

does go into detail on the death of USN Lieutenant Kara Hultgreen, one of the first women combat pilots in the USN. She was piloting an F-14 fighter in October 1994, when one engine on the aircraft malfunctioned during landing approach. The result was an investigation into the cause of the accident and a renewed controversy as to whether women should be allowed in combat roles.

In short, this is a useful book; not always one for an expert demanding in-depth narrative of some topics therein, but helpful to a novice in the field and a good read.

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**Angus Konstam. *Barents Sea 1942: The Battle for Russia's Arctic Lifeline*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, [www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com), 2022. 96 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. UK £15.99, US \$24.00, CDN\$32.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-4728-4845-1.**

The Allied Arctic convoys supplying the Soviet Union via its northern ports with all kinds of military equipment were not only critical for the defeat of Nazi Germany during the Second World War, but they operated in a gruesome theatre of war, in one of the most challenging parts of the world's oceans, especially during winter. It is no wonder, therefore, that there is a rich historiography on the subject, addressed from a wide variety of historical perspectives including naval, maritime and many other historical (sub-)disciplines.

*Barents Sea 1942: The Battle for Russia's Arctic Lifelines* focuses on Allied Convoy JW51B, and the so-called Battle of the Barents Sea, fought in the darkness of the Arctic night. As part of Osprey's Campaign Series, Konstam's goal was not a new historical or analytical take on the subject, but rather, a purely descriptive approach, designed for readers who are interested in (or even fascinated by) the details of this battle.

This approach works well, thanks to the easy-to-read text that explains the full details of a complex campaign, establishes the historical facts of operations on both sides of the conflict, discusses the motives behind individual actions, and is supported by a good number of historical photographs, charts and diagrams, that help the reader understand ship movements throughout the battle. There is also some powerful modern artwork that illustrates the historic event. A key aspect of the book's success is its organization by topics and its evenhanded presentation of the battles from both sides of the conflict.

A professional historian, however, might find confining the book to just ninety-six pages of 'facts' a somewhat dangerous approach? After all, how can a complex, catastrophic conflict like the Second World War be understood

without analysis? A “facts-only” history runs the risk of neglecting such key questions as why and how the war happened in the first place. It may focus on a select few ‘heroic’ sailors and officers and overlook the contributions of ordinary mariners forced into a war with no other objective but to survive.

Reviewing such a book for a journal like *The Northern Mariner* obliges the reviewer to acknowledge that Barents Sea 1942 is not a scholarly book. Rather, it is a general history designed for a non-academic market interested in, or fascinated by, tales of military action. While this is perfectly acceptable, it cannot be evaluated for its contribution to the body of existing historical knowledge nor can one engage with a historical argument or thesis proposed by the respective author. On a positive note, however, compiling the existing knowledge on JW51B and the Battle of the Barents Sea in a single book makes the information more readily available. Similarly, even if the facts cannot be argued, they are, at least, correct and complete. Like all books in the Osprey series, it is well supported by photographs and illustrations that help explain the course of events.

Given the above limitations, to whom should this book be recommended? Naval historians working on Arctic convoys and the battles in the Arctic theatre would find it a handy summary of the Battle of the Barents Sea. A general audience interested in Arctic operations during the Second World War might appreciate the description of warfare in Arctic waters during wintertime. Would I recommend the book to my students to help them understand the Second World War? Probably not, since the campaign is not put in the context of the wider war. Nevertheless, the book can be recommended to readers interested in learning the facts about this particular campaign.

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**Angus Konstam. *The Convoy: HG-76: Taking the Fight to Hitler’s U-boats*. Oxford, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, [www.bloomsbury.com](http://www.bloomsbury.com), 2023. 320 pp., illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. UK £25.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-47285-768-2. (E-book available.)**

The Second World War Battle of the Atlantic is a story of continuous struggle for command of the sea. An interesting term “command of the sea.” Naval theorists have loaded the term with a great deal of meaning. It has justified the build-up of massive battle fleets at huge expense, yet always seems elusive. In truth, command of the sea means being able to utilize the world’s oceans for your desired purposes, meanwhile denying your enemies the same opportunity to control the oceans for their own ends. Very rarely, however, is