

TORPEDO ALLEY



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Newsletter of Charleston Base, United States Submarine Veterans, Inc.

USSVI Creed

“To perpetuate the memory of our shipmates who gave their lives in the pursuit of their duties while serving their country. That their dedication, deeds, and supreme sacrifice be a constant source of motivation toward greater accomplishments. Pledge loyalty and patriotism to the United States of America and its Constitution”



Base Meeting:

Second Thursday of the month, January 12, 2012
Social Hour: 1800
Meeting starts: 1900

Location:

Fleet Reserve Association Branch 269
Low Country Home
99 Wisteria Rd.
Goose Creek, South Carolina. Phone 843-569-2962

Special Officers Phone Number

Chief of the Boat	Rick Sparger	843-553-5594
Public Affairs	Larry Starland	843 863-8474
Veterans Affairs	Jim Morrison	843-832-9716
Chaplain	John “Nick” Nichols	843-452-3189
Membership	Carl Chinn	843-875-3098
Holland Club	John Lookabill	843-797-2991
Scholarship	Julian Villegas	843-871-6135
Newsletter	Ervin Chase	904-327-6045
Storekeeper	Ken Hutchison	843-553-0935
Webmaster	John “Nick” Nichols	843-452-3189
Historian	George Scharf	843 873-3318

Base Officers Phone Number

Commander	Carl Chinn	843-875-3098
Vice Commander	Marty Sessler	843-871-1536
Secretary	Theron Irving	843-572-2731
Treasurer	Terry Trump	843-873-9563

Russian Nuclear Submarine Blaze: Injures Nine After Crew Remain Inside

The Guardian, December 30

The Russian president, Dmitry Medvedev, has ordered an investigation after a nuclear submarine caught fire during repairs in the Arctic, injuring at least nine people.

The blaze, believed to have been started by a welding lamp igniting rubbish and wooden scaffolding next to the craft, raged for nine hours at

a shipyard in the Murmansk region. Up to 30 crew members remained inside the submarine, although it was unclear if they were trapped.

Russian officials were quick to announce there had been no radiation leak from the nuclear sub, named Yekaterinburg, after the flames were extinguished. Conflicting reports said between nine and sixteen people were treated for smoke inhalation. Bellona, a respected Norwegian NGO which monitors Russia's nuclear fleet, said the number of casualties may have been higher.

Friday's fire was the second blow for Russia's military this week after it emerged a blogger had published photographs of a night visit to a secret rocket engine factory near Moscow. It is also the latest in a string of accidents to befall Russia's fleet of nuclear submarines in recent years, the most notorious being the explosion that sent the Kursk to the bottom of the Barents Sea in 2000, killing all 118 crew on board. A K-159 submarine sank in the same waters three years later with the loss of nine men, and 20 people died after the leak of a fire suppressant gas on a K-152 Nerpa off Russia's Pacific coast in 2008.

The K-84 Yekaterinburg, launched in 1984, is normally equipped with up to 16 missiles and 12 torpedoes. It was reportedly unarmed and in dry dock when the fire started Friday afternoon and spread to the rubber shell around the craft. About 400 emergency workers struggled to contain the blaze using helicopters and tug boats, partially submerging the vessel in order to put it out.

The 18,200-tonne, 167-metre Yekaterinburg was reportedly used twice this year to successfully test-fire the Sineva ballistic missile, also known by its Nato designation Skiff.

Igor Konashenkov, a defence ministry spokesman, said the Yekaterinburg's reactor was out of operation at the time of the accident, which happened at the Roslyakovo dock, one of the main port's for Russia's northern fleet, situated about 900 miles north of Moscow close to the city of Murmansk. "There is no danger of a radioactive leak," he said.

Prosecutors have launched a criminal investigation into the accident. Medvedev ordered deputy prime ministers Dmitry Rogozin and Igor Sechin to examine the causes of the fire and ensure the craft is restored.

The fire will embarrass Medvedev, who this year approved £400bn of arms spending to 2020.

The desolate region around Murmansk contains the biggest concentration of old nuclear reactors in the world and, since the cold war ended, has become the world's atomic dustbin. Murmansk is home to the old Soviet Union's northern fleet of nuclear submarines, many of Russia's atom-powered icebreakers and several 40-year-old civil reactors.

Alexander Ruzankin, head of economic development for the Murmansk region, says it has around 200 working nuclear reactors and 20,000

separate stores of waste, ranging from containers full of radioactive water to decrepit buildings full of fuel rods.

Nearly 20% of the world's reactors and nuclear fuel is concentrated in the region. A few obsolete nuclear submarines are decommissioned each year with the help of US and Norwegian aid, but the nuclear legacy is growing as Germany and former Soviet states send their radioactive research reactors and nuclear waste there for decommissioning and eventual shipment to the Urals.

Many of the stores are in a dangerous condition and are leaking water and radioactive substances into the soil and water.

Photo's shed light on the cause of the fire onboard a Russian nuclear submarine

Photographs posted by a blogger of the Russian nuclear submarine that caught fire last week while in dry dock have shed more light on what possibly caused the intense 20-hour blaze and demystify some of the initial speculation surrounding the breath of the fire and its implications.

Charles Digges, Igor Kudrik, 04/01-2012

The photographs, which appear on Blogger51.ru show flames belching from the interior of the port side of the Yekaterinburg nuclear submarine while it was located for repairs in dry dock in Roslyakovo near Severomorsk 1500 kilometres north of Moscow. Blogger51 is an alternative news web site covering events in northeastern Russia not carried by the official press.

Another photograph shown by Blogger51 of the submarine, which was taken before the fire, shows that an enormous hole had been cut in the port side of the submarine's forward section, making an opening the submarine's hydro-acoustic chamber.

Bellona's Alexander Nikitin a former Russian submarine captain said after reviewing the photographs that the fire appears to have spread to the submarine's hydro-acoustic chamber, located in the space between the inner and outer hulls of the submarine. The chamber is filled with water while the sub is at sea.

The navigational chamber is located very close to the torpedo compartment which is placed in the inner hull in the bow part of the submarine. The official explanation for the fire was that unsafe welding works set a wooden scaffolding around the

submarine ablaze, which then spread to the rubber outer hull of the submarine. The Emergency Service's Ministry reported that it had submerged the submarine up to its conning tower on Thursday night, when the fire broke out, but battled smoldering flames between the outer hull and the inner hull until Friday morning.

According to the analysis by Nikitin, who is also chairman of Bellona's Environmental Rights Center Bellona in St. Petersburg, this explanation is essentially untrue: There was no wooden scaffolding. The scaffolding was made of metal. The hydro-acoustic chamber, he said, is typically filled not only with water, but heavy oils and other contaminants that are found in the waters near naval ports. The antennas themselves also contain a certain amount of oil for isolation. In additions there are high-pressure air tanks located in between the inner and outer hulls.

This, said Nikitin would explain the duration and intensity of the fire: The oil residues that were left behind after the water was taken out of the acoustic chamber would have burned for a long time, and damaged air pressure tanks would have accounted for the intensity and height of the flames reported by witnesses via various internet social networks.

Flames of up to 10 meters at some periods and were seen from kilometers away as the fire blazed. The fire was initially reported to the local branch of the Emergency Service Ministry by civilians, not the navy.

Reports today indicate that the submarine has left dry dock in Roslyakovo and is headed toward the Okolnaya base, to proceed further for extensive repairs at Severodvinsk in Arkhangelsk Oblast.

Okolnaya is a base equipped with cranes designed to remove ballistic missiles from submarines.

According to Nikitin, it is typical to leave weaponry aboard a submarine when it puts in for only short terms repairs, as was the case with the Yekaterinburg as it has now been removed from dry dock so quickly.

But whether the vessel contains intercontinental ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads or simply test missiles remains in question.

The Defense Ministry when reached by Bellona on Wednesday maintained there were no weapons on board and would not confirm if the vessel was being moved to Okolnaya.

The 18,200 tonne Yekaterinburg, a Delta-IV class submarine, is built to carry 16 intercontinental ballistic missiles with four warheads a piece and 12 torpedoes.

President Dmitry Medvedev has charged Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin with conducting a thorough investigation into the Yekatriburg.

Russia: Nuclear sub fire out, no radiation leak

By Vladimir Isachenkov - The Associated Press
Posted : Friday Dec 30, 2011 8:01:14 EST

MOSCOW — Firefighters extinguished a massive fire aboard a docked Russian nuclear submarine Friday as some crew members remained inside, officials said, assuring that there was no radiation leak and that the vessel's nuclear-tipped missiles were not on board.

Military prosecutors have launched an investigation into whether safety regulations were breached, and President Dmitry Medvedev summoned top Cabinet officials to report on the situation and demanded punishment for anyone found responsible.

The fire broke out Thursday at an Arctic shipyard outside the northwestern Russian city of Murmansk where the submarine Yekaterinburg was in dry-dock. The blaze, which shot orange flames high into the air through the night, was put out Friday afternoon and firefighters continued to spray the vessel with water to cool it down, Emergency Situations Minister Sergei Shoigu said.

Russian state television earlier showed the rubber-coated hull of the submarine still smoldering, with firefighters gathering around it and some standing on top to douse it with water.

Seven members of the submarine crew were hospitalized after inhaling poisonous carbon monoxide fumes from the fire, Shoigu said.

An unspecified number of crew remained inside the submarine during the fire, Defense Ministry spokesman Col. Igor Konashenkov said in a statement. He insisted there never was any danger of it spreading inside the sub and said the crew reported that the conditions on board remained

normal.

Konashenkov's statement left it unclear whether the crew were trapped there or ordered to stay inside.

There has been no radiation leak from the fire, the Defense Ministry and Foreign Ministry said, and Norway's Radiation Protection Authority across the border reported it has not measured any increased radioactivity.

However, the governor in Finnmark, Norway's northeastern province that borders Russia's Murmansk Oblast, told Norwegian broadcaster NRK that he was disappointed with Russia's response.

"There have been problems to get clear information from the Russian side," Gunnar Kjoennoey was quoted as saying. "We have an agreement to exchange information in such cases, but there has been no information from the Russian side so far."

Russia's military says the blaze started on wooden scaffolding and then engulfed the sub's outer hull. The vessel's nuclear reactor had been shut down and its nuclear-tipped missiles and other weapons had been unloaded before dry-dock repairs, it said.

Toxic fumes from the blaze had spread to the town of Roslyakovo where the shipyard is located, but officials said there was no need to evacuate local residents.

Per Strand of the Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority said they had received information about the fire through the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, after which they contacted the Russians themselves.

"We have a warning agreement but we're working on also getting warnings for small incidents which the Russians do not believe will not cross the border. But we're not there yet," Strand told the Norwegian news agency NTB.

The Yekaterinburg is a Delta-IV-class nuclear-powered submarine that normally carries 16 nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles. It was commissioned by the navy in 1985.

Most modern submarines' outer hulls are covered with rubber to make them less noisy and more difficult for an enemy to detect.

The chief of the General Staff of the Russian armed forces, Gen. Nikolai Makarov, led a team of senior military officials to Roslyakovo to oversee the emergency response.

The damage from the fire could be so massive that the submarine would need to be scrapped, the Interfax news agency reported Friday. But Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, who is in charge of the nation's military industries, said after the meeting that the submarine will rejoin the navy after repairs.

The Russian navy suffered its worst accident in August 2000, when the Kursk nuclear submarine exploded and sank during naval maneuvers, killing all 118 crew members aboard.

A 2008 accident at the Nerpa nuclear-powered submarine killed 20 Russian seamen and injured 21 others when its fire-extinguishing system activated in error and spewed suffocating Freon gas.



January Submarines Lost:

USS S 36	SS 141	January 20, 1942
USS S 26	SS 131	January 24, 1942
USS Argonaut	SS 166	January 10, 1943
USS Scorpion	SS 278	January 5, 1944
USS Swordfish	SS 193	January 12, 1945

When we were young and feeling our oats
We joined the Navy and went on those boats
That sank on purpose sliding into the sea.
Nobody knew where we were going to be
Except for a few who charted the way
To a far off coastline or a secret bay.
The rest of us did what we were trained to do
And trusted each other - but prayed a lot too.
In a sewer pipe coffin we just did our jobs
Pulling sticks, cycling vents or adjusting some knobs.

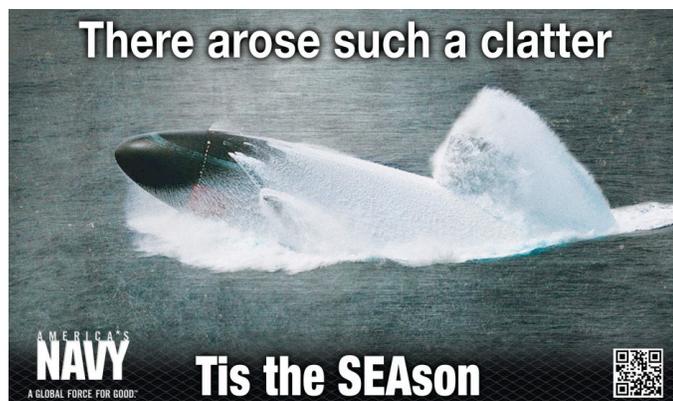
When all hell broke loose we knew what was best
Because we had dolphins affixed to our chest.
But although we knew every valve on the boat
That made it submerge or caused it to float.
It wasn't dolphins or qual cards or years worth of studies

That would save us....but rather our crewmates....our buddies.

Many stood by us then, but they stand here no more.
On Eternal Patrol that have left their last shore.
Husbands and fathers and grandfathers too
Who sailed with us, challenged us under the blue.
Forever a mate, forever our friend
We're bonded as shipmates beyond our lives end.
We pray for them now as we prayed with them then.

May you rest in peace always, my brothers - -
AMEN

By Mike Bickel



A Bird? A Plane? A Droid? A UFO?



The X-47B: Story continued onto next page.

The X-47B Unmanned Combat Air System arrived at Pax River early this morning after completing a yearlong test phase at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif. Personnel departed Edwards AFB last month with the X-47B loaded on a truck for transport cross-country. "The transition to Pax River is a highlight for the program," said Capt. Jaimie Engdahl, Navy UCAS program manager. "We are working toward demonstrating the aircraft's ability to operate on and around an aircraft carrier." The X-47B is a tailless, autonomous, unmanned aircraft that Northrop Grumman is developing and testing for the Navy's UCAS Demonstration program. X-47B is the first fixed-wing unmanned system designed to operate from a Navy aircraft carrier. The Navy and Northrop Grumman conducted first flight of the X-47B in February 2011 at Edwards AFB. Since then, the aircraft has undergone a series of flight tests demonstrating its performance under a variety of conditions. The combined Navy/industry UCAS-D team will conduct shore-based carrier suitability tests at Pax River in 2012. Tests will verify the X-47B's ability to communicate with the aircraft carrier and to operate safely and effectively with the ship's catapult and arresting gear. Testing at Pax River will be conducted following stringent flight safety procedures and will be conducted within restricted airspace. The first X-47B flight at Pax River is planned for spring 2012. A second X-47B aircraft is also scheduled to arrive early next year.

Mission

The mission of the Navy Unmanned Combat Air System (UCAS) Aircraft Carrier Demonstration (UCAS-D) is to mature technologies for a carrier suitable, low observable relevant, unmanned air system in support of a potential follow-on acquisition milestone for an unmanned air system capable of providing persistent, penetrating surveillance, and penetrating strike capability in high threat areas. The X-47B made a successful first flight on February 4, 2011 at Edwards AFB.

Description

The Navy UCAS program will evolve technologies required to conduct Launch, Recovery, and Carrier Controlled Airspace operations and Autonomous Aerial Refueling (AAR) of an LO platform. The Navy plans to:

- Achieve UCAS CV demonstration
- Achieve probe & drogue (US Navy style) and boom/receptacle (US Air Force style) AAR demonstration with an unmanned platform
- Evaluate and identify technologies supporting future Naval Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance and strike capability requirements

In the 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review, the Navy was directed to restructure the Joint Unmanned Combat Air System (J-UCAS) program and develop an unmanned, longer-range carrier-based aircraft capable of being air-refueled to provide greater aircraft carrier standoff capability, to expand payload and launch options, and to increase naval reach and persistence. The primary goal is risk reduction for carrier integration and maturation of critical technologies, while developing the critical data necessary to support a potential acquisition milestone decision.

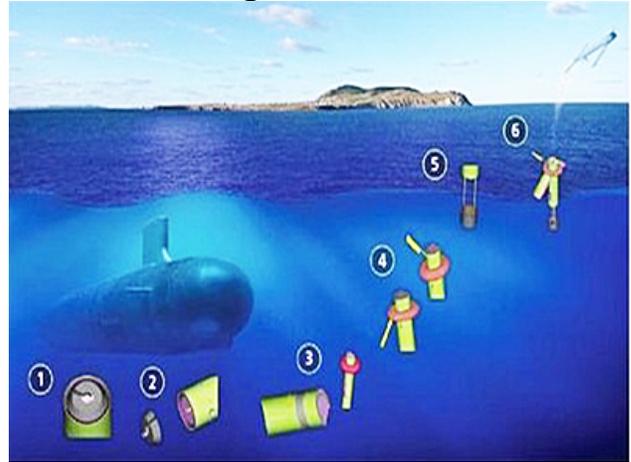
Specifications

Overall Length: 38.2 feet **Wingspan:** 62.1 Feet **Height:** 10.4 feet **Aircraft Carrier Takeoff Gross Weight:** approximately 44,500 pounds **Speed:** High subsonic **Power Plant:** one Pratt & Whitney F100-220U engine **Payload Provisions:** 4500 pounds, plus allowance for electro-optical, infrared, radar and electronic support measures sensors **Autonomous Aerial Refueling Provisions:** US Navy and US Air Force styles **Contractor:** Northrop Grumman Corporation

Program Status

ACAT: Pre-Major Defense Acquisition Program (MDAP) **Production Phase:** Demo **Inventory:** 2

The Navy's New Submarine Drone Will Launch Through The Trash Chute



The U.S. Navy has announced it will deploy the [AeroVironment Switchblade](#) drone from a submerged submarine during naval exercises next year.

[Gaham Warwick at Aviation Week](#) reports the contract to get the drone from the sub to the air went to [Raytheon](#), which built the submerged launch vehicle (SLV) system that sends the drone through the trash disposal unit on its way to the surface (via [fbo.gov](#)).

Launched at periscope depth, the drone is folded into a canister, shaped like a large projectile round, and once in the water it floats to the surface and parks at a 35 degree angle. Once it hits the waves, the canister opens, delivers a small charge to the electric drone, which launches itself from the canister.

The move is part of a Submarine-Over-The-Horizon Organic Capability (SOTHOC) program that will allow submarine crews to deploy surveillance from their shallowly submerged vessels.

Read more:

<http://www.businessinsider.com/submarine-drone-launched-trash-chute-2011-12#ixzz1hpzAuBay>

Air Force Retiree News **Release No. 01-02-12**

Jan. 4, 2012

Walgreens no longer a TRICARE pharmacy provider

FALLS CHURCH, Va. – The expiration of the retail pharmacy contract between Express Scripts, Inc. and the Walgreens pharmacy chain means Walgreens is no longer a TRICARE pharmacy network provider as of Jan. 1.

“The january majority of beneficiaries have access to another network pharmacy very close to home as our pharmacy contract requires ESI to maintain high-access standards,” said Rear Adm. Thomas McGinnis, chief of the TRICARE Pharmaceutical Operations Directorate. “There are still 56,000 network pharmacies nationwide -- easily meeting or exceeding our access requirements.”

Besides 56,000 network pharmacies, TRICARE beneficiaries have other pharmacy options including military pharmacies at no cost and TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery. Generic medications are available at no cost through Home Delivery.

Beneficiaries who use non-network pharmacies, including Walgreens, pay full prescription costs upfront and submit their own claims for reimbursement. Reimbursement will occur only after the non-network deductible is met. Out-of-network costs include a 50 percent point-of-service cost share for TRICARE Prime, after deductibles are met. All other non-active duty TRICARE beneficiaries pay the greater amount of a \$12 co-pay or 20 percent of the total cost for formulary medications, and the greater of \$25 or 20 percent of the total cost for non-formulary medications, after deductibles are met.

For more on pharmacy costs, visit www.tricare.mil/pharmacycosts.

TRICARE beneficiaries changing from Walgreens pharmacy can simply take their current prescription bottle to their new network pharmacy to have the prescription transferred. To find a nearby network

pharmacy, use the “find a pharmacy” feature on www.express-scripts.com/tricare. Beneficiaries who want help finding a pharmacy, changing their medications to Home Delivery, or who have other questions can contact Express Scripts at 877-885-6313.

The issues between ESI and Walgreens are not specific to TRICARE. Other employer-sponsored and some Medicare Part D pharmacy plans are also affected. Beneficiaries with questions and concerns about this issue can go to <http://www.tricare.mil/walgreens/> for more information.

“We are committed to ensuring all our pharmacy beneficiaries are aware of the many options that TRICARE makes available to them,” said Brig. Gen. Bryan Gamble, TRICARE deputy director. “By now, all of our beneficiaries who use Walgreens to fill prescriptions should have been contacted to advise them of their pharmacy options and to take action to ensure their pharmacy benefit remains uninterrupted.”

For more retiree news and information, please visit www.retirees.af.mil.

U.S. ship rescues Iranian fishermen— AGAIN!!



An Iranian mariner greets a US Coast Guardsmen
Jan 10, 2012. (Centcom/Defense Department)

U.S. ship rescues Iranian fishermen– AGAIN!! Cont'd

American sailors have come to the rescue of distressed Iranian fishermen for the second time in less than a week, the Pentagon said Tuesday. The United States Coast Guard cutter Monomoy "picked up six Iranian mariners after their vessel broke down" in the Persian Gulf Tuesday, the [BBC reported](#).

At about 3 a.m. local time, the Coast Guard vessel "was hailed by flares and flashlights from the Iranian cargo dhow, Ya-Hussayn," the U.S. Navy Central Command/Fifth Fleet [public affairs report said](#). The Iranian fishing ship asked for assistance from the Monomoy because their engine room was flooding.

"Monomoy immediately launched their small boat and approached the Ya-Hussayn," the Pentagon report said. "Two persons were rescued from the vessel, and four from a life raft tied off to the dhow's stern."

The six Iranian mariners were taken aboard the Coast Guard ship and given water, blankets and halal meals, the Pentagon said. One Iranian sailor received medical treatment for minor burns. The Coast Guard then turned the six mariners over to an Iranian Coast Guard vessel at approximately 4:30PM local time, the Pentagon said.

The Captain of the Iranian Coast Guard vessel, the Naji 7, speaking through a translator, thanked the Monomoy captain and crew "for assisting and taking care of the Iranian sailors," the Pentagon said.

The latest American rescue comes just five days after a [U.S. Navy ship belonging to U.S.S. John C. Stennis aircraft carrier strike group freed 13 Iranian fishermen from Somali pirates](#) in the Arabian sea. The American sailors gave clothes, food and water to the freed Iranian fishermen, who had been held hostage by their Somali captors for six weeks. "It is like you were sent by God," one of the freed Iranian fisherman, Fazel ur Rehman, told the American sailors, the New York Times' [C.J. Chivers reported](#).

Iran's foreign ministry on Saturday praised that Navy rescue effort, calling it "a humanitarian gesture.

Iran sentences U.S.-Iranian man to death for spying



(Reuters) - Iran's Revolutionary Court has sentenced an Iranian-American man to death for spying for the CIA, officials said on Monday, a move likely to aggravate U.S.-Iranian tensions already high because of Tehran's disputed nuclear program.

The United States denies that Amir Mirza Hekmati is a spy and has demanded his immediate release. The White House said it was trying to verify the report on his sentencing.

"If true, we strongly condemn such a verdict and will work with our partners to convey our condemnation to the Iranian government," said Tommy Vietor, spokesman for the White House National Security Council.

Western nations have recently expanded punitive economic sanctions against [Iran](#) over suspicions it is trying to develop atomic bombs under the cover of a civilian atomic energy program. The Islamic Republic denies this.

But word from diplomatic sources in Vienna, headquarters of the U.N. nuclear watchdog, that Iran has begun enriching uranium in a mountain bunker protected from possible Western air strikes is likely to heat the atmosphere further.

"Amir Mirza Hekmati was sentenced to death...for cooperating with the hostile country America and spying for the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency)," the student news agency ISNA quoted judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei as saying.

"The court found him Corrupt on the Earth and Mohareb (one who wages war on God). Hekmati

can appeal to the Supreme Court."

Iran's highest court must confirm all death sentences. When it will rule in Hekmati's case was not known.

Hekmati, a 28-year-old of Iranian descent born in the state of Arizona, was arrested in December and Iran's Intelligence Ministry accused him of receiving training at U.S. bases in neighboring [Afghanistan](#) and Iraq.

"Allegations that Mr. Hekmati either worked for, or was sent to Iran by the CIA are false," Vietor said. "The Iranian regime has a history of falsely accusing people of being spies, of eliciting forced confessions, and of holding innocent Americans for political reasons."

The United States urged Iran to grant Hekmati access to legal counsel and to "release him without delay."

Iran's judiciary said Hekmati admitted to having links with the CIA but denied any intention of harming Iran, which has had no relations with the United States since its 1979 Islamic Revolution. Mutual antagonism has reigned since.

Hekmati's parents issued a statement, signed by his mother, Behnaz Hekmati, denying their son was a spy and asking for mercy for him. They said the former U.S. military translator was visiting relatives in Iran for the first time when he was arrested.

"My husband Ali and I are shocked and terrified by the news that our son, Amir, has been sentenced to death," it said.

"Amir did not engage in any acts of spying, or 'fighting against God,' as the convicting Judge has claimed in his sentence. Amir is not a criminal. His very life is being exploited for political gain."

The State Department has said Iran did not permit diplomats from the Swiss Embassy, which represents U.S. interests in Iran, to see him before or during his trial.

Hekmati graduated from a Michigan high school. His father Ali is a professor at a community college in Flint, Michigan.

SPY NETWORK UNCOVERED

Hekmati, whose trial ended on January 2, was shown on Iranian state television in December saying he was a CIA operative sent to infiltrate the Iranian intelligence ministry.

Iran also said on Monday it had broken up an alleged U.S.-linked spy network that planned to "fuel unrest" before the

March parliamentary election, the first nationwide vote since the country's 2009 disputed presidential vote.

"The detained spies were in contact with foreign countries through cyberspace," Intelligence Minister Haydar Moslehi was quoted by state television as saying. He gave no information about the nationalities and the number of those detained.

Iran, which often accuses its foes of trying to destabilize its Islamic system, said in May it had arrested 30 people on suspicion of spying for the United States and later 15 people were indicted for spying for Washington and Israel.

Despite mounting international pressure and sharpened rhetoric, Iran seems determined to stick to its nuclear course ahead of the parliamentary election, to be followed by a presidential ballot in 2013.

The United States is leading efforts to tighten sanctions on Iran. Washington and Israel say they do not rule out carrying out pre-emptive military strikes on Iran's nuclear sites if diplomacy fails to resolve the row.

Iran has threatened to close Gulf oil shipping lanes through the Strait of Hormuz that are vital to the global economy if the West carries out plans to bar Iranian crude exports, or if Iranian nuclear sites came under military attack.

(Additional reporting by Hossein Jaseb, Mitra Amiri and Ramin Mostafavi in Tehran, [Caren Bohan](#) in Washington, [Andrew Stern](#) in Chicago; Writing by Parisa Hafezi; Editing by [Mark Heinrich](#) and [Doina Chiacu](#))

When Cutting Defense, Consider Subs' Strategic Value

As Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta prepares to unveil his strategy to balance national defense priorities with a need to slow the growth of military spending, guiding his assessment should be an emphasis on deterrence and the ability to react quickly and strategically to emerging threats. A strong submarine force is a critical component to such a strategy.

That may sound self-serving coming from a news company located in a region with an economy dependent in large part on a submarine builder - Electric Boat in Groton - and home to a Navy submarine base, but in this case the region's economic self-interest dovetails with national security priorities.

Current planning calls for \$450 billion in reduced defense spending over the next decade. That number could roughly double, however, because of the failure of the so-called super committee to agree on a deficit-reduction plan.

Personnel costs account for roughly one-third of defense spending, meaning substantial reductions in the number of military personnel in uniform will be necessary. The U.S. cannot afford to maintain a standing army capable of fighting multiple wars. Tomorrow's military must be mobile, strategic and versatile.

The nuclear powered Virginia-class attack submarine, built cooperatively by EB and Newport News Shipbuilding in Virginia, is a versatile weapons' system. The Navy can stealthily dispatch these attack submarines to hot spots globally, where if necessary they can deliver a salvo of Tomahawk cruise missiles with devastating accuracy.

These technological marvels also have the ability to launch mini-submarines that can bring a group of Navy SEALs ashore for special operations aimed at terrorist targets or other military objectives. They have the capability to eavesdrop on communication networks, providing mission-critical information.

The Virginia-class's more traditional mission in anti-submarine warfare and serving as a threat to

enemy surface ships provides a deterrent to other countries that might contemplate the investment necessary to match U.S. naval strength.

Congress and the administration appear to recognize the importance of these submarines to modern warfare and antiterrorist efforts. Commitment to building two Virginia-class submarines a year remains strong, leading to a goal of 53 to 55 attack submarines patrolling the world's oceans.

EB and Newport News have proved they can deliver these ships within budget. The Mississippi, christened a month ago, came in \$50 million below budget and roughly a year ahead of schedule. Compare that to aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford now under construction, expected to be as much as \$1.1 billion over budget.

More vulnerable to defense spending cuts could be the next generation of ballistic-missile submarines that would replace the aging Ohio-class, Trident submarines. EB has begun design work, but these ships will be enormously expensive, perhaps \$5.6 billion per ship. A proposal to instead stretch and retrofit Virginia-class submarines to carry ballistic missiles appears impractical because the Virginia hulls could not accommodate the current Trident II (D5) missiles.

In a nuclear world in which proliferation is the likely forecast, the United States cannot do without the deterrent value of these underwater nuclear missile launch pads. But in a post-Cold War era, the Navy may have to do with less. Fourteen Ohio-class Tridents now perform this mission, while Navy plans call for 12 new ballistic-firing submarines to replace them. Depending on how deep the budget cuts go, the number could drop to 10 or even less. At those levels, long-term national security comes into question. While striking the proper balance of cost and deterrent value will be a challenge, deterrence must be the priority.

In the coming high-stakes political game of how to trim defense spending, advocates for the submarine force hold a winning hand, but they must play their cards well