

The Sinking of the U-126 during WW II



Siegfried Bruckmeier was just 20 years old when he lost his life aboard the German U-Boat U-126 on 3rd July 1943. The U-Boat was sunk by a Wellington bomber off the north coast of Spain (Cape Ortegal) with the loss of all 55 crew.^[1]

Siegfried was born on the 9th August 1922 in Oberaichbach by Landshut^[2]; the eldest son of Jakob Bruckmeier and Maria Bruckmeier (nee Klaus). His brother Alfons was also killed during the war while fighting on the western Front. His other 2 brothers and 2 sisters survived the war.

The U-126 was a type Typ IX C and was launched on the 31st December 1940 in Kiel. The U-Boat was stationed in Lorient (France) and was active in the North- and mid-Atlantic as well as off the coast of West-Africa. The ship and crew undertook 6 missions between 1941 and 1943 and was responsible for the sinking of 25 ships (including one warship) and damaging a further 7 ships. On the final voyage the U-Boat left Lorient on the 20 March 1943, travelling south to Liberia and Sierra-Leon before being sunk 106 days later on the way back to base.^[2]

Chart of U-boat losses 1939-1945

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1939									2	5	1	1	9
1940	2	5	3	4	1	1	2	2	1	1	2		24
1941			5	2	1	4		4	2	2	5	10	35
1942	3	2	7	2	4	3	12	9	10	16	13	5	86
1943	7	18	15	17	42	16	38	25	10	26	19	8	241
1944	14	22	24	21	23	24	23	32	20	9	7	15	234
1945	14	21	29	48	24								136
Total U-boats lost													765

These figures count all U-boats "lost" to the Kriegsmarine. That includes air attacks in harbours, training accidents, accidents at sea and 2 boats interned in neutral countries. In short, any event which cost the German Navy a U-boat for good (i.e. the boat was not re-floated and re-commissioned to fight again).

Excluded are boats surrendered or scuttled in May 1945 and boats that had been paid off earlier in the war (decommissioned).

Apparently on his final shore-leave, Siegfried told his family that he did not expect to survive the next voyage as the new captain was "*hungry for success and likely to take too many risks*". Presumably this was a reference to Siegfried Kietz who, at the age of 26, took over command of the U-126 for the final voyage from Ernst Bauer who was the Kommandant for the previous 5 missions. We can, however, also see above that the



losses of U-Boats in 1943 was significantly higher than in the earlier years of the war. This change was the result of the sheer numbers of Allied ships at sea, Allied air power at sea, and technological developments in anti-submarine warfare. These had been introduced over the period and came to fruition in May, with devastating results.



The names of the U-Boat casualties are on display at the war memorial in Möltenort near Kiel, where the names of all the U-126 final crew are displayed [3]:

Heikendorf (Möltenort), Kreis Plön, Schleswig-Holstein

U-Boot-Ehrenmal Möltenort

U-126

Typ IX C, 2. U-Flottille, Wilhelmshaven & Lorient

	
Kommandant:	Oberleutnant z. S. Siegfried KIETZ
Besatzung:	55, keine Überlebenden
Verbleib:	Am 3.7.1943 im Nordatlantik/ Biscaya von britischem Flugzeug versenkt.
Bemerkungen:	Versenkt von der Wellington „R“ des 172. Geschwaders der RAF nordwestlich von Kap Ortegal bei Position 46°02'N, 11°23'W. Das Flugzeug warf 8 Wasserbomben, die beidseits des Bootes explodierten. Als die Wellington nur eine Minute später die Stelle überflog, war nichts mehr zu sehen. U-154 hatte die Versenkung beobachtet und dem BdU gemeldet. Quelle: Die deutschen und österreichischen U-Boot-Verluste in beiden Weltkriegen (Paul Kemp, 1997)

Namen der Gefallenen:

Dienstgrad	Name	Vorname	Geburtsdatum & Ort	Todesdatum	Bemerkungen
OMaschMt	ALBRECHT	Heinrich	04.03.1919	03.07.1943	E.K.2., E.K.1. *)
Lt.z.S	BACHER	Emil	03.06.1909	03.07.1943	
OLt.z.S	BALLESTREM	Johannes, von	17.02.1914	03.07.1943	
FkOGfr	BARTHEL	Kurt	21.12.1923	03.07.1943	
MaschOGfr	BECKER	Heinz	12.12.1922	03.07.1943	
MtrOGfr	BRUCKMEIER	Siegfried	09.08.1922	03.07.1943	
Fähn.z.S	GAEDE	Wolfgang	16.02.1923	03.07.1943	
MtrOGfr	GALKOWSKI	Franz	08.04.1924	03.07.1943	
BtsMt	HARTIG	Willi	12.12.1911	03.07.1943	
MechMt	HARTMANN	Heinrich	27.06.1921	03.07.1943	
MaschOGfr	HEERDA	Wilhelm	10.01.1922	03.07.1943	
MtrOGfr	HORTMANN	Johann	10.06.1922	03.07.1943	
MaschOGfr	JORIAS	Josef	09.07.1922	03.07.1943	
MtrGfr	JUCH	Heinrich	21.03.1923	03.07.1943	
MaschGfr	JUSTUS	Alfred	01.09.1923	03.07.1943	
MtrOGfr	KABISCH	Walter	16.04.1922	03.07.1943	

References:

- [1] [Onlineprojekt Gefallenendenkmäler](#)
- [2] [U-boat patrols \(U-126\)](#)
- [3] [U-Boot-Ehrenmal Möltenort](#)