

TORPEDO ALLEY



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United States Submarine Veterans - Charleston Base Newsletter

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:

January 10 2013 Social hour 1800 General Meeting 1900

Location:

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

Base Officers	Click to email	Phone Number
Commander	Carl Chinn	843-875-3098
Vice Commander	Jerry Stout	843-871-9533
Secretary	Rick Wise	843-875-5559
Treasurer	Terry Trump	843-873-9563

Appointed Officers	Click to email	Phone Number
Chief of the Boat	Rick Sparger	843-553-5594
Public Affairs	Ed Stank	843 863-8474
Veterans Affairs	Jim Morrison	843-832-9716
Chaplain	John Nichols	843-452-3189
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Newsletter	Steve Morawiec	843-410-0131
Storekeeper	Ken Hutchison	843-553-0935
Webmaster	John Nichols	843-452-3189
Historian	George Scharf	843 873-3318

No December Meeting – No Minutes

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

January Birthdays

Barnette	Beach	Bohling	Euper
Farr	Farrell	Isaman	Kay
Kirk	Lewis	Moore	Murray
Owen	Pasnak	Phillips	Scott
Silvers	Simokat	Stank	Welch
Yoakum	Young		

Notes From The Chaplain

How will you focus your thoughts today? This year? Will you think on those things that are honorable, honest, and admirable? Or will you allow your thoughts to be hijacked by the negativity that seems to dominate our troubled world? Are you fearful, angry, bored, or worried? Are you so preoccupied with the concerns of this day that you fail to thank God for all that He has given you? Are you confused, bitter, or pessimistic?

God intends that you experience joy and abundance. So, today and every day, celebrate the life God has given you by focusing your thoughts upon those things that are worthy of praise. Today, count your blessing instead of your hardships. And thank the Giver of all things good for gifts that are simply too numerous to count.

Your prayer for today: Lord, help me have an attitude that is pleasing to You as I count my blessings each and every day. Amen.

Submarine News

SECNAV Tours Chinese Submarine



NINGBO, China (Nov. 29, 2012) Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) the Honorable Ray Mabus departs the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy Yuan-class submarine Hai Jun Chang (SSP 21). Mabus is visiting China to discuss the new U.S. defense strategy, deepening our military-to-military engagements, rebalancing toward the Pacific and fostering a positive, cooperative and comprehensive relationship with China.

Iran unveils unusually colored blue submarine

It looks like the Iranian Navy really wanted people to see its new submarine. In a live broadcast on state TV on Wednesday, the Islamic Republic showed off a new Sina 7 submarine that is painted in an unusually bright turquoise blue hue. So, why exactly would any military want to design its ship in a colour that can be easily spotted? The Daily Mail speculates that the ship's designers mistakenly chose the colour, believing it would help the craft blend in with the ocean's waters.

Launched from Bandar Abbas, near the Strait of Hormuz, the Sina 7 and two Ghadir-class submarines represent the first wave of the country's "indigenously built" warships, Iran said. "Since the beginning of the Islamic Revolution, we have learned not to ask for help from other countries and stand on our own feet in meeting our demands," Iranian Navy commander Habibollah Sayyari said during the broadcast. "Thanks to the Islamic Revolution, Iran has acquired the know-how to build submarines.

First Qualified Female Submarine Officers Receive Dolphins

Three Sailors assigned to USS Maine (SSBN 741) and USS Wyoming (SSBN 742) became the first female unrestricted line officers to qualify in submarines Dec. 5.

Lt. j.g. Marquette Leveque, a native of Fort Collins, Colo., assigned to the Gold Crew of Wyoming, and Lt. j.g. Amber Cowan and Lt. j.g. Jennifer Noonan of Maine's Blue Crew received their submarine "dolphins" during separate ceremonies at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, Ga., and Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor, Wash.

In order to receive their dolphins, Leveque, Cowan and Noonan were required to qualify as Officer of the Deck and Engineering Officer of the Watch, perform damage control functions, and demonstrate satisfactory qualities of leadership.

Cowan, a native of Colorado Springs, Colo., and Noonan, who hails from Boston, joined two other Blue Crew officers - Lt. j.g. James Barclay and Lt. j.g. John Schaeffer - in receiving their dolphins. Cowan was pinned by her husband, Naval Flight Officer Lt. Adam Cowan. Noonan chose a former Maine shipmate and mentor, Lt. Jason Brethauer, to pin her dolphins. Schaeffer decided to have Lt. Joe Westfall, a current shipmate from the Blue Crew, conduct his pinning.

The Commanding officer of Maine's Blue Crew, Cmdr. William Johnson, pinned Barclay. "I am honored to participate in today's ceremony honoring these four fine officers who have proven themselves over the past year," said Johnson. "They are truly worthy to join in the great legacy of submariners that have gone before us as 'qualified in submarines.'"

In Kings Bay, Leveque, along with fellow Gold Crew officer Lt. j.g. Kyle E. McFadden, participated in a ceremony presided by Cmdr. Christopher Nash, commanding officer of Wyoming's Gold Crew. Leveque was pinned by her husband, Lt. j.g. Luke Leveque, a qualified submariner onboard the ballistic missile submarine USS Maryland (SSBN 738). McFadden was pinned at the ceremony by Nash.

"Today was a very special occasion. It was special because two talented young officers earned the right to lead the next generation of submarine sailors in the most capable Navy the world has ever known. It was also special because these young leaders fully represent the future of our nation's technical talent," said Nash.

Leveque, Cowan and Noonan are three of 24 women - 17 line officers and seven supply officers - assigned to Maine, Wyoming, USS Ohio (SSGN 726) and USS Georgia (SSGN 729). Maine and Ohio are homeported in Bangor, while Wyoming and Georgia are homeported in Kings Bay.

"I am honored to be joining the long tradition of the submarine force by earning my dolphins and excited for the journey to come. I could not have accomplished this without the help of the wardroom and crew of the USS Wyoming," said Leveque.

Leveque, Cowan and Noonan have each completed strategic deterrent patrols aboard their respective submarines. "Qualifying is a huge accomplishment for any submariner, and it feels no different for me," said Noonan. "I am thrilled to finally be a member of this elite community. I'm particularly grateful to my crew, officers and enlisted, for supporting me and holding me to the same standards as those who have gone before me. I look forward to being able to fully contribute to the crew now that I'm a qualified submarine officer."

"Qualification in Submarines is more of a personal achievement," said Cowan. "It requires understanding of the many facets of submarine life and has you perform so many skills that when I take a step back and look at everything that I have done and what this qualification means I will do, it is pretty amazing. I see it as that point where I have demonstrated the knowledge and the instinct to perform safely and smartly in all areas of the ship and its missions. Ultimately, it is a monumental mark of the confidence my command and crew has in me. And earning that respect and acceptance is a feeling that I will hold with me for my entire life."

Prior to reporting to their boats beginning in November 2011, Leveque, Cowan, Noonan and the other women assigned to Ohio, Maine, Wyoming and Georgia graduated from the Submarine Officer Basic Course in Groton, Conn. In addition, the submarine line officers under instruction graduated from the Naval Nuclear Power School at Charleston, S.C., and underwent naval nuclear prototype training.

See photos of the ceremonies here: http://www.navy.mil/list_all.asp?id=70940

Congress Supports Building Two Submarines Per Year

Anyone who has spent much time around either submarines or the Bahamas is likely to have heard of something called AUTEK. Not many people know much about it since it involves submarines and testing to ensure the subs and their weapons work well. AUTEK's main base is on Andros Island, a short flight from Nassau. A key part of AUTEK is its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Naval Forces Sensor and Weapons Accuracy Check Sites (FORACS), known as NFA. AUTEK was picked for its access to the Tongue of the Ocean, a remarkable site protected from the open Atlantic so ambient noise is at a minimum. Here's the surprisingly readable and detailed entry on it from Wikipedia:

"Chosen because of its ideal natural characteristics, and its climate which permits year-round operations, the TOTO is a U-shaped, relatively flat-bottomed trench approximately 20 miles (32 km) wide by 150 miles (240 km) long with a depth which varies gradually from 3,600 feet (1,100 m) in the south to 6,600 feet (2,000 m) in the north. Its only exposure to the open ocean is at the northern end, and except for this ocean opening, the TOTO is surrounded by numerous islands, reefs, and shoals which make a peripheral shelter isolating it from ocean disturbances, particularly high ambient noise which degrades undersea tests and evaluations."

The following piece is a clear bit of advocacy by NFA's Navy guardians in a time of enormous budget uncertainty. Given how rarely service people reach out to the media to write on the record op-ed pieces -- especially about test sites -- we decided to run it. The Editor.

Naval operations are complex and risky, particularly against 21st-Century "hybrid" and "irregular" threats and challenges. In these demanding and dangerous environments, commanding officers (COs) must be confident that their onboard sensors, weapons, combat systems and links will work as intended.

For that, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Naval Forces Sensor and Weapons Accuracy Check Sites (FORACS) Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center (AUTEK), known as "NFA" for short, is a "one-stop shop" to assure COs that their ship systems are accurately and precisely instrumented to deliver situational awareness--the foundation for mission success.

Although co-located with AUTEK, a U.S. Navy national test asset, NFA is one of the Navy's "best-kept secrets." The NFA test team has a long history testing submarines and surface ships. They are often integrated with other test teams, such as Combat System Ship Qualification Trials (CSSQT) or Weapon Systems Accuracy Trials (WSAT), to maximize test periods and minimize impacts to the ships under test. And yet, people are surprised when they learn of NFA's central role in assuring weapon and sensor accuracy and effectiveness.

FORACS dates from the mid-1960s when the Navy discovered problems with its torpedo testing range at Dabob Bay off the Hood Canal leading to Washington's Puget Sound. The range was clocking errors in sonar inputs that were off by as much as 20 degrees. These findings prompted the Bureau of Ships, the predecessor of the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA), to establish a deep-water test and evaluation facility and test ranges off Florida's east coast. Headquartered in West Palm Beach, NFA was the Navy's operational field activity to measure dynamic errors in its platforms.

Back then, the Navy and NATO's priority was to counter the Soviet submarine threat with accurately calibrated anti-submarine warfare sensor and weapon systems. In the 1960's NATO navies had also become aware that their shipboard systems were performing significantly below their designed capability, resulting in significant sensor accuracy errors.

In 1977 the NATO FORACS Office (NFO) was established in Brussels as a multinational alliance activity, an early example of what today is called "Smart Defense." (FORACS exemplifies Smart Defense in this era of tight national defense budgets and reduced national infrastructures. FORACS is a premier, operationally focused example of how NATO is moving toward increased multinational cooperation, interoperability and use of shared assets.)

Four years later the first European range, the NATO FORACS Norway (NFN), near Stavanger, was established. In 1984, the NATO FORACS Greece (NFG) range became operational at Soudha Bay, Crete, and nearby Cape Drapanos. In 1994, the U.S. FORACS V site (co-located at AUTEK) affiliated with the NATO FORACS program as NFA, becoming the Alliance's third instrumented, fixed test range. In addition to fixed facilities, all three NATO FORACS sites support portable testing teams that can deploy virtually anywhere in the world to test and assess operational combat system performance after repairs to major defects or battle damage.

Sensor/weapon/information exchange accuracy and interoperability are fundamental requirements for intra-service, joint and multinational use of cooperative engagement systems that rely on accurate plots. NFA and its sister FORACS sites provide accuracy assurance by measuring errors in sensor performance and testing the full combat system in static and dynamic conditions. The U.S., Norwegian, and Greek NATO FORACS sites perform precision dynamic calibration measurements of the accuracy of target and navigation sensors against common geographical references to satisfy national requirements and meet NATO material readiness standards. The testing process assesses design

specifications of new and upgraded systems, validates performance following new construction and overhaul, and, most critically, assesses real-time operational capability. If a ship has a particular sensor accuracy, performance or interoperability problem, FORACS can design a test tailored to investigate it and to restore or improve overall combat system performance.

NFA facilities test the full range of all in-service systems. At the basic level, testing measures bearing, range, heading and positional sensor errors. The ranges have an undersea capability to test submarine and surface ship sonar and other underwater sensors and communications. All ranges can test for blind spots in antenna radar patterns, and, with mine countermeasures once again a concern, range facilities have installed specific capabilities to test mine-hunting and -avoidance capabilities.

"The United States receives a high return on its investment in our affiliation with the NATO FORACS Project" says Patricia Hamburger, director of integrated warfare systems engineering (SEA 05H) at Naval Sea Systems Command. "The Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe requires all multinational operational units joining NATO formations to use FORACS to ensure interoperability for joint-service and multinational operations. The three sites provide baseline assessments that ensure that U.S. and allied warships can operate together to carry our critical missions and tasks in operations as varied as Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean Sea, Ocean Shield anti-piracy missions off the coast of Somalia, and the naval contributions to International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan."

The test process has evolved from purely stand-alone sensor technical testing to system-level integrated testing, thus enabling the platform to perform as a fully integrated combat system. Dynamic range testing now includes much more command operationally focused serials--such as the three-day Operational Capability Confidence Checks (OC3s)--that can provide technical analysis of tactical procedures by replicating theater-specific threats.

OC3s deliver relevant operational capability to the entire spectrum of maritime operations. All OC3 tests are tailored to individual needs, and they provide the commanding officer with the assurance that the ship's combat system has maximized its ability to enter an operational theater and counter all threats. FORACS issues comprehensive reports to ship personnel, to material commands for evaluation of maintenance and design performance, and to operational commands for measurements of combat readiness.

"The leadership and commitment of NAVSEA 05H and Naval Undersea Warfare Center enable the U.S. Navy to sustain this vital sensor accuracy test service," Hamburger underscored. "We measure and assess reality, not what we think or hope might be the case."

Funding Spat Could Sink USN Virginia-Class Sub

The U.S. Navy wants it. Industry wants it. Democrats and Republicans want it. Appropriators and authorizers want it. Everybody, it seems, wants to put a second Virginia-class nuclear submarine back in the fiscal 2014 budget, keeping the service and its industrial suppliers on a two-boats-per-year building schedule.

But if an agreement isn't reached before too long, a wonky, inside-the-Beltway disagreement on the kind of money used to pay for the sub could kill it, scuttled by an impasse over funding mechanisms. All four lawmaking entities that oversee the U.S. Defense Department have addressed the absence of the sub, which the Navy cut from plans for 2014 and moved to 2018 for affordability reasons. Service leaders don't object when the move is characterized as a calculated risk, with a reasonable chance that Congress — pleased and supportive about the overall Virginia-class program — would find some way to restore the boat.

And that they have. House and Senate authorizers and the Senate Appropriations Committee support paying for the sub in installments, called incremental funding. It's a method frowned on by Congress and the White House. But the scheme is commonly used to pay for very costly programs such as aircraft carriers and big-deck assault ships, and virtually all consumers know that paying for something on the installment plan is a way to make expensive items more affordable.

The Navy also supports the idea, even though objections continue at the Office of Management and Budget, the White House entity that oversees the executive budget process. But House appropriators remain adamantly opposed to incremental funding for the submarine, using the oft-repeated argument that the method obligates future congresses to commit money to programs they may not agree with.

The House's fiscal 2013 defense appropriations bill, approved in July, forbids the Navy from paying for the submarine incrementally. Instead, it defers a new auxiliary ship, provides an additional \$723 million in advanced funding for the sub program — needed to buy long-lead items for the 2014 sub, such as the reduction gear — and directs the Navy to find full funding elsewhere for the additional 2014 boat, seeking savings within the existing nine-sub multiyear procurement plan.

But the deleted afloat forward staging base (AFSB) ship saves only \$38 million, a pittance against the overall \$2.6 billion cost of the submarine. And putting the burden back on the Navy to find more than \$1.2 billion that would be needed for the sub in the 2014 budget only gets service planners back to square one, asking how to fit it all in. "The Navy doesn't have it," one Pentagon source said of the chances of finding full funding.

The submarine, hull number SSN 793, will be the second unit in Block 4 of the Virginia-class program. If it were to be added to 2014, the nine-boat Block 4 group would grow to 10 vessels, and the Navy, according to a report by Congressional Research Service analyst Ron O'Rourke, estimates it would save \$700 million over the 10-boat group through a variety of efficiency factors.

O'Rourke, in his report, noted that \$700 million would be the equivalent of about 27 percent of the cost of a Virginia-class sub, making that much of an additional sub self-financing. General Dynamics Electric Boat and Huntington Ingalls Newport News Shipbuilding share equally in building the submarines, with each shipyard building specific portions of the subs and alternating in final assembly. Work schedules are calculated years in advance, and while neither company would turn down additional work — a problem the yards would love to have — disruptions could occur as the second boat is squeezed back in, with possible cost ramifications.

"Shipyards plan pretty tight," one industry analyst said. "Also, the delays change the cost — there's a factor there. "But," the industry analyst added, "it still works out good because of the block buys."

An Old Argument

The Navy also is fighting to keep the AFSB ship, which would be built at General Dynamics' National Steel and Shipbuilding (NASSCO) yard. The San Diego shipbuilder, a strong performer held in high regard by the Navy, is struggling with a low order book, and the AFSB is key to keeping the work force employed until more ships come along.

The debate over incremental funding is an old one, and avoiding tying up future budgets with multiyear obligations is the standard objection. But multiyear procurement plans are themselves a form of incremental funding, some observers point out, as is the standard three-year funding profile of every submarine — two years of advanced procurement plus a third year of full funding. And in an era of declining budgets, the installment plan is attractive.

"If we're getting poorer, with other fiscal hurdles to get over, wouldn't you be seeking additional flexibilities — multiyear procurement, economic order quantities, even multiyear or incremental funding?" asked the industry analyst.

A Capitol Hill staff member had a similar take.

"One frustrating part is that when you fully fund the sub up front, most of the money sits around, sometimes three to four years," the Hill staffer noted. "At a time when we're trying to stretch every shipbuilding buck, does it make sense to have \$2.5 billion sitting around?" the staffer asked. "We can do this a better way. We kind of do this as it is."

The issue is not likely to be decided until around March, at the end of which the continuing resolution now funding the U.S. federal government runs out and when a number of Hill observers expect the 2013 spending bill to be decided. Until then, both the Navy and its congressional supporters remain hopeful the second 2014 submarine will become a reality. "I do think the guys on House Appropriations really want the boat, that they're supportive of the program and want to keep it at a high production rate. I do think it will happen," the Hill staffer observed. "We all agree we want to and need to do this, but there's just this one little sticking point."

New leader of Trident subs takes over

The Navy always has a way of replacing one great leader with another," Rear Adm. James Caldwell Jr. said Wednesday during a change-of-command ceremony featuring the past three Submarine Group 9 commanders. Rear Adm. Dietrich Kuhlmann III relieved Rear Adm. Robert Hennegan, who had taken over for Caldwell two years ago.

Relinquishing command is hard, said Caldwell, now directing Submarine Force, Pacific Fleet. No matter the accomplishments, there always are more aspirations. Caldwell's were in the good hands of longtime friend and look-alike Hennegan, who relieved him Oct. 29, 2010.

"Precisely the visions I had, Bob took to the next level," Caldwell said. "Bob, you crushed this job." Submarine Group 9 comprises eight Trident ballistic-missile submarines and two that were converted to carry cruise missiles and special forces.

In July, the ballistic missile fleet, including six boats at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay (Ga.), received the Meritorious Unit Commendation from Chief of Naval Operations Jonathan Greenert for excellence in strategic deterrence from July 16, 2007, to Jan. 28, 2011. That spanned the Bangor tours of both Caldwell and Hennegan. Also during Hennegan's stay, women were integrated onto two Bangor subs, and boats made 35 strategic deterrent patrols and 22 forward-deployed missions.

"I believed Bangor was the best in the Navy when I was up here and it's only gotten better under Bob's leadership," Caldwell told a crowd of about 200 Navy and civilian leaders under tents at Deterrent Park. Progress is expected to continue under Kuhlmann, whose previous assignment was with the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations in Washington, D.C.

"We've got the right guy in place, and it's time for me to go," said Hennegan, who's headed to San Diego to head the Naval Mine and Anti-Submarine Warfare Command. Hennegan thanked Team Bangor, including staff members, ombudsmen, support commands and, especially, the submariners — the "warriors at the top of the spear," the "ultimate peacekeepers." The CNO and two Air Force generals lauded the sailors in July when they picked up the meritorious unit award for maintaining peace through deterrence. "Now you're going to hear it from me, Hennegan told a formation of sailors from each boat. "Thank you for your great service to our country. I'm asking for one last round of applause for these sailors."

That's the only time the admiral's voice cracked, perhaps steeled by the experience last time he and Caldwell were on the same stage two years earlier. Both became emotional, and Caldwell's mother told them to stop being such crybabies, said Hennegan, who received a Legion of Merit award for his work at Bangor.

Kuhlmann knows his way around the area. His first submarine assignment was aboard the ballistic-missile sub USS Florida. He later commanded the USS Michigan before and after it was converted to cruise missiles. "I feel like I'm back home," he said.

Project moves ahead to develop mini-submarines for covert special operations forces

Leaders of U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., are moving ahead with a project to develop mini submarines able to transport combat swimmers such as Navy SEALs covertly while minimizing swim time to maintain combat effectiveness.

USSOCOM awarded a potential \$44.3 million contract last Friday to submarine maker General Dynamics Electric Boat in Groton, Conn., for the Dry Combat Submersible-Light (DCS-L) program to build a user operational evaluation system of a mini-submarine designed to deliver combat swimmers. The contract was announced this week.

This kind of mini-submarine is intended to operate from combat support surface ships or submarines. These subsea vessels are to deliver special operations warfighters to their mission areas ready to fight, rather than exhausted by long swims.

The USSOCOM contract to Electric Boat is a three-year phase II research and development letter contract that calls for the company to design, build, test, and deliver a complete commercially classed prototype dry combat submersible system. Electric Boat designers will do work on the contract in the U.S. and in Italy, USSOCOM officials say.

U.S. Special Operations forces have been planning a submersible combat swimmer delivery system since cancelling the organization's Joint Multi-Mission Submersibles program two years ago because it was too expensive. Last April USSOCOM awarded a contract to the Lockheed Martin Corp. Mission Systems & Sensors segment in Palm Beach, Fla., to design a prototype Dry Combat Submersible (DCS) to transport Navy SEALs directly to their underwater mission areas.

The Lockheed Martin-led DCS team includes Submergence Group LLC in Chester, Conn.; Northrop Grumman Undersea Systems segment in Annapolis, Md.; and Huntington Ingalls Newport News Shipbuilding in Newport News, Va. The USSOCOM projects seek to design and build prototype one-atmosphere special operations dry combat submersibles of two different sizes, light and medium, which will be free-swimming vehicles capable of delivering and extracting teams of combat swimmers.

USSOCOM officials are interested in dry combat submersibles that can move at speeds of at least five knots, at depths to 200 feet, with provisions for two pilots. These dry submersibles should be sized to transport aboard C-5 or C-17 cargo jets, or in standard 40-foot surface ship containers. The submersibles are to have military radios, military sonars, and high power silver-zinc batteries. These submersibles would operate from surface support ships or submarines equipped with pressure-proof shelter systems either military or commercial, or future generations of the Dry Deck Shelter (DDS).

The Dry Combat Submersible-Light will be about 24 feet long with moderate endurance and moderate passenger and cargo capability that will be operated from specially configured commercial surface ships. The Dry Combat Submersible-Medium, meanwhile, will be about 38 feet long with high endurance and high passenger and cargo capability that will be operated from specially configured commercial surface ships, and potentially from future submarine shelter systems.

Russia Plans to Raise Lost Submarine

Russia's Emergencies Ministry plans to carry out a study in 2013 to see if the sunken Soviet nuclear submarine K-27 can be recovered from its resting place on the seabed in Russia's Arctic waters, a ministry representative said. "We have to check its condition and make a forecast of how the integrity of the hull might have been affected by corrosion in seawater," the representative said.

Divers will carry out an engineering analysis of the boat and collect samples of metal from its hull, he said. "No radioactive nuclides were detected from the K-27 when tests were made this year," he added. "Only after we have results from examining the integrity of the hull and the characteristics of the seabed will it be possible to devise options for raising the boat and removing its fuel," he said.

The K-27 is lying in shallow water, just 100 feet (30 meters) deep on an even keel, and its main hull has no apparent breaches, he added. The boat is one of 24,000 objects on a Russian government register of potentially dangerous sunken objects in Russian territorial waters, according to the Emergencies Ministry. Most of the objects on the list are in water over 1,500 feet (500 meters) deep, making their recovery extremely difficult.

The Project 645 vessel was a one-off design powered by a pair of experimental VT-1 nuclear reactors with liquid metal (lead-bismuth) cooling. The boat received two nicknames from its crew: "Golden Fish" (from a Russian folk tale) and "Nagasaki" following a series of fatal incidents involving onboard radiation leaks from the reactors.

K-27 entered service in 1962 and on April 21, 1964 she completed a record length and duration submerged cruise in the mid-Atlantic. On May 24, 1968 she suffered another catastrophic radiation leak affecting all the crew and killing nine of them.

The boat was only formally decommissioned from the Soviet Navy's inventory on February 1, 1979 and her reactor compartment sealed up. She was then scuttled in September 1982 in the Kara Sea off northern Russia near the island of Novaya Zemlya.

Top-secret submarine may settle Russia's claim in the Arctic

A unique Arctic expedition has brought a top-secret Russian submarine into the limelight. The AS-12 bathyscaphe Losharik has now been enlisted to help Russia gain evidence of its right to territorial waters in the Arctic. Moscow is prepared to present evidence to the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea that would expand Russia's territorial waters in the Arctic, thus asserting its right to the bed of the Arctic that is extremely rich in hydrocarbons. Russia filed a similar application once before, but the bid was turned down due to a lack of geological samples. The new evidence has been obtained by AS-12 Losharik – Russia's top-secret deep-sea nuclear-powered bathyscaphe.

The North Pole expedition was undertaken in late September as part of the Arctic 2012 research project. The mission required working at a depth of 1.5-1.8 miles for 20 days. The deep-sea station collected earth samples using robotic arms, a dredging device (a rock filtration system), a clamp bucket (a scoop with a video camera) and a hydrostatic sampler. The results of the sample tests will be released in early 2013, when they are also expected to be handed over to the United Nations.

Until recently, the competing territorial claims to the Arctic made by Russia, Norway, Canada, the U.S. and Denmark have been ineffectual, since, apart from political statements, none of the countries has been able to provide any factual evidence to justify their claims. If Losharik's recent operation does not close the matter for good, then it at least puts Russia ahead of the game. Before Losharik, no one had been able to bring up any actual samples from the seabed that could formally prove Russia right.

Meanwhile, little is actually known about the main character in the story – the nuclear-powered deep-sea bathyscaphe AS-12, nicknamed Losharik (NATO reporting name NORSUB-5). One of the reasons behind the scarce public knowledge is the fact that the submarine was created for the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Defense Ministry and, given the specific nature of the ministry's mission, was never intended to be declassified – just like an undercover spy. However, Moscow eventually decided to go all in and play for the sake of winning the territorial dispute. The submarine was dubbed Losharik for its extraordinary shape: Its hull consists of spherical titanium modules. The nickname comes from the name of a Soviet cartoon character – a funny little horse with a body made

up of small spheres.

According to its engineers, the unusual hull construction permits the 196-foot-long bathyscaphe to withstand the enormous pressure of ocean depths of up to 3.7 miles. Losharik is powered by a small nuclear reactor with a fundamentally new model of nuclear steam generating plant: the KTP-7I Fenix. The reactor enables the bathyscaphe to travel at a speed of up to 30 knots (37 miles) per hour and does not limit the time it can stay submerged in virtually any way. The crew consists of 25 officers.

The bathyscaphe is carried by the K-129 Orenburg submarine, which is a Project 667BDR Kalmar strategic nuclear submarine redesigned specifically for the purpose. While assigned to Russia's Northern Fleet, the submarine is not actually part of it, as it remains an asset of the Main Intelligence Directorate. It is stationed at Olenya Bay, where Russia's naval spies are based.

While the AS-12 does not carry any weapons, it still poses a serious threat to the national security of many countries, since it is equipped to perform intelligence and diversion operations at depths out of reach of any other vessel in the world. The kind of operations that the vessel could perform include using its mechanical arms not only to collect seabed samples, but also to disrupt telecommunications between continents or, conversely, plant wiretaps, which, even if detected, would be impossible to remove because of the depths.

There is also an apocalyptic theory that the work of designing the bathyscaphe was launched back when a nuclear conflict between Moscow and Washington was still on the table. The bathyscaphe is believed to have been intended to become an invincible carrier of a gigantic T-15 thermonuclear torpedo (5 feet in diameter) developed by Nobel Prize-winning physicist Andrei Sakharov.

The Soviets believed that, if detonated at a depth of 3.7 miles, the torpedo could generate an unprecedented and deadly tsunami that would wash away an entire coast of the United States, West or East. Whatever their past plans, Moscow and Washington are now partners intent on resolving their disagreements at the negotiating table. This was the main reason why, in the mid-1990s, Russia almost stopped financing the Losharik project. The country even invited the United States to be a co-investor, suggesting that the deep-sea bathyscaphe could be involved in rescue operations. While Losharik failed to become a rescue vessel, it has nevertheless proved a very valuable national security asset.

SUBVETS NEWS & VIEWS

USSVI Southeast Regional Convention to be held in North Charleston, SC

The 2013 Southeast Regional Convention of the United States Submarine Veterans will be held at the Sheraton Hotel in North Charleston, SC on April 7 through April 11. Visit this link for more information and to download the registration form:

<http://www.ussvicb.org/conventions/index.html>

Navy & Veteran News and Other Gouge

Senate NDAA Debated

After months of delay, the Senate began debate on its version of the FY 2013 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA-S.3254) this week and continues on the Senate floor today. Lawmakers are considering more than 400 floor amendments. Key amendments approved so far include one requiring a report on TRICARE Prime availability in conjunction with implementation of new TRICARE contract provisions sponsored by Sen. Dean Heller (Nev.); an amendment sponsored by Sen. John Cornyn (Texas) requiring the VA to provide Congress with a plan to reduce the claims backlog; and an amendment expanding TRICARE coverage for health services for military children with autism sponsored by Sen. Kristen Gillibrand (N.Y.). Unfortunately, an amendment sponsored by Sen. Bill Nelson (Fla.) addressing the Survivor Benefit/Dependency Indemnity Compensation (SBP/DIC) offset was defeated because it exceeded spending limits set by the Budget Control Act of 2011.

DFAS Tax Statements Available Soon

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) recently announced that retiree and annuitant pay customers will receive their 2012 tax statements between mid-December and the end of January. Most 1099 forms will also be available a week earlier via the online myPay pay account management system (<https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>).

Bad addresses create significant delays in receiving end-of-year documents and maintaining accurate contact information is important. According to DFAS officials, incorrect address information is the top reason retirees or annuitants don't receive their 1099-Rs.

Individuals without active myPay accounts should call, mail or fax a written request to DFAS-Cleveland, and the processing of a change of address and reissuing a new 1099-R takes at least 30 days. Changes made via myPay accounts take effect in three to five business days, and a copy of their 1099-R can be printed directly from myPay.

For more information, visit the DFAS website at <http://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary.html> or call DFAS at 800-321-1080.

Senate Passes Legislation for Veterans

The Senate this week passed the "Women Veterans and Other Health Care Improvements Act" (S. 3313), sponsored by Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairwoman Patty Murray (Wash.). The measure seeks to include fertility counseling and treatment within authorized Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical services, end the VA ban on providing in-vitro fertilization (IVF) services, establish child care programs at Vet Centers for vets seeking counseling, and improve outreach to women veterans.

Veterans with severe reproductive system, urinary tract and spinal cord injuries often require specialized treatments and procedures like IVF. The Department of Defense (DoD) currently provides IVF services under the TRICARE program at no charge to service members severely wounded in combat, and this legislation would provide similarly-wounded veterans with the same access. The bill now moves to the House for further consideration.

On The Web

Some Websites and Blogs of Interest to USSVICB Members

The Historic Naval Ships Association (HNSA) has digitized World War II submarine patrol reports at this link (there are 17 pages of listings):

<http://issuu.com/hnsa/docs>

[Historic Naval Ships Association](#)

[Submarine Simulator](#)

[Russian Typhoon Submarines](#)

(email your favorite links for publication to [steve](#))

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