

# TORPEDO ALLEY



Vol. 12 No.1

Jan. 2016

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

**Base Meeting:**

BOD: 07. Jan. 1800

Membership: 14 Jan. 1900

**Location:**

Fleet Reserve Association Branch 26

Low Country Home

99 Wisteria Rd.



Base Commander	Rick Wise	843.875.5559
Vice Commander	Rick Sparger	843.553.5594
Secretary	Mike Ciesielko	843.324.0011
Treasurer	Mike Welch	843.300.9022

Interim Chief of the Boat	Rick Sparger	843.553.5594
Veterans Affairs	Ken Curtis	843.797.1268
Membership	Ed Stank	843.212.5610
Scholarship	George Scharf	843.873.3318
Storekeeper	Ron Chambers	843.821.2268
Historian	George Scharf	843.873.3318
Public Affairs	Ronnie Kerstetter	843-367-1026
Chaplain	Nick Nichols	843.452.3189
Holland Club	Bill Freligh	843.553.1115
Newsletter	George Fuchs	941.580.2333
Webmaster	Nick Nichols	843.452.3189
Kaps for Kids	Vacant	



## Submarines Lost During the Month of January

<b>USS SCORPION (SS-278)</b>	Jan. 5, 1944 – 4 <sup>th</sup> War Patrol	Lost with all hands – 77 souls
<b>USS ARGONAUT (SS-166)</b>	Jan. 10, 1943 – 3 <sup>rd</sup> War Patrol	Lost with all hands – 102 souls
<b>USS SWORDFISH (SS-193)</b>	Jan. 12, 1945 – 13 <sup>th</sup> War Patrol	Lost with all hands – 89 souls
<b>USS S-36 (SS-141)</b>	Jan. 20, 1942 – 2 <sup>nd</sup> War Patrol	No loss of life
<b>USS S-26 (SS-131)</b>	Jan. 24, 1942 – 2 <sup>nd</sup> War Patrol	Lost with 46 souls, 3 men rescued

### Five Boats and 314 Men Lost

#### TEMPORARY SETBACKS

*A time to weep, and a time to laugh: a time to mourn, and a time to dance . . . Ecclesiastes 3:4 KJB*

The occasional disappointments and failures of life are unavoidable. Such setbacks are simply the price that we must sometimes pay for our willingness to take risks as we follow our dreams. But even when we encounter bitter disappointments, we must never lose faith.

When we encounter the inevitable difficulties of life, God stands ready to protect us. Our responsibility, of course, is to ask Him for protection. When we call upon Him in heartfelt prayer, He will answer – in His own time and according to His own plan – and He will heal us. And, while we are waiting for God’s plans to unfold and for His healing touch to restore us, we can be reassured in the understanding that our Creator can overcome any obstacle, even if we cannot.

*If you learn from a defeat, you have not really lost. Zig Ziglar*

--A Prayer for Today--

Dear Lord, even when I’m afraid of failure, give me the courage to try. Remind me that with You by my side, I really have nothing to fear. So today, Father, I will live courageously as I place my faith in You. Amen.

#### "The Sculpins Lost Mission - A Nuclear Submarine in the Vietnam War"

**The Naval History Magazine—February, 2008—Volume 22, Number 1**

In March, shortly after we began our second operation, patrolling the South China Sea, we were diverted for a specific mission. The U.S. government believed supply trawlers were operating out of Hainan Island, off the southern coast of the People's Republic of China. They were running arms, ammunition, and supplies from the northern part of the Gulf of Tonkin down to the Vietcong in the IV Corps region, the southernmost portion of Vietnam. U.S. forces discovered this when ground troops caught the enemy in the act of off-loading a trawler on a South Vietnamese beach. The incident sparked a big firefight, creating the legend that the trawler crews were elite forces willing to fight to the death. It also initiated a concerted effort to stop the traffic by convincing the enemy that it

could not succeed.

Each of the trawlers could carry about 100 tons of munitions. Several suspect ships were photographed, so we knew generally what they looked like, but as long as they were in international waters, we had no means to interdict them other than to turn them around by making low passes with a P-3 Orion patrol plane or a close approach by a surface ship. This was complicated by the fact that so many legitimate trawlers like them were in the area. Several gunrunners had been turned around, but this would not stop the at-sea resupply effort. To convincingly discourage the effort, it would be necessary to destroy them in the waters off South Vietnam before they could land their cargo. The plan that evolved was to use a submarine to follow one from Hainan to South Vietnam and finger it for our forces to destroy. We were selected for this mission.

We took up a patrol station off Hainan on 10 April. After referring to a book with images of the different types of trawlers and what we could expect, we picked up our quarry on 12 April. The wardroom was divided on whether she was a good prospect. However, the ship resembled photographs of other known suspects, and her projected track was taking her toward the west coast of the Philippines, which did not make sense for a fisherman. So we took off in trail. Not long thereafter, the trawler turned to the south, and that was the clincher for us. She had an extremely distinctive shaft rub and propeller sound, which our sonarmen could easily discriminate from background noise. We relied completely on passive sonar to avoid being detected. The active sonar in the *Skipjack* -class submarines wouldn't have been reliable because of the reverberations in shallow water.

The ship we followed was probably 200 feet long, a large trawler, certainly suitable for open-ocean fishing. We did, of course, identify her by periscope before we started to trail, but we weren't able to follow her totally by periscope and maintain visual contact. We didn't want to take the chance of having our periscope seen in the flat, calm waters of the South China Sea. Also, she was making a speed of advance through the water of about 11 knots. That meant that if we were going to do our periscope operations every now and then, get out radio messages, and do our required housekeeping evolutions, we were probably going to have to run an average of about 18 or 20 knots submerged to keep up with her. We also had

to include time for ocean analysis and tactical maneuvering to make certain we were staying with the correct target.

One more challenge was that the trawler was heading south, right through the "dangerous ground." On charts of the South China Sea, an area about 180 nautical miles wide and 300 miles long is simply labeled dangerous ground. Our charts had one track of soundings through that area—taken in 1885. We assessed that the terrain was fairly level, but the depth was 200 feet or less in most of this area. So we were in a position of running up to 20 knots in 200 feet of water, with between 30 to 80 feet under the keel at that high speed. Our ship could react very quickly to plane (control surface) movements, so we had only our most experienced officers of the deck, diving officers, and planesmen on station. Our chief petty officer diving officers controlled the ship's depth by supervising the planesmen. They did a superb job.

As the trawler headed south, she vectored a little to the east and went into an area in the dangerous ground where we couldn't go. Up to then, although we were in the dangerous area, we felt secure in knowing the bottom was fairly level. But now she went into an area that was littered with rocks, shoals, and shipwrecks. I wondered then if the trawler's crew was smart enough to do what we called a "sanitization move"—go where even surface ships wouldn't follow. She doubtlessly believed that if she went through there she would come out the other side well clear of any trailing vessel.

I was absolutely convinced that the trawler was unaware of our presence (that became clear later when we intercepted a radio message). We believed the ship's course change was simply a safety move. While we were able to use our fathometer to plot the bottom and know the depth under our keel, the device looks only directly down; it doesn't look ahead. We were genuinely worried about what we couldn't see ahead—an undersea mountain, a wreck, or something else.

When the trawler had entered the dangerous ground, we requested cover from an on-call P-3 Orion. Although we were under the operational control of the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) in Saigon, we had the ability to call the shots on the scene. We wanted the aircraft to remain covert, so it would not scare the trawler back into port by making low passes near her. During the ship's voyage through this very shallow, wreck-strewn portion of the dangerous ground, the plane, remaining at high altitude to minimize the chance of being seen, kept track of her by radar and visual observation. We dodged around the area by hauling off to the west, then south, and finally back to the east, to an area where we predicted the trawler would emerge, still in the dangerous ground. As the P-3 turned the contact over to us, the trawler appeared just about where we thought she would. We picked her up from the distinctive shaft rub and propeller sound and got in close enough to get a good positive periscope observation. We then went back in trail.

As we headed south in the South China Sea, we approached a new hazard. We found a large number of oil-drilling platforms near the coast of Borneo. We first became aware of this hazard through the prolonged tracking of a diesel contact, which prompted the CO, Commander Harry Mathis, to go up to periscope depth for a look. We spotted an uncharted platform. If the rigs were operating, that was no problem; we could plot the location of their noisy diesel engines. We found some charted, some not, some operating and others not. Our concern, of course, was about those uncharted and not running. We made frequent periscope observations to avoid the platforms, which forced us to run faster to maintain the quarry's speed of advance. We continued south at higher speeds for longer periods of time, sometimes with barely 20 to 30 feet of water beneath the *Sculpin*'s keel.

As our target passed between the Great Natuna Islands, we made an end run around North Natuna. After that, our quarry was on a beeline for the Gulf of Thailand, passing through the busy sea-lane between Hong Kong and Singapore. The density of the large shipping traffic in this lane was incredible. Crossing it was like running across a busy freeway. It was night time, and sonar was useless amid all the traffic noise, so we crossed at periscope depth following our quarry's stern light, maneuvering to avoid the large ships bearing down on us from both directions.

The Gulf of Thailand presented a new challenge. The water was hot, 86 degrees Fahrenheit, and shallow, averaging 110 feet deep, and the bottom was flat. The surface was a dead calm mirror with fishing buoys and nets everywhere, not to mention small fishing boats of every description. It was also very hazy and so hot that the horizon was somewhat obscure. Such were the wartime circumstances that our operation order authorized us to operate in water as shallow as six fathoms. Who says nuclear-powered submarines can't operate in the littorals?

During this time we half-jokingly talked about "the hump." We were trying to visualize what the *Sculpin* looked like on the surface, running at 20 knots, with maybe only 40 feet from the top of the sail to the surface. We visualized a hump—the water displaced above the boat's hull—roaring through the South China Sea like a mini tidal wave, with observers wondering what it was. We assumed the ship left some sort of trail but were certain one would have to be very close to be able to see it.

An incident when I had command duty got my attention. I brought the *Sculpin* up to periscope depth and saw what I thought was a periscope going by. My first reaction was, "Holy smoke, there's another submarine up here." Then I realized it was a small water-saturated log that was floating vertically. Just for a moment I thought there were two submarines staring at each other and wondered which one was going to blink first.

As the trawler moved farther south, she made a distinct turn to the west and then to the northwest. We were absolutely sure she was a gunrunner, going in to land and off-load her ammunition. Then,

two things happened. We were ordered by MACV to photograph our target and alerted to prepare to execute a provision in our operation order for us to sink our target with torpedoes.

The photographic mission meant leaving our trail position and speeding up ahead of the target to take pictures as the trawler cruised by. The risk of detection was great because of the flat calm sea and our hump as we repositioned at high speed. To avoid this, we had to go as deep as possible. Commander Mathis selected 90 feet keel depth, leaving 20 feet between the keel and the bottom. We limited periscope exposure to 6 inches for less than ten seconds. We did get good pictures and apparently were not detected, although one photograph revealed three men on deck looking in our general direction. The depth control skill of our diving officer chiefs was extraordinary.

Immediately after the trawler made the northwest turn, and just before we communicated with higher authorities, we lost contact for about two hours. Up to that point, our target had been somewhat predictable, cruising on a straight course to the northwest near the center of the Gulf of Thailand about 100 miles off the coast of South Vietnam, with the familiar shaft rub being tracked by sonar. It was night with a full moon, and we saw her lights through the periscope. The horizon was indistinguishable. Suddenly, sonar reported she had stopped, and while the CO watched, the trawler turned off her lights. Blind and deaf, we then lit off the radar and made several sweeps that revealed nothing. This was not too surprising. When a radar hasn't been used in months and is not tuned, taking it out and rotating it a couple of times doesn't guarantee a high probability of picking up a small target. We were not sure whether she had stopped for the night or was moving away in a new direction at slow speed.

We reported the lost contact, which threw the operational command authority in Saigon into a panic. They had been moving South Vietnamese naval forces along the coast to maintain a blocking position based on our updates, so the whole operation threatened to unravel. Commander Mathis and I huddled and decided: "Well, we've got to assume that she's making a run toward the border up there. Let's just go down and run as fast as we can and get about 30 miles ahead of her predicted track and set up a barrier."

So we moved up and waited for her farther up into the Gulf of Thailand. We made that sprint at 20 knots with 20 feet under the keel. At first daylight, we contacted our on station P-3 aircraft and described our quarry, particularly her white color. We requested that the Orion's crew search the area from where we lost contact to the Vietnamese coast. They reported several widely separated contacts; only one of them was white. The CO authorized a low-altitude identification pass, and the P-3 made a positive ID. They reported to Saigon, and we closed the target. As we neared, we regained that familiar shaft rub and when we took another periscope look, it was her—positive identification, both sonar and visual. Originally, MACV requested authorization for us to sink the target

with our torpedoes, but this was not approved. For years I assumed that the National Command Authority in Washington, D.C., disapproved the request. However, several years later, Harry Mathis, who by then was a captain, was commanding officer of the Submarine Base Pearl Harbor. He regularly played tennis with retired Admiral Bernard "Chick" Clarey, who had been commander-in-chief Pacific Fleet at the time of our operation. Admiral Clarey remembered the operation very well because he and Admiral John McCain, commander-in-chief Pacific, had followed our progress closely in daily briefings. Admiral Clarey told Mathis that he had argued vehemently in favor of having us shoot, but Admiral McCain was not convinced it would work. Instead, South Vietnamese naval forces were called in to do the job on 24 April. The surface forces—led by a South Vietnamese destroyer escort—challenged the trawler, which hoisted a Chinese flag and an international flag signal designating they were fishing. The South Vietnamese commander was hesitant to take action because he was concerned about creating an international incident. Fortunately, we established communications with the U.S. liaison officer on board the destroyer with the UQC underwater telephone. His first question was whether we could verify this ship as our trawler. We told him, "Absolutely, this is the one without a doubt." We then went to periscope depth to observe.

The trawler tried to convince the South Vietnamese destroyer that she was an innocent fishing vessel. We spoke once again with the liaison officer and with higher authorities and said: "We are absolutely sure that this ship came out of Hainan flying a PRC [People's Republic of China] flag. We have tracked her 2,500 miles to this position, and in our opinion she is a gunrunner making a run toward the border and certainly is not a fisherman. We can verify who she is, which should allow us to take whatever action is appropriate."

As we later learned from the intercepted communication, the trawler at one point said, "I think there is a submarine out there." This was the first indication that the trawler crew was aware of us as we coordinated with the destroyer. Based on our identification, the destroyer escort ordered the trawler to stop, and when she failed to comply, began making intimidating runs at her, finally opening fire from a standoff position with her 3-inch guns. The trawler was hit and began burning, running in a circle as if the rudder was jammed hard over. We watched through the periscope, and our crew gathered in their mess to watch on the TV monitor. Suddenly, with a thunderous roar, clearly audible through the *Sculpin*'s hull, the trawler exploded and disintegrated as its cargo detonated. Flames leaped hundreds of feet in the air, accompanied by the cheers of our crew.

At this moment, Commander Mathis asked the crew over the IMC for a moment of silence. Enemy or not, they had perished doing their mission. Later, we were pleased to learn that 16 of the trawler crew had been rescued and they spoke Vietnamese, not Chinese.

The captain and the navigator were among them and able to provide valuable intelligence about their operations. One of the few casualties was the political officer.

Our communication with command headquarters, through the loitering Orion during the urgent final search, was vital. Only later did we learn that, because of atmospheric conditions, the communications link with Saigon consisted of the P-3 aircraft on station relaying to another P-3 revving up its engines on the ground at its airbase while parked next to a phone booth. A flight crew member would run out to the phone and relay the messages between Saigon and us.

One other significant factor made the mission possible. It could only have been done by a nuclear-powered submarine. That experience gave me great admiration for the diesel-boat crews and skippers of World War II. We had more margin for error than they did because of their speed limitations owing to low battery capacity. If we made a mistake on the *Sculpin*, we could make it up through speed and repositioning, which couldn't be done with a diesel boat. Certainly our speed came in handy, not only in the basic trail, trying to stay up with a ship doing 11 knots and do all the things we had to do, but also during that period when we lost them. We were able to run quickly forward, reposition up the track, and get a chance to pick them up again. But that blackout period was a low point. We had trailed the ship 2,300 miles and thought we'd lost her.

The trawler's crew verified that their ship was a gunrunner. They had on board enough arms and ammunition to supply the Vietcong in IV Corps for at least 60 days. Her destruction thus made a significant contribution to the safety of U.S. and South Vietnamese troops in the area and set back the enemy's military operations there.

The surviving crew were North Vietnamese. They were split up, with U.S. and South Vietnamese intelligence each interrogating half and their stories compared. It was determined that the navigator's responses were credible because he provided interrogators with exactly the same track we plotted.

The United States learned much about the North Vietnamese at-sea resupply strategy. It also learned that the trawler crews were not elite forces that would resist until death. One engineer told of being at his station when the political officer came to the engine room hatch, told him the enemy had arrived, and ordered him to stay at his post. The engineer, no doubt considering the nature of the cargo, said, "I immediately went on deck and jumped into the water."

It was an unusual operation. We spent more time submerged inside the 100-fathom curve than any U.S. submarine since World War II. Crew training, equipment reliability, ship control, navigation, sonar, communications, propulsion plant—everything and everyone performed superbly. We could not have asked for anything more. For that operation the *Sculpin* earned the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, the only U.S. submarine during the entire Vietnam War to receive that award.

The *Sculpin* was also nominated for the submarine combat patrol pin,

and our individual awards for the combat "V." If that had been approved, she would have been the first submarine since World War II to get the combat patrol pin. Instead, the nomination was disapproved somewhere up the chain of command. I assume it was probably rejected by a World War II submariner who thought the operation wasn't nearly as hazardous as what he did during his war, and it didn't measure up. I can't argue with that, but the crew had great hope that they could proudly wear the pin for their contribution, particularly to the safety of our troops. Another consideration, however, might have been that those pins would have raised questions and possibly compromised an operation that was still classified.

We covered a huge distance in trail during that operation. Someone asked me later how I slept at night. I said, "With a pillow under my head, up against the bulkhead in case we hit something."

Larson went on to serve on active duty for 40 years. His senior position was as commander-in-chief of all United States military forces in the Pacific. Captain Wright served 26 years on active duty. He was commanding officer of USS *Puffer* (SSN-652) and operations officer for Commander Submarine Group Seven. Mr. Stillwell, the former editor of *Naval History* and the U.S. Naval Institute Oral History Program, has written the "[Looking Back](#)" column since 1993.

## WWII Submarine Poem

Fellow Submariners - I just finished reading a book entitled simply: "*Submarine*", written in 1953 by Capt. Edward L. Beach. Capt. Beach was a veteran of twelve war patrols during WWII. In it, Capt. Beach has included a poem written by MoMM1/c Constantine Guinness, USN, 1943. It's entitled: *I'm The Galloping Ghost of the Japanese Coast!* I've included below, just as written, for your entertainment and enjoyment!

I'm the Galloping Ghost of the Japanese Coast,  
You don't hear of me or my crew -  
But just ask any man off the coast of Japan  
If he knows of the *Trigger Maru*.

I look sleek and slender alongside my tender  
With others like me at my side,  
But we'll tell you a story of battle and glory,  
As enemy waters we ride.

I've been stuck on a rock, felt the depth-charges' shock  
Been north to a place called Attu,  
And I've sunk me two freighters atop the equator -  
Hot work, but the sea was cold blue.

I've cruised close inshore and carried the war  
To the Empire island Honshu;  
While they wired Yokohama I could see Fujiyama,  
So I stayed - to admire the view.

When we rigged to run silently, deeply I dived,  
And within me the heat was terrific -

My men pouring with sweat, silent and yet  
 Cursed me and the whole damned Pacific.  
 Then destroyers came sounding and depth-charges pounding;  
 My submarine crew took the test.  
 For in that far-off land there are no friends on hand  
 To answer a call of distress.  
 I was blasted and shaken - some damage I've taken'  
 My hull bleeds and my pipe lines do, too;  
 I've come in from out there for machinery repair,  
 And a rest for me and my crew.  
 I got by on cool nerve and in silence I served,  
 Though I took some hard knocks in return -  
 One propeller shaft sprung and my battery's done -  
*But the enemy ships I saw burn!*  
 I'm the Galloping Ghost of the Japanese Coast,  
 You don't hear of me or my crew -  
 But just ask any man off the coast of Japan  
*If he knows of the Trigger Maru.*  
*This poem is dedicated to the 374 officers and 3,131 enlisted men  
 who gave their lives in a submarine offensive that finally swept  
 enemy shipping from the Pacific.*  
 If you get the chance, you may want to read this book. It contains  
 much of the fighting exploits of these WWII boats: Trigger,  
 Seawolf, Wahoo, Harder, Archerfish, Tang, Albacore, Cavalla,  
 Batfish, Tirante, and Piper.  
 My best regards and Happy New Year to you and  
 yours.....Bill Roberts

## FRA News

### House Personnel Subcommittee Reviews TRICARE

The House Armed Services Committee, Military Personnel Subcommittee recently held a hearing on “Stakeholder Views on Military Health Care.” This hearing was the start of a legislative process to consider legislation to make drastic changes to TRICARE. FRA signed onto a Military Coalition (TMC) statement submitted for the hearing that cautioned the subcommittee regarding military health care reform to “first, do no harm.” The testimony proposed that military retirees have, at least in part, earned their TRICARE coverage with 20 or more years of arduous military service. The testimony challenged the Pentagon claim that “military health care costs are spiraling out of control,” and also challenged the claim by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) that TRICARE is unfixable, and should be replaced with a completely new system. The statement noted that most beneficiaries are satisfied with the quality of care they receive, based on a recent survey of beneficiaries.

### President Signs NDAA into Law

The President signed into law the revised National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA-S. 1356), which does the following:

- Creates a new “blended” retirement system for those joining military service on or after January 1, 2018;
- Revokes a one-percent COLA cut for future retirees under age 62;
- Increases pharmacy co-pays for family members and retirees for prescriptions filled off base or by mail. These increases will range from \$2 to \$4 depending on whether drugs are brand-name or filled at retail outlets;
- Provides a one-time offer to certain former TRICARE Prime beneficiaries to regain TRICARE Prime coverage;
- Increases annual active duty pay by 1.3 percent;
- Provides for Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) benefits for a second spouse when the first divorced spouse is deceased; and
- Reduces BAH rates by one percent each year until 2019.

Congress is working on passing an omnibus spending bill by late next week to wrap up its work for calendar year 2015. the SBP benefit bought by their spouses for every dollar of the DIC provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). FRA co-signed a Military Coalition statement submitted for the hearing that urges Congress to repeal the SBP/DIC offset. The statement acknowledged the modest monthly Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) enacted in 2008 for those affected by the offset, which in 2009 created a schedule of annual SSIA increases through 2017. The statement also refers to the August 2009 court ruling that required payment of both SBP and DIC to eligible survivors who remarried after age 57 as a good example of why the deduction is so wrong. The court decision stated, “After all, the service member paid for both benefits: SBP with premiums; DIC with his life.”

There are contradictory aspects of the law that penalize survivors who remarry before age 55 for SBP and age 57 for DIC by stopping their payments, and also penalizes widows (by continuing to subtract DIC from SBP) for not remarrying after age 57. FRA supports eliminating the offset for all SBP/DIC survivors. Due to the potential budget impact, Congress could phase in increases to the SSIA amounts. As of FY 2017, the \$310 monthly SSIA will restore about 25 percent of the offset. However, the SSIA benefit will expire October 1, 2017, and the payments will stop. At minimum, Congress needs to extend the SSIA or SBP/DIC survivors will forfeit the \$310 monthly allowance.

FRA supports legislation in the House and Senate (H.R. 1594/S. 979) that repeals the SBP/DIC offset (i.e. the military widow’s tax) and urges members to use the Action Center ([action.fra.org/action-center](http://action.fra.org/action-center)) to ask their legislators to support these proposals.

### SVAC Moves Veterans Bills Forward

The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee (SVAC) amended and voted out of committee two legislative proposals. SVAC approved the “Homeless Veterans Reintegration Programs Reauthorization Act” (S. 425), sponsored by Senator John Boozman (Ark.), and supported by FRA testimony on Capitol Hill. The bill would allow certain nursing homes to accept eligible veterans when other



Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care plans are not an option, usually due to the veteran residing in a rural area. The bill was amended with a two-year sunset to provide the committee the opportunity to reevaluate the program and determine its long-term viability. The SVAC also approved the “No Excuses Act” (S. 290), sponsored by Jerry Moran (Kan.), that would reduce the pensions of executives convicted of a felony, limit the amount of paid administrative leave for VA senior executive service (SES) employees to only 14 days, and reform the department’s management training program and performance appraisal system for senior executives. The bill was introduced when VA Secretary Bob McDonald claimed he did not have authority to discipline VA employees in cases of employee misconduct. Both bills now go to the Senate floor for further consideration.

### **Final FY 2016 Spending Bill**

House and Senate appropriators have agreed on an FY 2016 omnibus spending bill and a tax extension bill, but not before having to approve another temporary Continuing Resolution to keep the government open until December 22. Once the spending bill passes both chambers, Congress will adjourn until next year. The deal includes \$129 billion to pay for a military force of 2.1 million troops, including 1.3 million active duty service members and 811,000 reservists. That amount is \$1.2 billion more than fiscal 2015. As expected, the measure includes funding for a 1.3 percent military pay raise in 2016. The raise is slightly higher than the one percent increase service members have received the past two years, but less than the 2.3 percent increase necessary to keep pace with private sector wage growth. The measure also includes a \$2.1 billion increase in spending for Navy shipbuilding.

### **CRDP/CRSC Open Season Begins in January**

FRA wants to remind retirees who qualify for both Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) and Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) that they can choose which compensation they prefer to receive during the CRDP/CRSC open season, which runs for the entire month of January 2016.

According to federal law, retirees can receive either CRDP or CRSC, but not both.

All eligible retirees should have received a CRDP/CRSC Open Season Election Form in the mail, which includes a comparison of the CRDP and CRSC entitlement amounts and information about tax implications. Retirees should return the form only if they wish to make a change from CRDP to CRSC or vice versa. No action is required to keep things the way they are, in which case the current payment will continue uninterrupted. Forms must be postmarked no later than January 31, 2016, and the expected processing time for this change is 30 days. All choices remain in effect unless changed in a subsequent annual open season. For more information, go to <http://www.dfas.mil/dfas/retiredmilitary/disability/comparison.html>

### **VA Updates List of Ships Presumptive for Agent Orange**

### **Exposure**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has added more ships to its list of ships whose crews may be eligible for disability compensation as a result of exposure to the toxic defoliant Agent Orange used during the Vietnam War.

VA added ships to the “Brown Water” inventory, meaning the vessels were found to have operated on inland waterways, and therefore all personnel who served aboard them are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange. The new additions include the Navy survey ships Sheldrake and Towhee, attack transport ship Okanogan, submarine rescue ship Chanticleer, destroyers Frank Knox and James E. Kyes, and transport ship General W. A. Mann. VA also expanded the dates of eligibility for sailors who served on the destroyer Fechteler and said veterans may be eligible for presumptive status if they went ashore from the guided missile cruiser Dewey or attack transport ships Pickaway or Paul Revere during certain dates. VA pays disability compensation to veterans or survivors for 14 medical conditions associated with exposure to Agent Orange.

The list of vessels is available at: [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/shiplist/index.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/shiplist/index.asp).

*Happy New Year to Submariners Everywhere!*



*Pride Runs Deep!*

### **USWN Arts. For Jan. 2016**

**How Reliable Is the U.S. Nuclear Triad? Dan Holliday, *Slate Magazine*, Dec 5**

In a word: reliable. I'm trying to be rigorous to the black-and-white meaning of the word without employing needless adverbs. Either something is reliable or it isn't. There is nothing more reliable than the American nuclear triad.

The most powerful arm of the U.S. nuclear triad (indeed, that of Britain and France as well) is that of the ballistic missile submarine. The U.S. employs 14 nuclear ballistic submarines (the French and British four each; the Brits use the same nukes as the U.S.). In each Ohio-class submarine, there are 24 UGM-133 Trident II (some do still carry Trident I's) submarine-launched ballistic missiles. Each of these can be MIRVed with many nuclear warheads—assume the most conservative at eight, a credit to START I. The warheads can be a variant of either the newer W88 (of which most are) or the older and larger W76.

The W76 has 100 Kt of explosive power, or five times

Nagasaki. The W88 has 475 Kt, or 24 times Nagasaki. That's a lot. The U.S. has, right now, deployed half of the 14 (which doesn't prevent the ones at port from launching, though if they're undergoing maintenance, it's unlikely they could). Fourteen submarines multiplied by 24 nuclear missiles is 336. Each of those missiles is likely to carry the full complement of eight MIRVs (multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles), which the U.S. wisely seeks to reduce to three, if I recall correctly. That's a total nuclear strike capacity of 2,688.

Even if 90 percent of them fail to reach their targets—an almost fantastically outrageous estimate; the U.S. nuclear missiles are the most modern and generally can graciously be expected to have no more than a 10 percent dud rate, and even that's crazy—then 269 cities could independently be neutralized. A nation like China or Russia doesn't even have that many major metropolitan areas. But given how these things work, the point of the MIRV is to independently strike a city multiple times. This means that most cities over a million would be struck five to 20 times, ensuring total annihilation. There is no combination of navies on Earth, even if all of them unified (including the U.S.'s close allies) that could neutralize them before launch.

We haven't even touched on the land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles or the U.S. Air Force—launched cruise missiles or gravity-assist bombs.

The U.S.'s second “deterrent” is the ICBM LGM-30 Minuteman. There are 450 of them based inside the U.S. They all currently carry the W62, 170 Kt nuclear warhead, about eight and a half times Nagasaki. These are clearly less destructive in aggregate than what the U.S. Navy has. They aren't a “first strike” force but rather a last-resort weapon to ensure that if the Navy and Air Force fail to deter an enemy, then that enemy would be totally annihilated. There are unlikely many places in Russia that get more than a few of these each pointed at it. The 10 major cities likely have a few each, then the rest are likely aimed at targets throughout Russia.

The last and most nimble portion of the U.S.'s nuclear arsenal is the Air Force. The Air Force currently employs 3,000 B61 air-drop atomic bombs with a total yield of 340 Kt, about 17 times Nagasaki, which can be delivered by high-speed aircraft. There are sufficient B61s in Europe through the U.S.'s nuclear-sharing agreement (a classified number between 150 and 250) that any nation in Europe could be struck rather quickly.

The Air Force also employs 600 B83 gravity bombs with a total maximum yield of 1.2 Mt, or 60 times Nagasaki. It's the largest bomb in the U.S. arsenal and is kept on hand to ensure that any bunker could be collapsed and its inhabitants neutralized. It's physically larger but still able to be mounted on bombers as well as fighters. These are not (at least not said to be) maintained in Europe.

To reiterate: **reliable**

## **Northrop Grumman To Develop GPS Backup For Subs** *Michael Peck, C4ISR, Dec 4*

Northrop Grumman has been awarded a \$19.8 million Navy contract to develop a backup navigation system for submarines when GPS isn't available.

The Inertial Navigation Systems Replacement Inertial Sensor Module (INS-R ISM) "is intended to serve as the U.S. naval fleet's primary position source in the absence of a global positioning system," according to the Department of Defense contract announcement. "The INS-R will provide mission critical ship positioning, velocity, and altitude data to shipboard sensors, combat systems, guns, and missile systems."

If all options are exercised, the contract is valued at \$47.8 million. Work is scheduled to be completed by November 2016.

## **Russian Sub with Cruise Missiles Reported Near Syria** *Staff, Times of Israel, Dec 8*

A diesel-electric Russian submarine with state-of-the-art cruise missiles approached the Mediterranean coast of Syria on Tuesday, the Russian Interfax news agency reported.

The Rostov-on-Don submarine of the Black Sea Fleet is reportedly armed with Russian Klub series missiles and anti-aircraft artillery.

“Klub” missiles were reported to have been used recently by Russia's Caspian Flotilla to attack Islamic State fighters in Syria.

Russian news site Izvestia reported that the warship Moskva, the most advanced vessel of the Black Sea Fleet, has also been stationed in the eastern Mediterranean in the aftermath of Turkey's November 24 downing of a Russian fighter jet.

On Sunday, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu blasted as “provocation” images of a Russian serviceman armed with a rocket launcher as the Caesar Kunikov warship passed through Turkish waters.

Russia has been openly stepping up its involvement in Syria in recent months, especially since the October downing of a Russian passenger plane in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula in a bomb attack claimed by IS. All 224 people on board were killed in the attack.

In a Friday evening address at the Saban Forum in Washington DC, Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon warned of waning US influence in the Middle East, saying that Russia is replacing the vacuum left by US absence in the region.

“Russia is playing a more significant role than the United States,” Ya'alon said, adding, “We don't like the fact that King Abdullah of Jordan is going to Moscow, the Egyptians are going to Moscow, the Saudis are going to Moscow.”

“The United States should play a more active role in our region,” Ya'alon said.



## **US Stealth Submarine USS Tucson Arrives In Subic Staff, GMA News Online, Dec 9**

US Navy submarine USS Tucson arrived in Subic Bay, Zambales last week for a visit as part of its Indo-Asia-Pacific deployment, the US Embassy said in a statement on Wednesday.

In the statement, USS Tucson chief Senior Chief Electronics Technician Billy Daly Jr. said the Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine with 150 crew members will showcase the US submarine fleet's capabilities.

"The men have worked and trained hard to prepare the ship for deployment and their performance over the past 11 months has been nothing less than exceptional," Senior Chief Electronics Technician Billy Daly Jr. said.

"I am proud to serve with each and every one of these sailors and to be part of USS Tucson," he added.

The USS Tucson can operate in all oceans of the world. Its home port is in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. It is equipped with 12 vertical launch tubes armed with Tomahawk cruise missiles and four torpedo tubes.

The weapons make it capable of anti-submarine warfare and anti-surface ship warfare.

The USS Tucson also boasts its stealth capabilities while only measuring 360 feet long. It is thus ideal for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions.

The US submarine's arrival in the country shows the robust alliance between the old allies amid rising tensions in the South China Sea due to overlapping maritime claims. China for its part has been aggressive in reclaiming disputed areas there to which the US responded with a rebalancing of naval forces to Asia to protect the freedom of navigation.

## **China Army Paper Warns Of Lost Wars and Shame If No Reform REUTERS, Dec 11 BEIJING**

– China's military risks losing wars and bringing millennia of shame upon itself if it drags its heels on reform, the army's official newspaper said on Friday, warning that modernization of the armed forces was behind that of advanced foreign counterparts.

President Xi Jinping unveiled a broad-brush outline of the reforms last month, seeking further streamlining of the command structure of the world's largest armed forces, including job losses, to better enable it to win a modern war.

Xi is determined to modernize at the same time as China becomes more assertive in its territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas. China's navy is investing in submarines and aircraft carriers, while the air force is developing stealth fighters.

The reforms, kicked off in September with Xi's announcement he would cut service personnel by 300,000, have been controversial.

The military's newspaper has published a series of commentaries warning of opposition to the reforms and worries about lost jobs.

In a lengthy commentary provided by the Chongqing military command, the People's Liberation Army Daily said China had managed to narrow the gap with its peers in developed countries through existing reform programs.

"But, generally speaking, our military modernization level is not commensurate with the security needs of the world's largest developing country and the gap with the world's advanced militaries," it said.

China has too many levels of command, "backward" combat effectiveness and too many layers of bureaucracy, the paper said.

"This directly impacts upon and constrains our military in trying to raise the ability to win battles," it added.

History shows that only those who embrace change thrive, and "no change means falling behind and taking a beating," the commentary said.

"Looking at the situation broadly, whether the armed forces bring glory or disgrace ultimately rests on the basis of the country's power and military's strength," it added.

"If there is no reform, once something happens and the armed forces cannot win, then they will be condemned through the ages."

There was no room for standing on the sidelines or prevarication, and those who spread "lies and slander" about the reform process must be firmly rejected, it added.

Xi's reforms include establishing a joint operational command structure by 2020 and rejigging existing military regions, as well as cutting troop numbers, to make the armed forces more streamlined and efficient.

On Monday, the same paper told high-ranking officers to hold their tongues about concerns over military reform and lead from the front to ensure the rank and file are on board.

## **Russia Launches New Airstrikes in Syria; 1st from Submarine Vladimir Isachenkov, AP, Dec 8**

**MOSCOW** – Russia has unleashed another barrage of airstrikes against targets in Syria, including the first combat launch of a new cruise missile from a Russian submarine in the Mediterranean Sea, the country's defense minister said Tuesday.

The Kalibr cruise missiles launched by the Rostov-on-Don submarine successfully hit the designated targets in Raqqa, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reported to President Vladimir Putin. The submarine was in a submerged position during the launch, he added.

Putin noted that the new cruise missile can be equipped with both conventional and nuclear warheads, adding he hopes that the latter "will never be needed."

Shoigu said Tu-22 bombers flying from their base in Russia also took part in the latest raids, performing 60 combat sorties in the last three days.

He said the targets destroyed in the latest wave of Russian airstrikes included a munitions depot, a factory manufacturing

mortar rounds and oil facilities belonging to "terrorists."

Shoigu said the Russian military had informed Israel and the United States about the airstrikes before launching them. A U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss the matter publicly, confirmed that Russia notified the U.S. in advance.

The U.S. official said at least 10 cruise missiles were launched from Russian surface ships in the Caspian Sea and at least one missile was fired by a Russian submarine in the eastern Mediterranean.

Russia has carried out its air campaign in Syria since Sept. 30, using warplanes at an air base in Syria's coastal province of Latakia, as well as navy ships and long-range bombers flying from their bases in Russia. While Moscow said its action has been focused on the Islamic State group, the U.S. and its allies have criticized Moscow for also striking moderate rebel groups opposed to Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Shoigu told Putin that Syrian army forces had overtaken the area near the border with Turkey where a Turkish jet shot down a Russian warplane on Nov 24. He showed Putin the plane's flight recorder, which he said Syrian and Russian troops had recovered from the crash site.

Putin ordered the flight recorder to be studied in the presence of foreign experts, adding that the data will show the plane's flight path.

Moscow's relations with Ankara have been badly strained over the downing. Turkey said it shot down the aircraft after it violated Turkey's airspace for 17 seconds despite repeated warnings.

Russia has insisted the warplane had stayed in Syria's airspace, and responded by deploying long-range air defense missiles at its air base in Syria and introducing a slew of economic sanctions against Turkey.

"We had treated Turkey not only as a friendly country, but as an ally in the fight against terrorism, and we couldn't expect such a mean, treacherous stab in the back," Putin said.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova dismissed Turkey's complaint about a sailor on a Russian navy vessel pictured on its deck with a portable air-defense missile while the ship was cruising across the Bosphorus.

Turkey denounced the incident as a provocation and summoned the Russian ambassador to protest.

Zakharova responded Tuesday by saying the Russian crew had the right to protect its vessel and insisted that the action didn't contradict the Montreux Convention, which sets international rules for using the Turkish straits.

Russia's Foreign Ministry also voiced concern Tuesday about the reported bombing of a Syrian army camp without addressing the U.S. claim that Russia was responsible for the bombing.

The Syrian government blamed aircraft from the U.S.-led coalition for targeting the army camp in the eastern city of Deir el-Zour on Sunday night, killing three Syrian soldiers and wounding 13. The U.S. denied the claim, and a senior U.S. official military said Washington was "certain" it was a Russian airstrike that had hit the camp. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss the issue publicly.

Without commenting on the U.S. claim, Russia's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday said it has "serious concerns" about reports of the coalition strike in Deir el-Zour. It said the incident was rooted in the U.S.-led coalition's reluctance to coordinate with Damascus on its campaign against the Islamic State group.

The ministry also mentioned a coalition strike in Syria's province of Hassake that reportedly involved civilian casualties.

"These incidents show that the situation on the front against IS in Syria and Iraq is getting more tense," the ministry said, adding that the Turkish military's deployment to a base near Mosul in Iraq without Iraqi government sanction has added to the tensions.

"We consider such presence unacceptable," the ministry said.

U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power, said Washington expects Turkey to operate in coordination with the Iraqi government.

"We have urged political dialogue between the Iraqi government and that in Turkey," Power said. "Our belief is that just as we operate in close coordination with and with the consent of the Iraqi government that all countries should do that."

She voiced hope that the Turkish deployment could "be done in that manner where a sovereign government is making judgments about which capabilities are deployed and making sure that it has visibility into everything going on in its country."

Dmitri Trenin, director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, said that while Russia so far has said 'no' to Iraq's request for help in fighting IS, that attitude may change. He added that the arsenal Russia has put on the ground in Syria signals Moscow's intention to have a lasting military presence.

"It's not going to be a short operation, it's not going to be a short war," Trenin said. "Russia is there for a long haul."

AP National Security Writer Robert Burns in Washington, Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations and Kate de Pury in Moscow contributed to this report.

### **Capps Relieves as SUBLANT Force Master Chief** ***Navy.mil, Commander, Submarine Force, Atlantic Fleet*** ***Public Affairs, Dec 10***

**NORFOLK, Va.** – Force Master Chief (Submarines) Stephen Capps has relieved Force Master Chief (Submarines) Wes Koshoffer as Commander, Submarine Force Atlantic (SUBLANT) Force Master Chief. The Atlanta-native relieved Koshoffer during

a change-of-office ceremony held at SUBLANT headquarters, Thursday, Dec, 10.

Koshoffer served as the SUBLANT Force Master Chief from April 2013 to December 2015. He will return to his hometown when he reports to the Naval Leadership and Ethics Center, U.S. Naval War College located at Newport, R.I.

Naval Leadership and Ethics Center serves as the educational facility for developing leaders. The educational institution brings together flag, senior and intermediate level naval leaders from other countries to develop them for high command in their navies; promote an open exchange of views between international security professionals which encourages friendship and cooperation and builds trust and confidence; and study operational planning methods and common maritime security challenges.

Capps' previous assignment was as Command Master Chief, Commander, Submarine Squadron SIX headquartered in Norfolk, Va.

Prior to leaving SUBLANT, Vice Adm. Joseph Tofalo, Commander, Submarine Forces presented Koshoffer with a Legion of Merit medal citing him for providing "crucial oversight in the management of more than 22,000 Sailors, and offered valuable insight, guidance and a deck-plate perspective to the Force Commander and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy."

### **USS Colorado Submarine Crew Honored**

#### ***Blair Shiff, 9 News, Dec 14***

Crewmembers from the USS Colorado returned to Denver to participate in various presentations and speaking events.

They received some on-field recognition during the Sunday Denver Broncos game against the Oakland Raiders. Sadly, the Broncos lost that matchup.

A local Colorado crewman is the focus of many of the Colorado events. Sonar Technician Seaman Brayden Kane, a May 2014 graduate of Horizon High School in Thornton, was honored in the 10 a.m. ceremony conducted in the rotunda of the State Capitol. He received his submarine "Dolphins" breast insignia.

"I love Colorado, which is why I volunteered to be on the USS Colorado, so this means the world to me," Seaman Kane said.

Conducting the ceremony was WWII Veteran submariner, and Aurora citizen, Ret. Lt. Col. Andy Palenchar. Of note is that Palenchar is credited with pulling former U.S. president George H.W. Bush from the water onto the submarine Finback SS-230 when the former Navy pilot's plane was shot down by ground fire while attacking the Japanese held island of Chichi Jima.

"It brought back a lot of memories, way back in 1943, when I was also pinned on with my dolphin," he said of Monday's pinning ceremony at the Capitol. "That was a proud moment."

The crew members also plan to visit various schools in the area to focus on the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) principles essential to safe submarine operations.

They will visit the University of Colorado-Boulder Veteran's Memorial Center to view artifacts from previous ships named USS Colorado. The last ship to bear the name USS Colorado was a highly decorated WWII Battleship BB-45, commissioned in 1923, over 90 years ago.

Also, Tuesday night, a reception will be held by the USS Colorado Commissioning Committee at Balistreri Vineyards.

### **Russian Submarine Returns after Bombing Islamic State in Syria (Russia), Staff, the Indian Express, Dec 16**

In the war against Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria, Russia had flexed its military might last week as it launched strikes in Iraq and Syria for the first time from a submarine stationed in the Mediterranean.

This video shows Russia's naval troops arriving back in Novorossiysk, Russia after successfully hitting so-called Islamic state positions in Syrian province of Raqqa.

People are seen cheering the naval troops as they make their way into the country. Made in Rostov-on-Don, the submarine was on a mission in the international waters to repel the threat posed by Islamic State militants and rebels in Iraq and Syria.

Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said last week that Russia's strikes reportedly hit "300 targets of different kinds" and helped Syrian special forces recover the black box of the Russian warplane downed by Turkey last month. "We used Calibre cruise missiles from the (Kilo-class) Rostov-on-Don submarine from the Mediterranean Sea," Shoigu told President Vladimir Putin during an encounter broadcast on state television. This video shows Russia firing missiles from submarine at IS in Syria.

"As a result of the successful launches by the aviation and submarine fleet, all targets were destroyed," Shoigu said, adding that oil infrastructure, ammunition depots and a mine-making factory had been hit in the strikes.

On September 30, Russia launched a bombing campaign in Syria saying it needed to target Islamic State militants — but the West has accused Moscow of seeking to prop up Assad's regime and hitting moderate rebels.

### **Israel's Newest Submarine Leaves Germany, Bound For Haifa (Israel) Judah Gross, Times of Israel, Dec 17**

The latest and one of the most expensive weapons in the IDF's arsenal, the Dolphin-class submarine INS Rahav, set out for Haifa from the German port of Kiel on Thursday, according to a senior naval official.

Ordered a decade ago, the Rahav will be Israel's fifth Dolphin-class submarine, joining the INS Tanin, Tekuma, Leviathan and Dolphin at the Haifa naval base when it arrives next month.

Rahav is the Hebrew name for the Greek god of the seas, Neptune, and has been used for other naval ships in the past, but it can also mean haughtiness or arrogance in Modern Hebrew.

The submarine, built by the German Howaldtswerke-Deutsche Werft shipbuilding company, was unveiled in April 2013, but required an additional year and a half of work to make it fully operational. The diesel-powered sub is over 220 feet (67 meters) long and weighs more than 2,000 tons. It will be staffed by a crew of approximately 50 sailors, the Israel Navy official said.

The vessel's air-independent propulsion system, which operates through a fuel cell instead of using louder, oxygen-dependent sources, allows the submarine to remain underwater without surfacing for potentially weeks at a time, the source said.

"The fifth submarine greatly enhances the Israel Navy's submarine flotilla and provides us with another state-of-the-art tool to aid and defend Israel against numerous threats," the Navy official said, but refused to specify to what exact dangers he was referring.

The INS Rahav cost Israel a reported \$2 billion (NIS 8 billion), but the Navy officer was loath to discuss its price.

"We're not speaking about the cost," he said.

The price tag, seen by some as exorbitant, of the Rahav was offset by a considerable discount from Berlin that is rooted in a contentious 1953 reparations agreement between Germany and Israel for the Holocaust.

The controversial agreement, which significantly boosted Israel's economy during the early days of its independence, has brought billions of dollars of military and economic aid to Israel throughout its history and was further invoked to purchase the new line of naval vessels.

The Rahav is equipped with state-of-the-art surveillance systems to track other ships and countermeasures to allow it to avoid detection by enemy craft, as well as satellite communications capabilities and other systems for electronic warfare, the Israel Navy officer said.

Last year, the INS Tanin — crocodile, in Hebrew — arrived in Israel. The nuclear-capable submarine, similar in most ways to the new Rahav, came equipped with 10 torpedo tubes, capable of holding a variety of missiles, according to Defense News.

Submarines, unmatched in their ability to hide from enemy navies, have long been a major facet of Israel's defense policy. "Submarines are a strategic tool in the IDF's defense arsenal. Israel is prepared to act at any time in any place to ensure the safety of Israel's citizens," Netanyahu said in 2013, when the Rahav was first unveiled in Germany.

Israeli submarines are allegedly armed with cruise missiles topped with nuclear warheads, affording the tiny Jewish state "second strike" capabilities — although the government will not officially acknowledge these nuclear weapons.

Israel also purchased a sixth submarine from Germany in 2013, which is expected to be completed in a few years. It is not yet clear if it will join the current fleet or replace one of the older

vessels.

"Let's talk about that in three or four years," the military official said.

### **Chinese Submarine Practiced Missile Attack on USS Reagan** *Bill Gertz, Washington Free Beacon, Dec 15*

A Chinese attack submarine conducted a simulated cruise missile attack on the aircraft carrier USS Reagan during a close encounter several weeks ago, according to American defense officials.

The targeting incident near the Sea of Japan in October violated China's 2014 commitment to the multinational Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea, known as CUES, designed to reduce the risk of a shooting incident between naval vessels, said officials familiar with details of the encounter they described as "serious."

A section of the non-binding 2014 agreement states that commanders at sea should avoid actions that could lead to accidents or mishaps. Among the actions to be avoided are "simulation of attacks by aiming guns, missiles, fire control radar, torpedo tubes or other weapons in the direction of vessels or aircraft encountered."

Navy officials recently briefed congressional staff on the incident that took place during the weekend of Oct. 24—days before the Navy warship USS Lassens sailed within 12 miles of disputed Chinese islands in the South China Sea, triggering vocal criticism from Beijing.

The Obama administration has kept details of the submarine targeting incident secret to avoid upsetting military relations between the Pentagon and the People's Liberation Army.

Asked directly about the incident, Adm. Harry Harris, commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, did not deny that the encounter occurred. "I have nothing for you," Harris stated in an email.

Pacific Command spokesman Capt. Darryn James earlier directed questions about the targeting to the Chinese navy. James also stated that Navy ships in the region are capable of defending themselves.

"I cannot discuss submarine operations, reports of submarine operations, or rumors of submarine operations," James said. "I can tell you that we are completely confident in the effectiveness and capabilities of the ships and aircraft of the forward-deployed naval force."

Additional details about the submarine-carrier encounter emerged after the Free Beacon first reported the incident Nov. 3.

The nuclear-powered Reagan is currently the Navy's sole forward-deployed aircraft carrier strike group. It arrived at its base in Yokosuka, Japan on Oct. 1 and replaced the USS Washington strike group there.

Aircraft carrier strike groups are equipped with anti-submarine warfare capabilities, including ships armed with sensors and submarine-killing torpedoes.

Disclosure of the aircraft carrier targeting comes as two

Chinese navy warships arrived in Pearl Harbor on Sunday.

China's official news agency said the ships' visit to Hawaii will last five days. "During the fleet's stay here, the U.S. navy and the Chinese fleet will hold receptions for each other," Xinhua said. "Friendly sports activities, such as basketball and soccer games, will be held between the two sides."

The Pentagon has made developing closer ties with the Chinese military a top priority, despite concerns that the exchanges are boosting Chinese war-fighting capabilities.

Members of Congress have called for curbing the exchanges in the face of Chinese cyber-attacks and destabilizing activities in the South China Sea.

On Capitol Hill, Rep. Randy Forbes (R., Va.), chairman of the House Armed Services subcommittee on sea power, said he is concerned by reports of China's simulated ship attack.

"If true, this would be yet another case of China trying to show us that they can hold our forces in the region at risk," said Forbes.

"Coming on the heels of anti-satellite tests and other demonstrations, this latest incident should be a reminder of the destabilizing course that China is on and the challenges we face in maintaining a stable military balance in the Asia-Pacific region," Forbes added.

Naval warfare analysts said the incident highlights Chinese efforts to counter U.S. aircraft carrier strike groups, the United States' major power projection capability in the Pacific.

Retired Navy Capt. Jim Fanell, a former Pacific Fleet intelligence chief, said the submarine incident, if confirmed, would be another clear case of the Chinese navy targeting the carrier strike groups, known as CVNs.

"The PLAN submarine force is on the leading edge of the PLAN for targeting U.S. CVNs in the East Asia arena, all for the expressed purpose of being able to attack and disable them in a contingency operation" he said. PLAN stands for People's Liberation Army Navy.

Rick Fisher, a China military specialist at the International Assessment and Strategy Center, said the Chinese navy operates several types of submarines capable of firing anti-ship cruise missiles.

The Song-class and Yuan-class attack submarines can fire two types of torpedo tube-launched anti-ship cruise missiles, including the YJ-82 with a range of up to 22 miles.

Eight of China's 12 Russian-made Kilo-class submarines are armed with Club anti-ship missiles with a range of up to 137 miles. Newer Shang-class submarine can also fire cruise missiles.

"That the U.S. side would be able to determine that the submarine was conducting a cruise missile strike would indicate that the Chinese submarine was under close surveillance," Fisher said.

"That also raises the potential that the U.S. side could

determine the Chinese submarine had hostile intent, potentially leading to the launching of defensive weapons."

Fisher said the incident was serious because a U.S.-China shootout would likely result in the destruction of the Chinese submarine and the loss of its crew. "Even though China would have been at fault for the incident, the Chinese government would likely then use it as an excuse for initiating a series of attacks or incidents against U.S. naval forces," he said.

Additionally, the targeting "certainly runs counter to a 2014 U.S.-China agreement to avoid such incidents at sea, which could indicate that China may have little intention to honor such this or other military confidence building agreements," Fisher said.

The Navy's main close-in anti-submarine warfare weapon is the RUM-139C rocket-launched anti-submarine torpedo, with a range of about 17 miles.

Ben Ho Wan Beng, a military analyst at Singapore's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, said the Chinese military is focused on using of cruise missiles against carriers. "China seems to stress the centrality of this weapon in attacking ships," he wrote last week in the Diplomat.

Recent improvements in Navy defenses against submarines include a new electronic combat system, a towed sensor array, and the P-8 maritime submarine patrol aircraft.

"Whether or not these and similar measures would enable the U.S. to retain a distinctive edge in the undersea combat realm vis-à-vis China remains to be seen," Ho said.

Lyle J. Goldstein, a U.S. Naval War College expert on the Chinese military, wrote on Sunday that a Chinese defense journal recently discussed ways to sink U.S. aircraft carriers.

A Chinese military analyst recently revealed that China is closely studying a report from earlier this year revealing that a small nuclear-powered French submarine successfully conducted a simulated attack on the aircraft carrier USS Roosevelt, sinking the ship and several support ships in the simulation.

"The article illustrates how Chinese military analysts are diligently probing for cracks in the U.S. Navy's armor," Goldstein wrote in the National Interest.

The October showdown between the Chinese submarine and the Reagan took place as the carrier sailed around the southern end of Japan on the way exercises in the Sea of Japan along with four other strike group warships.

Days after the incident, two Russian strategic bombers flew within a mile of the carrier at a height of 500 feet, prompting F-18s from the ship to scramble and intercept them.

The October incident was not the first time a Chinese submarine threatened a U.S. carrier strike group.

In 2006, a Song-class attack submarine surfaced undetected within torpedo range of the USS Kitty Hawk.

The state-controlled China Daily praised the implementation of the CUES maritime code agreement last year as

a major step in U.S.-China military relations.

Wen Bing, a researcher at the Chinese army's Academy of Military Sciences, told the newspaper that the code of conduct and U.S.-China warship exercise at the time "demonstrate the resolve of both countries to deepen military ties and avoid a maritime conflict escalating due to a lack of communication."

In December 2013, a Chinese amphibious warship sailed in front of the guided missile cruiser USS Cowpens and stopped, causing a near collision in the South China Sea.

A Chinese Embassy spokesman did not respond to an email request for comment.

### ***Submarine Learning Center Changes Command Staff, The London Day, Dec 28***

Capt. Andrew C. Jarrett relieved Capt. David A. Roberts as commanding officer of the Submarine Learning Center in change of command ceremonies at Naval Submarine Base on Dec. 21.

Rear Adm. Michael S. White, commander of the Navy Education and Training Command, presented Roberts with the Legion of Merit (Bronze Star in lieu of Second Award) noting, "He expertly led four Major Commanders, six schoolhouses and four detachments across the globe, keeping them aligned and focused on his priorities while delivering thousands of trained sailors to the fleet and bringing dynamic training to submarine crews in preparation for challenging deployed operations.

"Captain Roberts positioned the Submarine Learning Center to successfully transition into Ready, Relevant Learning (RRL) in support of the Navy's Sailor 2025 initiative. He led the NETC domain in building learning continuums for every submarine force rating, incorporating modernized training devices and simulators and state-of-the-art curricula and saving millions of dollars and man-hours annually while delivering high-quality training to the waterfront."

"He capitalized on science and technology teaching innovations in support of future Submarine Learning Center training programs ... and developed and tested a virtual training environment, termed Virtual Schoolhouse, to teach students worldwide without the need for TDY costs while maintaining a skilled training workforce equipped with quality training devices.

"Captain Roberts led the Navy's transition to enlisted women in submarines. Handpicked to be the deputy commander of the Enlisted Women in Submarines Task Force, he led a diverse group of Navy leaders through a very complex challenge to integrate enlisted women on submarines. Because of his efforts, the task force delivered a plan to CNO and SECNAV nine months ahead of schedule.

"He was selected to brief the Defense Advisory Council on Women in the Service, DACOWITS, and led Navy-wide discussions on this important Navy initiative. Under his leadership, the Submarine Learning Center seamlessly transitioned into training enlisted female submariners."

Roberts' next assignment is chief of staff of the Undersea Warfare Development Center, but used his change of command as a final opportunity to speak to, and about, the staff of the Submarine Learning Center and their role in preparing sailors for the world's finest submarine force.

"The need for relevant, cutting edge, adaptable training for our undersea warriors has never been more important than today. In a world where submarines are in high demand worldwide and the enemy continues to get smarter, and stealthier, and faster, it's critical that we control the undersea domain with the best people, the best ships and the best systems," he noted.

"The training professionals at the Submarine Learning Center are the unsung heroes of the Submarine Force," he continued, "those who know more about submarine training than all of us combined and I am a better naval officer and training professional having worked with them.

"Our people have always been the center of gravity of our force and our job to train them, with the help of so many other supporting organizations and commands Navy-wide," Roberts concluded, "with the best teachers, the best course curricula and the most technologically advanced trainers could not be more important. Submariners must be ready for the arduous work of taking submarines to sea and we must do everything we can to get them there."

Jarrett's previous command was, literally, down the street on Submarine Base New London as commanding officer, Naval Submarine School where he had also relieved Roberts.

In assuming charge of the Submarine Learning Center and with it, the responsibility to train the officers and sailors of the submarine force, Jarrett thanked his family for their love and support but couldn't resist noting the personal history he and Roberts share.

"Dave, thanks for the great turnover. We sure have come a long way from those two First-Class Midshipmen who rode the USS Fort Fisher from Guam to San Diego in the summer of 1988, and although we've raced the same race for close to 27 years I always seem to be just one step behind!

"But if I have to follow someone I want it to be you, you are not only one of the finest officers I have ever known but you are also one of the best people I have ever known and I am privileged to call you my friend. Thanks for everything...

"I would like to thank all the submariners who have served as mentors throughout my career. This includes the chiefs, department heads, XO's, and CO's who taught me what it means to be an officer in the world's finest Submarine Force...

"To my new team at Submarine Learning Center, I look forward to serving as your captain and promise to give you my best effort."

The Submarine Learning Center has training sites in fleet concentrations such as Groton, Norfolk, Va., Kings Bay, Ga.,



Bangor, Wash., San Diego, Calif., and Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, with additional learning sites at Yorktown, Va., and Guam.

### **Enlisted Women Report to Submarines in Early 2016** *David Larter, Navy Times, Dec 27*

The first four enlisted women completed the intensive basic enlisted submarine course in October and, starting next year, will report for duty to the blue and gold crew of the guided missile submarine Michigan.

The first cadre of 38 enlisted women selected for the program were announced this summer; the second round of selectees will be announced in January. The Michigan is the first sub to integrate enlisted women and the guided missile sub Florida will follow later that year.

In October, the Atlantic Fleet's top enlisted submariner said they were still working on the instruction that will govern the integration, revising it down from 49 pages to something more concise — especially when it comes to equal opportunity matters.

"We are revising our instruction that was — no kidding — 49 pages long of excruciating detail on what you wear on the treadmill and how you manage the head," said Force Master Chief Wes Koshoffer at the annual gathering of the Submarine League in Northern Virginia.

"The instruction just ought to read: We will treat each other with dignity and respect because we are professionals. We have a fraternization policy and until we cross those lines, proceed."

The Navy wants women to make up about 20 percent of the crews of seven of the 18 Ohio-class submarines by 2020, at which point they will start to send enlisted women to Virginia-class attack submarines.

### **Underwater Drones Could Scupper the Trident Nuclear Programme**

#### ***David Connett, The Independent, Dec 27***

Britain's independent nuclear deterrent could be torpedoed by an increasingly sophisticated breed of underwater drone, a leading defence expert has warned.

Rapid advances in underwater drone technology — autonomous underwater vehicles that can be controlled by ship- or land-based operators — threaten to make the controversial Trident nuclear submarines vulnerable, according to Paul Ingram, the chief executive of the British American Security Information Council (Basic).

Submarines have traditionally been seen as capable of providing stealth and invulnerability to pre-emptive attacks. The current requirement for Trident replacement subs is for them to operate as near to silently as possible.

However, a revolution in underwater drones, as well as advances in sonar, satellite and other anti-submarine warfare systems, mean that even totally silent submarines are likely to become detectable. Some sensor technologies can detect large submerged objects by monitoring small movements of surface

water.

Experts warn that as the capabilities of detecting systems improve and their cost falls, large-scale remote and potentially autonomous sensor deployments become possible. The result is that the world's oceans will become increasingly transparent, seriously calling into question the UK's heavy reliance upon the Trident submarine programme for its nuclear deterrence.

"There is a major transition taking place in the underwater battle space and it is far from clear how the new submarine will be able to evade detection from emerging sophisticated anti-submarine warfare capabilities," Mr. Ingram said.

The revolution seen in aerial drone capabilities in recent years was likely to be extended to underwater craft, he added. A U.S. study recently reported that up to 50 aerial drones, controlled by one operator, had "swarmed" in a simulated co-ordinated attack. New algorithms, or mathematical formulas, to command and control much greater drone numbers are already being developed. Similar advances in underwater drone operation would make it harder for submarines to escape detection, he said.

The U.S. navy and other states including China are already known to be carrying out extensive research into underwater drones.

"With satellite surveillance able to look further and further into the water, coupled with the possibility of 'swarming' underwater drones which are likely to become cheaper and cheaper to produce, it raises serious questions about the wisdom of putting all your nuclear weapons on board a submarine," he argued. "The only purpose for doing that, it is claimed, is to make them hard to detect, which could well be impossible to achieve by the time the new Trident programme is launched."

The Basic think-tank is concerned by the lack of informed public debate about Trident. "The worrying thing is that nobody is debating this. It is an issue that nobody wants to talk about," Mr. Ingram said.

"Campaigners against Trident don't want to talk about it because it's not about the purity of their anti-nuclear arguments. Those in favour of maintaining a nuclear deterrence do not want to talk about it because if the seas become transparent then the sense of putting all of our nuclear weapons in relatively slow moving platforms such as submarines will pose fresh difficulties," he said.

Military experts point out that the Royal Navy has long been involved in "cat and mouse" warfare — with Germany during two world wars and then with the Russians during the Cold War and beyond. They insist that underwater drones are but the latest tool in a race between submariners and their detectors.

In January, Carol Naughton, of the non-proliferation group British Pugwash, will launch a research project into the appropriateness of Trident as a platform for the UK's nuclear weapons capability.

"We are in danger of embarking on a major spend that will

not only fail to deliver the invulnerability required of the proposed deterrent system, but is also likely to add a worrying degree of instability into the nuclear weapons situation," she said.

Last month the Prime Minister revealed that the strategic defence and security review (SDSR) had put the cost of the four subs at £31bn, up from £25bn nine years ago. The review said a contingency fund of £10bn would be set aside, suggesting the MoD anticipates the costs could rise still further.

The first sub is not due to come into service until the early 2030s.

### **Germany Delivers First of Four Attack Submarines to Egypt Staff, Middle East Eye, Dec 24**

Germany has exported the first of four state-of-the-art military submarines to Egypt, it was announced on Wednesday.

One of the vessels was inaugurated in Germany on 10 December, Berlin's ambassador to Cairo, Julius Georg Luy, told the state-run Egyptian MENA news agency.

The submarines are being built by the German construction juggernaut ThyssenKrupp. The company's share price jumped by over seven percent after completion of the deal was announced on Wednesday night.

The submarines are being built in the northern coastal city of Kiel, which is famed for its ship-building and last week exported the fifth of six new ThyssenKrupp vessels bound for Israel.

The first two of the four submarines are thought to have been ordered in 2011, though the deal only became public in August 2012 following statements by Egyptian Rear Admiral Osama Ahmed al-Jundi.

A 10 December statement from ThyssenKrupp about the first vessel's inauguration was the company's first acknowledgement of the deal, though the press release gave no other details about the submarines or forthcoming delivery dates.

The second order for two submarines was announced in February 2014. Announcements of the submarine deals caused friction between Germany and Egypt's neighbour Israel, whose

navy contains vessels of the same model and whose territorial waters border those of Egypt in the Red Sea.

All four Egyptian submarines are thought to be Type 209, 64-metre long vessels armed with torpedoes and capable of firing land- and ship-striking missiles from on deck.

The value of the deal has not been made public, although the same model has previously been purchased by South Africa at a cost of \$285mn per unit.

Announcing the submarine deal, Luy celebrated a positive year for German-Egyptian relations, which has seen an 18.5 percent increase in German exports to the North African country.

Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukri will begin a three-day visit to Berlin on 11 January, meeting high-level officials to discuss bilateral relations and regional issues.

Germany became the world's fourth-largest arms exporter in 2015, overtaken for the first time by China.

Egypt imported almost \$3bn worth of arms in 2014, with figures for 2015 not yet available.

However, the past year has seen Cairo announce a number of high-value purchases, including a \$5bn deal with France for fighter jets and deals with Russia.

**AND FINALLY:**

### **Upcoming Events for January 2016**

**Friday, January 1<sup>st</sup>, New Year's Day**, HAPPY NEW YEAR to all hands and their families. Lots of football to watch!!

**Thursday, January 7<sup>th</sup>**, BOD Meeting at the FRA. Anyone desiring to help out with our flag folding detail please attend. We will be having FF training after the meeting.

**Thursday, January 14<sup>th</sup>**, Charleston Base monthly meeting at the FRA, 99 Wisteria Road, Goose Creek. Kitchen opens at 1700. Social hour starts at 1800. Meeting starts at 1900. Hope to see everyone there.

**Thursday, January 21**, Monthly Date Night Yokoso Japanese Restaurant, 106 Parkway Ave. Summerville (off Berlin G. Meyers Pkwy), from 18-2000

## **2016 Happy New Year!**



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