

Ethan Locke

U-boat 505 was used as a tourist attraction to raise funds for the Pacific theatre in WWII.

The target audience is anyone 18 or older who has an interest and general understanding of military history.

### **Recklessness Making History**

The capture of the German U-boat 505 played a tremendous role in ending WWII. It gave the Allies the intelligence needed to counter the Germans and raised the funds necessary to defeat Japan. Despite these victories, the capturing of the U-505 could have been a detriment to the entire war effort.

### **A Short-Sighted Decision**

German U-boats were responsible for bringing down 1,100 Allied ships in 1942. The U.S. responded to this threat by creating naval task forces whose only mission was to bring down the U-boats. Captain David Gallery, the commander of the escort carrier Guadalcanal, instead sought to capture one. On June 4, 1944, Captain Gallery's task force would locate the U-505 about 150 miles off the coast of Africa.

Captain Gallery's boarding parties would come across two Enigma enciphering machines and their secret code books. Their capture made the venture a success even if the boat sank, but Captain Gallery was determined to save the boat. The task force attached a tow line to the Guadalcanal and began heading to the nearest friendly port in Dakar.

However, Captain Gallery would receive orders to tow the boat to Bermuda as Dakar was full of German spies. Naval leadership was not enthused about Captain Gallery's adventure and aimed

to silence it as quickly as possible. Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King feared that the capturing of the boat could jeopardize Allied intelligence in decoding the Enigma machines. If German intelligence found out that the boat was captured, then they would change all of the codes and force Allied intelligence to start decoding efforts from scratch.

### **A War Prize turned Attraction**

Fortunately for the Allies, this was not the case. Their efforts to completely silence the boats capture worked, and the Allies were able to read U-boat signals as fast as the Germans. This gave the Allies an even bigger edge in the war, and on May 4, 1945, German Naval command would order all U-boats to ceasefire. On May 16, a press release was made about the U-505 and it would become a part of the U.S. government's Seventh War Loan drive.

Many Americans stopped purchasing war bonds after Germany surrendered, however, the war in the Pacific was still ongoing. U-505 was taken on a tour along the East Coast with the government offering guided tours in exchange for war bonds until Japan's surrender on September 2, 1945.

### **To End in a Bang or a Whimper**

By 1946, the Navy had extracted everything they needed from the U-505. With no more use for the boat, Naval Command planned on using it as target practice. Now Admiral Gallery refused to let this happen, and he found a place for the boat in his home city of Chicago, Illinois. The Museum of Science and Industry had long been searching for a submarine to add to its collection. Admiral Gallery and the Museum convinced Naval Command to donate the boat to

Chicago as long as the City paid for the transportation. On September 25, 1954, the boat became **a permanent exhibit** for the museum where you can still see this naval legend today.