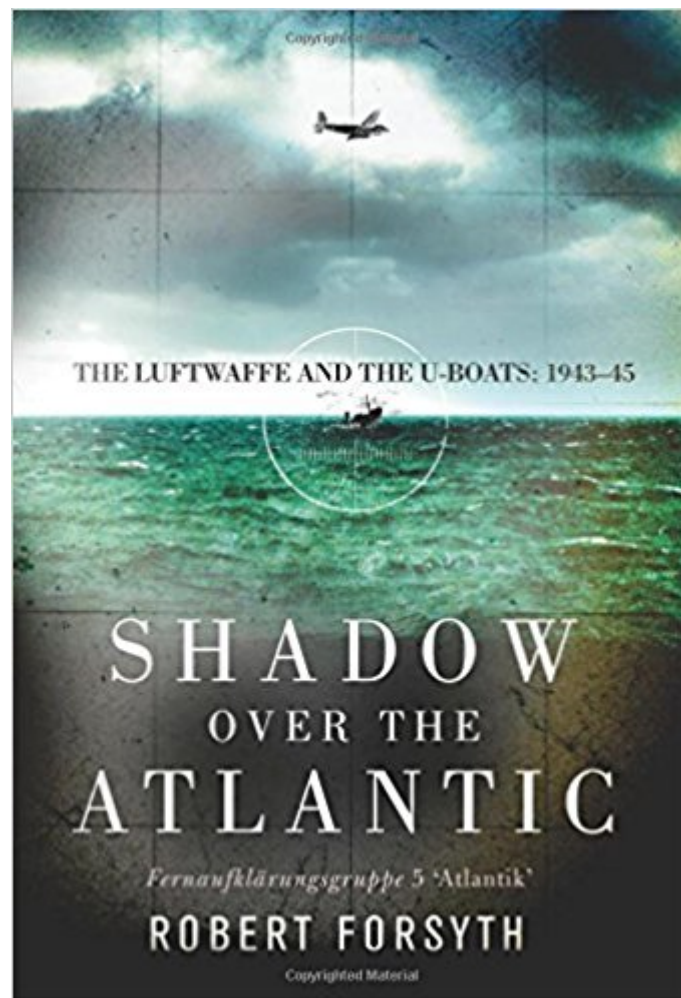




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Shadow Over The Atlantic: The Luftwaffe And The U-boats: 1943â€“45



Synopsis

German U-boats were the scourge of Allied merchant and military shipping in the Atlantic during World War II, threatening to isolate and then starve the UK out of the war. As Germany's war against the Allied convoys intensified in late 1943, German Admiral Karl Dönitz called upon the Luftwaffe to provide a long-range spotting and shadowing unit to act as 'eyes' for his U-boats. Equipped with big, four-engined Junkers Ju 290s fitted out with advanced search radar and other maritime 'ELINT' (electronic intelligence) devices, Fernaufklärungsgruppe (FAGr) 5 'Atlantik' undertook a distant, isolated campaign far out into the Atlantic and thousands of miles away from its home base in western France. The information generated and reported back to Dönitz's headquarters was vital to the efforts of the U-boats, and FAGr 5's 'shadowing' missions were assigned priority in terms of skilled crews, supplies and equipment. This book tells for the first time the fascinating story of the formation and operations of FAGr 5 'Atlantik', drawing on never-before-published historical records of the unit that accounted for the reporting and destruction of thousands of tons of Allied shipping.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Robert Forsyth has studied the history and operations of the Luftwaffe for many years. He is the author of JV 44 – The Galland Circus (1996), Battle over Bavaria – The B-26 versus the German Jets (1998), Mistel – German Composite Aircraft and Operations 1942-1945 (2001), Messerschmitt Me 264 Amerikabomber (2006), He 162 Volksjäger, Heinkel He 111 and Junkers Ju 52 (with Eddie J Creek), all for Classic Publications/Ian Allan Publishing/Crecy Publishing. He

has also written seven books for Osprey in the Aviation Elite Units, Aircraft of the Aces, Combat Aircraft and Duel series. Finally, he has written articles for Aeroplane magazine and The Aviation Historian, and a member of the Editorial Board of the latter publication. Jim Laurier is a native of New England, growing up in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. He has been drawing since he could hold a pencil, and throughout his life he has worked in many mediums, creating artwork on a variety of subjects. He has worked on the Osprey Aviation list since 2000, and in that time he has produced some of the finest artwork seen in these volumes. Jim completed the profile and badge artwork for the plate section for this title.

First, as a WWII history buff, I have a major problem with 's synopsis -- it's not accurate, for it draws a conclusion that's not substantiated by what's in the book, casts a bit of a pall over what I found to be a very good work by Mr. Forsyth. Here's the offending passage, and it makes me wonder if if proofing this stuff: "As Germany's war against the Allied convoys intensified in late 1943, German Admiral Karl Dönitz called upon the Luftwaffe to provide a long-range spotting and shadowing unit to act as 'eyes' for his U-boats." As any student of the Battle of the Atlantic knows, 1941-43 was the most critical time when the U-Boats threatened to choke off Britain's shipping completely, and aircraft such as the Fw 200 Condor were definitely in use over the Atlantic during that period. By late 1943, the time identified in the synopsis, with systematic use of sonar and improved tactics and weaponry, the Allies had the U-Boats on the defensive, and it's fair to say the hunters had become the hunted. May of 1943 was the turning point, when Allied shipping losses declined from the previous month for the first time during the war, a trend that continued and made D-Day possible just over a year later. Donitz would therefore have geared up the fight against the convoys in late 1940, or at the latest, late 1941. This is a synopsis of a history book, so somebody ought to be paying attention to the DATES. While the first chapter states that the Luftwaffe and the Kriegsmarine by late 1943 devised what they jointly thought was a recipe for success in the North Atlantic, by then it was too late. Later in the same chapter, the following passage appears: "In very early 1943 [note the year] following instructions from the General der Aufklarungsflieger, Oberst Karl-Henning von Barsewisch, ordered the establishment [of a unit] with "four-engined aircraft for reconnaissance over the Atlantic specifically to assist the U-Boats..." This was likely the result of a decision by Donitz in late 1942 or even earlier. Again, by December 1943 the game was up for the Germans. Second, in defense of the author in light of a previous critique by another reviewer, anyone who is familiar with Robert Forsyth's previous aviation books on specific aircraft, knows that that's his thing. He is highly skilled at researching and educating the reader who wants to know about specific airplanes.

Naturally the book focuses on specific aircraft, how they were used, and with what success. In short, Forsyth gives you the trees, that's what he does, and he's quite good at it. If you want the forest, go to another author. Having read his previous works and thoroughly enjoyed them, this particular complaint did not resonate with me. Mr. Forsyth's works are a treasure trove for aviation history buffs and aviation modelers -- so that comment seemed a bit odd, akin to such a complaint against Len Deighton's highly informative book on the Battle of Britain, *Fighter*, which provides detailed information on the aircraft, but also on leaders on both sides whose personalities and priorities helped shape the battle -- that too in my opinion was a "trees" book, albeit of slightly grander scope, one that I'm glad I read.

I review quite a few books, and this is one of those books that always poses a challenge to review fairly. It is a well-researched and clearly written book, but it is just not the sort of history I enjoy reading.=== The Good Stuff ===* Robert Forsyth has put together an excellent and detailed look at the Luftwaffe during the Battle of the Atlantic. There is great detail on the command structure and leadership challenges of the German Airforce, and a look at how the politics and personal rivalries of Nazi Germany influenced and hindered its successes. For example, neither Hitler nor Goring ever really understood naval warfare, and Goring was much more interested in bombing of land targets and supporting invasions.* If you are interested in specific planes used by the Luftwaffe, including the various subtypes and prototype models, this is about as comprehensive look at them as you will find. There are discussions of many of the sub-types of German aircraft, and how they fitted into specific roles in the sea war.* The author also captures the efforts of individual German units, and their commanders, to put together a plan for air and naval units to work together. There wasn't a lot of interest on the part of senior commanders, and probably the only reason for their success was their remoteness from Berlin.=== The Not-So-Good Stuff ===* This is definitely a trees rather than a forest book. There is limited effort devoted to the overall strategic goals and results of the Battle of the Atlantic. There are details of individual missions, but little overall analysis of how successful the Luftwaffe was in the Atlantic, or if their contributions had any material effect on the war.* It is just a personal preference, but I just don't enjoy books that are crammed with facts. While I appreciate the author's intent to document the names of individual commanders and the details of various versions of aircraft- I usually end up reading them and promptly forgetting what I read.=== Summary ===As a source for documenting specific facts about the Luftwaffe and its Atlantic campaign, the book is a valuable resource. But for an armchair historians like me, I am more interested in narratives about the tactics and strategies of the

warring powers, and more analysis on how specific actions, technologies, tactics and commanders affected the overall campaign and war. I would recommend the book only if you are really interested in detailed facts surrounding the German Air Force, its units and commanders, and its aircraft.===
Disclaimer ===I was able to read an advance copy through the courtesy of NetGalley and the publisher.

received a free Kindle copy of *Shadow Over the Atlantic: The Luftwaffe and the U-Boats: 1943-45* by Robert Forsyth courtesy of Net Galley and Osprey Publishing, the publisher. It was with the understanding that I would post a review to Net Galley, Goodreads, , Barnes and Noble and my history book review blog. I also posted it to my Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Google Plus pages. I requested this book as I read a great deal about World War II, but not much about U-Boats and their interaction with the Luftwaffe. It is the first book by Robert Forsyth that I have read. This is a well researched book, but it is not one that will rivet you to your seat and cannot put down. The author presents the facts and story is a well detailed history of the relationship between U-Boats and the Luftwaffe. It lacks the engagement that some of the other authors of the time period have developed that makes for a more enjoyable read. I recommend this to anyone with an interest in World War II in Europe, the Luftwaffe and U-Boats. But be prepared for a somewhat dry recitation of the fact
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