

Chapter X

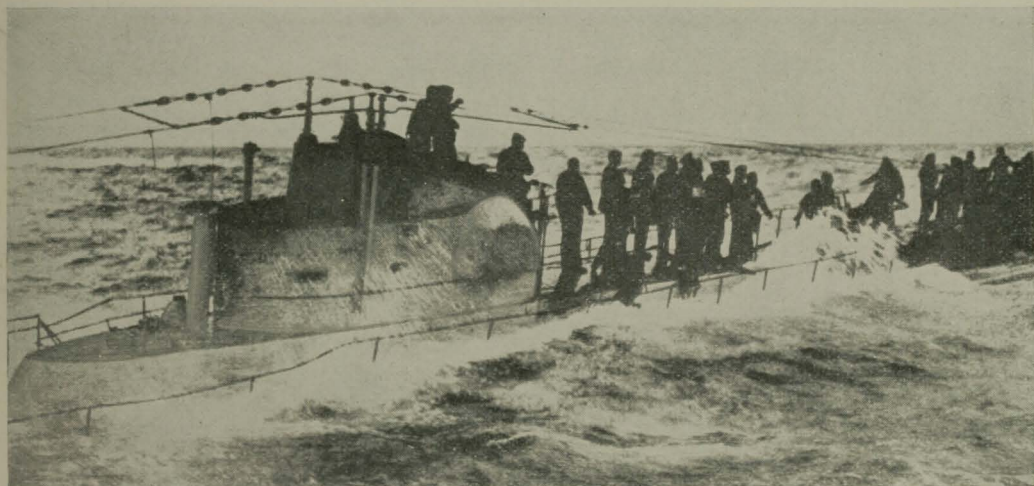
OPERATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY IN THE WORLD WAR

THE information given in this chapter is based upon data furnished officially by the Secretary of the Navy.

When the United States entered the war the Allied Navies appeared to be lacking in effective means for combating the German submarines which had started a campaign of unrestricted warfare two months previously. It was extremely important, therefore, that immediate

of shipping a month, which was much greater than the rate of replacement.

The task facing the American Navy was one of tremendous difficulty. It had to assist as soon as possible in counteracting the submarine menace and in addition had to organize means of providing passage across the Atlantic for hundreds of thousands of American troops and enormous quantities of supplies.



German Submarine *U-58* Surrendering to
United States Destroyers *Fanning* and *Nicholson*, November 1917

American naval assistance be furnished to aid them in meeting the crisis.

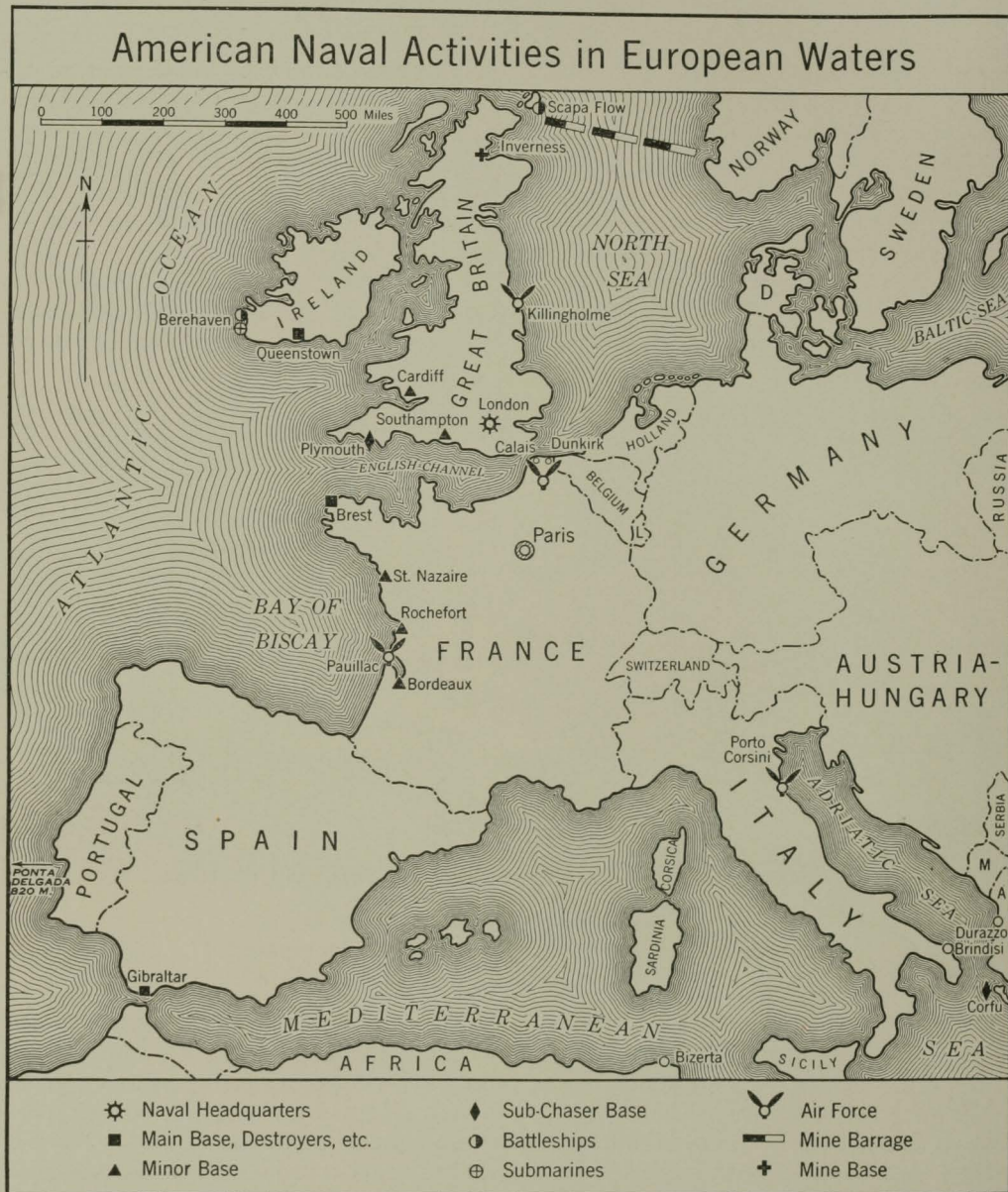
Admiral William S. Sims, who was to become Commander-in-Chief of the United States Naval Forces in European waters, landed in England shortly after America's entry into the war and established his headquarters at London. He was at once informed by the British authorities that if losses due to hostile submarines were not checked quickly the Allies would probably be defeated, as they were then losing about 800,000 tons

Action against submarines was initiated at once by dispatching to Europe the limited number of destroyers then available. These were augmented by converted yachts, gunboats, small cruisers and revenue cutters, and immediate steps were taken to build additional destroyers.

The first fighting unit of the American Navy to arrive in European waters was a detachment of six destroyers which, on May 4, 1917, steamed into the harbor at Queenstown, Ireland, where a main base was established. This force was soon

increased to 34 destroyers. A main base was later established at Brest, and the force operating from there gradually grew in size until it approximated that of Queenstown. A third main base

the war the Cruiser and Transport Force was organized to carry American troops overseas. The few suitable vessels available were taken over by the Government at once and the German liners interned



was established at Gibraltar. Secondary bases were established along the Bay of Biscay and at various other places along the European and Mediterranean coast.

Soon after the United States entered

in American ports were later added to this fleet. Every effort was made throughout the war to obtain additional ships for this service, which carried a total of 911,000 men to Europe, or a little

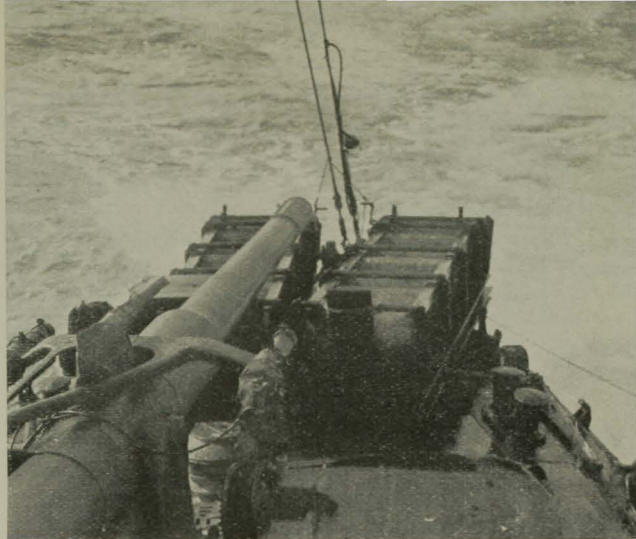
less than half of the number sent. Most of the remainder were transported in ships under British control.

To guard against submarine attack, American transports making the trip to Europe were, as far as practicable, gathered into groups and escorted through the danger zone by destroyers and other armed vessels. This method of combating the submarine menace was most successful and the results obtained were remarkable. Not a single vessel of the Cruiser and Transport Force was lost on the eastward voyage, although three ships returning to the United States were sunk out of a total of five torpedoed.

Nearly all the troops who crossed the Atlantic in American and French ships landed at French ports, while those going in other vessels landed in England. This necessitated the establishment of a small transport force of American ships at Southampton, the chief port used for reembarkation to France, in order to augment the British cross-channel service.

As the number of troops overseas increased, the task of supplying them became more difficult. This problem was met by the formation of the Naval Overseas Transportation Service, which was a force distinct from the troop transport organization. It developed into a fleet of more than 400 vessels, manned by approximately 4,500 officers and 29,000 men. To form this great organization it was necessary to take vessels from every available source, and included in it were ships taken over from the Shipping Board, new tonnage resulting from the intensive building program of the Emergency Fleet Corporation, and a number of ships which were brought from the Great Lakes under considerable difficulties. The convoy system was also used insofar as possible in the operation of this fleet, and only seven vessels were lost by enemy action. This was considered an exceptionally fine record.

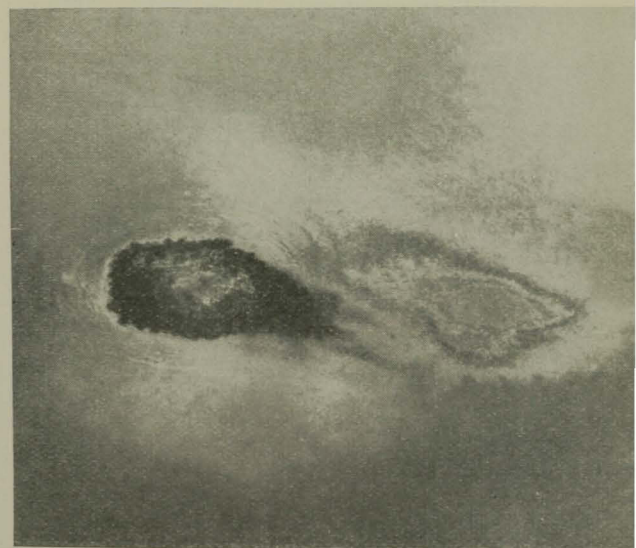
As soon as the safety of the transports and supply ships had been reasonably assured, aggressive steps were taken against enemy submarines. This was



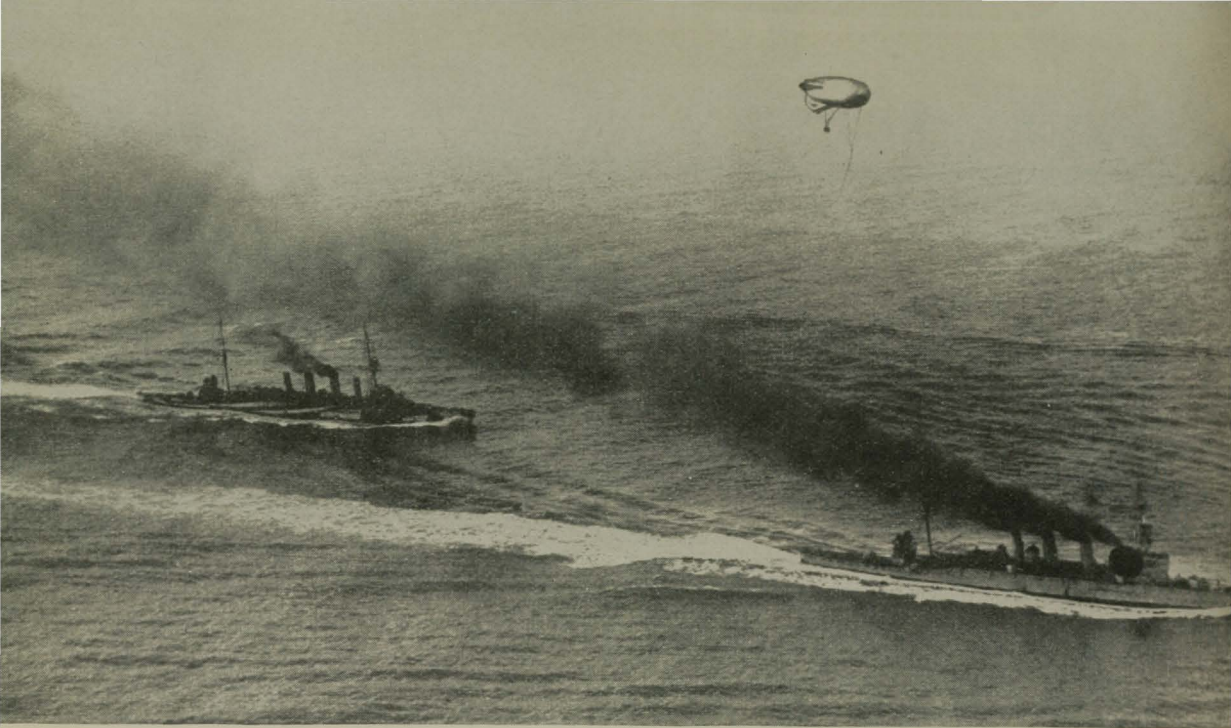
Stern of Destroyer Showing 4-Inch Gun and Depth Bombs Used Against Submarines



Explosion of a 300-Pound Depth Bomb Dropped by a United States Destroyer, May 18, 1918



Oil Patch Indicating a "Hit" With a Depth Bomb



United States Naval Vessels With Captive Balloon in Tow
The balloon was used in searching for German submarines

done by the laying of mine barrages, the employment of a hunting force of small ships, supplemented by aircraft, and the use of submarines.

Before America's entry into the war the British had considered closing the northern entrance to the North Sea by placing a mine barrage from Scotland to Norway, but had given up this idea as impracticable. The American naval authorities felt, however, that with a new type of mine which had been developed in the United States this scheme could be undertaken successfully. In October 1917 it was decided to make the attempt, in conjunction with the British, and the construction of mines was begun in the United States. The total length of the mine barrage to be put down was 270 miles, and the estimated number of mines required was about 75,000. Bases were established on the eastern coast of Scotland, necessary vessels were procured and equipped, and in March 1918 operations were begun by the British and in June by the United States. By the time hostilities ceased the British had placed approximately 14,000 mines and the Americans 56,000, as a result of which 12 enemy submarines are known definitely to

have been put out of action either by being sunk or considerably damaged.

Plans were also made for placing mine barrages in other areas, and a mine base was planned at Bizerta, Tunis, from where operations were to be conducted in the Adriatic and Aegean Seas, but the signing of the Armistice halted the undertaking.

In order to establish a large and effective hunting force of surface vessels, construction was undertaken in America of several hundred boats called "submarine chasers". These were small wooden vessels, 110 feet long, powered by gasoline motors, and equipped with sound-detecting devices. A force of 135 of these vessels was sent to Europe. Most of them based at Plymouth, England, Queens-town, Ireland, and Corfu, Greece, and were very effective in the protection of merchant shipping. During the period of operation of the Plymouth detachment between Start Point and Lizard Head not a single merchant vessel was lost in its area as a result of German submarine attacks. A detachment from the Corfu group sailed from Brindisi, Italy, with the Allied fleet and participated with it in the attack on the Austrian port of Durazzo, doing especially valuable work

in screening the larger vessels of the fleet from attack by Austrian submarines.

In June 1917 a small detachment of the Naval Air Service arrived in Europe and soon thereafter the establishment of aviation bases was begun along the French, English and Italian coasts in order to assist in the escort of shipping. At the signing of the Armistice this force had developed into an organization of approximately 19,000 officers and enlisted men, operating from 27 bases.

The operations of this force against hostile craft at sea were very successful. With its growth, plans were made for offensive action against the submarines at their bases, and eight squadrons, based near Calais and Dunkirk, frequently bombed the Belgian ports of Zeebrugge, Ostend and Bruges until they were freed in the autumn of 1918 by the attacks of the Allied Armies. Until the cessation of hostilities the American naval air units also helped the Royal Air Force by operating against objectives which aided the advance of the northern British Armies.

The Allied naval authorities having decided to employ some of their own submarines as an additional means of combating similar hostile craft, two groups of American submarines were dispatched to European waters. One group operated from Ponta Delgada, Azores, and the other from Berehaven, Bantry Bay, Ireland, and effectively covered the areas in the vicinity of these places.

During the early days of America's effort there appeared to be no necessity for dispatching any great portion of her battle fleet to European waters. Therefore, except for two divisions, it remained on the American side of the Atlantic, where it was engaged principally in training the large numbers of recruits taken into the Navy during the war.

Of the two divisions of battleships sent to Europe, one, comprising four vessels later increased to five, joined the British at Scapa Flow in December 1917, thereafter participating in operations of the Grand Fleet. The other division of three battleships took station in 1918 at Berehaven, from where it was to operate against any enemy raiding cruisers that might break through the cordon drawn around the German coast.

Aside from the foregoing purely naval operations, a brigade of marines served as part of the 2d Division, and five 14-inch naval guns on railroad mounts, manned by naval personnel, operated along the battle front firing against distant targets. These naval railroad batteries arrived in France during July and August, 1918, and were all in action during October. They continued in service taking part in the fighting until the Armistice.

To commemorate the achievements of the Navy, memorials have been erected at Brest and Gibraltar by the United States Government. Information concerning these memorials may be found in Chapter XII.

An American Convoy Nearing the English Coast



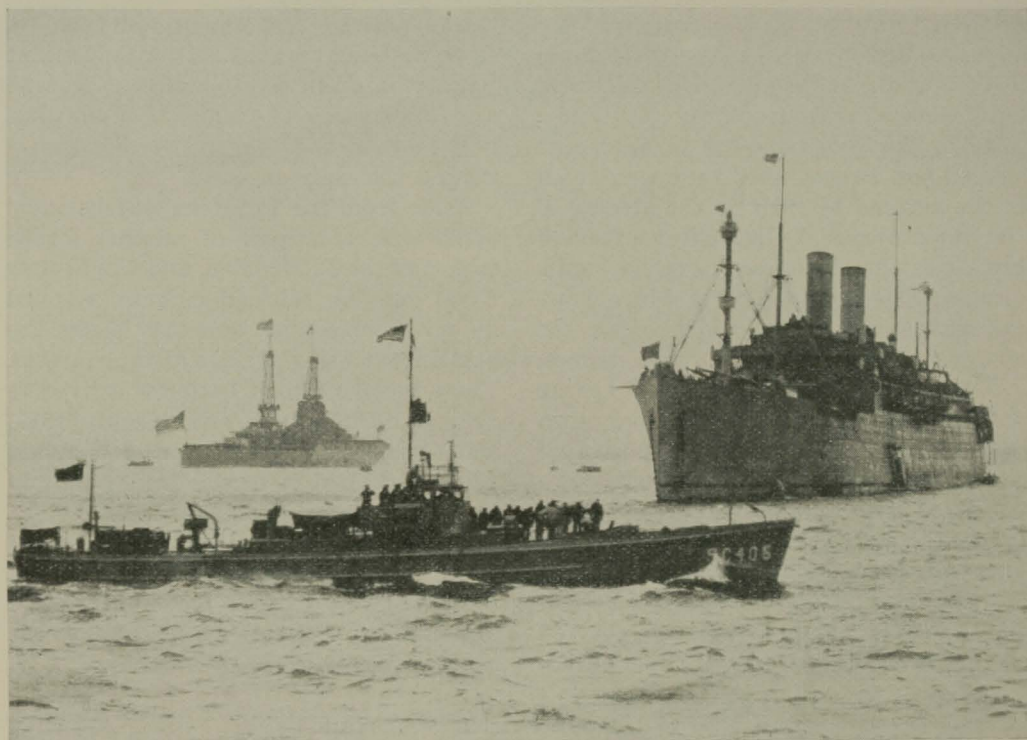
PARTIAL LIST OF ADDITIONAL PLACES

WHERE AMERICAN NAVAL ACTIVITIES OCCURRED IN EUROPE

Bordeaux. The Naval District Headquarters, located here, directed the operations of vessels engaged in convoy work and submarine hunting in this vicinity. Near the city the construction of a high-powered naval radio station was undertaken for communication with the United States, but this was still under construction at the time the Armistice was signed.

Cardiff, Wales. American Naval Headquarters for the administration of the coal transport service, which carried coal for the Army from this port to France.

Gibraltar. A naval force operating from here made many attacks upon submarines, and during July and August, 1918, escorted 25 per cent of all Mediterranean convoys to French ports, as well



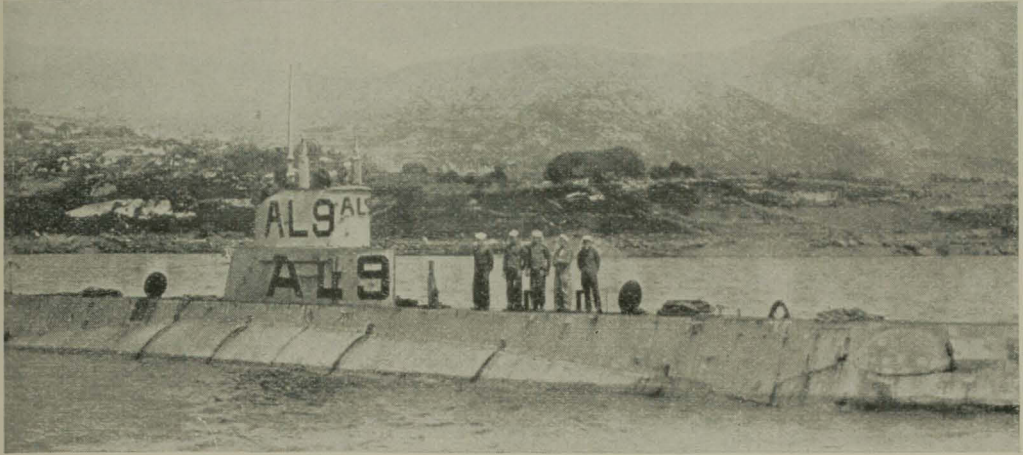
United States Transport *George Washington*, Battleship *Pennsylvania*
and a Submarine Chaser at Brest

Brest. American Naval Headquarters in France and main port of debarkation for troops carried on American naval transports. A force of over 30 destroyers and many yachts which based here operated as escorts for troop and supply convoys. During July and August, 1918, over 3,000,000 tons of shipping were conveyed in and out of French ports by vessels from this base with a loss of less than one-tenth of 1 per cent of this shipping.

as 70 per cent of all convoys to English ports from the vicinity of Gibraltar.

Inverness, Scotland. The main base for American mining operations in the North Sea was established at this port in the autumn of 1917.

Killingholme, England. An American naval air base was located here. Planes operating from it flew approximately 57,000 sea miles while escorting about 6,000 vessels through the submarine zone.



American Submarine Off the Coast of Ireland

Pauillac. An assembly plant for all naval planes shipped to the Continent was located here. A force of about 5,000 officers and men built and operated it.

Porto Corsini, Italy. American naval flyers from this base, which was taken over from the Italians in July 1918, participated in raids upon the Austrian port of Pola and carried out 5,500 flights while patrolling and reconnoitering.

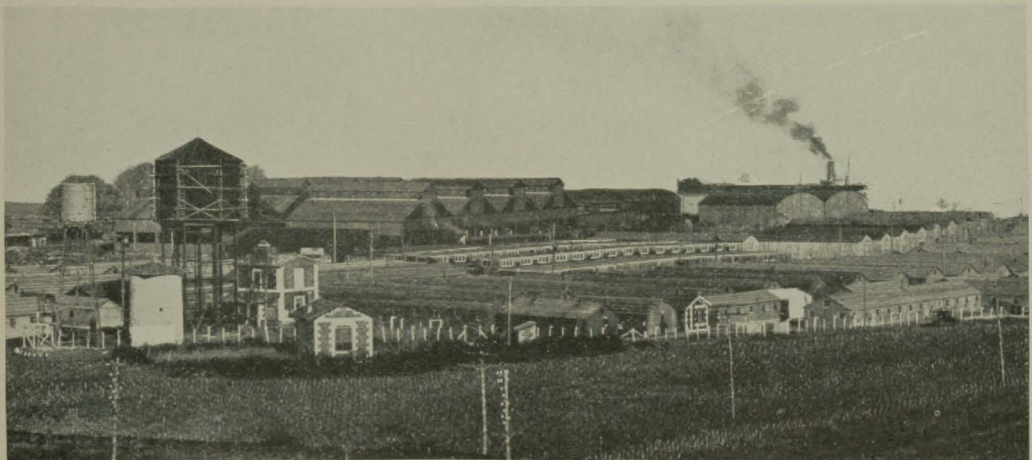
Queenstown, Ireland. First American naval base in Europe. The U. S. S. *Nicholson* and *Fanning*, based here, sank the German *U-58* and captured its crew in November 1917. During July and August, 1918, destroyers operating chiefly from this port furnished 75 per

cent of escorting vessels for approximately 2,700,000 tons of shipping into British harbors, steaming a total of 260,000 miles and accomplishing the task without the loss of a single ship.

Rochefort. Eight naval vessels, including five converted yachts, operated from this port during the war and escorted a total of 182 convoys.

St. Nazaire. Naval District Headquarters and principal port for army supplies. First detachment of American troops landed here June 26, 1917. A force consisting principally of converted yachts was concentrated at this port and performed the duties of mine sweeping, submarine hunting and convoy escorting.

United States Naval Air Station at Pauillac





Flagpole at the Somme American Cemetery