

Office of Naval Records and History
Ships' Histories Section
Navy Department

HISTORY OF USS COD (SS 224)

USS COD (SS 224), a 1,525-ton submarine of the GATO Class of 1940, was built by the Electric Boat Company of Groton, Connecticut. Her keel was laid on 21 July 1942.

USS COD was launched on 21 March 1943 with Mrs. Grace M. Mahoney, wife of a veteran employee of the Electric Boat Company, as the official sponsor.

The submarine was placed in commission on 21 June 1943 and, after the usual fitting out period and shakedown trials, sailed for the Pacific combat area by way of the Panama Canal.

COD arrived at Brisbane, Australia, on 2 October 1943 and after completing exercises and topping off fuel at Darwin, Australia, sailed on her first war patrol under the command of Lieutenant Commander J.C. Dempsey, USN. It was conducted in the northern portion of the South China Sea and extended for 64 days; 45 of which were spent on station and the approaches thereto.

USS COD covered her assigned area in a most thorough manner but through a combination of bad weather and ill fortune was never in a position to cash in on her few fruitless contacts. It was not until she was on her return trip that she finally attained a satisfactory attack position on a worth-while target.

On 29 November 1943, the submarine was on surface patrol across the northern end of Palawan Passage and at 0547 sighted an enemy destroyer at about 10,000 yards range. With sunrise, visibility improved and the hulls of two large ships were distinguished beyond and just ahead of the escort. A short time later, two more ships were sighted well separated from the first two. COD submerged to make approach and at 0557 identified the convoy as one tanker, two cargo ships, one transport, and a destroyer of the MINEKAZE Class.

It was planned to fire four torpedoes at one of the cargo ships and two at the transport and then swing for a stern tube shot at the destroyer when she headed toward the firing point. The first four were fired, but while swinging the periscope for a set-up on the transport, a premature explosion of the first torpedo was heard and it was figured there was no time to complete the set-up. The other two forward tubes were fired immediately at the mainmast of the transport and COD swung right while observing the targets. A hit was observed and heard on the cargo ship between the stack and after king posts and then a second under the stack. The enemy ship took a port list and began to smoke and settle aft.

A few seconds later a splash was observed in the vicinity of the premature explosion and a plane was noted zooming over the spot. A

bomb explosion was heard at about the same time a torpedo hit was seen abaft the stack on the Jap transport.

A few seconds later another bomb explosion was heard and the enemy destroyer was seen closing rapidly. It was assumed that the plane had sighted COD's periscope and the submarine submerged deep. The crackling and groaning sounds of a ship breaking up could be heard through COD's hull and over her sound gear. At 0623, screw noises stopped on the bearing of the transport.

Then came two more explosions; one of which sounded like a torpedo exploding at the end of its run and the other an explosion aboard a target. Two more bombs exploded while COD was going deep and then came the first depth charge. The Jap escort made about three runs, dropping one or two charges on each run, none of which was closer than 400-500 yards. At 0629 the screws of the transport were heard starting up again and judged to be turning at about 80 R.P.M's. The last depth charge a few minutes later and the destroyer was heard drawing away to the northeast.

COD continued on with her patrol but was unable to develop further attacks on the enemy. She arrived in Fremantle, Australia, on 16 December 1943, for refit in preparation for her next patrol.

For her first war patrol, COD was awarded the Submarine Combat Insignia and was credited with sinking a freighter of NAGARA MARU type of 7,149 tons and damaging a transport of NAMINOUE MARU type of 4,731 tons.

Refit was completed on 31 December 1943 and, on 11 January 1944, USS COD sailed on her second war patrol again under the command of Lieutenant Commander J. C. Dempsey, USN. The patrol covered a period of 63 days; 45 of which were spent in enemy areas of the South China Sea, the Molukka Sea, and in the vicinity of Halmahera Island. Five contacts worthy of torpedoes were made and four of these were attacked; two successfully.

While patrolling submerged off Pulo Gambir on 29 January 1944 a northbound enemy convoy consisting of one tanker, two freighters and two or three escorts was sighted close the coast. Though numerous attempts were made to attack, nothing seemed to click and each unsuccessful attempt to gain a suitable firing position seemed to make the next try more difficult. Finally in the early morning of 30 January, a submerged position was made at the estimated dawn position of the convoy, about 3 miles east of Kulao Rai Island, but the enemy group was not sighted again.

On 28 January, due to a loosened cap on a drum of carbon tetrachloride, 90% of the officers and men were sick from the CCL₄ fumes. Since this sickness prevailed all through the sighting and chase of this convoy, COD was not up to her usual combat efficiency and this was in a great measure responsible for the failure to attack the enemy.

The submarine's first attack on this patrol was made from a submerged daylight sighting on 9 February off Tamkwam Point. First, what appeared to be a freighter of about 5,000 tons and a sub-chaser escort were sighted; then later a second ship some six miles ahead of the first. A favorable attack position could not be reached so the target was trailed on the surface. A night attack was made submerged, by periscope, in bright moonlight and a spread of four torpedoes was fired - but all missed. At the time of attack, no escort was sighted, so it was assumed this to be the second of the ships sighted during the day.

COD then surfaced and commenced chase of the first. On 10 February at 0129, the bow wave of a submarine was seen dead ahead making high speed. It was assumed to be BILLFISH but since no contact could be made, COD turned away and increased speed. About an hour later BILLFISH was contacted and information given the submarine on the ships COD was chasing. However, the chase was in vain and COD continued on with the patrol.

On 16 February, COD made contact with a power-driven sampan and manning her guns, set the ship on fire and blew it apart with her 4-inch and 20 millimeter guns.

On 23 February 1944, an enemy tanker, a freighter and an accompanying sub-chaser were contacted. They were first sighted at 0524 while on the surface, tracked submerged until 1120, and on the surface until attacked at 2215. A spread of four torpedoes was fired at the larger Jap ship -- the tanker. The first torpedo swerved and prematurely exploded. The second hit the ship under the mainmast and exploded with a flash that lighted the horizon. The third torpedo hit under her stack with a greater flash and broke the ship in half. All parts of the ship burst into flames and it disappeared from sight in about two minutes, accompanied by numerous explosions. The fourth torpedo probably passed astern. Though two tubes were fired at the smaller maru, no hits were observed, as she probably maneuvered to avoid them.

Continuing on patrol, COD made contact with a cargo ship and one escort on 27 February off South Loloda Island. At 0259, approaching on the surface, a spread of four torpedoes was fired. About one minute after firing, the first depth charge explosion was heard. Fifty seconds later the first torpedo hit the after end of the Jap cargo ship with a violent explosion. A large fire immediately broke out with much smoke and a considerable portion of the stern appeared to be blown into the air. The second torpedo hit amidships. Two minutes later a second more violent explosion occurred, after which the flames died out and the target disappeared from view. The escort vessel was heard firing her gun and depth charging the area for 20 minutes after the attack.

Two days later, COD reached a position off the eastern entrance to Buton Strait and, at 1340, heard echo-ranging and closed. At 1409 she sighted the masts and stacks of a cargo ship similar to a YAMAZATO MARU

escorted by what later proved to be a TERUTSUKI type destroyer. The target ship was zigging on a northeasterly course with the escort weaving in position about 1,000 yards ahead. The escort was thought to be a CHIDORI type torpedo boat until the final stages of the approach.

At 1449 COD attempted a fire spread of 4 torpedoes at the freighter. However, due to a defective gyro regulator, the attack was thwarted. Five minutes later the escort ceased echo-ranging and turned toward COD at increased speed, letting go the first barrage of three depth charges right on top of the submarine. Though COD dived deeper and changed course, the TERUTSUKI made another good run and dropped three more which exploded very close, directly overhead. The enemy escort continued intermittent depth charging and echo-ranging until 1648 when she was relieved by one or two different types of anti-submarine ships. These did not trouble COD, however, and she evaded them to surface well out of their range about an hour later. On the surface, batteries were charged, tubes were reloaded, and efforts were continued to repair the gyro setting gear -- while continuing in the general direction of the target. However, at 2400 no possibility was seen for overhauling the Jap ship, so course was changed to normal patrol across the lanes from Buton Strait to Ambon.

On 1 March, after securing loose deck plates and planking and repairing minor damages resulting from the depth charging, COD transmitted a dispatch as to her position and set course for Darwin, Australia. She arrived at Darwin on 4 March and departed for Fremantle the same day; arriving on 13 March 1944.

For her second war patrol, COD was awarded the Submarine Combat Insignia and was credited with sinking 9,853 tons of enemy shipping: the tanker OGURA MARU #3 of 7,350 tons on 23 February; the cargo ship TAISOKU MARU of 2,473 tons on 27 February; and a sampan of 30 tons (by gunfire) on 16 February 1944.

USS COD, after a refit period at Fremantle, left on her third war patrol on 6 April 1944. This patrol, conducted in the Sulu Sea and in the South China Sea off the coast of Luzon, was of 56 days duration; 43 of which were spent on station in combat waters.

During this patrol, COD was only able to get into position for one torpedo attack. This attack, 10 May 1944, was on a convoy of at least 32 ships, including escorts. The convoy was chased and tracked for three and one-half hours and then a submerged periscope attack was made about 20 minutes after sunrise. Just prior to firing, the convoy zigged and gave COD a stern tube set-up on an enemy destroyer. With deliberation, COD waited until the range had opened and then fired three torpedoes at the destroyer, observing two hits. The first torpedo hit right under the bridge. Both stacks collapsed, and dozens of the crew in white uniforms who had been lining the rails acting as periscope lookouts were tossed into the air. The ship immediately started to sag in the middle with bow and stern rising. While swinging around for the set-up on the Maru's, the second torpedo was seen to hit abaft the mainmast and the whole fantail disintegrated.

COD then shifted her set-up to the last ship of the near column. Two torpedoes were fired and, then shifting again, let loose four more at the first ship in the same column. At the time of firing on the second target, two ships in the far column were so aligned as to make for a three-ship target. Since the Jap escorts were closing on COD rapidly, she started deep while tracking the torpedoes by sound.

The first torpedo was heard to hit the first target ship and three hits were heard on the second; followed ripping and tearing noises characteristic of ships breaking up. Some time after firing the last tube, sound reported another torpedo hit which checked with the torpedo run on one of the ships in the far column.

At 300 feet COD changed course to get clear of a nearby CHIDORI which let go a barrage of three depth charges. Breaking up noises of the torpedoed Maru's and the sinking destroyer continued while three aircraft bombs landed close to the sub. At 0605 a series of heavy explosions were heard on the bearing of the torpedoed freighters. One minute later four escorts from the next formation arrived and the depth-charging began and during the following 15 minutes approximately 70 charges were dropped in batches of three to eight. After intermittent periods of silence and more depth charges, COD managed to elude her pursuers, and finally, at 2050, surfaced in the midst of a thunderstorm.

COD proceeded on with her patrol but though several contacts were made she did not get other opportunities for attack. On the 27th of May she entered Lombok Strait enroute to Fremantle and on 1 June entered that port, completing her patrol.

For her third war patrol, USS COD was awarded the Submarine Combat Insignia and was credited with sinking the Japanese destroyer KARUKAYA of 820 tons and the freighter SHOHEI MARU of 7,256 tons. She also damaged a transport of the KASADO MARU type of 6,003 tons and a freighter of 5,423 tons of the BRISBANE MARU type. Out of nine torpedoes fired COD had obtained seven hits.

COD left on her fourth patrol on 3 July 1944 under a new skipper-- Commander J. A. Adkins, USN. This patrol, ending on 25 August 1944, was of 54 days duration; 36 of which were spent in combat areas. It was conducted in two phases. The first was off Manila and following a reload at Darwin, another short phase was made in the Flores and Molukka Seas.

Ten aggressive torpedo attacks and one gun attack were made on enemy shipping. Out of the first load of torpedoes only one hit was made and poor torpedo performance was thought to have accounted for some of the misses. However, out of 24 torpedoes loaded at Darwin, 11 hits were made.

On 16 July 1944 the first attack was made, while submerged during daylight, on a convoy consisting of three unescorted Jap ships. Three torpedoes were fired at each of two cargo ships but both targets maneuvered and avoided them. Four torpedoes fired a few minutes later at an escort vessel also missed.

In the darkness of early morning of the next day, COD made an end around on the same convoy. In a surface attack from an excellent position, three torpedoes were fired. For some unknown reason, all three missed and the only result was a counterattack by the escorting vessels.

Late the same day, radar contact was made with seven ships consisting of two large ships and five smaller ones. Six torpedoes were fired at difficult angles. One timed hit was heard, possibly on a trailing escort.

At 0445 on the morning of 20 July 1944, COD made a radar contact on a convoy of four cargo ships and five escorts. Visibility was less than 1,000 yards in the heavy rain and dark overhanging clouds. Intermittent flashes of lighting revealed brief glimpses of a cargo vessel. Four stern torpedoes were fired with no hits observed.

Another night attack on 25 July resulted from radar contact with a convoy of three cargo ships and four escorts. One timed hit was scored on a cargo ship believed to be of the MAREI MARU type. The ship turned on a vigorously flashing red mast-head light and commenced flashing signals with an escort vessel. The target ship was later tracked at one half a knot and the radar pip grew smaller in size.

A cargo or passenger ship with one escort was picked up by COD's radar at 0225 on 3 August 1944. Three torpedo hits were heard two of which were observed. Screw noises stopped and breaking-up noises were heard for three minutes after the ship was hit. Upon surfacing at the scene of the torpedoing, much debris and a heavy oil slick were observed. Ten to fifteen survivors were seen near a small life boat.

A daylight approach was made on a small cargo ship or naval auxiliary on 10 August 1944. Four torpedoes reached out from the submarine toward the target; three of them were seen to hit. The target disappeared in a cloud of smoke and never came into view again. Upon surfacing, in the midst of a large oil slick and debris, COD picked up the lone survivor.

Later that day an unidentified enemy ship was picked up and four torpedoes were launched. One hit was observed and the target ship appeared well down by the bow and making a large bow wave. COD regained position for another attack on the following day. Four torpedoes were fired at the crippled ship. One hit on the ship was heard and seen and the screws stopped. The target was observed to sink through the periscope.

On 14 August 1944, a large landing barge was attacked by gunfire from COD. When the shells failed to sink the ship, four torpedoes were fired. Three hits were observed and the Japanese ship went down.

The last attack of the war patrol came on 18 August. It was a night attack on an unidentified ship. However, no torpedo hits were scored and this was the last opportunity the submarine had during the

fourth war patrol. After fifty-four days on her war patrol COD arrived at Fremantle, Western Australia on 25 August for a normal refit period.

The submarine departed on her fifth war patrol on 18 September 1944 which was conducted in the areas west of Luzon and Mindoro. Her first attack was made on a convoy of one large tanker, one freighter, two smaller vessels and a WAKATAKE class destroyer escort. Singling out the two largest targets, COD fired four torpedoes at the tanker and two at the freighter. Two hits were observed on the tanker and one hit was probably made on the freighter. Observation was interrupted by an aggressive attack by the escort vessel which kept COD submerged for a short while.

On coming back to periscope depth, COD noticed that the convoy was still in the vicinity and approached for another attack. The damaged tanker was selected again and four torpedoes were sent on their way. All four torpedoes ripped into the tanker and she disappeared.

Two days later, a night attack was made on another large tanker which had already been damaged by a torpedo from the submarine RAY. Four torpedoes were fired and two timed hits were made; these hits were observed by USS RAY. This attack brought an aggressive anti-submarine hunt by the escort vessels.

COD surfaced about daybreak and noted that the tanker had suffered severe damage but had not sunk. The submarine set chase for the tanker but could not gain a firing position before the tanker reached the safety of shallow water.

On 8 October, COD made an approach on a Japanese minelayer at periscope depth. Upon gaining position, she fired a spread of six torpedoes. The enemy spotted the torpedo wakes and made successful evasive maneuvers. Turning toward the submarine to counter-attack, the minelayer forced COD to go deep to avoid the depth charges which followed.

On 22 October, COD sighted five enemy sea trucks and made an attack on them with gun fire. Several hits were scored on one of the trucks before they could escape to safety by running into shallow water.

A night surface attack was made on a convoy of four large ships on 25 October. The convoy was heavily escorted by five anti-submarine vessels. The largest of the ships, an ASAMA MARU class transport, was selected as the target and the last four torpedoes were fired after this fast-moving target from the best position obtainable. Unfortunately, all torpedoes missed even though the firing problem had checked perfectly. The keen disappointment over missing this target was felt throughout the submarine and it was determined that COD would track this convoy until it could be turned over to another submarine.

Although out of torpedoes herself, COD tracked this important convoy for about thirty hours. The thought of the American and allied soldiers that might be killed by the enemy troops and equipment in the ASAMA MARU transport spurred the COD on to follow the convoy and report its positions.

A rendezvous was made with the submarine BREAM on 29 October and six Japanese soldiers were transferred to COD. They had been picked up out of the water by BREAM after their transport had been sunk from under them. The prisoners of war were covered with ulcerated wounds, jungle sores and chancres.

During this war patrol, COD arrived on lifeguard duties off the northeast coast of Luzon during the carrier strikes in the vicinity of Manila Bay. Upon completion of her fifth war patrol, COD pulled into Pearl Harbor on 20 November 1944, on her way to the Navy Yard at Mare Island, California, for an overhaul.

On 1 December, COD arrived at Mare Island and by 20 February 1945, her yard overhaul was completed. Leaving San Francisco, the submarine arrived at San Diego on 22 February, where she gave daily services to the West Coast Sound School until her departure for Pearl Harbor on 28 February. COD entered the channel at Pearl Harbor on 7 March where she received voyage repairs and training.

The sixth war patrol of the submarine COD started with her departure from Pearl Harbor on 24 March 1945. COD and the submarine POMPON departed from Guam together on 9 April to conduct coordinated patrol and lifeguard operations for the 5th Air Force in the East China Sea. This patrol was under the command of Commander J. A. Adkins, USN. The submarines POMPON and COD operated as a coordinated attack group with the Commander Adkins as task group commander.

In the late morning of 17 April 1945, two ships were sighted and COD approached them on the surface to engage them with gunfire. Upon surfacing it was apparent that one of the vessels was towing the other. The tow was set on fire with 5-inch and 40 millimeter shells. The tow obviously had a cargo of oil as large clouds of black smoke poured out and flames engulfed the vessel. The armed tug let go his tow at this point and decided to shoot it out.

The tug was taken under fire at a range of 3,700 yards and as she drew closer she was sunk by the gunfire of COD's 5-inch and 40 millimeter shells. COD then returned to the burning oiler and sank it with three five-inch hits along the waterline. Three prisoners were picked up from the water.

On the evening of 24 April, the submarine made radar contact on two ships. Gaining a firing position, COD fired four torpedoes at the lead ship. Each torpedo jumped out of the water as soon as it was launched and then proceeded toward the target like a porpoise, alternately breaching and plunging. The trailing ship was not fired upon

considering the performance of the torpedoes and the target ship detected the submarine and gave chase. The increasing accuracy of the enemy's gunfire forced COD to submerge and endure a severe depth charging.

The submariners in COD showed their mettle on 26 April when a torpedo casualty and fire occurred in the after torpedo room. The crew worked heroically as the fire blazed with increasing intensity and threatened to explode the warhead in the torpedo which caused the trouble. Working in intense heat and smoke, the men rigged jiggers to the torpedo, which was too hot to touch, and held their thumbs over the hydrogen burner hole in the torpedo tube door during the time when the torpedo was fired. The captain off the ship was deeply impressed by the sterling quality of his men and said, "It is a privilege to have been their shipmate."

During this time it was necessary for two men to go aft to assist in opening the after torpedo room hatch from topsides. Two of the men were washed over the side, one of whom was recovered some time later in a state of complete exhaustion. An intensive search for the other man was unsuccessful. A Navy patrol plane assisted in the search for an extended period in spite of the foul weather which was considered by the skipper of COD to be non-flying weather. He was greatly impressed by the willing risk and diligence displayed by these flyers in helping search for the lost man.

Many floating mines were sighted during this war patrol and 11 of them were sunk by gunfire from the sub. Patrol and lifeguard duty was also included in the COD's schedule before she arrived at Guam on 29 May 1945.

After a normal refit period, COD departed from Apra Harbor, Guam on her seventh war patrol on 26 June 1945. This patrol was conducted partly in lifeguard duties off the Indo-China Coast and partly on offensive patrol in the Gulf of Siam. On 9 and 10 July, COD was skillfully maneuvered for 14 hours in close proximity to the grounded Dutch submarine O-19 in a vain effort to tow her clear of Ladd Reef. The crew of the Dutch submarine was finally transferred to COD and the O-19 was completely destroyed by demolition charges, torpedoes and gunfire.

On 19 July, COD made an unsuccessful attack on a small convoy. The smooth sea coupled with air cover, forced the submarine to approach submerged and just prior to firing, the sub was bombed or depth charged. Three torpedoes were fired on sound bearings but no hits were scored. The Jap counter attack was not too close.

That night an end around was made on the same convoy to gain a position ahead. However, on commencing an approach, the radar power supply burned out. The only choice left was to attempt another daylight attack. No further contact with the convoy could be made.

During the period between 21 July and 1 August, COD made twenty gun attacks on twenty-three junks and motor sampans, plus one towed oil barge, sinking all of them for a total of 2,200 tons sunk. During these attacks 65 rounds of five-inch ammunition and 1,092 rounds of 40 millimeter ammunition were expended. COD was one of the first ships to attempt to break up the considerable amount of small boat traffic in the Gulf of Siam which was transporting valuable enemy cargo in small lots to and from Singapore. The cargoes consisted of rice, sugar, oil, soap, crude rubber, coffee, paper, horseshoes and army blankets. The sub's skipper inspected these vessels to determine the nature of the cargoes and provide for the safety of friendly natives.

On 1 August, COD was forced to dive while being strafed by an enemy fighter plane, leaving her boarding party unassisted on an enemy ship. Fortunately the boarding party was rescued by the submarine BLENNY after 48 hours. They were in good health and suffered no ill effects from their junk cruise.

The seventh war patrol was successfully ended as COD pulled into Fremantle Harbor, Western Australia on 13 August 1945. This completed the submarine's last war patrol in World War II since the cessation of hostilities followed, shortly thereafter. COD subsequently returned to the United States, where she was placed out of commission in reserve in the New London Group, Atlantic Reserve Fleet.

USS COD (SS 224) earned the Submarine Combat Insignia for each of her seven war patrols and is entitled to wear seven Battle Stars on the Asiatic-Pacific Area Service Medal for her service in World War II. She participated in the Okinawa Gunto Operation from 14 April to 25 May 1945.

COMMANDING OFFICERS

Commander J. C. Dempsey, USN, War Patrols 1, 2, and 3.

Commander J. A. Adkins, USN, War Patrols 4, 5, and 6.

Lieutenant Commander E. M. Westbrook, Jr., USN, War Patrol 7.

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STATISTICS

OVERALL LENGTH	312 feet
BEAM	27 feet
SURFACE SPEED	20 knots
DISPLACEMENT	1,525 tons.

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