



**Vol. 14 No. 11**

**November 2018**

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

**Base Meeting:**

BOD: November 1, 1800  
 Membership: November 8, 1900

**Location:**

FRA Branch 269  
 Low Country Home  
 99 Wisteria Rd.  
 Goose Creek, SC



Base Commander	Ralph Rohrssen	843.670.2135	Chief of the Boat	Joe Lunn	843.747.5368
Base Vice Commander	Mike Ciesielko	843.324.0011	Veterans Affairs	Tom Lawson	843.327.3282
Secretary	Gordon Long	843.214.2353	Membership	Larry Knutson	843.860.1155
Treasurer	Gordon Williams	843.553.3015	Scholarship	Carl Chinn	843.437.5515
			Storekeeper	Ken Hutchison	843.553.0935
			Historian	George Scharf	843.873.3318
			Public Affairs	Rick Wise	843.875.5559 (H) 843.276.0899 (C)
			Chaplain	Nick Nichols	843.452.3189
			Events Coordinator	Rick Sparger	843.553.5594
			Holland Club	Bill Freligh	843.553.1115
			Newsletter	Rick Wise	843.875.5559 (H) 843.276.0899 (C)
			Webmaster	Nick Nichols	843.452.3189
			Kaps for Kids	Bill Kennedy	843.875.3109



## Submarines Lost During the Month of November

USS ALBACORE (SS-218)	November 7, 1944 – 11 <sup>th</sup> War Patrol	Lost with all hands – 85 souls
USS GROWLER (SS-215)	November 8, 1944 – 12 <sup>th</sup> War Patrol	Lost with all hands – 86 souls
USS SCAMP (SS-277)	November 16, 1944 – 8 <sup>th</sup> War Patrol	Lost with all hands – 83 souls
USS CORVINA (SS-226)	November 16, 1943 – 1 <sup>st</sup> War patrol	Lost with all hands – 82 souls
USS SCULPIN (SS-191)	November 19, 1943 – 9 <sup>th</sup> War Patrol	Lost with 43 souls – 41 became POWs – 21 survived the war

### Five Boats and 399 Men Lost

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#### Upcoming Charleston Base Events

CHARLESTON BASE CHRISTMAS PARTY    Friday, Dec 14 1800    Charleston AFB NCO Club

Information on all these events are on the base website [www.ussvicb.org/events/index.html](http://www.ussvicb.org/events/index.html)

#### From the Editor

I receive an aortic valve replacement on November 19 at Trident Hospital and am at home recovering. That means a lot of rest as well as breathing and leg exercises and a lot of walking. I am limited to not lifting over 10 lbs. for 2 months while my sternum heals and to limit any unnecessary strain on my chest. That can sometimes be complicated.

Anyway, I'm back and can now get out the November newsletter. I plan on sending out a December newsletter with the pictures from the Christmas party and the Dec. 21 NPS Graduation. It should go out before Christmas.

## From USSVI National

Normal message traffic from USSVI will be published each month in the newsletter. If the message is of immediate interest to the membership it will be sent out by the Base Secretary. Messages are arranged in the order received

### 2019 USSVI SE Regional Conference

As you may know, Snug Harbor base is sponsoring the 2019 SE Conference here in the Space Coast (Cape Canaveral). My name is Shawn Brown, Snug Harbor Base's Treasure and the coordinator for this event.

FYI – the Space Coast Submarine Birthday ball is going to be held on 4 May 2019 at the Cape Canaveral Radisson.

To support the birthday ball, we are running our SE Conference as close to 4 May as possible and at the same Cape Canaveral Radisson. Presently we are aiming for 30 Apr – 3 May but due to room pricing we may have to move the dates to the left (earlier).

We intend to keep the SE Conference separate from the Submarine Ball for meetings and activities.

We ran the last Space Coast SE Conference at the same Radisson back in 2015 so they are familiar with myself and Snug Harbor.

I talked to the Radisson hotel today and they can support our activities and dinner. Normally we have to reserve the Radisson with a \$500 deposit but the Radisson was able to take the deposit that the Submarine Birthday Ball is supplying to cover both events. This is excellent for us since there was not any "Seed" money to start this.

I will be asking the other SE Bases to donate some money to support the SE conference (in lieu of the Seed money).

The main reason that I'm writing you is to let you know what meetings I have scheduled so far with the Radisson and to get yours and Ken's input whether we need any other meetings:

- Base Officer Meeting
- Holland Club Breakfast
- Men's Brunch
- Ladies Brunch
- Welcome to the SE Conference greeting meeting
- The Dinner

Anything that we missed?

Between meetings we will have events/tours such as:

- Kennedy Space Center tour (my companies manager is an Astronaut and we are going to see if he is willing to join the tour).
- Two casino boat rides
- Veterans Museum tour

This just names a few – our core planning group is going to review these events/tours and see if we can come up with something new for the conference.

We are hoping to get the same support we received the last time that we sponsored this event so wish us luck.

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

### Minutes of Business Meeting

8 November 2018

#### Opening Ceremonies:

□ The November 2018 Base Meeting was called to order by Vice Commander Mike Ciesielko in the absence of Base Commander Ralph Rhorsen with a quorum of three officers and a total of 74 members present. The meeting started at 1900 with the sound of the diving alarm.

□ The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Vice Commander and recited by the members in attendance.

□ The Invocation and the Tolling of the Boats lost during the month of October was given by Base Chaplain Nick Nichols. Submarines Lost during the month of November:

○ USS ALBACORE (SS-218) November 7, 1944 – 11th War Patrol Lost with all hands – 85 souls

○ USS GROWLER (SS-215) November 8, 1944 – 12th War Patrol Lost with all hands – 86 souls

○ USS SCAMP (SS-277) November 16, 1944 – 8th War Patrol Lost with all hands – 83 souls

○ USS CORVINA (SS-226) November 16, 1943 – 1st War patrol Lost with all hands – 82 souls

○ USS SCULPIN (SS-191) November 19, 1943 – 9th War Patrol Lost with 43 souls – 41 became

POWs – 21 survived the war

○ 5 Boats and 399 Men Lost

□ **RMCM(SS) Larry Lyle Cox** departed on Eternal Patrol October 21, 2018

□ **ENCS(SS) Michael Howard Bailey** departed on Eternal Patrol October 9, 2018

□ **TM1(SS) Michael L. McLuskey** departed on Eternal Patrol September 4, 2015

□ The USSVI Creed was read by Vice Commander Mike Ciesielko and welcomed members and guests to the meeting.

#### Introductions of New Attendees:

□ Three men were present at the Base meeting for the first time:

○ Bill Reece – MSCS – Qualified on USS Henry L. Stimson SSBN-655 in 1974 – also served aboard James Monroe SSBN-622 and retired after serving aboard Henry Clay SSBN-625

○ Dennis Morris – IC1 – Qualified on USS Skipjack SSN-585 in 1974 – also served aboard USS Lafayette SSBN-616

○ Jeff Wrenn – RM2 – Qualified on USS Von Steuben SSBN-632 – also served aboard USS Phoenix SSN-702

#### Old Business:

□ **Social Media Coordinator** – Vice Commander Mike Ciesielko presented the BOD request of the Base members to consider becoming the Social Media Coordinator. This individual needs to be someone who is well-versed in the use of social media such as Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, etc... Mike asked the membership to think about it and contact him after the sometime after the meeting. Nick Nichols emphasized that although he works very hard to keep the Base website [www.ussvicb.org] updated, not everyone looks at websites. The younger generation is looking at the social media sites as mentioned previously.

□ **Phone APP** – Vice Commander Mike Ciesielko asked the Base members if anyone knows someone (even their children or grandchildren) who does coding to build a “Smartphone APP” for Charleston Base SubVets.

□ **Base Photographer** – Vice Commander Mike Ciesielko reminded the Base members that we still need a Base Photographer. Nick Nichols reminded the Base members that likely, everyone in the room has a phone that takes pictures and with the phone, each one can be a photographer for the Base. If anyone takes pictures, please send them to Nick via email or Drop Box – the instructions are on the Base website. Glenn Little accepted the task of Base Photographer. Thank you Glenn!

#### New Business:

□ **Base Commander Update** – Vice Commander Mike Ciesielko informed Charleston Base that Base Commander Ralph Rhorsen has taken a full time job that is keeping him out of Charleston. Because of this, Ralph has found it difficult to attend any Base Meetings. If requested by the Charleston Base Board of Directors, he will offer his resignation as BC. Mike Ciesielko has discussed this with the BoD and notified the Base membership of the situation. We plan to continue as we have the last several months. Ralph will remain as BC and Mike as VC conducting the business at the Base meetings. Beginning in January, 2019, the membership will be reminded that an election will be held in May for the position of Base Commander.

Mike will be a candidate for the BC position at that time. Mike also encouraged anyone else in the membership who would like to be a candidate for BC to also submit his name for this position and have a good election where he would not be running unopposed for Base Commander. He is even willing to have a debate with other contenders. The office of Base Treasurer is also scheduled for election in May, 2019.

□ **Cold War Memorial Maintenance and Preservation Fund – Nick Nichols** – Rusty Pickett, our Patriot's Point liaison, because of the fact that Patriot's Point has not been properly taking care of the submarine areas, has requested that a preservation and maintenance fund be established to do this work. Individual submarine associations are being asked to provide small donations to this fund if the boat has a memorial bench or monument located at Patriot's Point. Charleston Base is responsible for maintaining the Lost Boats Memorial and the Amberjack Memorial. The fund has been named as the Cold War Memorial Maintenance and Preservation Fund (CWMMP). Cleaning of the memorials and trimming of bushes and brush around the CWM shall be the purpose of this fund. The money will be used to purchase supplies such as the special cleaners required for the benches. Rusty Pickett will organize the volunteer working parties from all of the SubVet Bases in South Carolina. He will also determine how the money is spent for cleaning materials and supplies. Nick Nichols requested a motion be made for Charleston Base to make a \$100 donation to the CWMMP fund. Ken Curtiss made the motion for the donation with Tom Lawson seconding. During discussion, a suggestion was made to donate \$200 instead. Nick pointed out that Rusty already has verbal notifications from several associations which will be providing funds for this effort and although the cleaning solutions are expensive, we still do not require a large pot of money for this maintenance. The motion for the donation of \$100 by Charleston Base to CWMMP was passed by voice vote. Nick requested anyone who is a member of an individual submarine association which would like to donate to CWMMP to contact him and he will provide the information about how to donate to the fund. The money donated to CWMMP will be administered as a line item in the Charleston Base Treasury similar to the Base Scholarship Fund. This money can only be used for maintenance as required around the CWM as directed by Rusty Pickett. It is not allowed to be used for anything that Charleston Base does or is part of. There was a concern from a Base member regarding the availability of volunteers to be part of the working parties. Nick requested a show of hands for those who would be willing to help roughly twice a year. The response negated the concern about available personnel.

□ **Rick Wise** – As Base Comptroller, Rick presented the 2019 proposed budget for Charleston Base. Bill Roberts made the motion to accept the Base 2019 Budget and was seconded by Ken Curtiss. The motion passed successfully.

□ **FRA Liaison** – Mike Ciesielko requested a member to take over the task of FRA Liaison. Skip Chilton accepted the job. Congratulations to Skip.

#### **Secretary – Gordon Long:**

□ The Minutes from the USSVI Charleston Base October Business Meeting have been published in the Base Newsletter and promulgated on the Base website. There were no additions or deletions. The minutes were approved.

#### **Treasurer – Gordon Williams:**

□ The Treasurer's Report for October have been published and promulgated on the website. There were no additions or deletions. The report was approved. There will not be a meeting in December, however the Treasurer will publish a report for the month of November.

#### **Chaplain – Nick Nichols:**

##### □ **Highlighted boat of the month:**

○ USS SCULPIN SS-191 was lost on November 19, 1943 with the loss of 43 men near Truk. Severely damaged by depth charges after attacking an enemy convoy, Sculpin continued to fight on the surface. When the captain was killed, the crew abandoned ship and scuttled Sculpin. 41 men were taken prisoner but only 21 survived the war. Among those not abandoning ship was CAPT Cromwell who was aboard as a potential wolfpack commander. He rode the Sculpin down, fearing that vital information in his possession might be compromised under torture. For this, CAPT Cromwell was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

□ **RMCM(SS) Larry Lyle Cox** departed on Eternal Patrol October 21, 2018 in Goose Creek. He joined USSVI and Charleston Base in 2007, he was a Life Member. Larry qualified on the JOHN MARSHALL SSBN/SSN-611 in 1972 and served on DANIEL BOONE SSBN-629, COB on KAMAMAHEA SSBN/SSN-642 and COB on JAMES K. POLK SSBN/SSN-645. His service was held on Sunday, October 28th. SUBVETS and FRA were very well represented.

□ **ENCS(SS) Michael Howard Bailey** departed on Eternal Patrol October 9, 2018 in Hickory NC where he had lived the last several years. He joined USSVI and Charleston base in 2004 and was a Life Member and Holland Club member. He qualified on the SENNET SS-408 in 1960 and served on HENRY CLAY SSBN 625 and JAMES MONROE SSBN 627.

□ **TM1(SS) Michael L. McLuskey** departed on Eternal Patrol September 4, 2015 in Summerville. He joined USSVI and Charleston Base in 2000 and was a Life Member. He qualified on ANDREW JACKSON SSBN-619 in 1972. I discovered his death when I contacted his family to see why his email was no longer working.

□ **Luke Murphy** is back in the VA with respiratory problems. He is in MICU 3B South Bed 2. His O2 level is very low and he's not doing well. Visitors are welcome.

□ **Mike Welch** is at the Elms Rm 201 at 2600 Elms Plantation Blvd. He is working at getting better after his 6 way bypass. Robby Roberts and Soupy Campbell have stopped in to see him and said he looked good and was smiling. Still weak and needs to get his strength back. The doctors want to keep him a while but he is pushing to be home next week.

□ **CC Cager** has had a serious setback with his left ankle wound. He is seen at the VA Wound Care Center and has made significant progress. He'll be having skin graft surgery soon. If you remember he had the motorcycle vs deer wreck back a while back.

□ **Rick Wise** will have his aortic valve replacement surgery on Friday November 16 at Trident Hospital. If all goes well he should be out of the hospital for Thanksgiving.

□ **Rick Sparger** is recovering from his left knee replacement last month. He isn't here tonight due to overworking his knee today.

□ **Jimmy Kimbrell** had a Stent put in the Left Carotid Artery on 8 Nov. at 8:00 A.M. Dr. said it has about 80% blockage. He called during the meeting to say all went well and he is home.

□ **Beetle Bailey** is going to have his left knee replaced on 13 Nov.

□ **Jerry Farr** had a bad fall about a year ago and has since had a rough year. If you get a chance to call him that would be great.

□ **Art Hance** will be having a same-day surgical procedure on 15 Nov.

□ **Roger Rader** collapsed during the November meeting. The meeting was interrupted while EMS was called. Roger was treated but not transported. He was able to remain for the meeting, after which, one of the Base members gave him a ride home.

□ I still need page 2s from a lot of you. I will be sending out the form via individual emails soon in hopes that I get some of them back. Larry Cox did not have a Page 2.

#### **Webmaster – Nick Nichols:**

□ Website is constantly updated.

□ Make use of the EVENTS page on the Charleston Base website. All events that are put out to the membership via email will be listed and updated on the events page.

#### **Victory House – Ed Stank**

□ Ed will be leaving at 1000 on Tuesday November 13 from the VFW on Bellwright Road for the visit to Victory House. Tom Scott usually attends and Ed invited others to come along for the visit. Anyone who has donations for Victory House, please let Ed know, so that he can get them.

#### **Recreation – Ed Stank**

□ Ed has tickets to the Base Christmas party to be held on December 14 at the Air Force Base NCO Club. Red Freligh will provide entertainment. Tickets are \$15 per person. Menu includes beef, pork and fish. There will be two free drinks provided. There will be plenty of soft drinks at no charge.

□ Ed reported that access to the storage shed on the base has been an issue, but extra keys are being made and hopefully, the access problems will not be an issue in the next coming year. For those who need something out of storage, there is a list on the website of Base members who have access to the facility. Nick Nichols read the list from the website – Rick Wise, Rick Sparger and Ken Hutchison. Ed also has access.

#### **Membership – Larry Knutson**

□ USSVI Charleston Base membership we currently have 288 members. About a dozen members paid their dues tonight. Larry is collecting dues for next year and will be sending out dink notices.

#### **Kaps for Kids – Bill Kennedy**

□ **\*\*Humor\*\*** Two atoms were standing around talking. One atom says, “Man, I think I lost my electron.” The

other atom says, "Are you positive?"

☐ He will be going to McLeod Hospital in Florence on December 4. Meet at the hospital at 1000. If anyone needs directions or a ride, please contact Bill. This will be the last Kaps trip for the year and he would like a good turnout for this trip. Also, plan to join him for next year on these trips. The kids and the parents really appreciate these visits.

#### **VA – Tom Lawson**

☐ There is a lot of good information regarding the VA on the Base website.  
☐ The VA and DAV are in dire need of volunteers – especially drivers.

#### **Fleet Reserve Association – Skip Chilton**

☐ Last Sunday, November 4, the FRA attended the Veterans Parade in downtown Charleston where the SubVets' float was used. There were quite a few good comments about the float.  
☐ There will be a golf tournament on November 10 (also the U.S.M.C. birthday).  
☐ The FRA will be placing flags on the veteran's graves at Plantation Memorial Gardens.  
☐ The Navy Breakfast is on Saturday, November 17 from 0800-1100.  
☐ The FRA will be closed on Thanksgiving Day, November 22.  
☐ The FRA Christmas Party will be held on December 15 at 1800. Children's events will be held earlier that day at 1200.  
☐ There will not be an FRA meeting during the month of December.  
☐ Plans for the FRA New Year's Eve party December 31 are still in progress.

#### **Submarine Veterans of WWII – George Scharf**

☐ George welcomed WWII veteran Stacy Power at the meeting this evening.  
☐ George will send an email to let members know when the next WWII luncheon will be held.

#### **Scholarship – Carl Chinn**

☐ The Scholarship Application for 2019 is on the website. Make sure that the application is properly completed.  
☐ The drawings for both submarine book and the Smoker/Grill will be held at the end of the meeting tonight.

#### **NPS – Ray Sparks**

☐ The next Nuclear Power School graduation ceremony will be held on December 21. Muster in the Navy Exchange parking lot at 0800 to carpool. We have VIP Parking, but it is limited.

#### **Public Affairs – Rick Wise**

☐ The float will be taken to Coastal Coffee Roasters in Summerville for Tolling of Lost Boats on November 11.  
☐ Veterans Day Ceremony will be held on Monday, November 12 at the County Office Building, Main Street, Summerville.

#### **Special Events – Carl Chinn**

☐ Rick Sparger has sent in the applications to pull the float in the Christmas parades at Harleyville on November 29 and Summerville on December 9. Those are the dates for those who want to ride the float.

#### **Storekeeper – Ken Hutchison**

☐ A picture of the Nathaniel Green with the Ulysses S. Grant alongside was provided for any member who would like to take it home.  
☐ 2019 Calendars are available - \$10 each.

#### **COB – Joe Lunn**

☐ Would like to plan an Oyster Roast either February or March. His preferred date is February 2. He will have to arrange for the pavilion as well. Joe requested a show of hands for those who would like to attend.

#### **Base commander – Mike C.**

☐ Thanked the members for attendance at the meeting, especially those who volunteered to take on needed positions; making mention of Skip Chilton for FRA Liaison and Glenn Little as Base Photographer.  
☐ Speech

#### **Good of the Order**

#### **After Battery – Ray Sparks**

☐ After Battery is open every Wednesday. Executive chef cooking dinner serving at 1700.  
☐ The dates for the Spring Hog Roast are still to be determined.

#### **Gun Club – Mike Ciesielko**

☐ Wants to arrange a gun shoot soon.  
☐ Is working to design a Gun Club patch for the Base. Once that is done, he will then work with the Storekeeper to get them available to the members.

## **Nuclear Historian – Rick Carlson**

How about a few more “Simple Truths”?

1. Every two years, the American voting public has a brain fart and forgets why they voted the way they did during the last election. So, they vote for something new and different. The ones they voted out the last time.

2. Did you ever notice ... you voted for “this” guy because he promised you “more”? The last time, he promised you “more”, but you always end up with less. He is the only one who gets more. Then during the next election cycle, he will promise you more, again ... and you will get less ... again.

3. Have you seen a poor politician? No! They all want “more” – but we get less! This is the truth.

- Our phones are – wireless
- Cooking is – fireless (microwave ovens)
- Cars are – keyless
- Food is – fatless
- Tires are – tubeless
- Dresses are – sleeveless
- Youth are – jobless
- Leaders are – shameless
- Relationships are – meaningless
- Attitudes are – careless
- Babies are – fatherless
- Feelings are – heartless
- Education is – valueless
- Children are – mannerless
- We are – speechless
- The government is – clueless
- Our politicians are – worthless
- And, we should all be scared – S\_\_TLESS!

This is a Simple Truth ... MORE or LESS!

HAPPY VETERAN’S DAY HAPPY THANKSGIVING

## **Drawings**

Submarine Book – Joe Lunn

Smoker/Grill – Marty Sessler

FRA – Larry Pepper

Depth Charge – Tom Clark

## **Closing Ceremony**

Nick Nichols led the group in a prayer of Benediction; Vice Commander Mike Ciesielko announced adjournment of the meeting followed by three blasts on the diving alarm. The meeting was closed at 2029.

## **VA Websites Get Major Redesign**

13 Nov 2018

Military.com | By [Jim Absher](#)

If you've visited [va.gov](http://va.gov) in the last few days you may have noticed some changes.

The website, along with the pages for all the business lines, have been redesigned to make them more user friendly, according to [a press release from the VA](#).

You may have trouble finding the information you need, since everything has been redesigned. Luckily, there are still some old pages floating around, though the old stuff will probably be redesigned soon.

For example, the GI Bill page has been moved from <https://benefits.va.gov/gibill/> to <https://www.va.gov/education/>,

the compensation page has moved from <https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/> to <https://www.va.gov/disability/>,

and the healthcare page has moved from <https://www.va.gov/health/> to <https://www.va.gov/health-care/>.

According to the press release, VA used feedback from more than 5,000 veterans, servicemembers, their families, caregivers and survivors to come up with a design that is more user-friendly.

## THE GOOD

Apparently, the VA actually listened to the users this time. The redesign actually makes it easy to do most things you go to the VA website to do.

The new design is big on personalization, the main page has links like:

- refill and track your prescriptions
  - apply for a home loan Certificate of Eligibility
  - apply for education benefits
- file for a VA disability increase

The VA finally got rid of vets.gov, visiting that website now takes you directly to the va.gov page. This is good, it was pretty confusing before.

## THE BAD

The whole redesign is supposed to be personalized, however when I signed in to the main VA page and then attempted to view my benefits I had to sign in to [eBenefits](#) again. Hopefully this will be fixed in the future, but having first-hand knowledge on how VA security and IT systems work I wouldn't hold my breath.

If you are looking for things like the compensation rates, they are pretty hard to find, but of course [military.com has them for you in an easy-to-understand format](#).

## THE UGLY

Really not a lot of ugly on the new website, it displays pretty good on mobile devices, and cuts out a lot of the right hand and left hand menus that drive me crazy when I'm trying to find information.

At first glance, the new design may appear familiar, it looks fairly similar to the [eBenefits website](#).

The redesign has also added some neat stuff. For example, when I try to find the nearest facility while using the website on my phone it uses my location and will even load google maps with driving directions or let me call the local clinic by just tapping my screen. Welcome to modern times!

## THE CONCLUSION

While the redesign of VA's website will be confusing at the start, it will be better than the old one, they got it right this time.

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### **Maintenance backlog results in costly delays in returning submarines to the fleet**

Julianne Stanford, Kitsap Sun, 27 November

<https://www.kitsapsun.com/story/news/local/2018/11/27/navy-maintenance-backlog-caused-costly-delays-submarines-fleet/2058582002/>

The Navy has spent more than \$1.5 billion in the past decade to support the operating costs for submarines that idly sat in the water, all while the Navy's four shipyards worked through a backlog of delayed maintenance availabilities.

A number of the fleet's fast attack submarines have collectively spent more than 10,600 days pierside, waiting to start or complete a maintenance availability since 2008, according to a recently released report from the Government Accountability Office.

The Navy would foot the bill for the operating costs of those vessels - including crew salaries. But whether they were deployed or waiting for maintenance at the shipyard, the delays meant the submarines were unable to perform missions. "Without addressing this challenge, the Navy risks continued expenditure of operating and support funding to crew, maintain, and support attack submarines that provide no operational capability because they are delayed in getting into and out of maintenance," the report said.

Overall, it costs the Navy about \$9 billion a year to operate and sustain the 51 commissioned nuclear-powered fast attack submarines in the fleet, which includes 33 Los Angeles-class submarines, 15 Virginia-class submarines and three Seawolf-class submarines.

Fast-attack submarines are among some of the Navy's most sought-after assets because their "stealthy nature provides an asymmetric advantage for gathering intelligence undetected and, due to their nuclear power, allows for prolonged underwater operations with few practical limits," according to the report.

Most of the fleet's fast-attack submarines are homeported at bases in Connecticut, Hawaii, Virginia, California and Guam. All three of the Navy's Seawolf-class fast-attack submarines are homeported at Naval Base Kitsap, near where they receive maintenance at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard.

The USS Jimmy Carter has been homeported at Bangor since 2005. The USS Seawolf and USS Connecticut have been homeported in Bremerton since 2007.

The report found the majority of delays resulted from depot-level maintenance periods, which requires entering one of the Navy's often-backlogged shipyards, like PSNS.

A similar GAO report published in September 2017 found systemic facility restoration and maintenance backlogs across all four Navy-owned shipyards had resulted in more than 13,000 lost operational days for the fleet's aircraft carriers and submarines of all classes after their maintenance availabilities could not be completed on time.

Within the past decade, the Navy has spent more than an estimated \$350 million to support the Kitsap-based fast-attack submarines as they waited to either start or complete a maintenance availability at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, according to the report.

The three Seawolf-class subs have collectively waited more than 1,600 days to complete work packages that had fallen behind schedule. Combined, they have sat idle for almost 80 days as they waited to enter dry dock.

At the average estimated daily cost of more than \$205,000 to operate, Seawolf-class submarines were the most expensive vessels for the Navy to support per day during a delayed maintenance period compared with Los Angeles-class or Virginia-class submarines, the GAO found.

Maintenance projects on those vessels often ran into unforeseen roadblocks after they got underway, according to Naval Sea Systems Command spokesman Bill Couch.

The resulting delays were "due to higher-priority work leading to a lack of available resources, along with growth and new work in excess of the original plan," Couch said.

The Seawolf's first major depot-level maintenance period, which began in September 2009, ran almost 20 months behind schedule. It was completed in April 2012.

The Seawolf is once again laid up in the shipyard after delays arose during the course of the submarine's current dry dock maintenance period that began in October 2015. The availability will likely be completed next month, Couch said.

At that rate, the project will be more than two years behind the schedule of its original estimated completion date of July 2016, according to the Navy's fiscal year 2019 budget.

The next submarine in the Seawolf-class, the Connecticut, entered the shipyard for its first major maintenance period in July 2012. By the time its work package was completed in November 2016, the project had run almost 32 months longer than what the Navy planned.

The last dry dock period for the Jimmy Carter - the third and final submarine in the Seawolf class - ran more than eight months behind schedule after it began in September 2013. It was completed in October 2014.

The delays to that particular project resulted because of the "one-of-a-kind maintenance program" required for the specialty sub, which has unique modifications to support special operations missions and intelligence-gathering operations, Couch said.

The Jimmy Carter once again entered the shipyard for dry-dock maintenance in July. The work package is scheduled for completion in January 2020, according to the Navy's budget.

Solutions to resolve the backlog

If the maintenance delays continue unaddressed, the GAO estimates that Navy will spend another \$266 million to support idle fast attack submarines during the next five years.

One possible solution to the addressing the backlog would be for the Navy to consider passing along of the fleet's fast-attack submarine maintenance needs to private shipyards with greater frequency.

The report recommends the Navy should conduct a business-case analysis that takes a closer look at the maintenance workload allocation between the Navy's public shipyards and private ventures, including an assessment of the costs and risks associated with allowing submarines sitting idle versus passing along some of the workload to private-sector counterparts.

Shipbuilders like General Dynamics Electric Boat and Huntington Ingalls Industries-Newport News Shipbuilding, which manufacture nuclear-powered fast-attack submarines for the Navy, already provide depot-level maintenance for those vessels as needed on a case-by-case basis. Going forward, those shipyards could be a viable solution to working through maintenance backlog for vessels of that class, the report suggested.

The report found that the Navy has shifted an estimated 8 million man-hours of maintenance on fast-attack submarines to private shipyards during the past five years, but "has done so sporadically, having decided to do so in some cases only after experiencing lengthy periods of idle time," according to the report.

In one extreme case, the Los Angeles-class submarine USS Boise was scheduled to undergo maintenance at Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Virginia in 2013, but the Navy had to push back the work package's start date due to shipyard's heavy workload. As such, the Boise's certificate to safely dive the submarine expired in 2016 and the crew has sat idle pier side since.

The Navy awarded a contract to the private shipyard Huntington-Ingalls to perform the required maintenance in October 2017, but by the time the Boise enters the company's shipyard in January, it will have idled for more than 960 days. The GAO also recommended the Navy continue to work toward addressing workforce shortages and a facility restoration backlog found at all found shipyards, as detailed in the organization's September 2017 report.

In the year since then, the Navy has already started to take steps to alleviate those problems.

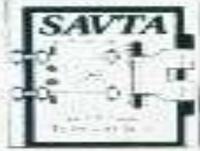
Almost 1,500 new employees have started working at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in the past year since that report came out, according to shipyard spokesman J.C. Mathews.

In the past decade, the PSNS' workforce has surged from almost 9,500 employees to the current workforce of more than 14,000 employees.

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