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This image depicts a flotilla of U-Boats in Bergen, Norway, at the close of WWII. In the center is U-2511, skippered by Captain Adalbert Schnee, which returned from patrols in the Atlantic after Germany surrendered in early May of 1945. The ship returned to Bergen on the 6th of May where it was released to the Allies. It was later scuttled by the British.

One of Hitler's best weapons to hinder successful Allied convoy trips was the U-Boat.

The Unterseebooten (under sea boats) were German submarines which attacked, almost at will, because the commanders knew (through the Enigma codes) the specific coordinates of Allied ships as they passed through convoy routes.

At the same time, the German navy had high hopes for its new battleship, the mighty Bismarck. With her massive size, she could severely impede sea travel to and from Britain - as she did when she sank HMS Hood, pride of the Royal Navy. However ... Bismarck's power - and Germany's plans for her - abruptly ended when Britain sank the Bismarck on May 26, 1941.

Hitler and his forces would thus have to depend on their U-boats. Like Allied submarines, the German vessels were different from today's nuclear subs which can remain underwater for months. WWII subs were more like regular boats with diving capability. They had to return to the surface periodically.

When submerged, WWII subs would creak and groan. Men had to live in cramped spaces. Showers were usually permitted only once a week. Sometimes the stale air in the sub was freezing cold. Sometimes it was blazing hot with nearly 100% humidity. The possibility of losing one's life on a submarine was an ever-present reality.

German U-boats were usually identified by numbers. U-110, on patrol in the North Atlantic on May 9, 1941, was having a good trip. After sinking two Allied ships, in a convoy passing to the southeast of Greenland's Cape Farewell, 110's commander - Fritz-Julius Lemp - left his periscope up longer than usual. Perhaps he was gloating a bit over his successful kills.

It would be the last time he looked through the periscope of U-110.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-U-BOATS-Enigma-Machine-and-Its-U-boat-Codes>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

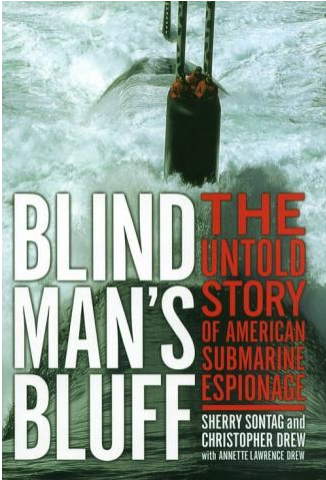
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-U-BOATS-Enigma-Machine-and-Its-U-boat-Codes>



German U-Boat

Image online, courtesy the [Daily Llama](#) blog site.

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Blind Man's Bluff - by Sherry Sontag and Christopher Drew

Image online, courtesy [amazon.com](#) website.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Blind-Man-s-Bluff-by-Sherry-Sontag-and-Christopher-Drew0>



Life Aboard A Sub

Image online, courtesy the [NavSource History](#) website.

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Map of Iceland

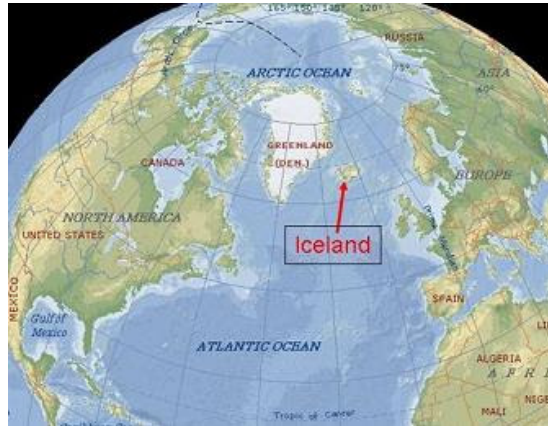
Iceland, an island nation of Europe, is located east of Greenland and northwest of the UK.

The Traveling Viking (TTV) tells us more about [Iceland and its specific location](#) between the North Atlantic and the Greenland Sea (also providing a map to help us visualize things):

Iceland, the second largest island in Europe, is located south of the Arctic Circle, between the North Atlantic Ocean and the Greenland Sea. It is situated east of Greenland and northwest of the UK. It is overall the eighteenth-largest island in the World. Unlike the neighboring island Greenland, Iceland is considered part of Europe and not of North America.

Iceland is located east of Greenland and immediately south of the Arctic Circle, atop the constructive boundary of the northern Mid-Atlantic Ridge. It lies about 860 km (534 mi) from Scotland and 4,200 km (2,610 mi) from New York City. [It is] one of the world's most sparsely populated countries.

About half of Iceland's land area, which is of recent volcanic origin, consists of a mountainous lava desert (highest elevation 2,119 m (6,952 ft) above sea level) and other wasteland. Eleven percent is covered by three large glaciers: Vatnajökull (8300 km²), Langjökull (953 km²) and Hofsjökull (925 km²)



Cape Farewell is located on Greenland's southern tip. On the 9th of May, 1941, a German U-boat - U-110, commanded by Captain Fritz-Julius Lemp - was patrolling the waters southeast of Cape Farwell and southwest of Iceland. It had been in that general location when it sank two ships of an Allied convoy.

This Google-Map depicts the [relative locations of Cape Farewell and Iceland](#). It was in this part of the ocean that U-110 was fatally damaged by ships of the Royal Navy.

Click on the top image for a better view of the Iceland map.

Image depicting a map of Iceland, online via Perry Castañeda Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin. Public Domain.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-of-Iceland>



Captain Fritz-Julius Lemp

This image depicts Fritz-Julius Lemp, the captain of U-110, a German U-boat which operated during World War II.

On the 9th of May, 1941, U-110 was on a successful mission, torpedoing Allied ships, when she was spotted by a Royal Navy lookout aboard HMS *Aubretia*.

After an engagement between the U-boat and the Brits, U-110 was fatally damaged. Captain Lemp died as a direct result.

Image online via Wikimedia Commons.

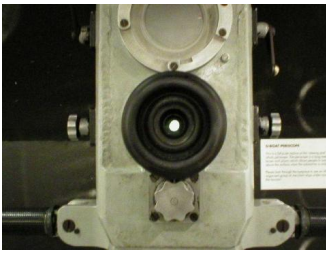
View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Captain-Fritz-Julius-Lemp>



German Sub Strike

Animated image online via Wikipedia.

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U-Boat Periscope

Image online, courtesy Merseyside Maritime Museum.

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THE U-BOATS

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Bismarck versus HMS Hood - Battle of Denmark Strait

Clip from "Dogfights: Hunt for the *Bismarck*" - online, courtesy the History Channel via YouTube.

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Bismarck Sinks HMS Hood

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Swordfish Planes Track and Attack the Bismarck

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Sinking of the Bismarck

Churchill sent an order to “sink the Bismarck.” This was particularly urgent after the German ship’s fatal attack on the battle cruiser HMS *Hood*, a few days before, when all but 3 of the *Hood*’s 1,418 crewmen died.

There is a controversy—still debated—about the *Bismarck*’s demise. As it happens, some of her crew had signaled “surrender” before the Royal Navy took her out.

The surrender efforts came about, among other things, by the raising of a black flag. This is a naval parley signal (expressed, in common parlance, as “let’s talk”). The *Bismarck* also used Morse lamps, from the ship’s yardarm, to signal a surrender message, but the Royal Navy’s senior officers either didn’t know about the signals or chose to disregard them.

Terry Charman, a senior historian at the Imperial War Museum, provides some of the reasons why the Royal Navy ignored the surrender attempt:

The Bismarck’s admiral was a fairly fanatical believer in Hitler and the telegrams he sent were along the lines of “we will fight to the end.” It would have been very dangerous to take the surrender.

With so much damage from the air—and torpedo attacks from HMS Ark Royal, an aircraft carrier—the Bismarck’s steering was jammed. She was in peril unless the Royal Navy captured her instead of sinking her.

The lives of 2,200 men, aboard the Bismarck, were at stake.

Likely believing it was too dangerous to capture the battleship—even if she was disabled, most of her crew was not—the Royal Navy continued to pound the ship which had sent the Hood to the bottom of the Atlantic just days before.

Within two hours of the British attack on her, the once-mighty battleship was a wreck of twisted metal. Among her raging fires were dead and dying crewmen.

*When the final torpedo, fired by the Royal Navy, ended her life, the Bismarck sank in the Atlantic (hundreds of miles off the coast of Brittany). Charman—author of *The Day We Went to War*—also tells us about her survivors:*

HMS Devonshire picked up 200 [of the estimated 600] survivors but had to leave a lot of men behind because there was U-boat activity in the area.

Such—as historians tell us—is the awful price of war.

The battle between the Hood and the Bismarck is the subject of popular culture. One of the most-famous songs, about the events which took place in May of 1941, is by Johnny Horton.

This embedded YouTube video combines historical footage (of the Bismarck’s launch) together with excerpts from the film “Sink the Bismarck” (with Horton’s famous song playing in the background).

Clip from “Dogfights: Hunt for the Bismarck” - online, courtesy the History Channel via YouTube.

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Bismarck and HMS Hood - Why Did They Sink?

Clip from “Dogfights: Hunt for the *Bismarck*” - online, courtesy the History Channel via YouTube.

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