

Allied Ships Attacked by the Italian Submarine

Leonardo da Vinci

During World War Two, Italy operated a substantial fleet of submarines which were split between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic theatres of war. The Italian submarines were larger and less maneuverable than the German **Type VIIC** U-boat which sank so many Allied ships on the North Atlantic. Italian submarine commanders were also trained differently from their German counterparts. Instead of operating in groups like the German *wolfpacks*, the Italian submarines usually operated alone. German U-boat commanders were trained to attack on the surface at night, but, Italian submarine commanders preferred the older method of torpedoing a victim from periscope depth before rising to the surface to finish off the attack with gunfire. In 1942 the Italian submarines based at **Bordeaux, France**, began venturing farther out to look for ships travelling alone in waters off the Caribbean, along the western coast of Africa and off northeastern South America. One of the Bordeaux-based subs, *Leonardo da Vinci*, sunk a total of seventeen Allied ships. The first six were sunk when the submarine was under the command of **Luigi Longanesi-Cattani** and the rest were sunk when she was commanded by **Gianfranco Gazzana-Priaroggia**.

The information below is taken mainly from three books:

Britain's Sea War: A Diary of Ship Losses, 1939-1945. Written by John M. Young and published by Patrick Stephens Limited, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, c1989.

Axis Submarine Successes of World War Two: German, Italian and Japanese Submarine Successes, 1939-1945. Written by Jürgen Rohwer and published in London by Greenhill Books and in Annapolis, Maryland by Naval Institute Press, c1999.

A Careless Word...A Needless Sinking: A History of the Staggering Losses Suffered by the U.S. Merchant Marine, Both in Ships and Personnel, During World War II. Written by Captian Arthur R. Moore and published by the American Merchant Marine Museum, King's Point, N.Y., c.1983.

Gross Registered Tonnage (**GRT**) is the volume of space within the hull and enclosed spaces above the deck of a merchant ship which are available for cargo,

stores, fuel, passengers and crew. The letters **MOWT** stand for the British Ministry of War Shipping. The term **"In Ballast"** refers to any heavy material which is put into the hold of an empty ship in order to make the vessel steadier. For a list of ship prefixes [Please Click Here.](#)

MV Doryssa

Type of Vessel: Motor Tanker

Owner/Manager Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Co.

GRT: 8,078

Nationality: United Kingdom

Date of Attack: 25 April 1943

Position of Attack: 37° 03S 24° 03E

Details: Torpedoed and shelled when enroute to the Persian Gulf.

Please see April 2006 [Guestbook](#) entries #790 and #791 for more about this attack.