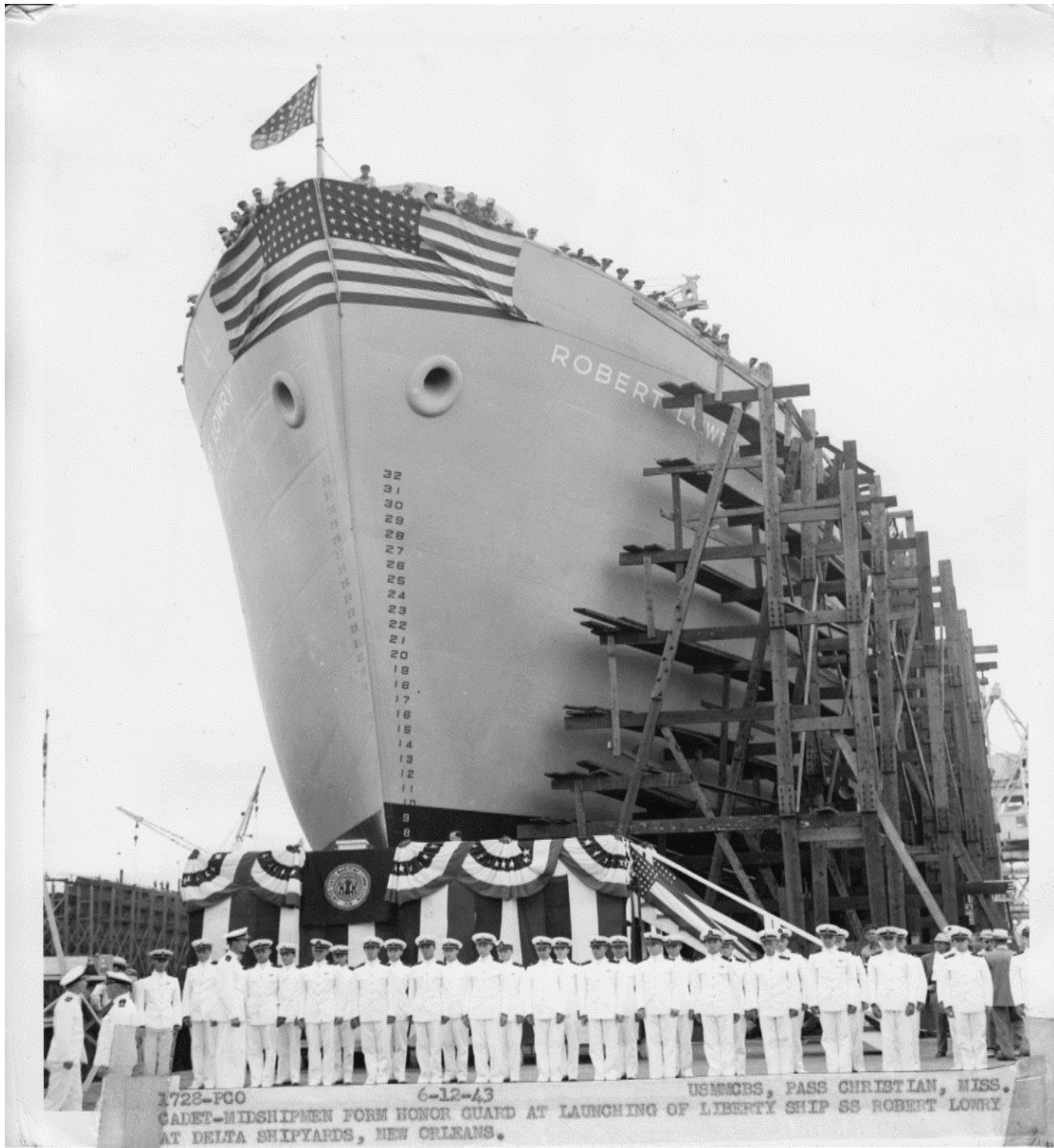
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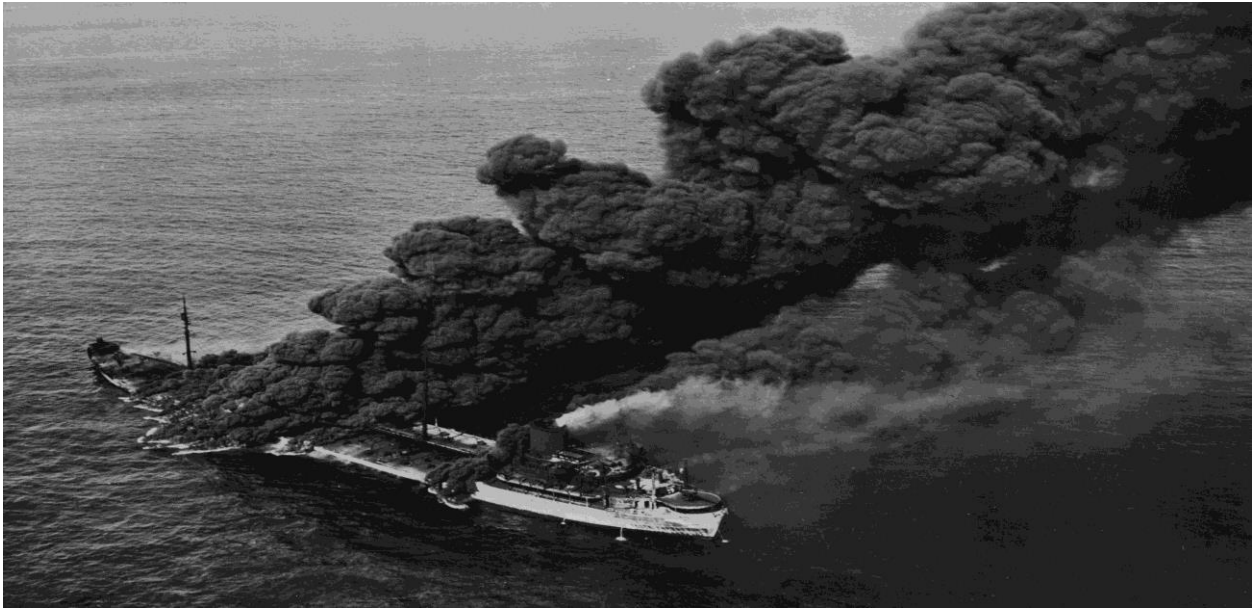
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Appendix A.



Appendix B.



Appendix C.

44-2043/27X
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CONFIDENTIAL

18 January, 1948

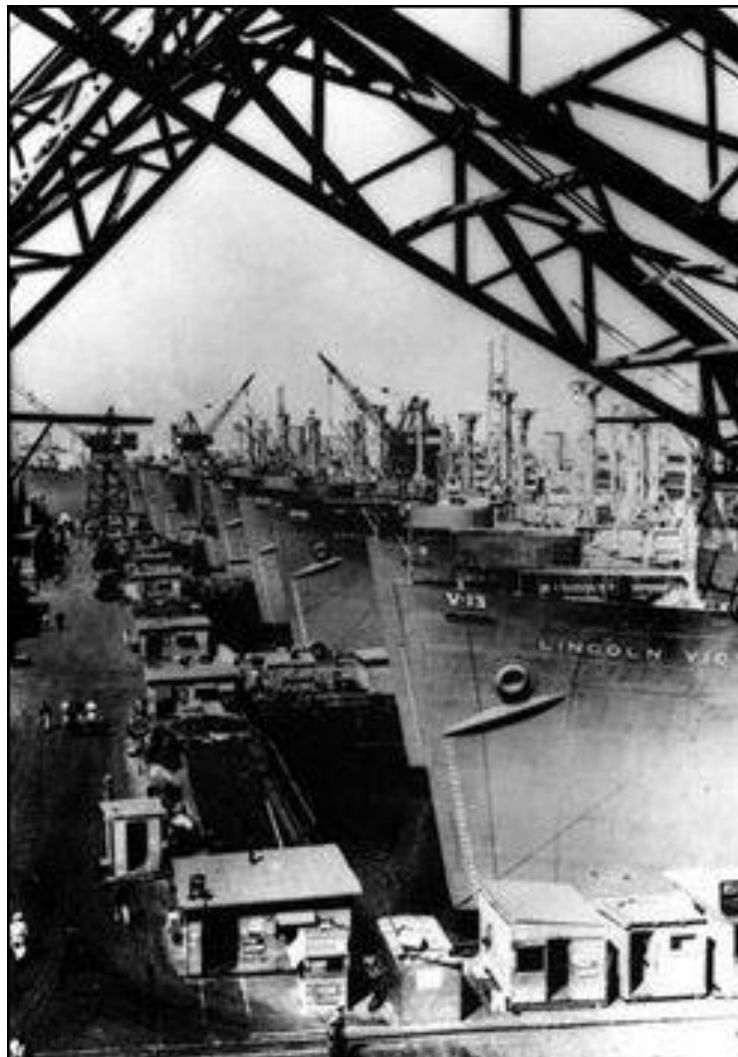
From: Cadet-Midshipman James Thomas CHAFFIN, Second Class,
(D-2), USMC/COC
To: Supervisor, U. S. Merchant Marine Cadet Corps
Via: District Cadet-Midshipman Supervisor, New York
Subject: Loss of Vessel SS PORT LEE; report on

1. On 21 October, 1944, we departed from Abadan, Iran carrying approximately 100,000 barrels of Navy special fuel oil bound for Brisbane, Australia. We traveled alone, unescorted, and the weather at the time of sinking was moderate and had been for the previous days except at times when it was very calm. We had had storm warnings that there was a typhoon south of us and it was traveling in a southwest direction.

2. On 2 November, 1944 at 2002, the first torpedo hit the vessel. At this time, I was taking positions, dead reckoning, from the chart to give to the radio operator. I had just come off the bridge where I had been on watch since 1800. As soon as I got on deck, I went to the boat to which I was assigned, the No. 1, and secured the plug. The order was not given until later to abandon ship and after we saw that she was settling by the stern, I went into the chart room and got the two sextants, chronometer, Bowditch and the 214 publication for that latitude, and also a chart that the Captain handed me and put them in the lifeboat. One A.B. was missing so when the order came to abandon ship I took the station on the forward fall. The second torpedo hit at 2032 on 2 November, 1944 just as I had lowered the forward fall within a few feet of the water. The approximate position of the sinking was Long. 72E, Lat. 27S. The first torpedo hit the port side of the engine room and the second hit approximately between the engine room and after cofferdam on the starboard side.

3. After I had lowered the boat to the water, there was a very dense smoke and I could not obtain a man rope so I found the fall and made my way to the lifeboat. The releasing gear on the forward fall wouldn't work so we cut that fall. Our boat picked up approximately 12 men out of the water. Our boat was close by the others after the ship had sank and we saw the shape of an object that looked like a sub. The following morning the boats drew in together and the Third Mate reported that the sub came alongside his boat and he was asked the nationality, name and year ship was built. I do

Appendix D.



Appendix E.

1936

- Merchant Marine Act of 1936 passes Congress June 29th. It calls for fifty merchant ships a year to be built for ten years and establishes the US Maritime Commission.¹⁰³

1940

- November 8th- First American flagged merchant ship lost in WWII- SS *City of Rayville*. It was hit by German mine off Australia.¹⁰⁴

1941

- March 11th – Lend Lease package passes the US Congress.¹⁰⁵ Merchant Marine now carrying supplies across U-boat infested Atlantic to British and supplying China, Burma, and India.

1942

- January- August- “Operation Drumbeat” organized by Germans to operate U-boats off American coastline. Known as “Second Happy Time” and the “Atlantic Pearl Harbor” due to huge Allied losses.¹⁰⁶
- November 8-12th The Liberty ship, SS *Robert E Peary*, was built in four days, fifteen hours, and twenty-nine minutes at Permanente Metals Corporation (Kaiser) No.2 Yard in Richmond, California.¹⁰⁷

1944

- December 15th: The invasion of Mindoro in the Philippines was the high point of Merchant Marine casualties in the Pacific. Among the losses were two liberty ships that were blown up with loss of all hands because of kamikaze attacks.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ United States. National Park Service. "Liberty Ships and Victory Ships --Setting the Stage." National Parks Service. Accessed March 2, 2015.
http://www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/116liberty_victory_ships/116setting.htm.

¹⁰⁴ Moore, *A Careless Word*, 58.

¹⁰⁵ Edward Offley, *Turning the Tide: How a Small Band of Allied Sailors Defeated the U-boats and Won the Battle of the Atlantic* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 7.

¹⁰⁶ Gannon, *Drumbeat*, 1.

¹⁰⁷ Arthur Herman, *Freedom's Forge: How American Business Produced Victory in World War II* (New York: Random House, 2012), 190.

¹⁰⁸ War Shipping Administration, "American Merchant Marine Ships in Action in the Pacific During World War II," (October 14, 1945)

Vita

James Linn IV received his Bachelor of Arts degree in history from the University of New Orleans with a concentration in political science in 2011. He then spent three years in politics before deciding he needed a change of scenery and returned back home to New Orleans. He currently works at The National World War II Museum in New Orleans as a curator and exhibit designer and is married to his wife, Jennifer Terranova Linn. He has always had a strong passion for history, specifically military history, and would like to utilize his historical knowledge and hands-on experience in government and politics in his future employment. He is an avid reader, poor golfer, and a SEC football fan.