

MERCHANTMEN AT ARMS THE BRITISH MERCHANTS SERVICE IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR pdf

1: U-boats | World War 1 Live | Page 5

Bone, David W. Merchantmen-at-arms: the British Merchants' Service in the war / by David W. Bone ; drawings by Muirhead Bone.

During six protracted years, more humans, ships and materiel were lost than in all the naval campaigns of the previous years combined. It was arguably also the most decisive campaign of the Second World War and lasted for the entire duration of the war in Europe, from September to May. The Danish-owned, 2,ton vessel had been taken over by the Canadian government for the war; on this trip she was laden with 3, tons of wheat. The Erik Boye has the dubious distinction of being the first of 72 Canadian- and Newfoundland-owned merchantmen to be sunk by the enemy during the war. Fortunately, her man crew survived. However, more than 1, Canadian and Newfoundland men and women—perhaps as many as 2,—lost their lives due to enemy action of the approximately 12, that served in the Merchant Navy; a higher rate than any of the armed services—about one in eight. The first Canadian casualty—and merchant casualty—was a woman. Hannah Baird of Verdun, Que. She was one of lost—including a handful of Canadians—when the Athenia became the first ship sunk during the war, torpedoed by U without warning on her westward passage to Montreal. Cargo is loaded onto an unidentified merchant ship at Halifax. In a North Atlantic winter the odds were far worse. Frigid waters brought death quickly, usually within five minutes, making the chances of survival one in

Yet, despite the dangers, merchant mariners, even those who survived sinkings, kept going back to do their duty and crew other ships, with only a thin plate of steel separating them from all eternity. Ships on which Chief Steward Allan Harvie served were torpedoed nine times; on two occasions he was the sole survivor. On one voyage, he and the head cook were inside a solidly-built ice box on the top deck picking up bacon and eggs for breakfast when a torpedo struck their explosive-laden freighter. We crashed into the sea with such force that the icebox fell apart, and the cook and I found ourselves swimming for it, both badly shaken but otherwise unhurt. Ships and sailors have been associated with Canada since the earliest days of European contact. Ships brought the first explorers to our shores, vessels that the aboriginal inhabitants initially mistook for floating islands, complete with tall trees that disappeared into white, billowing clouds. The endless forests of pre-Confederation Canada initially provided timber to build British vessels and by the early 19th century a home-grown shipbuilding industry had begun. By , Canada was the fourth largest ship-owning nation in the world, with a merchant fleet of 7, vessels. Then, as European-built iron-hulled sailing ships replaced wooden square-riggers, Canadian shipbuilders found it harder to compete. By , they were essentially out of business. A launch delivers supplies to a merchant ship preparing to join a convoy out of Halifax, December. While there were few Canadian merchant ships, there were hundreds of Canadian merchant seamen, and they helped man the ships of Britain and other Allied nations carrying essential supplies to Europe. At least Canadian merchant mariners died during the First World War. Although the British had advised Canada at the outset to concentrate her war efforts on the army, eventually Britain turned to Canada to build trawler and drifter type warships as well as merchant vessels. As the first contract for merchantmen was not placed until March , when the war ended none had been completed, although 63 had been ordered for the Canadian government. They were needed sooner than anyone expected. Later, several vessels from enemy or occupied nations were added. Additionally, the Great Lakes fleet was called up and lakers were transferred to ocean convoy duties. Ship construction also started. By the end of the war, Canadian shipyards had produced cargo ships. Most of these were taken over by Britain and the United States, but a significant number sailed under Canadian flag. Canadian ships became the property of a Crown corporation, the Park Steamship Company Limited, established in April , which commissioned shipping firms to operate vessels on its behalf. By , the company had taken over 10,ton Park class ships, 43 4,ton Gray class freighters and six 3,ton tankers—all built in Canada. Merchant ships assemble in Bedford Basin, Halifax, April. Halifax was chosen as the main assembly point for eastbound convoys and on Sept. Among its escorts were the RCN destroyers St. Initially, ships had

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to be capable of making nine knots to sail in convoy, but as older and slower ships were pressed into service, slow convoys began in August, using Sydney, N. Ships capable of 15 knots or better sailed independently. Typically, a ship convoy would be 10 columns wide with four ships in each column. A flagship sailed at the head, carrying the convoy commodore, while escort vessels patrolled the flanks. One of the major challenges facing the Merchant Navy was finding enough sailors to crew the ships. The pre-war Canadian fleet comprised about 1, merchant sailors. Virtually all seamen with sailing experience had already been recruited by the RCN, while most of the able-bodied men without sea experience were in the army and air force. The Merchant Navy turned to shipping companies that operated on inland or coastal waterways, but also accepted men rejected by the navy or other services for being under- or overage or not meeting medical standards. To command the ships, several retired naval officers re-enrolled, some of them in their seventies. To prepare the inexperienced crews, merchant sailors were trained at special schools. Conditions aboard many merchant vessels often left a lot to be desired. As sinkings grew, older ships and those not intended for the open ocean were pressed into service. Carrying a load of timber to Europe, three days out of Philadelphia, two torpedoes slammed into the Skotland the first ship to be hit so close to the American coast. Aircraft aboard a merchant ship destined for England, April The threat of enemy attack was a constant concern for crews and it affected their daily lives at sea. According to Windsor, Ont. A lot of people used it for a pillow. An attack often came when a crew least expected it. First thing I knew, the ship just jumped up almost out of the water. That wakes you up. In , during the height of the Battle of the Atlantic, the Allies lost "on average" one 10,ton ship every 10 hours for 31 straight days. Fifty-eight Canadian-registered merchant ships were sunk by enemy or probable enemy action. In addition, six British-registered, but Canadian government-owned, merchant ships and eight Newfoundland-registered merchantmen were lost to enemy action. The contribution, however, was great. During the war, 25, ships sailed from North America to Britain, carrying more than million tons of military and civilian supplies, and thousands of other voyages occurred elsewhere. A 10,ton merchant ship could carry enough food to feed , people for a week. The government did this for purely selfish reasons "to keep a merchant fleet operational. The Royal Canadian Legion held a similar view, although the RCL would years later have a change of heart and through dominion convention resolutions urge legislation that would recognize Second World War Canadian merchant seamen under the Veterans Charter, something that would make them eligible for the same benefits received by armed forces veterans. The Liberal government of Louis St-Laurent sold the fleet off at rock-bottom prices. Twelve Canadian-flagged ships did sail into the war zone, fortunately without casualties. The CSU opposed the government sell-off and called for a worldwide strike, which tied up 60 per cent of world shipping and became the largest international strike of the 20th century. In response, the government and ship owners tried to discredit the union by labelling its members Communists some were , at a time when the Cold War was beginning. One of the most vicious episodes of labour unrest in Canadian history followed. Through a combination of secret agreements with shipping companies, intimidation and blackmail, Banks quickly destroyed the CSU. But he went too far. By his bullying tactics had turned his former allies against him and the SIU Canadian branch was suspended from the Canadian Labour Congress. In the early s, a report from a commission of inquiry described Banks as a hoodlum and a bully. Banks fled the country following a conviction for conspiracy to assault. In , after a lengthy battle, merchant mariners were granted official status as veterans, eligible to receive disability pensions, allowances and health-care benefits accorded to veterans of the three armed services. Sadly, thousands of merchant seamen had already died by then. Additionally, nothing was done to compensate the living for the loss of benefits since In , four Merchant Navy veterans participated in a hunger strike on Parliament Hill, vowing to remain until death or the government approved a new compensation package in lieu of the demobilization benefits provided to armed forces members at the end of the war. Email the writer at:

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2: Armed merchantmen

*Merchantmen at Arms - The British Merchants' Service in the First World War [David W. Bone] on www.enganchecubano.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. Originally published in This is a classic work on the important role which Merchant seamen played in the First World War.*

A certain care needs be noted lest undue credit is given, most obviously in the Baltic, where the Russian performance was primarily defensive and where offensive success, specifically in terms of submarine operations, was very limited and indeed bordered on the nonexistent, but in essence the situation in the Baltic and Black Seas can be summarized simply. In the Baltic there was for the first three years of war a certain balance in which the Russian fleet, from a position of hopeless geographical inferiority, was able to check a German fleet that was, perhaps very surprisingly, for most of this period numerically inferior to itself. In the Black Sea balance gave way to an increasingly assertive Russian presence. Such was the basis of what would appear to be, prima facie, a paradox. The basic stance of both Germany and Russia in the Baltic was defensive. In the case of Russia this was obvious; the security of Petrograd was the primary concern. This concern translated itself into two related efforts: For Germany the primary interest in the Baltic was the Swedish iron ore trade. One of the little-known features of the First World War in general and of the war in the Baltic in particular is the fact that the first use of convoy was by the Swedes. The Germans introduced convoy for the same reason on two lines, to the Swedish east coast and on the Danzig-Memel-Libau route on 7 April. Action in the Baltic was largely divorced from the war on the Eastern Front. The German advances into the Baltic provinces in were the product of general Russian defeat in a campaign that brought Germany control of Poland. But after October, and with German military formations having secured Libau and Windau and having reached the Gulf of Riga, the advance was halted by an elaborate Russian defense in front of Riga. There was to be no major change in theater for two years. On the Russian side there was neither the military nor the naval forces available to undertake major offensive operations and perhaps force a German withdrawal in this area; on the German side priorities lay elsewhere. In spring the German military priority, obviously, was Verdun. As spring gave way to summer this priority shifted first to the Somme, then to the provision of help for Austria-Hungary as a result of the massive defeat in Galicia in the course of the Brusilov offensive, and finally to Romania. The German naval priority was, of course, the North Sea. Any German offensive at or beyond Riga necessarily had to be a joint effort, but the German military had neither the resources needed for nor any real interest in a move north. In strategic terms in the route into Latvia and Estonia led nowhere, and without the military seeking or agreeing to any offensive, the German Navy was unable to undertake any independent action that would fundamentally alter the situation in the Baltic. Such a statement necessarily borders on the simplistic. The events in a major theater over a three-year period by definition cannot be summarized in a couple of sentences, however long, or even a couple of paragraphs, but they may provide the basis of understanding events, subject to the inevitable caveats. In naval terms this episode is notable for the fact that it was one of the very few occasions in the war when the German Navy undertook a major commitment in the Baltic with formations drawn from the High Sea Fleet. The German force numbered more than three hundred ships, plus six air-ships and more than a hundred aircraft, and this number included the battle-cruiser Moltke, ten dreadnoughts, and five light cruisers, as well as three destroyer formations, and one minesweeping formation drawn from the North Sea to supplement the formations and units normally in the Baltic. The Russian naval forces in the zone of German attention were hopelessly outnumbered and outclassed, the two pre-dreadnoughts Slava and Tsarevich being their most important units, but provided good account of themselves over the first four days. Thereafter the story was one of unbroken German successes. Thereafter the German reluctance to continue operations, and the relative slenderness of minesweeping numbers, rendered any further attempt to move north through Moon Sound problematic, and Operation Albion in effect proved to be the last major German offensive undertaking in the Baltic; in the course of the operation

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the German Navy incurred the loss of just the destroyer S. If Operation Albion was the largest single-and best known-operation in the Baltic in the First World War there were various other matters, some operational, that present themselves for passing consideration. The Baltic in November saw one German operation miscarry with the result that showed the effectiveness of mines: This episode may have lacked the scale and immediacy of impact of the Anglo-French losses of 18 March in the Dardanelles, but most certainly it was an episode of some local significance and provided very different comment on the German conduct of operations and Russian defensive mining efforts. One of the great problems of historiography is that there can never be any single episode involving the British military or navy in which that contribution was of utmost, in most cases, decisive significance: The First World War and the Baltic, and the British submarine commitment, certainly lends itself to accounts noted for exaggeration of national worth, suffice to note four matters. First, just two submarines represented the initial British commitment in October Admittedly that would double the number of Allied submarines available for offensive action-and more followed over time-but in April the number of British boats on station was just seven. One would suggest that such a total, even allowing for losses, was never going to affect such issues as victory and defeat. For all the laudatory treatment afforded these submarines in British accounts of proceedings, such numbers bordered on the irrelevant. Second, in July , and after repeated Russian requests for assistance, the British high command took the decision to send more submarines to the Baltic. On 3 August four of the older C. With such numbers, two British submarines each conducted one patrol before the onset of winter brought a halt to proceedings. Third, the submarine contribution to the Allied cause was all but irrelevant. The first patrol by a new Russian boat did not begin until September In the course of operations the E. This represented the sum of achievement. One comment on the performance suggests that between July and end of November four British and twelve Russian submarines of which five were new undertook a total of thirty-one patrols and sank just two ships. The fourth matter is that so many actions in the Baltic seem to belie the name. It is one of the curious features of the Baltic war that on a number of occasions formations met but to virtually no effect. In the first action three Russian cruisers encountered a German convoy of ten merchantmen escorted by three auxiliaries. Even allowing for German ships reaching the security afforded by Swedish waters, the fact that just one of the escorts, the auxiliary cruiser Hermann, was sunk is surprising. Some two weeks later three Russian destroyers encountered no fewer than eight German destroyers and torpedo-boats and retired, drawing the German warships forward to the guns of supporting cruisers; no hits were recorded by either side before both withdrew. When the poor results registered in these two actions are placed alongside the returns in the action of 2 July of the previous year when, in an action that has drawn comparison with the Dogger Bank, a superior Russian force accounted for just the minelayer Albatross from a force that included one armored and two light cruisers plus seven destroyers, then question marks impose themselves on the conduct of operations by both sides, most obviously the Russian. Nonetheless, the Russian mining efforts were extensive and thorough, and exacted a steady toll of warships lost and damaged. Perhaps the best comment on Russian mining efforts was that as a direct result of seeing where German warships had operated in the course of the day, on the night of December three Russian destroyers laid a minefield along the Latvian coast between Windau and Lyserort that claimed the third-class protected cruiser Bremen and the destroyer V. Moreover, any assessment of Russian performance in the Baltic has to be set alongside the fact that really represented the peak of achievement and that in Russia was going backward in terms of the conduct of the naval war in the Baltic. This is perhaps somewhat surprising not least because, with new dreadnoughts and submarines coming into service, Russia in was at the peak of its strength, and was also a year when there was no appreciable loss of territory and position. Certainly the greater German commitment in the Baltic after Jutland and June was partly at the heart of relative Russian ineffectiveness in that year. Most certainly must have come as a sore disappointment after what had been a not unsuccessful season in the Baltic between May and November , though a certain care needs be exercised lest the latter assumes dimensions that did not exist at the time. The Russian successes in were primarily defensive, and in terms of disruption of the crucially important German iron ore trade with Sweden the toll exacted by Russian

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warships, submarines, and mines and British submarines amounted to just fourteen steamers of 28, tons. It may have been that with the end of the campaign there was the promise of better things to come, but in truth in Allied success was most definitely of nickel-and-dime status. The third, and much more seriously, was perhaps the most important single Russian contribution to the final Allied victory in the war at sea. The German light cruiser Magdeburg, having run aground near the Odensholm light, was destroyed by the Russian cruisers Bogatuir and Pallada on 26 August. One of these copies, with key, arrived in London on 13 October and it was to be one, and the most important one, of three related documents that made their way to the British Admiralty before the end of the war. The second was the Handelsverkehrsbuch, which was captured in a German merchantman in the Pacific and which arrived in London at the end of October, and the third was the Verkehrsbuch, which was retrieved from the North Sea by a trawler off Texel on 30 November and which arrived at the Admiralty three days later. These were the code books relating, respectively, to signals between the German admiralty and the fleet, merchant ships, and commanders at sea, and when one considers the closeness to defeat that Britain was dragged in primarily as a result of Admiralty incompetence one is left to wonder what might have happened had the Admiralty not been in possession of an ability to read German naval signals in real time. Inevitably this ability took time to translate itself into an operational advantage, and the possession of such ability naturally imposed its own restraints in terms of its use lest the enemy became aware that its signals security had been compromised. The ability of the Allies, and specifically Britain, to survive the crises of 1917 was not the result of any single factor, but it is possible to argue that possession of the Signalbuch der Kaiserlichen Marine, inadvertent courtesy of the Magdeburg, proved to be if not the life-saver then certainly of primary importance in the Allied victory at sea.

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They were, as a type, powerfully-armed and carried large and well-disciplined crews. The great mercantile trading companies of the age of sail are long gone, but the idea that a heavily armed merchant ship might again more fully participate in naval warfare has new credence. The advent of the large, survivable container ship, with the potential for containerized weapon systems changes the calculus of the last century where merchant ships were soft targets requiring significant protection. If properly armed and crewed, US-owned and US Government-chartered container ships have the potential to become powerful naval auxiliaries capable of defending themselves and presenting a significant risk to those that might attack them. Such ships could free naval escorts for other combat duties and contribute toward short term sea control while otherwise engaged in logistics operations. The historical East Indiaman The East Indiaman was a significant vessel type throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. While designed to carry high value cargo through dangerous waters, they were capable of being quickly up-armed to the point where some could mount as many guns as a major warship. Originally armed with 26, short-range, but powerful carronade weapons, she was up-gunned by the RN to a total of 56 guns and served in several engagements with French, Dutch, and Danish forces, notably the Battle of Copenhagen when she was commanded by William Bligh; formerly the master of the mutinous Bounty. Their large size caused pirates and French naval vessels to often mistake them for more heavily armed ships of the line. When actually engaged in battle, the East Indiaman usually performed well if not excessively overmatched. They were however vulnerable if overmatched. In July , two company ships; the Ceylon and the Windham; both with respectable frigate armament of near 30 guns each were captured by a strong French frigate squadron. The East Indiamen still put up significant resistance to the French attack; allowing a third ship of their convoy; the Astel, to escape. Armed merchantmen returned however in both World Wars as nations sought to protect their trans-oceanic convoys from German U-boats and surface raiders. In the First World War nations armed merchants with old naval weapons as a defence against both surface warships and surfaced submarines. Also active were disguised raiders for surface action and Q-ships to lure submarines to destruction. Carmania sinking Cap Trafalgar off Trinidad, September 14, In the first six months of the war the US lost merchant ships and 3, merchant seaman. The US again assigned naval personnel as weapons crews on U. The practice of arming merchantmen again fell into decline after the Second World War, although naval auxiliaries continued to be armed with defensive weapons through the end of the Cold War. After the fall of the Soviet Union and in the downsizing of the US Navy that followed, nearly all commissioned supply and auxiliary ships were shifted over to the authority of the Military Sealift Command MSC in an attempt to save money through re-crewing with a smaller number of civil service MSC mariners rather than with navy sailors. It reported, for example, that civil service crews on a navy oiler would be half the crew size the navy used on those ships. The auxiliaries assigned to MSC were disarmed of weapons upon transfer from the navy, and those built or added since have not been equipped with them. The very largest of these vessels support over 20, such containers. The Maersk Line operates better than large container ships about 15 percent of the global fleet,. This creates the opportunity to incorporate underwater signature control and survivability measures including foundations for modular combat systems in huge mass production hulls for MSC habitually chartered ships. The combination of the very large container ship, vast numbers of containers per ship, and containerised warfighting tools offers the possibility of a 21st century East Indiaman. If not already possessed of helicopter facilities, additional containers could support rotary wing aviation. The vessel might carry large numbers of unmanned air vehicles for both offensive and defensive missions. Erecting the modular combat system at sea might constitute a larger challenge unless the ship was designed for the purpose and had self-enablement cranes. That said, such capabilities might be enough to repel an attack on a convoy by light or

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medium enemy forces. Like their 18th century forebears, 21st century armed cargo ships could in effect escort themselves with significant self-defence capabilities and magazine spaces equivalent to those of medium-sized warships. The Israelis and the Russians are already experimenting with these concepts. Israeli LORA launch test. While not built to warship survivability standards, the sheer size of modern container ships contributes to their survivability rating. Large merchant ships that have been the victims of attack since the s have shown remarkable resiliency in resisting damage. Roberts, a purpose-built convoy escort ship. The 21st Century East Indiaman could free up escorting warships for more offensive actions. The price tag for such a vessel might be relatively low, with most costs being associated with the additional containerised weapons and sensors, as well as the small navy crew needed to operate the vessel. They can be given a guided missile frigate FFG equivalent combat system as part of their new construction design or for T-AKE at mid-life overhaul. There has also been informed discussion on the legal implications of arming civilian vessels. An armed MSC ship acting as a combatant risks blurring the legal lines between military and civilian personnel. Civil Service Mariners may need to be designated as US Navy reservists under special cases such as active wartime operations in order to avoid having civilians operating weapon systems. Such discussions would likely become academic at best in the midst of a high end war where logistics ships would be a prime target. These operators are continuously building ships in production numbers. Container ships and tankers are much larger than combat logistics ships. The operators can design features into the ships MSC habitually charters such as underwater signature control, side protection systems, and AI controlled robotic damage control and appropriate adaption for modular combat system installations at little additional cost. Many of the features may be suitable for general commercial use in that the ships can approach conflict areas more closely and may enjoy lower insurance rates. Moving ahead with armed merchantmen While there remain considerable legal and policy issues regarding the concept of merchant ships armed with shipping container-based weapons, the technology appears ready for use. Such vessels could add to fleet size and free destroyers and littoral combatant ships for other missions other than convoy escort. The question is whether or not the US Navy would embrace the idea of an armed container ship as a combat unit in its own right.

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4: WWI: An Evolution in Naval Warfare

An armed merchantman is a merchant ship equipped with guns, usually for defensive purposes, either by design or after the fact. In the days of sail, piracy and privateers, many merchantmen would be routinely armed, especially those engaging in long distance and high value trade.

Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz , supported by Kaiser Wilhelm II , had attempted to create a German navy that could match the RN, but the British had comfortably maintained their lead in the subsequent naval arms race. Britain had traditionally aimed to have a navy that was equal in strength to the next two in the world, the two power standard. In this was replaced by a measure of a 60 per cent superiority to the second largest navy. The Press, public and politicians measured the strength of navies by the number of dreadnought battleships and battlecruisers. However, navies also had a large number of other types of warships. Naval Strengths in August Source: UCL Press, , pp. There were fears that the Ottoman ones might be sold to Germany, which would have left the RN below its target of a 60 per cent margin over Germany. Another Chilean dreadnought under construction in Britain that was completed as a British aircraft carrier is not included. German numbers include a dreadnought that was never completed and a battlecruiser and a light cruiser that were transferred to the Ottoman Empire just after the outbreak of war. Its Asian one was small and consisted mostly of old ships. The Baltic and Black Sea ones contained all the battleships, armoured cruisers and planned dreadnoughts. The Baltic fleet was the biggest. One of the Japanese battlecruisers building was completed in August Nine small and old US submarines, based in the Philippines, that were suitable only for coastal defence are excluded. Some numbers are given as ranges because of doubts over the usefulness of some older vessels. The only other countries with dreadnoughts were Brazil and Argentina, with two each, and Spain, which had one in service and two more building. Warship Types Pre-dreadnought battleships carried a number of guns of differing calibres, which were intended to carry out different roles. They normally had a main armament of four 12 inch guns, although some had smaller but faster firing main guns. A secondary battery, most commonly of 6 inch guns, although some had smaller or larger guns, was intended to deal with smaller opponents. Some pre-dreadnoughts carried an intermediate battery of inch guns in order to increase their firepower against enemy battleships. Pre-dreadnoughts were made obsolete in by HMS Dreadnought , which carried an armament of 10 12 inch guns, supplemented by only 24 12 pounders to deal with torpedo boats. A single calibre armament was both more powerful than a mixed one and superior for fire control purposes. The range of guns was increasing, making the old tactic of overwhelming ships with a hail of fire from many guns at short range obsolete. She was the first battleship to be powered by steam turbines and the first to be constructed to burn a mixture of fuel and oil, although others had been converted to do so. She was capable of 21 knots, fast for a battleship. The next British battleship, HMS Bellerophon, carried 16 4 inch guns and later dreadnoughts had secondary armaments of 6 inch guns. These were known as semi-dreadnoughts. Armoured cruisers were large ships with an armoured belt protecting their sides and an armoured deck. They were faster than battleships, but had weaker armour and a main armament of inch guns. Protected cruisers were an old and smaller type that had armoured decks but no side belts. She had a battleship armament of 12 inch guns, but was faster and more lightly armoured. Fisher, who thought that speed was a better protection than armour, saw the battlecruiser as the eventual successor to the battleship. Invincible was originally rated as an armoured cruiser, but the term battlecruiser was later adopted because of the main armament of these ships was the same size as that of battleships. Previous armoured cruisers carried smaller guns than pre-dreadnought battleships. Only Germany and Japan followed Britain in building battlecruisers, although other navies planned to do so. The RN, needing reconnaissance ships, built 4 inch gun armed scout cruisers for a period, but these proved to be too small and slow. They were succeeded by light cruisers, originally called light armoured cruisers because they had some armour. British ones had either a main armament entirely of 6 inch guns or a mixture of 4 and 6 inch guns. Germany moved from 4. Torpedo boats were introduced in the late nineteenth century as

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cheap vessels that could attack battleships with the newly invented motorised torpedo. The torpedoes used in the American Civil War were static weapons that were renamed mines after the development of the motor torpedo. Destroyers, originally called torpedo boat destroyers, were developed to defend battle fleets. The two types eventually merged. The rapid development of warships in the early twentieth century meant that the oldest destroyers were slower than the newest battlecruisers. Submarines were in their infancy and views differed over their utility and employment. Should they be used to attack enemy battle fleets, to raid enemy commerce or just for coastal defence? Coast defence ships were small, slow and short ranged battleships. Navies also had many smaller vessels, not listed above, that were used for tasks such as minesweeping, trade protection, shore bombardment and colonial policing. The British used armed merchant cruisers for trade protection and blockade duties during the war, and the Germans armed merchantmen as commerce raiders. The older ships were very vulnerable to underwater attack by torpedoes and mines and the older cruisers were too slow to perform scouting duties. However, the RN, which had a large superiority in older ships, found them to be very useful for blockade and trade protection and in secondary theatres. The Royal Navy versus the German Navy British dreadnoughts generally had larger guns than contemporary German ones, initially 12 versus 10. Britain laid down its first 15 inch gun armed ships in 1906 and had 10 building at the start of the war. Germany followed in 1906, but had only three under construction at the outbreak of war, one of which was never completed. Most other countries armed their dreadnoughts with 12 inch guns, but the first 14 inch armed Japanese and US ones entered service in 1909. British ships were mostly faster but worse protected than equivalent German ones. The German propellant was more stable than the British one and British shells had a tendency to break up on contact with armour. The British have often been criticised for the poor anti-flash protection for their magazines. However, the Germans initially made the same mistake, which they corrected after the battlecruiser SMS Seydlitz almost blew up at the Battle of Dogger Bank in 1915. Before the war Arthur Pollen, a British civilian, had designed a fire control system using an analogue computer to predict ranges. The British instead adopted a cheaper system designed by Captain Frederick Dreyer. They did have a system of director firing, but their main gunnery strength was their stereoscopic sights. A new major base at Rosyth, on the Firth of Forth, was not ready in 1914. For much of the war, it was used only by the battlecruisers. The anchorages at Cromarty and Scapa Flow had no protection against submarines and Harwich was suitable only for light forces. The large British merchant navy provided a further source of trained seamen. Tirpitz had thought that conscription would be an advantage for Germany because it would be able to recruit more sailors than Britain, but he was wrong. Massie, *Castles of Steel: Jonathan Cape*, 1961, p. 10. University of South Carolina Press, 1997; J. Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Gordon, The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command* London: John Murray, 1990, p. 10. Oxford University Press,

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5: Defensively equipped merchant ship - Wikipedia

Merchantmen At Arms. () The British Merchants Service in the War [David W Bone, Muirhead Bone, To Algernon C. F. Henderson As representing a sympathetic and understanding governance in an important section of the British merchant service This is a great source of information related to the merchant service in WW1.

Perhaps the most infamous incident affecting the railway marine service during World War One was the execution in of Captain Charles Fryatt of the Great Eastern Railway. Instead of stopping, and being unable to run away due to his position, Fryatt ordered full ahead. Firing off his rockets to simulate gunfire, he steered directly for the enemy with the intention of either ramming the submarine or forcing it to submerge. The Admiralty presented Fryatt with an inscribed gold watch commending his actions and he was praised in Parliament. The attention of the German Imperial Navy was already focussed on Fryatt due to an earlier incident. Ordered to stop, Fryatt, took the decision to run. He sent all hands to assist the engineers and firemen and undertook a forty mile run, through shallows and minefields, at full power, before reaching safety in Rotterdam. For this action the Great Eastern Railway had presented him with a gold watch. Crew of the SS. Brussels in prison camp. Great Eastern Railway Magazine. Fryatt and his chief officer, Mr. Hartnell, were tried before a naval court martial on the 27th July and Fryatt was found guilty of trying to run down a German submarine. The justification for his execution was that his actions were those of a franc-tireur, in that he was not a member of a belligerent armed force yet undertook a military action in contravention of the rules of war merchant ships when challenged by warships were supposed to stop and surrender thus becoming a prize vessel. Fryatt was executed by firing squad the same evening, and Hartnell was transferred to Ruhleben. One of the many franc-tireur proceedings of the British merchant marine against our war vessels has thus found a belated but merited example. This is hardly surprising when one considers that the Great Eastern Railway issued gold watches to at least five other captains for actions against U-boats, GER Captain Beeching received a military award DSC and his chief officer and chief engineer were both mentioned in Admiralty Dispatches for the ramming and sinking of a U-boat. The GER were not alone in rewarding their staff for such actions, the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway issued two gold watches for actions involving the avoidance or sinking of U-boats and cheques to crewmen who spotted submarines or mines. British Railways and The Great War: Organisation, Efforts, Difficulties and Achievements. Simon Batchelor Simon has written 12 posts Categorized.

MERCHANTMEN AT ARMS THE BRITISH MERCHANTS SERVICE IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR pdf

6: Baird Maritime - FEATURE | Merchant warships and creating a modern 21st century East Indiaman

Buy Merchantmen At Arms - The British Merchants' Service in the First World War by David W Bone (ISBN:) from Amazon's Book Store. Everyday low prices and free delivery on eligible orders.

Nature of Source Registers of seaman employed in the Merchant Navy. The indexed Registers of Seamen were extracted and compiled from newly created Agreements and Crew Lists, established following the Merchant Shipping Act. The process created a central register of Merchant Seamen capable of serving with the Royal Navy if required at times of military conflict. This separate Register of Seamen extracted from Crew Lists was abandoned in 1855, due to the problems of maintaining registers based on Crew Lists. Following three previous registration systems, a new Central Index Register fourth register was introduced in 1855 which survived until followed in by a new Central Register of Seamen fifth register which lasted up to 1860. Unfortunately no records exist from 1855 to 1860 as legislation was not required to keep records of individual seamen. From onwards the Registry of Shipping and Seamen in Cardiff holds records of service extracted from the ships official logbooks and crew agreements. Therefore between 1855 and 1860 the names of seamen will only be found in the Crew Lists. However between 1860 and 1865, the authorities established an entirely new system whereby every mariner had to apply for a Register Ticket See Registered Ticket Records. This system proved unpopular and unworkable and was replaced by a new register which lasted until 1865. The registration system underwent a number of revisions over the years of operation and is classified into the following series of registers: Unfortunately entries between 1865 and 1870 were destroyed in 1940. The database includes every British registered ship from 1865 to the early 1900s with official numbers 1 to 10000. In addition CLIP offers a searchable index of ships by name. It shows matching names and their official number, sorted first by name, then by official number. Most Merchant Seaman records survive from 1865 following the introduction of the Merchant Shipping Act which introduced for the first time a central register of seamen. Before the Act few records merchant seamen records exist as seamen were employed for the duration of the contract and then made redundant. Those serving as officers may be easier to locate. Many editions covering the 18th and 19th centuries are available to view online at Google Books which also offers the facility to conduct a text search for the names of vessels and captains. The registration number of the seamen being researched will be needed to look up his details in the registers. This can often be found in the Crew Lists or can be found in the alphabetical name index of seamen in series BT Merchant Navy mariners were recorded in the census but unfortunately not those on board ships either stationed on shore or at sea. They were first recorded on board vessels in port from 1865 for Scotland and from 1870 measures were taken to record mariners at sea. However the coverage, especially for the earlier censuses, is patchy with many not appearing in the schedules. For more detailed information on the census and Merchant Navy see [here](#) and [here](#). The pouches could include records from series IV and V of the seamen registrations as well as photographs of the seaman. Unfortunately out of the 10000, or so pouches around 95, were destroyed mid 20th Century. The records are held in series BT First select advanced search from the Discovery home page and enter the name being searched. Finally click the search button. Further filters appear on the search results screen. The series can also be directly searched from the series catalogue entry See also.

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7: The Naval Balance of Power in | War and Security

Merchantmen-at-Arms: The British Merchants' Service in the War by David W. Bone (with reproductions of drawings by his brother, the official war artist Muirhead Bone), Chatto & Windus, London, *The Merchant Navy* by Archibald Hurd, published by John Murray, London, (3 volumes).

Just like the war on land, the naval sphere of the First World War was dominated by industrial methods and new fighting machines. The Arms Race The war was preceded by a dramatic decade-long naval arms race. Launched in 1906, the Dreadnought was a dramatic leap forward in battleship design. For the first time, its main armament was made up entirely of the largest available guns. S Battleship Division Nine "Scotland, The combination of an improved range and greater firing control gave it huge destructive potential. Despite being larger than any of its predecessors, it was also faster than most thanks to its steam turbines, which were being used on a battleship for the first time. The British built more ships like the Dreadnought, and other nations followed suit trying not to be left behind. By 1914, all the major powers had ships in a class named after its originator "the dreadnoughts. HMS Dreadnought Other innovations were also taking place. Battlecruisers were built to provide lighter, faster ships still while still able to carry heavy weaponry. Torpedo boats were a cheap way of defending coastal waters and harassing enemy shipping. And under the surface, submarines were preparing to fight. Commerce Raiders The first naval actions of the war were relatively small-scale engagements. The British were reliant on seaborne trade to feed their population and their industry. The most cunning of these were the auxiliary commerce raiders, civilian ships carrying disguised weapons. They were meant to lure enemy ships in by looking vulnerable and innocent, then attack them. Armed merchant cruisers were civilian ships, usually fast passenger liners, equipped with guns. The British and French also used these, but like the Germans, they found them too vulnerable to last long. The heaviest ships engaged in commerce raiding were eight German light cruisers. The Emden sank British merchants and French and Russian battleships before being sunk herself by the Australians. Others were less successful and were quickly hunted down. But it was a group of these raiders that triggered the first significant naval battles of the war. Coronel and the Falklands Battle of Coronel. The weaker British were defeated in only 40 minutes, losing two armored cruisers, while the Germans emerged victorious without loss. There they approached the British outpost at the Falkland Islands. HMS Invincible going into action at the battle of the Falkland Islands Unknown to the Germans, the British had sent a strong task force to hunt them down "a force now based at Port Stanley in the Falklands. The British emerged and attacked the Germans, who tried to escape. Four of the five German cruisers were sunk, giving the British vengeance for their losses at Coronel. Jutland For the next year, the British and Germans eyed each other warily across the North Sea, each looking for a chance to engage the other on their own terms. At last, in May 1916, the Germans made their move. But the British knew that they were coming. From the 31st of May to the 1st of June, they fought the Germans at Jutland, the only major fleet action of the war. The battle began badly for the British, as their battlecruiser squadron took a pounding from the German fleet. However, the tables were turned as the Germans pursued the battlecruisers north, straight into the guns of the main British fleet. As the British dreadnoughts opened fire from a tactically advantageous position, the Germans suffered heavy damage and began to retreat. The British pursued them through the night but failed to trap them, and the German fleet eventually escaped to their home port. The British lost 14 warships while sinking 11 German ships. Twice as many British crewmen lost their lives during the engagement, yet Jutland was a success for the British as they forced the German navy back to port. The German fleet remained there for the rest of the war, giving the Allies domination of the North Sea and beyond. Anglo-French forces launched an ineffective naval bombardment of the Dardanelles before the Gallipoli campaign, and there was some fighting between smaller ships. Critically for the Allies, the Austro-Hungarian and Turkish navies were contained, preventing them from interfering in the wider war. The War Beneath the Waves A new form of weapon led to a new dynamic in naval warfare "submarine raiding. The Germans

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committed most heavily to submarines with over of their U-boats serving over the course of the war. The Allies fielded much smaller submarine fleets. The Allies also made the mistake of trying for variety in their submarine designs, while a focus on consistency let the Germans build and crew theirs more quickly and easily. Increasingly limited in what they could do on the surface, the Germans used submarines to attack Allied supply lines. The Allies responded by developing better anti-submarine measures, including barriers, detection equipment, and depth charges. They also started moving merchant ships in convoys, so that they could protect each other. The U-boats remained the most powerful submarine force throughout the war. But by the end, they were taking heavy losses from the convoys. Mutiny and Scuttling The Allies were dominant at sea throughout the war. In the final days of the war, the German navy mutinied in protest against the conditions in the country. Rather than let their enemies have their ships, the crews scuttled them. The age of dreadnoughts and battlecruisers was over. But technology would still dominate at sea, and the age of the submarine had only just begun.

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8: Armed merchantman - Wikipedia

The U.S. Merchant Marine Armed Guard was assigned to this mission during the Second World War and suffered over dead in the course of its operations. The practice of arming merchantmen again fell into decline after the Second World War, although naval auxiliaries continued to be armed with defensive weapons through the end of the Cold War.

They were, as a type, powerfully-armed and carried large and well-disciplined crews. The great mercantile trading companies of the age of sail are long gone, but the idea that a heavily armed merchant ship might again more fully participate in naval warfare has new credence. The advent of the large, survivable container ship, with the potential for containerized weapon systems changes the calculus of the last century where merchant ships were soft targets requiring significant protection. If properly armed and crewed, U. Such ships could free naval escorts for other combat duties and contribute toward short term sea control while otherwise engaged in logistics operations. While designed to carry high value cargo through dangerous waters, they were capable of being quickly up-armed to the point where some could mount as many guns as a major warship. Originally armed with 26, short-range, but powerful carronade weapons, she was up-gunned by the RN to a total of 56 guns and served in several engagements with French, Dutch, and Danish forces, notably the Battle of Copenhagen when she was commanded by William Bligh; formerly the master of the mutinous *Bounty*. Their large size caused pirates and French naval vessels to often mistake them for more heavily armed ships of the line. When actually engaged in battle, the East Indiaman usually performed well if not excessively overmatched. They were however vulnerable if overmatched. In July , two company ships; the *Ceylon* and the *Windham*; both with respectable frigate armament of near 30 guns each were captured by a strong French frigate squadron. The East Indiamen still put up significant resistance to the French attack ; allowing a third ship of their convoy; the *Astel* to escape. Armed merchantmen returned however in both World Wars as nations sought to protect their trans-oceanic convoys from German U-boats and surface raiders. In the First World War nations armed merchants with old naval weapons as a defense against both surface warships and surfaced submarines. These ships generally gave good accounts in battle; sometimes against similar craft when the British armed passenger ship *RMS Carmania* sank the German armed liner *SMS Cape Trafalgar* in a rather bloody battle at close range in Also active were disguised raiders for surface action and Q-ship s to lure submarines to destruction. *Carmania* sinking *Cap Trafalgar* off Trinidad, September 14, In the first six months of the war the U. Merchant Marine Armed Guard was assigned to this mission during the Second World War and suffered over dead in the course of its operations. The practice of arming merchantmen again fell into decline after the Second World War, although naval auxiliaries continued to be armed with defensive weapons through the end of the Cold War. After the fall of the Soviet Union and in the downsizing of the U. Navy that followed, nearly all commissioned supply and auxiliary ships were shifted over to the authority of the Military Sealift Command MSC in an attempt to save money through re-crewing with a smaller number of civil service MSC mariners rather than with Navy sailors. It reported, for example, that civil service crews on a Navy oiler would be half the crew size the Navy used on those ships. The auxiliaries assigned to MSC were disarmed of weapons upon transfer from the Navy, and those built or added since have not been equipped with them. The very largest of these vessels support over 20, such containers. The *Maersk Line* operates better than large container ships about 15 percent of the global fleet,. This creates the opportunity to incorporate underwater signature control and survivability measures including foundations for modular combat systems in huge mass production hulls for MSC habitually chartered ships. The combination of the very large container ship, vast numbers of containers per ship, and containerized warfighting tools offers the possibility of a 21st century East Indiaman. If not already possessed of helicopter facilities, additional containers could support rotary wing aviation. The vessel might carry large numbers of unmanned air vehicles for both offensive and defensive missions. Erecting the modular combat system at sea might constitute a larger challenge unless the ship was designed for the purpose and had self-enablement cranes. That said, such capabilities might be enough to repel

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an attack on a convoy by light or medium enemy forces. Like their 18th century forebears, 21st century armed cargo ships could in effect escort themselves with significant self-defense capabilities and magazine spaces equivalent to those of medium-sized warships. The Israelis and the Russians are already experimenting with these concepts. Israeli LORA launch test. While not built to warship survivability standards, the sheer size of modern container ships contributes to their survivability rating. Large merchant ships that have been the victims of attack since the s have shown remarkable resiliency in resisting damage. In the large oil tanker Bridgeton, a reflagged Kuwaiti vessel being escorted by U. Roberts, a purpose-built convoy escort ship. The 21st Century East Indiaman could free up escorting warships for more offensive actions. The price tag for such a vessel might be relatively low, with most costs being associated with the additional containerized weapons and sensors, as well as the small Navy crew needed to operate the vessel. Military Sealift Command MSC as a Source While the current MSC fleet has few container ships ready for armament, the Civil Mariners are thinking again about how to operate in a more contested environment than that of the last 30 years. They can be given a guided missile frigate FFG equivalent combat system as part of their new construction design or for T-AKE at mid-life overhaul. There has also been informed discussion on the legal implications of arming civilian vessels. An armed MSC ship acting as a combatant risks blurring the legal lines between military and civilian personnel. Civil Service Mariners may need to be designated as U. Navy reservists under special cases such as active wartime operations in order to avoid having civilians operating weapon systems. Such discussions would likely become academic at best in the midst of a high end war where logistics ships would be a prime target. These operators are continuously building ships in production numbers. Container ships and tankers are much larger than combat logistics ships. The operators can design features into the ships MSC habitually charters such as underwater signature control, side protection systems, and AI controlled robotic damage control and appropriate adaption for modular combat system installations at little additional cost. Many of the features may be suitable for general commercial use in that the ships can approach conflict areas more closely and may enjoy lower insurance rates. Moving Ahead with Armed Merchantmen While there remain considerable legal and policy issues regarding the concept of merchant ships armed with shipping container-based weapons, the technology appears ready for use. Such vessels could add to fleet size and free destroyers and littoral combatant ships for other missions other than convoy escort. The question is whether or not the U. Navy would embrace the idea of an armed container ship as a combat unit in its own right. Navy strategy and policy. He is a Ph. These views are his own and are presented in a personal capacity.

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9: Action in the Baltic WWI | Weapons and Warfare

The first two weeks of the war saw 27 British merchant ships go down, and between September 3 and the end of the year, merchantmen totaling , tons were lost. Yet, by the end of , more than 5, convoyed Allied vessels had reached their destinations.

Background[edit] In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European countries such as Spain , France , the Netherlands and Britain armed their merchant ships to prevent capture by pirates , enemy commerce raiders and privateers when they conducted overseas trade. The most heavily armed were ships carrying valuable cargo back from the Far East. For example, the East Indiamen class of ships were constructed from the keel up with defence in mind, with their heavy armament making them equivalent to naval ships of the line. Once the threat passed after the end of the Napoleonic Wars in , armed merchant ships like East Indiamen were replaced with faster and lighter unarmed ships such as clippers. In December a memo from Winston Churchill , recently appointed as First Lord of the Admiralty , proposed that the utility or otherwise of arming British merchant ships "for their own defence" be ascertained. Governments, newspapers and the public in South American countries that Aragon visited took little notice and expressed no concern. Domvile predicted that arming merchant ships would be ineffective, and would lead only to a second maritime arms race alongside the naval one. Gerard Noel , a former Admiral of the Fleet , told Churchill that were a merchant ship ever to fire its guns it could be accused of piracy. Churchill replied by drawing a distinction between merchant ships armed as auxiliary cruisers and those armed only for self-defence. A single stern gun, equivalent to what a submarine might carry, was mounted; and civilian captains were encouraged to flee and shoot back from their more stable gun platform. The first merchant ship lost to U-boats was an ton British steamer outbound from Grangemouth to Stavanger with a cargo of coal, iron plate, and oil. The procedure followed customs originated by surface ships. International maritime law required the naval vessel to make adequate provisions for the safety of the merchant crew and passengers before sinking their ship. Within that zone, Germany conducted unrestricted submarine warfare against merchant ships from 18 February without warning and without regard to safety of their crew. The two procedures for sinking merchant ships were compared in In the Second World War the objective was to equip each ship with a low-angle gun mounted aft as defence against surfaced submarines and a high-angle gun and rifle-calibre machine guns for defence against air attack. Rifle -caliber machine guns were augmented or replaced by Oerlikon 20 mm cannon as they became available. The high-angle QF 12pdr Mk V mount was the most common anti-aircraft gun and later ships sometimes received Bofors 40 mm guns. Large ships sometimes embarked a junior naval officer to command the DEMS gunners. A request for volunteer aircraft recognition experts from the Royal Observer Corps produced 1, highly qualified candidates, from which were selected to perform valuable aircraft recognition duties as seaborne volunteers. Cooke and trained at the Royal Bath Hotel Bournemouth before the volunteers temporarily joined the Royal Navy with the rank of petty officer aircraft identifier. During the D-day landings two seaborne observers were allocated to each of the defensively equipped British and American merchant vessels. Their success is measured by a signal from Wing Commander P. Lucas, air staff officer who reported: The general impression amongst the Spitfire wings, covering our land and naval forces over and off the beach-head, appears to be that in the majority of cases the fire has come from warships and not from the merchant ships. Indeed I personally have yet to hear a single pilot report that a merchant vessel had opened fire on him " Lucas Twenty two seaborne observers survived their ships being sunk, two lost their lives and several more were injured during the landings. The "seaborne" operation was an unqualified success and in recognition, His Majesty King George VI approved the wearing of the "seaborne" flash as a permanent feature of the uniform. In addition, ten "seaborne" members were mentioned in despatches. I have read reports from both pilots and naval officers regarding the Seaborne volunteers on board merchant vessels during recent operations. All reports agree that the Seaborne volunteers have more than fulfilled their duties and have

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undoubtedly saved many of our aircraft from being engaged by our ships guns. I should be grateful if you would please convey to all ranks of the Royal Observer Corps, and in particular to the Seaborne observers themselves, how grateful I, and all pilots in the Allied Expeditionary Air Force, are for their assistance, which has contributed in no small measure to the safety of our own aircraft, and also to the efficient protection of the ships at sea. The work of the Royal Observer Corps is quite often unjustly overlooked, and receives little recognition, and I therefore wish that the service they rendered on this occasion be as widely advertised as possible, and all units of the Air Defence of Great Britain are therefore to be informed of the success of this latest venture of the Royal Observer Corps. These units provided detachments to protect Army-operated transports and chartered merchant ships from air or submarine attack. The Imperial Japanese Navy also formed air defence squads from April which were deployed on board ships. This example is preserved at the National Museum of the Pacific War. The Merchant Marine Act of identified mariners aboard United States flagged merchant ships as military personnel in time of war. Neutrality Acts prevented arming of United States flagged merchant ships until 17 November , although American-owned ships under Panamanian registry had been armed earlier. The United States began equipping ships of other nations with guns and United States Navy Armed Guard on 24 January ; [25] and approximately , USN armed guards ultimately sailed aboard 6, merchant ships. Ships sailing in regularly made-up convoys, other than ships bound to North Russia or tankers en route to the United Kingdom , may sail unarmed if the urgency of delivery of their cargo warrants it.

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