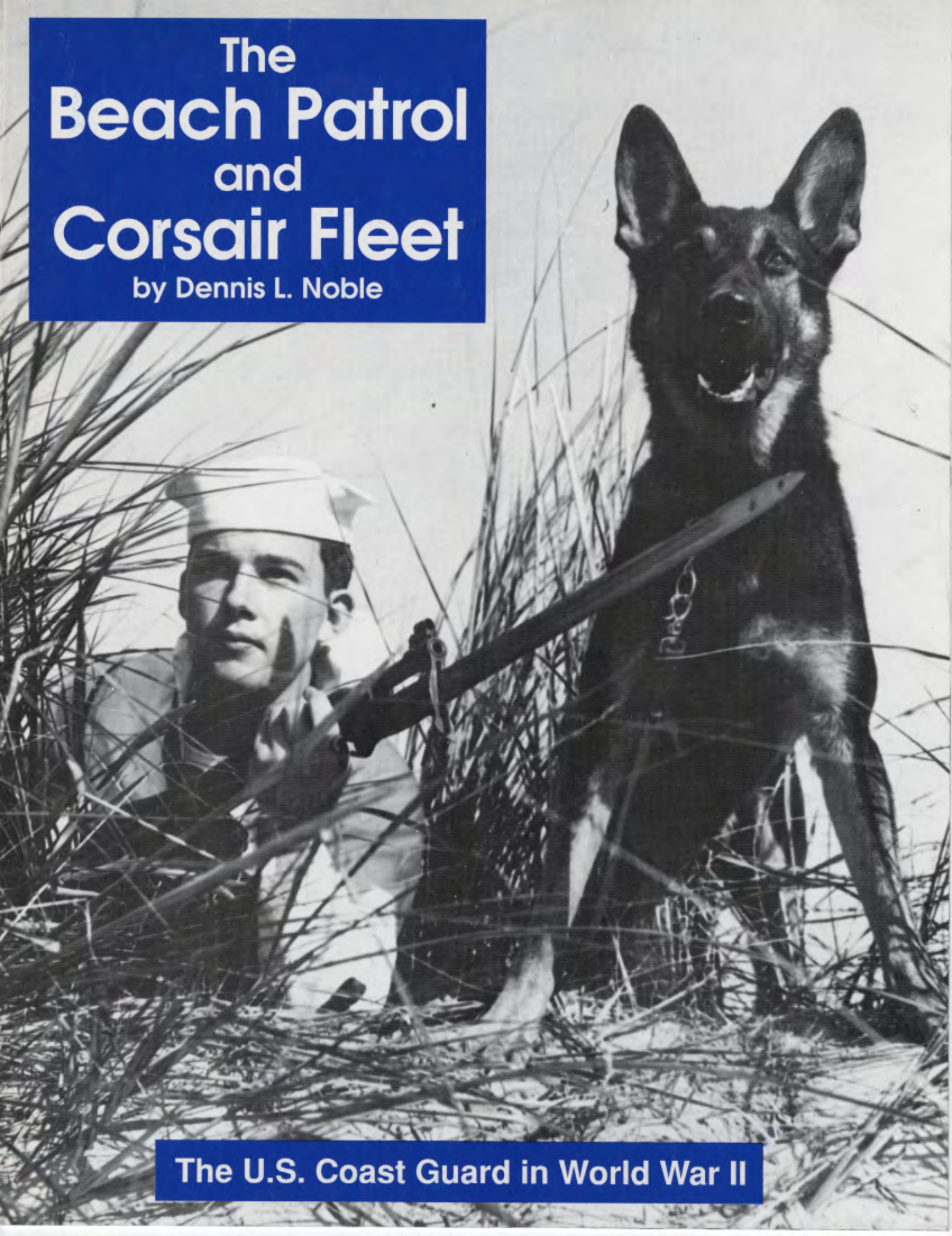


The Beach Patrol and Corsair Fleet

by Dennis L. Noble



The U.S. Coast Guard in World War II

The Japanese attack against Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1941, shocked and panicked many Americans. The fear on the West Coast was so great that as late as Feb. 1942 a weather balloon detected over Los Angeles by Army radar, became the target of an anti-aircraft barrage that showered hot metal onto the blacked-out city and caused one fatality — a civilian died of a heart attack.

On the Eastern seaboard shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, German U-boats began a devastating attack on U.S. merchant shipping. Along the coast numerous ships sank within sight of the beach, causing a great deal of fear among many Americans.

Since the war now seemed to be on America's doorstep, many Americans feared invasion. The Coast Guard undertook two little-known, but important, roles to protect the nation during this period of uncertainty. One role was to protect shipping off the East Coast and another was to prevent enemy infiltration from the sea.





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Front Cover: A member of the Beach Patrol and his dog on the look-out for the enemy.

Back Cover: A Coast Guard sailboat on patrol for German submarines off the Atlantic Coast.

Corsair Fleet



Above: Coast Guard Reserve vessel 2502, ex Dutchess, patrols off the Atlantic Coast. The Dutchess was one of many sailing vessels acquired for the Corsair fleet.

Above right: The logo of the Corsair fleet designed by Walt Disney studios.

During the first desperate months of 1942, when U-boats were sinking ships on American shores almost with impunity, the Navy found itself desperately short of the small craft needed to protect coastal shipping.

In the summer of 1941, Alfred Stanford, commodore of the Cruising Club of America, began the difficult task of convincing the Navy that private boats and their owners could help meet the Navy's need for small craft. On March 5, 1942, the cruising club of-



ferred the Navy's Eastern Sea Frontier Command the loan of 30 auxiliary sailing yachts between 50- and 90-feet, with skippers and skeleton crews. These vessels had sails and a gasoline or diesel engine for auxiliary propulsion.

By April, the offer had grown to 70 seagoing yachts and 100 smaller craft. Yet, the Navy refused. This caused a large flow of letters and editorials to those in command. The outcry caused the Navy to change its policy. On May 4, 1942, ADM Ernest J. King, chief of naval operations and commander in chief, U.S. Fleet, requested the Coast Guard Reserve to take over and organize the Coastal Picket Patrol.

The Coast Guard Reserve had been formed in June 1939. The service trained civilian yachtsmen for cooperation with the Coast Guard's search and rescue work and to assist with law enforcement activities such as boarding boats to insure boating safety regulations were being followed. In 1941, the Reserve had 7,000-8,000 members, and 2,000-3,000 boats, most of which were unsuitable for offshore work.

Since there was no provision for the reservist to be called to active duty, legislation was passed to establish a new reserve. In February 1941, a new reserve force was created similar to the other military services' reserves and the former reserve was renamed the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Congress amended the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Act by authorizing suitable men to serve for as short a period as 30 days, even though regularly disqualified for service in the Navy or Coast Guard because of age or minor physical problems.



On May 23, King ordered all sea frontier commanders to expedite the selection of small craft for the picket patrol also called the Corsair Fleet. The orders stated that the vessels had to be "capable of going to sea in good weather for a period of at least 48 hours at cruising speeds." They could be auxiliary sailing or motor yachts, fishermen, or other privately owned craft. The vessels would be accepted as loans, purchases or requisitions. This task proved too much for the auxiliary, so King ordered the Coast Guard to establish the patrol.

The force was organized into six task groups: Northern, Narragansett, New York, Delaware, Chesapeake and Southern. Their duty was to supplement forces employed in anti-submarine, rescue and patrol duties. The boats normally carried machine guns, four depth charges and a radio. These small boats were to observe and report the actions of hostile forces and to attack enemy submarines when armament permitted.

The owner of the yacht usually remained onboard with the rating of chief boatswain's mate. At first the crews were made up of college boys, adventurous lads of shore villages, Boy Scouts, beachcombers, exboot-leggers and rum-runners. Almost everyone who declared he could reef and steer, and many who couldn't, were accepted.

With such a diversified group of people under one organization, the Corsair Fleet was often referred to as the Hooligan Navy.

The Coast Guard also assigned some of its recruits to the patrol and by mid-1943 most of the crews were made up of Coast Guard enlisted men and officered by the former yacht owners.

Normal patrol areas were along the 50 fathom curve off the Atlantic and Gulf



Coasts. The craft patrolled in designated squares of about 15 nautical miles. This could be pleasant in summer weather, but in the winter or stormy weather, crews needed a good knowledge of seamanship and a strong stomach to endure the patrols.

Adventure on the seas

By the time the patrol reached a sizable force, the U-boat threat had lessened, never giving the force a chance to really test its worth. Even so, a few instances did show the Hooligan Navy may have helped the war effort if it had been formed in sufficient time.

Top: The 73-foot CGR 557 speeds along on anti-submarine patrol.

Above: Sailing Coast Guard reserve vessels required manual labor from crewmembers.



On Aug. 13, 1942, a flight of 10 airplanes from a base at Westover, Mass., tested the air defense network along the Massachusetts coast. No Navy ship or shore station made visual or radar sightings of the flight. The only units to accurately report the aircraft were four coastal picket-patrol craft.

The *Edlu II*, patrolling south of Montauk Point, N.Y., on Sept. 15, 1942, spotted a surfaced U-boat less than 100 yards away. Even though the *Edlu II* had not yet received depth charges, the small craft began to close, hoping to take the U-boat under machine gun fire. The Nazi vessel spotted the small boat and immediately dove. It is not surprising that the skipper of the submarine chose to submerge, he could not be certain what weapons the *Edlu II* had.

The threat of the picket boats was not realized by some U-boat commanders. One German skipper surfaced his sub beside a reserve boat and reportedly stepped out on the deck. In excellent English he shouted, "Get the hell out of here, you guys! Do you want to get hurt? Now, scram!"

In another instance the reserve craft *Jay-Tee* had a close encounter with a U-boat. According to the *Saturday Evening Post* the crew of the 40-foot reserve craft was searching for survivors of a gun duel between a German sub and a merchant vessel. When the *Jay-Tee* got to the scene of the battle the merchant vessel was gone. While searching the area they spotted a submarine a mile or so away. The sub then submerged and surfaced several times.

The crew of the *Jay-Tee* remained to see



Left top: Coast Guard and Coast Guard Reserve vessels await their next patrol.

Left bottom: A World War II press release photo. The caption reads: Somewhere in the North Atlantic... Picturesque Coast Guard schooners manned by adventurous members of the Coast Guard sail along ever watchful for enemy submarine activity.

Left: The CGR 52, ex Poodle Pup, pulls along side a merchant vessel in harbor. The boardings were conducted on merchant vessels in part to seal their radios so they could not send information to the Germans.

what would happen. Suddenly the *Jay-Tee* was lifted out of the water. The captain rushed to the side to see that the submarine had surfaced underneath his yacht, and watched as it submerged once again. The damaged *Jay-Tee* made it back to port. The crew's claim was substantiated by the boat's broken back, sprung planking and streaks of German paint on the hull.

By 1943 the submarine threat along the American Coast had abated. In January 1943, King ordered a cut of 35 percent in the picket force as an economy move.

In October 1943, the Coastal Picket Patrol was disbanded, although a few of the larger yachts were retained for this service until the end of the war.

Beach Patrol



The early submarine menace along the United States' long coastline also led to another, and larger, effort on the part of the Coast Guard to protect this country during World War II. Fears that Nazi submarines could easily surface and land agents along the many deserted stretches of America's Eastern coastline prompted a need for coastal patrols. Along the West Coast, there were numerous reports of Japanese submarines being sighted.

At least four cases of Japanese shelling or bombings along the coasts of Oregon and California were reported. Indeed, J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, helped to fuel already vivid imaginations. Hoover noted that Americanism was on trial: "The spy, the saboteur, the subverter must be met and conquered." To counter this threat, the Coast Guard organized the beach patrol, whose members were quickly dubbed the *sand pounders*.

The use of beach patrols has a long tradition in the Coast Guard. As early as 1871, the Life-Saving Service, a predecessor of the Coast Guard, was using foot patrols along beaches to detect ships in distress or in danger of running aground. The patrols were conducted each night or when the weather reduced visibility during the day.

While this method was not perfect, it did at least afford a method of locating ships needing assistance. In 1899, for example, beach patrols warned off 143 ships in danger of running aground. During the day, a lookout watched from a tower for those in distress. The many stations of the Life-Saving Service provided a natural coastal warning system. During the War with Spain (1898) the units were organized as coastal lookouts in the event of an invasion. While the attack never came, the value of the patrol was recognized as useful to the military even before the 20th century.

Just prior to, and shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the basic structure of the wartime beach patrol was set into motion. On Feb. 3, 1941, all coastal areas of the United States were organized into defense divisions known as Naval Coastal Frontiers. On Nov. 1, 1941, under Executive Order 8929, the Coast Guard was transferred to the Navy for the duration of the war. After Feb. 6, 1942, the Naval Coastal Frontiers became Sea Frontiers, with Army and Navy personnel in each area to guard the coast and prevent invasion. The Army was charged with the defense of the land areas, while the Navy would main-

tain inshore and offshore patrols. The Coast Guard, as a part of the Navy, was the logical choice to work along the beaches.

Wartime beach patrols, unlike those conducted during peacetime, were primarily security forces. The patrols had three basic functions: To detect and observe enemy vessels operating in coastal waters and to transmit information on these craft to the

"The spy, the saboteur, the subverter must be met and conquered."

— J. Edgar Hoover

appropriate Navy and Army commands; to report attempts of landings by the enemy and to assist in preventing landings; and to prevent communication between persons on shore and the enemy at sea. The patrol also functioned as a rescue agency and policed restricted areas of the coast. As will be shown later, the rescue function more than justified the operation of the patrol.

In the first hectic and confused months of the United States' participation in the war, patrols were conducted in much the same way they were during peacetime. That is, one man would, armed only with flares, patrol the beach. The responsibility for the work was placed under the local Captain of the Port. In the meanwhile, the FBI continued issuing warnings about the possibility of enemy landings. There is no doubt, however, that the work of the beach patrol was not taken seriously. Then, almost as if in a movie script, Nazi saboteurs were spotted by a lone Coast Guardsman landing on Long Island, N.Y.

Operation Pastorius

Forty miles west of Berlin, near Brandenburg, lay a Nazi school of sabotage named Quentz Farm. The school was established by the German military intelligence section headed by ADM Wilhelm Canaris. The school received a direct order from Hitler to train agents for the destruction of vital factories and communications within the United States. Two naturalized citizens and six Germans who had lived in America for varying lengths of time were chosen to undertake a crash course in sabotage. None of the men had any type of previous employment of note. Their only common link was a professed enthusiasm for Nazi ideas, Hitler's order, and an apparent fear of Amer-

Right: John C. Cullen thwarted the plans of four German saboteurs who landed on Long Island, N.Y., June 13, 1942. The capture of these saboteurs led to the capture of four other saboteurs in Florida.



ica's industrial capabilities, may explain the reasons behind the agents hurried training program and the relaxing of the normal high standards for covert operators.

Operation Pastorious, named after Franz Pastorious, the first German immigrant to America in 1683, would consist of two four-man teams. Each team had explosives and \$90,000 in U.S. currency for bribes and expenses. The teams planned to strike key factories and railroads to promote panic and disrupt transportation. The first team boarded the German submarine *U-584* at Lorient, in occupied France, bound for Florida. Later, the *U-202* slipped out of the same port for Long Island.

On the foggy night of June 13, the *U-202* surfaced off the coast of Long Island, N.Y., near Armagansett. U-boat sailors paddled

the four Nazi agents ashore in a rubber boat. The agents came ashore in German fatigue uniforms, believing that if they were immediately captured they would be treated as prisoners of war instead of spies. The men quickly changed clothes and began to bury their uniforms. As luck would have it, just at this time 21-year-old John Cullen, Seaman 2nd Class, was making his six-mile patrol from the Armagansett Station.

Out of the fog, Cullen suddenly saw someone approaching him. When the Coast Guardsman challenged the stranger to identify himself. The man identified himself as George Davis and said, "We're fishermen from Southampton and ran aground here."

His companions could be seen dimly in the heavy fog. Then, one of the men of the group came closer and shouted in a foreign



Left: A Coast Guardsman stands his watch in a beach tower. The towers were erected along the U.S. coast for use as lookout stations.

language that Cullen thought sounded like German. Davis quickly snapped, "Shut up you damn fool," and told the man to go stand with the rest of the group.

Not too surprisingly, the young Coast Guardsman became suspicious. Cullen suggested that the men return with him to the Coast Guard Station. Davis refused. Then he began to threaten Cullen, saying, "I don't want to kill you."

Suddenly, Davis completely changed his tack and offered Cullen \$300 to forget he had seen anything.

Years later Cullen recalled, "I had no

weapon more dangerous than a flashlight and a flare gun." Outnumbered, and possibly facing weapons, the unarmed Coast Guardsman accepted the money, thinking that perhaps he could get out of this situation alive. Furthermore, he said "no one would believe [the] story unless he had evidence to prove it." The Coast Guardsman, as soon as he was out of sight, began to run. "I made it back in record time," Cullen recalled.

Boatswain's Mate Carl R. Jenette listened incredulously to Cullen's story. Then he saw the evidence of the money and quickly



Above: Many Coast Guard Stations were located in out of the way locations.

called Warrant Officer Warren Bains, the commanding officer of the Armagansett Station. Jenette then armed Cullen and three other Coast Guardsmen and the group returned to the scene of the encounter.

The strangers were gone, but the Coast Guardsmen could smell diesel fuel and hear the throbbing of an engine offshore. Through the fog they could dimly make out the superstructure of the *U-202*, which had run aground and was now trying to free itself. "She had a blinker light," said Cullen. "We ducked behind a dune, not wanting to get shelled, until she slid away."

A morning search of the beach area uncovered explosives and incendiary devices. The Coast Guard notified the FBI and within two weeks both groups of agents were in custody. Six of the Germans were executed and the other two, because they had assisted the FBI, were given 30 years and life. For

his work, John Cullen received a promotion to Petty Officer 2nd Class and the Legion of Merit medal.

The landings on Long Island and in Florida quickly dispelled any further questions about the need for a beach patrol.

The patrol begins

On July 25, 1942, Coast Guard Headquarters authorized all Naval Districts that were adjacent to the coast to organize a well-armed and maintained beach patrol, with proper communication equipment to relay messages. Five days later, the vice chief of staff for naval operations informed commanders of the Sea Frontiers that the, "...beaches and inlets of the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific Coast would be patrolled by the Coast Guard whenever and wherever possible."

The patrol activities were meshed with the activities of the FBI, Army and Navy.



Above and left:
Coast Guard stations came in many different shapes and sizes.



The intertwining of various government organizations led Coast Guard headquarters to define the specific functions of the patrol. "The beach patrols are not intended as a military protection of our coastline, as this is a function of the Army. The beach patrols are more in the nature of outposts to report activities along the coastline and are not to repel hostile armed units. The functions of the Army in this connection is not to guard against surreptitious acts, but rather to furnish the armed forces required to resist any attempt by armed enemy forces or parties to penetrate the coastline by force."

In short, the beach patrol acted as a coastal information system. This coastal information system was operated under a national Beach Patrol Division in headquarters, under the command of CAPT Raymond J. Martinson. Each district established its own patrol organization and its own beach

patrol officer. The patrol operated as a part of port security.

Ten districts operated patrols, which mustered approximately 24,000 officers and men. The area covered by the sand pounders was about 3,700 miles. The varying nature of America's coastline prevented complete coverage of all beaches. On the Gulf Coast, for example, swamps created obstacles. Where the sand pounders could not walk, boat and motor patrols were established.

Normal foot patrol procedures required men to travel in pairs. The patrolmen were armed with rifles, or sidearms and flare pistols. The pairing of the patrols allowed one



Above: Jake, a Coast Guard dog, receives care in the sickbay of a Coast Guard Dog reception and training center.

Right: Dog Specialist Third Class Homer K. Hoff and his dog Pheffer jump rope together during training.



man to hold a suspect, while the other went for assistance. Usual distances covered were two miles or less, with the Coast Guardsmen required to report in by special telephone boxes placed along the beaches at about quarter-mile lengths. The telephone boxes were not available at every location, especially in isolated regions. In some locales the men conducted the patrols only at night. In those areas of potential invasion or sabotage activities, around-the-clock vigils were maintained.



The routine of foot patrols was far from exciting or glamorous. A walk along a beach on a bright moonlit June night might seem pleasurable, but the same beach could also be 20 degrees below zero when the patrolman was plodding it in February. In some areas, steep descents onto the beach could be extremely hazardous on dark, rainy nights.

One patrolman at Duxbury, Mass., near Plymouth, said, "The beach itself is annoying rather than dangerous. During most of the year it is covered with round, slippery rocks concealed by slimy kelp; it is strewn with mattresses, flotsam, jetsam and just plain sludge."

The Coast Guardsmen in some parts of the South faced other obstacles, such as alligators. The patrols also found some interesting things strewn along their patrol lengths. Life preservers, life jackets, sometimes with bullet holes which bore witness to the fury of the Battle of the Atlantic. At one location along the East Coast, the traditional message-in-the-bottle was retrieved. The message stated the writer was on an island and that all boats have been sunk by a



"The beach itself is annoying rather than dangerous. During most of the year it is covered with round, slippery rocks concealed by slimy kelp; it is strewn with mattresses, flotsam, jetsam and just plain sludge."

German sub. All too often, the Coast Guardsmen came upon bodies washed ashore.

Dogs on patrol

In 1942, the Coast Guard recognized that the use of dogs, with their keen sense of smell and their ability to be trained for guard duty, would help enhance the patrols. The Coast Guard eventually received about 2,000 dogs for patrol duties. The dogs and their trainers were schooled on the 300-acre estate of P.A.B. Widnener, at the Elkin Park Training Station in Pennsylvania. Others trained at Hilton Head, S.C. The first dog patrols began at Brigantine Park, N.J., in August 1942. The dogs were so successful, that within a year, the animals and their handlers were on duty in all the districts.

Dog patrols were usually conducted at night and consisted of a dog and dog han-

dlers. The patrol length was about one mile. Where canine patrols were in effect, the two-man foot patrols were replaced, thus reducing personnel requirements. The animals showed great alertness and were formidable as attackers. A 50- to 75-pound snarling dog could be more frightening than a man with a pistol. As both man and dog became more proficient, the human-animal team became one. In one case, near Plymouth, Mass., a patrolman was prevented from walking off a cliff on a dark night when his dog refused to advance further. There were other times that the animals were not quite as helpful. On three occasions, in the same area, the dogs, while leading their handlers on what appeared to be the trails of suspicious persons found skunks instead.

A year after its inception, with the threat of invasion diminishing, headquarters ordered a reduction of the dog patrols.

Above: Twelve members of a Coast Guard dog patrol team stand together after graduation from a dog training center.



Above: Three mounted Coast Guardsmen patrol a deserted stretch of beach

Right: Saddles may not be the usual equipment for sailors but they still have to be taken care of.



Even though the program was reduced 75 percent, many dogs and their handlers were placed on special guard duties.

Riders on the beach

In September 1942, horses were authorized for use by the beach patrol. The mounted portion of the patrol soon became the largest segment of the patrol. For example, one year after orders were given to use horses, there were 3,222 of the animals assigned to the Coast Guard. All came from the Army. The Army Remount Service provided all the riding gear required, while the Coast Guard provided the uniforms for the riders. A call went out for personnel and a mixed bag of people responded. Polo players, cowboys, former sheriffs, horse trainers, Army Reserve cavalymen, jockeys, farm boys, rodeo riders and stunt men applied. Much of the mounted training took place at Elkins Park Training Station and Hilton Head, the sites of the dog training schools.

Horse patrols were not used along the beaches of New England, but in other areas coastal residents

were treated to the rare sight of sailors on horseback. Patrols were conducted with at least two mounted riders. In some cases, dogs and horses patrolled together. The use of two animals, sensitive to strangers added to the ability of the patrol to detect suspects. The use of horses allowed patrols to carry radios, an important factor in isolated areas. They could also cover ground quicker. The mounted Coast Guardsmen were usually armed with rifles and sidearms.

Augmenting the foot, horse and dog patrols, and still considered part of beach patrol, were other means of coastal surveillance. The jeep was used, along with trucks, to cover isolated regions. Small boats were used in regions where swamps and other obstacles made passage on foot extremely difficult. The boats were also used to transport foot and dog patrols. Throughout the war, Coast Guardsmen stood watch in lookout towers scanning the beach areas and water for suspicious activities. The tower watches were kept 24 hours a day. To better illustrate the difficulties of beach patrol, the activities of the Coast Guard in Washington state will be detailed.

Pounding sand in Washington

There were four beach patrol units along Washington's coastline, Baaddah Point, Ozette Beach, La Push, and Kalaloch. "No other area in the country," stated the official Coast Guard history of the patrol, "offered more disadvantages for patrols . . . in some sections, the patrolmen would be obliged to climb and descend almost vertical rock walls. The many incurving beaches were separated by walls of rock which projected out to the sea, and the Coast Guardsmen in order to ascend and descend these obstacles had to use lines secured to boulders or dwarfed trees atop the barriers."

In addition, the region is dominated by jungle-like growth of lush temperate rain forest, making passage through some of the wooded areas to the beach almost impossible. Cool weather, with rain, drizzle and fog, combined with moist onshore winds, is the norm. While the whole region was difficult to patrol, the Ozette Beach patrol was perhaps the most difficult.

When the Coast Guard decided to establish beach patrols along the isolated beaches in this region, part of the area, around Lake Ozette, had been under Army control. The lake, a long, narrow coastal freshwater body of water, dominates the northwest



portion of the Olympic Peninsula. There was only one overgrown road into the lake. It required work parties laboring 14 hours a day to establish just a rudimentary base.

On Sept. 12, 1942, two trucks and four private cars transported two parties of four Coast Guardsmen each into the camp. From there, the men hoisted food, water, cooking utensils, rifles, ammunition, compasses and sleeping bags and hiked four miles to the beach, where they established a camp-post. Their only neighbors were rodents, skunks and bears. By late evening, the first patrol was walking the beach.

Twelve miles of beach were patrolled each day. Three days later, two additional

Above: Dressed for the weather, a Coast Guardsman patrols a beach during the winter in the Northwest.



Above: Members of the Coast Guard's Beach Patrol ford an inlet in the course of their patrol on the West Coast.

patrols were added and 26 miles of beach was covered twice a day. The men remained at their camp-post from two to six days. At first, all cooking was over an open fire and the Coast Guardsmen slept in sleeping bags, barely sheltered from the constant moisture.

The Coast Guardsmen began to hack additional trails between Lake Ozette and the ocean. Much of the terrain was so swampy that split logs had to be used to make corduroy trails. Enough trails were eventually established to set up five patrol posts along the beach. As time passed, the men carried in tents and other materials to the beach area, including a 100-pound stove, to make living a little more bearable.

Rotation back to base camp at Lake Ozette was viewed as luxurious, at least by the standards on the ocean shore. Located at the north end of the lake, five one-room wooden shacks and an old houseboat served as living units for the men. Cooking and eating facilities were located in an old gas station.

A 9-foot-by-18-foot wooden structure was an office, storeroom, armory, radio room, and repair shop. By Christmas 1942, the Coast Guardsmen had built a 150-foot by 20-foot barracks, a storeroom, armory and a shower room. In addition, they had hacked out 18 miles of trails through the forest. Lumber was eventually floated down from Neah Bay and permanent camps were established in the area.

The environment took its toll on standard military clothing. Uniforms would simply not hold up to the constant moisture and heavy brush. Logger's clothing proved to be the solution. Many of the men spent their own money on heavy boots and logger's clothing such as, wool shirts, blanket coats and oilskin ponchos. In short, the picture of the Coast Guardsman patrolling the Ozette Beach area was a far cry from the clean-cut sailor depicted by public-information office photographs. Rather, his living conditions made him resemble a bearded Northwestern logger.

The Navy eventually trucked in two small boats to be used on Lake Ozette, thus cutting down on the time spent hiking. To help the Coast Guardsmen on foot, 40 dogs and 10 handlers were assigned to the Ozette Beach area.

Few patrols along the remainder of the West Coast faced the same problems as the Ozette Beach area. Much like the rest of the nation, the Coast Guard used lookout towers, horses, foot patrols, dog patrols and motor patrols to help survey the coastlines of Oregon and California.

Rocky coast rescue

The official history of the Coast Guard in World War II states that the "most outstanding work of the Beach Patrol was in its traditional role of life saving." The foot patrolmen were often the first to spot vessels in distress. The crew of the station at Grand



Left: The Soviet cargo Vessel *Lamut* is pounded by waves as it lays on the rocky Washington coast. The crew of the vessel was rescued by Coast Guardsmen from the beach patrol.

Cheniere, La., consisted of men who were experts in navigating the thick swamps of the region. The Coast Guardsmen of this unit rescued so many downed airmen that they became known as the *Swamp Angels*. Probably the most unusual and daring rescue undertaken by the Coast Guard beach patrol took place in 1943 in the isolated Lake Ozette

area.

The Captain of the Soviet freighter, *Lamut*, lost his bearings during a severe gale March 31, 1943 and struck ground near Teahwhit Head, Wash., south of Cape Flattery. The *Lamut* struck between two beaches in the rocks of headlands that rose some 270 feet above the sea. The wild pounding seas drove the ship hard against the rocks



Above: Sometimes the Coast Guard used both horses and dogs in its patrol duties. The presence of two animals sensitive to the presence of strangers greatly increased the effectiveness of the patrol.

Right: A Coast Guardsman and his dog search a railroad car for saboteurs.



and it slowly settled on its side. The 45 men and eight women on board the *Lamut* seemed to have little chance, but the captain ordered a lifeboat to be lowered. While lowering the boat, one of the falls snapped injuring one woman and killing another woman crewmember. There now seemed little hope for the Soviet sailors.

Meanwhile, the early morning beach patrol from the LaPush Beach Patrol Station came upon debris and the body of the woman killed from the lifeboat. Immediately, search parties on foot and boat were dispatched to the area. The small boat from the Quillayute Coast Guard Station spotted the hapless *Lamut*, but the seas were too rough for the boat to approach the large ship.

The land search party, in the meantime, had hacked a trail to the nearest beach, named Second Beach. The sailors then faced a high rock wall, which made up the headland. To reach the top the Coast Guardsmen turned into rock climbers and scaled the headland. Once on top, the men



could see the *Lamut* far below. Knowing that little time was left, the sailors began to make their way cautiously out onto the precipitous ridge.

Once the rescuers were positioned above the ship the next problem was how to reach the *Lamut*. The only rescue equipment the Coast Guardsmen could carry with them were ropes. The rescuers heaved their line but, with frustration, watched as the line fell just short of the wreck.

In one of the most inspired moments of maritime rescue, the Coast Guardsmen hit upon an idea of how to make the line reach the *Lamut*. The men unlaced their shoes and tied them to bandages from their first-aid kits and then tied both of these to the end of the rope. They then heaved the rope once again to the ship. Quickly, the Soviet seamen grabbed the make-shift heaving line and bent on a heavier line, which the beach patrolmen on the rock ledge above hauled up.

A heavy line was then established from the ship to the rocks above. Now, the Soviet sailors had to climb hand-over-hand up the hawser to the relative safety of a ledge cut about half way up the headland. Hanging between the black clouds above and the snarling, crashing breakers below, they went. One slip on the wet line would have meant instant death. Later, some of the *Lamut's* crew admitted that fear alone impelled them onward.

One injured woman of the crew was brought across the chasm by rigging a litter to the line. Once on the ledge, yet another line was rigged to get the sailors to the top of the headland. Then another line had to be rigged to get the *Lamut's* crew down from the top of the headland to the beach.

Once this was accomplished, the sailors were brought out through the trail the Coast Guardsmen had hacked to the road, where trucks were waiting. The inspired actions of the Coast Guardsmen prevented the sea from claiming 52 lives.

Scaling downs

By the second year of the United States' participation in World War II, there was a need for more men for sea duty. At the same time, the danger from seaborne invasion was diminishing, especially along the East Coast. These factors caused ADM Russell R. Waesche, commandant of the Coast Guard, to announce, on Feb. 18, 1944, that a 50 percent reduction in beach patrol would be ordered for the West Coast. Dog patrols had already been cut back in the autumn of 1943. By July 1944, only the West Coast had an active patrol, which amounted to only 800 men.

Eventually, the Army returned to many of the West Coast's beaches, especially in California. Throughout the remainder of the war, however, Coast Guardsmen continued to man beach lookouts and to carry out

Above: Coast Guardsmen and their dogs played an important part in watching America's shores.

Right: A member of the Corsair fleet keeps a lookout for enemy activity from the bow of a CGR sailing vessel.

Below: A Coast Guardsman and his horse.



some traditional beach patrol activities.

The value of the Beach Patrol and Corsair Fleet is difficult to assess. On the one hand, no known saboteur landings were successful. The record clearly shows that in surprise drills, Coast Guard patrolmen inevitably located and reported the enemy. On the other hand, as the service's official history very correctly notes, "there is no way of knowing how many spies, despite all possible precautions, eluded the patrols by slipping into the country via the route of the eight apprehended saboteurs of 1942." We will probably never know whether the beach patrols actually made Germany rethink its plans on putting spies into the United States.

The beach patrol must have helped to allay the fears of a nervous population during the first confused and hectic months of the war. The sight of armed Coast Guardsmen patrolling the beaches must have made many seaside residents feel safer.



Additional reading

There has been no scholarly history on the beach patrol and, with one exception, most of the works on the subject are dated. Eugene Rachlis, *They Came to Kill: The Story of Eight Nazi Saboteurs in America* (New York: Random House, 1961) details the training and pursuit of the Nazi's who landed in Florida and New York. The only recent work on the patrol is: Eleanor C. Bishop, *Prints in the Sand: The U. S. Coast Guard Beach Patrol During World War II* (Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 1989), which is a popular pictorial overview of the patrol. For works on the Japanese attacks upon the West Coast see: Bert Webber, *Silent Siege-II: Japanese Attacks on North America in World War II* (Medford, or: Webb Research Group, 1988) and Clark G. Reynolds, *Submarine Attacks on the Pacific Coast, 1942*, *Pacific Historical Review* (May 1964): 183-193.

Works on the Corsair Fleet are even less numerous than those on the beach patrol and are very dated. Information on the fleet is usually found as a part of other subjects concerning the service during the war, such as within: Reg Ingraham, *First Fleet: The Story of the U.S. Coast Guard at War* (New York:

Bobbs-Merrill, 1944) and other similar, but dated works. Lawrence Thompson, *The Navy Hunts the CGR 3070* (New York: Doubleday, 1944), however, details the search for a unit of the fleet that was still in service even after the Corsair Fleet was officially discontinued and was missing during a hurricane in 1944. The best source of information on the fleet, other than in the official histories, is in Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II: Volume I, The Battle of the Atlantic, 1939-1943* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1947). Once again, the information is part of a broader subject.

The best source on the history of the U.S. Coast Guard in WWII but one that is largely untapped, is the Service's 30-volume series, *The Coast Guard at War*.

The standard overview available to most readers on the Coast Guard in World War II continues to be Malcolm F. Willoughby, *The U.S. Coast Guard in World War II* (Reprinted, Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1957). Almost every phase of the service's activities during the conflict is contained within the book.

Above: Coast Guardsmen and their dogs at a dog training center.



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