

The U.S. Coast Guard at D-Day: Rescue Flotilla One the "Matchbox Fleet"



Above: The Matchbox fleet. Below Left: rescuing downed pilots. Below center: Alongside the *Joseph T. Dickman*. Below right: The tally board. All images in the Coast Guard Heritage Asset Collection

Prior to D-Day, President Roosevelt suggested that Operation Neptune needed a rescue flotilla. The Coast Guard had sixty 83-foot patrol boats, nicknamed the "matchbox fleet," on anti-submarine duty. Although they were constructed of wood and had gasoline engines, hence the nickname, they were available and had trained crews. Renamed Rescue Flotilla One, they rescued nearly 500 Allied personnel on 6 June 1944. During the "first hours" of the D-Day assault, they rescued 194 off Omaha Beach, 157 off Utah and 133 off Gold, Juno & Sword. In total during the flotilla's Normandy service they rescued 1,438.



Searching for survivors.

