

Another patrol aboard the Ulysses S. Grant, a Fleet Ballistic Missile Submarine of the United States Navy. Another ninety days of cruising depth and patrol flank to nowhere. Another three months of hoping I will not have to do the job I am here for.

Tensions between the East and West were very high; our ship had been on alert since day sixteen of the deterrent patrol. The Commanding Officer's night orders required hourly reports of the ship's position and incoming radio traffic, indefinitely.

The mid-watch passed uneventfully. The ship remained on a northeast heading, and our depth hadn't changed as much as a foot the entire watch. By the end of the watch, I was ready for the rack. ( Bed onboard ship ). I went to my stateroom to do some weapons department paperwork and then retired for the night.

Suddenly, I awoke to the irritating bong, bong, bong of the ship's general alarm and the Chief of the Watch barking, "Man battle stations missile," on the ship wide paging circuit. It struck me as strange; normally the ship didn't run drills while on alert status.

As I left my stateroom, the sound of men scurrying to their battle stations echoed throughout the ship. I arrived at the Missile Control Center, where reports were already arriving that missile tubes 1 through 8 were enabled, and tubes 9 through 16 were nearly ready. It wasn't long before all of the ship's missile tubes were ready to release their deadly payloads.

Time passed very slowly as the launch crew awaited orders from the Captain in the Control Room. I heard various ships control orders, traveling between Maneuvering and the Officer of the Deck, as the ship prepared for launch.

Without warning, The Missile Control Center phone talker yelled, " From Control to the Weapons Officer, insert the launch key and take control of the Missile Control Panel". I complied with the order and reported the action to Control. I examined the panel as I removed the hand control from the safe and plugged it in. I noted all the proper green and white lights were lit with no red on the panel and reported, "Ready for launch".

The next half an hour seemed like an eternity, giving me time to think about the task at hand. I thought of my wife and two month old daughter and the few possibilities remaining for them. I wondered if this patrol would ever end, or if we would spend the rest of our lives running around radioactive seas, mission completed, nothing to go home to.

I jumped as the phone talker yanked me back to reality and said, " Control to Weapons Officer, launch tubes 1 through 16". Sweat ran down my face as I squeezed the trigger on the hand control to launch the first missile.

The ships alarm sounded, bong, bong, bong, and I sat up in a cold sweat, hitting my head on the upper rack. I realized everything had been a dream, but perhaps also a prediction of the future. Suddenly, the Chief of the Watch barged in over the alarm, " Man battle stations missile".