Some recent books

Before the US entered the Second World War, twenty-two American citizens crossed the Atlantic and volunteered with the Royal Navy. They were commissioned between September 1939 and November 1941 and fought in the Battle of the Atlantic and in other theatres.

While the history of Americans serving in the Royal Air Force is well known, the story of the US naval volunteers has not been previously told. Most trained at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, but since foreign military service was against US law, their names were never made public. After years of research, their identities and the details of their contributions are now known in Passport not required: US Volunteers in the Royal Navy, 1939–1941. Published by the Naval Institute Press and written by Commander Eric Dietrich-Berryman, Charlotte Hammond, and Ronald ‘Chalky’ White, this 186 page volume with 30 black and white photographs, was launched in Britain early in December where the price is £19.99 (ISBN: 978 1 59114 224 9).

America’s First Clash with Iran: The Tanker War, 1987-1988
In May 1987 the US frigate Stark, calmly sailing the waters of the Persian Gulf, was suddenly blown apart by an Exocet missile fired from an Iraqi jet fighter. A fifth of the ship’s company was killed and many others wounded, some seriously. This event began one of the most mysterious conflicts in American history, The Tanker War, waged against Iran for control of the Persian Gulf. Hostilities took place at the climax of the extensive Iran-Iraq War during the Reagan administration. Losing on the battlefield, Ayatollah Khomeini’s Iran had decided to close the Persian Gulf against shipping from Iraq’s oil-rich backers including the Emirate of Kuwait. The Kuwaitis appealed for help and America sent a fleet to the Gulf, in support of Kuwait’s commercial tankers.

The result was a free-for-all, as the Iranians laid mines throughout the narrow passage and launched attack boats against both tankers and US warships. The sixth largest ship in the world, the tanker Bridgeton (401,000dwt), steaming light hit an Iranian mine and flooded but mercifully remained afloat. The US Navy fought its largest surface battle since the Second World War against the Ayatollah’s assault boats. Meanwhile, US Navy Seals arrived in the Gulf, manning two mobile
platforms. As Saddam Hussein, who had instigated the conflict, looked on, Iranian gunners fired shore-based *Silkworm* missiles against US forces.

The subject is presented in *America’s First Clash with Iran: The Tanker War, 1987-88* by Lee Allen Zatarain, published as a paperback by Casemate Publishers of the US and Britain. ISBN 978 1 935149 36 1. Price £13.99. The US Naval Institute *Proceedings* said of this, “A fine job of recounting a 20 year old fight that was no doubt just another round in a continuing struggle.” Another reviewer regards the work as, “…an essential…for those wishing to understand America’s vast naval and air capability, as well as its enduring vulnerability.”