
Subject: Re: RenAlert Depth charges?

Posted by [mahkra](#) on Mon, 28 Jun 2004 06:06:40 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

IceSword71 dont understand how these could work?

Who would be dumb enough to stay directly under the enemy boat?

Actually, in real life, depth charges really didn't work very well, for precisely this reason. (I say "didn't" because we don't use them any more -- they were phased out by torpedoes after WWII.)

When they were invented (back in WWI) they were basically just cans of TNT with pressure-triggered fuses (so they'd blow up at a pre-set depth), but they worked relatively well because back then submarines couldn't go very deep. And it's easy to drop a bomb on someone if they're really close to you... But then submarine technology started to improve, and depth charges became less and less effective.

They do work a bit better than one might think, though, because you don't have to score a direct hit to do damage. If the charge explodes relatively close to the submarine's hull, the shock waves from the explosion will damage the sub slightly and may cause leaks. And if the sub starts leaking, it will be forced to surface. And once it's at the surface, the ship can use its guns or simply ram the submarine.

Depth charges started to become a bit more effective when technology was developed to launch the charges off the ship. This allowed ships to cover a larger volume of water with depth charges at the same time. And if you can put enough charges in the water at once, the sub can't avoid all of them.<http://www.ussslater.org/weapons/dpthchrg.html> Generally, several charges are released in rapid succession to form a pattern in depth, width, and length, and thus increase the probability of destroying the submarine. The pattern is obtained by dropping some charges from release gear on the stern, and firing others abeam from projectors, with appropriate depth settings made on the charges before launching.

At least, that's the theory. But in WWII it didn't always work so well...http://uboat.net/allies/technical/depth_charges.htm the depth charge was not the answer to the U-boat threat. The pressure hull of the U-boat was strong enough to withstand anything but a charge exploding 10 or 20 feet from its hull. To place the weapon this close to the U-boat was extremely difficult to say the least, especially since the U-boat normally took drastic evasive maneuvers at the very last moment. Thus most U-boats that were sunk by depth charges alone probably sank due to accumulated damage from repeated depth charge attacks. Many U-boats survived as many as 300 depth charges over a period of many hours.

The greatest amount of depth charges dropped on a single U-boat during a single-hunt in the war is believed to be 678 dropped onto U-427 in April, 1945. Amazingly the boat survived the onslaught.

Here's another pretty good site for WWII depth charges:

<http://www.de220.com/Armament/Depth%20Charges/DepthCharges.htm>

(One cool thing they mention is the development of the 'magnetic influence trigger' which would

make the depth charge blow up if it got close to a submarine hull -- didn't just have to rely on a pre-set depth any more)

(I realize this doesn't answer any RenAlert-related queries, and for that I apologize, but personally I think real life is much cooler...)
