Lesson #3: The War in the Sea & Air

King’s Preference
• King preferred Air Force & Navy participation to the Army
• High infantry casualties & deaths could lead to conscription.
• The Air Force & Navy were also more attractive to volunteers, so these branches grew in WW2.
Lesson #3: The War in the Sea & Air

The War in The Sea

• Many battles were fought for control of the seas, worldwide.
• The most significant theater for Canada was the Atlantic.
• At the start of the war, Canada had only 1,819 sailors & a total of 13 ships.
• In 1940, Canada sent all four of its destroyers to Britain.
Lesson #3: The War in the Sea & Air

Merchant Navy

- **Convoys** were large groups of cargo ships, tankers & passenger ships.
- They transported oil, equipment & soldiers across the Atlantic.
- They were slow and often defenseless.
- The gov’t recruited & trained sailors to man these ships, but they remained “civillians”.
- After the war they were denied veteran benefits, despite suffering significant losses.
- In 1992 they were finally given status equivalent to RCN veterans.

Smith Hudson i-Teach
Lesson #3: The War in the Sea & Air
Convoys & Corvettes

- German **U-boats** hunted convoys in teams called **wolfpacks**
- Canada built small “Corvette” class ships to escort the convoys.
- The need was urgent, so Canada focused on quantity.
- Expensive anti-submarine equipment was not included.
- Canada’s navy had few experienced sailors.
- Convoys escorted by Canadian ships suffered heavy losses.

RCN Corvettes were named for Cndn towns.

Examples:
- HMS Kamloops (*pic*)
- HMS Vancouver
- HMS Trail
- HMS Chilliwack
- HMS Nanaimo
Lesson #3: The War in the Sea & Air

Losing The Battle of the Atlantic

- 1940-1942: The allies were losing the battle of the Atlantic.
- German U-boats even entered the St. Lawrence River.
The Battle of the Atlantic starts when passenger ship Athena is torpedoed by U-boat on September 3rd; first convoy route established. To learn more visit "The Battle of the Atlantic" on the Juno Beach site.
After the fall of France, Kriegsmarine sets up U-boat bases in Brest, Lorient and Saint-Nazaire; U-boats attack shipping near the British Isles. To learn more visit "The Battle of the Atlantic" on the Juno Beach site.
Wolf packs of U-boats attack convoys in the middle of the Atlantic; the United States enter the war. To learn more visit "The St. Lawrence Under Attack" on the Juno Beach site.
U-boats attack shipping near the American coast and enter the gulf of St. Lawrence. To learn more visit "The St. Lawrence Under Attack" on the Juno Beach site.
Lesson #3: The War in the Sea & Air

Winning the Battle of the Atlantic

- March 1943- US, Br. & Can. made a new plan
  - Br. to equip & train the Canadians
  - US to provide air cover
  - Canada took over escort duties.
- The Allies began to win the battle of the Atlantic due to better equipment, training & air cover.
- The German code was broken after the allies stole an Enigma machine.
- By the end of the war, Canada had the third largest Navy in the world with 373 ships.
U-boats attack shipping near the American coast and enter the gulf of St. Lawrence. To learn more visit "The St. Lawrence Under Attack" on the Juno Beach site.
U-boats attack shipping outside the areas of air patrol. To learn more visit "Victory in the Atlantic" on the Juno Beach site.
Juno Beach Interactive Centre

Atlantic Theatre

LEGEND
- Merchant ships sunk
- U-boats sunk
- Convoy Route
- General Area of Convoy Routes
- Radius of Local Escort
- Range of land-based aircraft
- Mid-Ocean Meeting Point

Learn More...
- A Typical Convoy
- Minesweeping
- Air Ferry Routes

Choose An Area

Select a Year: 1936 1937 1938 1939 1940 1941 1942 1943 1944 1945

Allied navies take control over the Atlantic.
To learn more visit "Victory in the Atlantic" on the Juno Beach site.
Fighting concentrated in the waters off Northwest Europe and Great Britain; Germany surrenders May 4th.
To learn more visit "Victory in the Atlantic" on the Juno Beach site.
Lesson #3: The War in the Sea & Air

Video: A Miserable, Rotten, Hopeless Life
Lesson #3: The War in the Sea & Air

The War in the Air

- **Bomber Command** carried out bombings.
- **Fighter Command** was responsible for shooting down enemy fighters & bombers.

(Other commands incl. Transport, Coastal, Southeast Asia)

- The RCAF grew significantly, but many Cdn squadrons (~12 planes) flew with RAF Groups (~50 Sqdrns).
- Also, many Canadian pilots flew with the RAF, (more prestige, better conditions & equipment)
- Canadian pilots flew in Europe, North Africa, & Southeast Asia
- By 1945 the RCAF was the 4th largest allied air force.
Lesson #3: The War in the Sea & Air

Bomber Command

- Canadians took part in the night bombing of Germany
- Bombing runs were aimed at industry, then civilian populations.
  - *The city of Hamburg was bombed so heavily that fires created their own winds, which fed more fires, causing a firestorm.*
- Bombing was a dangerous mission; most RCAF fatalities were with Bomber Command
- In 1942 there was a 1 in 3 chance of surviving a tour of duty- 30 missions.
Lesson #3: The War in the Sea & Air

Group 6

• In 1943, an all Canadian Bomber Group was formed.

• Group 6 was a junior group, stationed farthest north (longer distance to fly) and was the last to get newer, better planes.

• The Group 6 survival rate was 1 in 8.

• By 1944, better training & equipment improved the numbers.