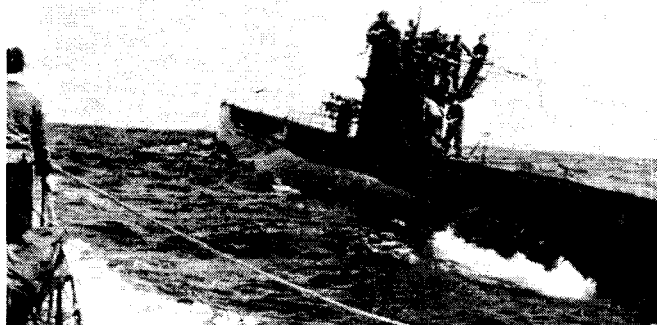


# Canadians and the Convoy System

After France had been knocked out of the Second World War by Nazi Germany, Britain, Canada, and the Commonwealth were all alone against the Third Reich. Keeping the supply lines open to the British became the number one priority of the war – if the British people ran out of supplies, all of Europe would fall to the Nazi forces.

One of Canada's primary roles in WWII was to provide Britain with supplies. The Royal Canadian Navy was instrument in sending, and protecting, ships filled with supplies to keep Britain in the war against Germany.

The German U-boat (submarine) Fleet was inflicting heavy tolls on ships crossing the Atlantic Ocean. Traveling together in groups – called wolfpacks – the German U-boats were inflicting heavy losses on ships traveling to Britain. The Germans were trying to starve the British out of the war.



After France fell in 1940 the German's called the operations in the Atlantic Ocean "The Happy Time" from June 1940 - February 1941 – the supply ships were sitting ducks.

In 1942 the Battle of the St. Lawrence began as shipping was attacked along the St. Lawrence River in Canada.

## Did You Know?

The Royal Canadian Navy began the war with 13 vessels, of which 6 were destroyers, and 3,500 personnel, and ended it with the third largest navy in the world. At war's end the RCN had 373 fighting ships and over 110,000 members, all of whom were volunteers, including 6,500 women who served in the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Services.

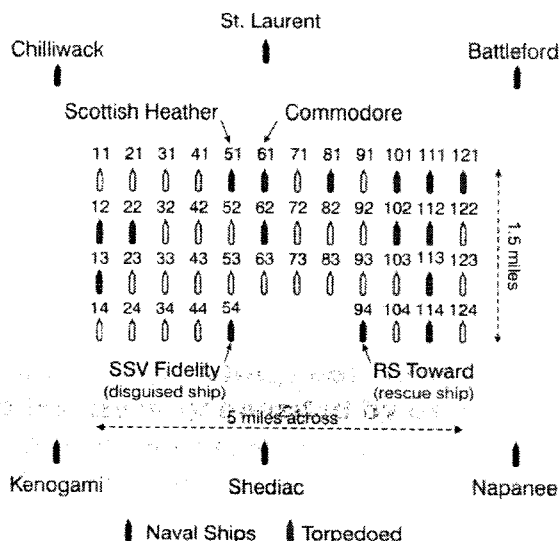
To protect the supply ships, the Royal Canadian Navy employed the "Convoy System."

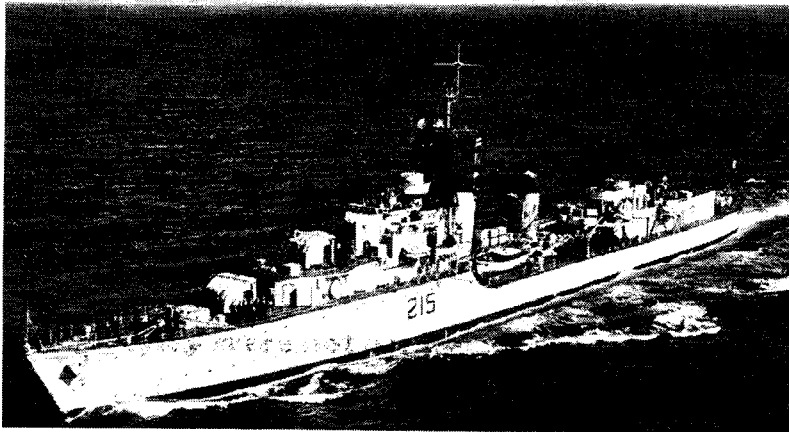
A convoy was a huge collection of supply ships, heavily guarded by escorts (usually Canadian destroyers and/or corvettes) that traveled together as they crossed the Atlantic.

## What was a Corvette?

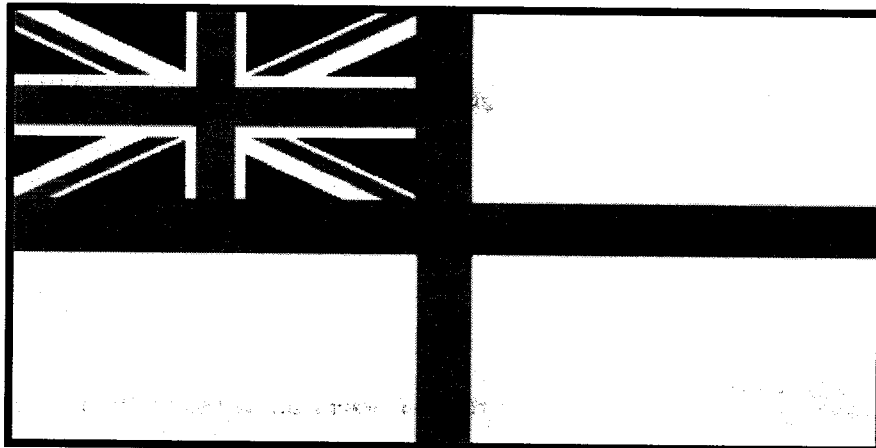
A Corvette is a type of small warship during WWII. Canada's most famous corvette was the HMCS Haida (currently anchored in Hamilton, Ontario). Corvettes were quick to manufacture for the Atlantic convoys, and Canada produced dozens of them.

They were not comfortable to travel in, but were fast. Corvettes guarded the convoys on their dangerous voyages to Britain.





***HMCS Haida and her Crest***



***Flag of the Royal Canadian Navy during WWII***

**More information is available on Canada's role in the Atlantic on pages 234-8 of *Spotlight Canada*.**

**For more information on the HMCS Haida visit [www.hmeshaida.ca](http://www.hmeshaida.ca)**