

American Submariners Inc.
4370 Twain Ave.
San Diego, CA 92120-3404



The Silent Sentinel

August 2019



Our Creed and Purpose

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

In addition to perpetuating the memory of departed shipmates, we shall provide a way for all Submariners to gather for the mutual benefit and enjoyment. Our common heritage as Submariners shall be Strengthened by camaraderie. We support a strong U.S. Submarine Force.

The organization will engage in various projects and deeds that will bring about the perpetual remembrance of those shipmates who have given the supreme sacrifice. The organization will also endeavor to educate all third parties it comes in contact with about the services our submarine brothers performed and how these sacrifices made possible the freedom and lifestyle we enjoy today.



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The Silent Sentinel via Email

To all of my Shipmates and families who currently receive our Great newsletter via the mail who would like it sent via email or continue to receive it via mail, please fill out the form and mail it to the base or myself. We are trying to cut the cost of the newsletter down from \$3700 to about \$1900 a year. By receiving the Silent Sentinel via email will cut down the printing and mailing cost. The other plus to receiving it via email is you can save it on your computer and not have the paper lying around the house.

A subscription to the Silent Sentinel newsletter will be available to surviving family members via internet email, at no charge, upon notification of the Membership Chairman. If a printed hard-copy is preferred, via US Post Office delivery, an annual donation of \$5.00 will be requested to cover costs.

NAME: _____

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Would like the SILENT SENTINEL emailed: YES _____ NO _____

USSVI Base Commander
c/o VFW Post 3787
4370 Twain Ave.
San Diego, CA 92120-3404

*DUE TO LOGISTICS CONSTRAINTS, ALL INPUTS FOR THE SILENT SENTINEL MUST BE IN MY HAND NO LATER THAN **ONE WEEK** AFTER THE MONTHLY MEETING. IF I DO NOT RECEIVE IT BY THIS TIME, THE ITEM WILL NOT GET IN. NO EXCEPTIONS! MIKE*

Our Next Meeting

Our monthly meeting is held on the second Tuesday of the month at VFW Post 3787, 4370 Twain Ave., San Diego. Our next meeting will be on *August 13th*. The post is located one-half block West of Mission Gorge Road, just north of I-8. The meeting begins at 7 p.m. The E-Board meets one hour earlier at 6 p.m.

*Check us out on the World Wide Web
www.ussvisandiego.org*

BINNACLE LIST

Len Heiselt, Sergio Frost, David Martinez, Chris Sultana and Tony Dack

Submarine Losses in August

Originally Compiled by C J Glassford



USS Bullhead (SS-332)

Lost on August 6, 1945 with the loss of 84 crew members in the Lombok Strait while on her 3rd war patrol when sunk by a depth charge dropped by a Japanese Army plane. Bullhead was the last submarine lost during WWII.

USS Flier (SS-250)

Lost on August 13, 1944, with the loss of 78 crew members while on her 2nd war patrol. Flier was transiting on the surface when she was rocked by a massive explosion (probably a mine) and sank within less than a minute. 13 survivors, some injured, made it into the water and swam to shore. 8 survived and 6 days later friendly natives guided them to a Coast Watcher and they were evacuated by the USS Redfin (SS-272).

USS S-39 (SS-144)

Lost on August 13, 1942 after grounding on a reef south of Rossel Island while on her 3rd war patrol. The entire crew was able to get off and rescued by the HMAS Katoomba.

USS Harder (SS-257)

Lost on August 24, 1944 with the loss of 79 crew members from a depth charge attack by a minesweeper near Bataan while on her 6th war patrol. Harder had won a Presidential Unit Citation for her first 5 war patrols and CDR Dealey was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously. Harder is tied for 9th in the number of enemy ships sunk.

USS Cochino (SS-345)

Lost on August 26, 1949 after being jolted by a violent polar gale off Norway caused an electrical fire and battery explosion that generated hydrogen and chlorine gasses. In extremely bad weather, men of Cochino and Tusk (SS-426) fought to save the submarine for 14 hours. After a 2nd battery explosion, Abandon Ship was ordered and Cochino sank. Tusk's crew rescued all of Cochino's men except for one civilian engineer. Six sailors from Tusk were lost during the rescue.



San Diego Base, United States Submarine Veterans Inc. ***Minutes of Meeting - 9 July 2019*** ***At VFW Hall, 4370 Twain Avenue, San Diego CA 92120***

1910 - Base Commander Warren Branges called the meeting to order.

Conducted Opening Exercises - Pledge of Allegiance lead by **Chief of the Boat Bob Bissonnette**.

Base Commander Warren Branges lead the opening prayer. A moment of silence was observed for ENC(SS) Frazee. ENC(SS) Frazee's interment ceremony will be held on Friday August 9th 2019 at Fort Rosecrans Ceremony at 1130 hours.

Chief of the Boat Bob Bissonnette conducted Tolling of the Boats for boats lost in the month of July.

Base Secretary Jack Kane recognized Past Commanders, dignitaries and guests and announced 22 members and 3 Guests present.

Base Treasurer Mike Cosgrove presented the Treasurer's report. A copy of the Report will be filed with these minutes. Minutes of the May and June 2019 meetings were published in the Sentinel.

Base Commander Warren Branges called for Committee Reports

Binnacle List - Len Heiselt, Sergio Frost, David Martinez, Chris Sultana and Tony Dack are on Binnacle.

Parade Committee - Chairman Jack Kane announced the next parade is in Poway on September 7th. Parade starts at 0900. Muster between 0730-0800. Maps and further information will be sent via e-mail upon receipt from the Parade Committee. The last parade of the year will be San Diego Veterans Day Parade on 11 November. Our Float was judged "Best Patriotic Theme" at the Julian Parade on Independence Day.

Membership Committee - **Chairman Ray Febrache** reported we have 242 members.

Scholarship Committee - **Committee Chairman Paul Hitchcock**. Three Scholarships were awarded this year. The recipients are: Emily Payner - Sonoma State College, Haley Fabley - California Polytechnic State University and Zoey McDaniel - Vet Tech Institute.

Storekeeper - **Chairman Paul Hitchcock**. Calendars are available for \$10 each. Paul is working on getting vests and a embroidery shop to do the sewing.

Breakfast Committee - **Chairman Base Commander Warren Branges**. The last Breakfast (30 June) cleared \$307.17. The Next Breakfast is 29 September 2019. The VFW Kitchen Supervisor will hold a certification/re-cert class for Food Handlers at 0700 that morning. Check the list on the bulletin board for your status.

52 Boat Memorial - **Chairman Base Commander Warren Branges**. - The next All Flags Day will be Friday, 20 September 2019 (POW/MIA Remembrance) and then again on 11 November 2019

(Veterans Day). We will post flags at 0700 and retrieve them at 1730 both days. The 52 Boat Memorial Board is working with San Diego Parks and Recreation concerning converting the markers to a Polished Concrete vice Granite. Parks and Recreation has okayed the change. The Memorial Board will work with City to finalize this change. Once implemented a fund drive will be undertaken to finance the changeover.

Float Committee - Chairmanship open. No Report.

Eagle Scout Program - Co Chairs Nihil Smith and Glenn Gerbrand. Co-Chair Nihil Smith reported that 8 Scouts have passed Board of Review and will be awarded Eagle Rank in the Fall.

1935 - Presentations. The Base Commander will schedule a speaker for November or December. The speaker will give a presentation about History Flights and their work to recover and repatriate remains of WWII KIA's.

Captain Ray Febrache gave a presentation "The State of the Chinese Submarine Force".

2020 - Base Commander called for a break. 50/50 Raffle held. The winner donated his share to the General Fund.

2014 - Unfinished Business

FLOAT STORAGE STATUS - Naval Base San Diego will be opening a new RV storage lot adjacent to the Mini Mart at Rosecrans and Nimitz. We will be moving the float to that lot when it opens. When we make the move we will obtain and install a new float cover. The Base anticipates opening the lot in August or September.

BASE ROSTER AND EMAIL VERIFICATIONS are continuing. If you a verification email please respond. We are still reconciling the Base List with National List.

MEMBERSHIP DUES. If your dues are lapsed please see the Base Commander.

VFW STORAGE AREA. We will help the VFW rehab the storage garage after the Solar Parking Area is completed.

DISTRICT COMMANDERS NEEDED. Please vote electronically via the message you received from Base Commander. Send your electronic ballot to Jim Denzien.

ANNUAL SUBMARINE VETERANS FAMILY PICNIC will be held at Smugglers Cove, Naval Base Point Loma on Saturday, 13 July 2019 - 0900 till ????. Two Submarine Tours will be held that day. Please contact the Base Commander with names of attendees. There are some openings for the afternoon tour. We will also have a "Holland Club" Induction Ceremony at the picnic. All paperwork is done for the picnic, coolers, sound system, etc are ordered. Base Commander finalized plans with those who are helping with and providing support on the day of the picnic.

2044 - NEW BUSINESS

WREATH LAYING AT 52 BOATS. The Wreath Laying tentatively scheduled for 7 December 2019 may have to be moved to 6 December 2019. The Park is being used on 7 December for The Jingle Bell Run. Base Commander will work out details of the event with the Point Loma Association. We do have funds from last year to cover most of the anticipated cost for this years event.

2041 - Good of the Order

2019 National Convention is 14-20 August in Austin TX. Details are at: <http://ussviconvention.org/2019/>. So far 350 people are attending.

OUTYEAR CONVENTIONS - 2020 will be in Tucson and 2021 will be in Orlando at Rosen Shingle Creek.

SILENT SERVICE TV SHOW is available at olgoat.com

DEEP SUBMERGENCE REUNION will be held in San Diego 25-27 September 2020 in San Diego.

A MODEL OF A MK-48 Torpedo donated by Kip Casper will be auctioned at the next meeting. (The Secretary forgot to bring it for this meeting).

John Boca (Medal of Honor Recipient) attended the Julian Parade. The Coins given in the Opportunity Drawing were presented to us by John.

SHIPMATE JJ LYNCH noted that the Maritime Museum in Los Angeles is opening an exhibition honoring USS Los Angeles (SSN-688) on 20 July 2019.

The Meeting was adjourned at 2055.

/s/ **Jack E. Kane**

Jack Kane, Secretary

Sailing List for 9 July 2019

Members

Matt Baumann
Bob Bissonnette
Jim Boydston
Warren Branges
Kip Casper
Mike Cosgrove
Bill Earl
Joel Eikam
Ed Farley
Bob Farrell
Ray Febrache
Paul Hitchcock
Jack Kane
J.J. Lynch

Bob Oberting
Joe Peluso
William Pickering
Jim Pope
Chris Stafford
Nihil D. Smith
Russ Stoddard
Mert Weltzien

Guests

Jessie Chang Farley
SKC(AW/SW) Sonja
Lynch
Julie Biewer

Silent Sentinel **EXCLUSIVE!**



Judith and Gary Murphy have graciously consented to allow the Silent Sentinel to republish their collection of USS Whale, SS-239, ship's newspaper, "THE RAG," from the WW-II era! Gary's father, Rex Murphy, served as Whale's Engineering Officer. The Silent Sentinel will now include a copy of The Rag in each issue. The Murphy's and I hope that you will find it an interesting reading experience.

On the evening of 19 March, *Whale* sighted two large freighters and one torpedo boat or destroyer as escort. Just after daylight the next morning, the submarine finally worked into a favorable attack position; she fired spreads of three torpedoes at each freighter, and hit both. The first target, tentatively identified as *Mogamigawa Maru*, sank rapidly by the stern. The second, a cargo ship resembling *Arizona Maru*, was plagued by several heavy internal explosions following a second torpedo hit. *Whale*, mistaking these secondary explosions for bombs, went deep. Upon discovering her mistake, she started to surface but was greeted by a barrage of depth charges from the escort. *Whale* dove again but again came under attack – this time from the air – when she attempted to return to examine the wreckage. The submarine suffered extensive damage during this attack. This was by far *Whale's* closest escape.. It is now 27 March 1943: "The Rag" No. 11.

"HARD QUESTIONS MUST HAVE HARD ANSWERS"

Once again the Chinaman came through with his famous Swedish meat balls. And, once again he was supposed to put in four bottles of good schlitz beer.

Now Chinaman we ask you, which did you use, your dish water or the beer, and if you did use the dishwater, what did you do with the beer?

Anonymous.....

All day---, through the various channels of the underground grapevine, notes of praise and condemnation have been pouring in to the office of the Editor of the RAG.

To you, the dear reading public of the Mighty Whale, the articles and editorials not "by-lined" by the Editor and other members of the staff, do not, and I repeat, do not necessarily betray the opinions and ideas of the members of the staff of the RAG.

This newspaper treats all with the same respect and if any purposely perpetrated prevarications are printed, it is due only to the fact, that, the experts employed by the peoples choice; the RAG, were unable to detect them. If you, the condemned can and will substantiate definite proof as to the liability of said falsifications, the RAG, will be only to glad to rectify the error publically.

Shortly after the Rag was on the streets early this morning, a member of the Aux. gang (a groupe of decrepits) was roughly seized and thrown into Bones Buckhiem's concentration center, in that compartment beneath the control room known as the pump room. The charges is seems were; that, Bundy the accused, supplied the RAG with information of vital interest which, automatically made him a stool pidgeon in the eyes of boss Buckhiem.

Hurridly court was held and the accused was consequently found guilty with a long hard life in the concentration center's bilges ahead of him. Boss Buckhiem is reputed to have said, When questioned by the reporters that; "Bundy is an arrogant, unintellectual, bone-headed nasty agent. He shall com-

pletethe just punishment that was meted out to him.

Editor.....

It was my unfortunate accident, a few months ago, to stumble across a certain OGM, playing goo goo with an elderly lady, say about 40 pleasure racked years, in a most remote spot in a night club.

You should have seen those two love birds, cooing, whispering words of love. You know---there must be something in that old saying, "life begins at 40".

As one lover to another, "The world will always love a lover".

-----The great lover Martini

Old folks, young folks, every body come. Come to Dame Cox's Sloppy Shoppe and make yourselves to home. There's a place to check your chewing gum and candy at the door. And hear the goldarndest stories that you've never heard before. ATTENTION PLEASE.--- Dame Cox, a resident of long standing and late of the bottle scarred veterens association announced this morning, just after the closing of the Stacey Stoker flingding, at which all of the Whale notables attended, The opening of the new Sloppy Shoppe. And is expecting one hundred percent patronage of her old clientell. To the new Sloppy Shoppe, Dame Cox let it out of the bag that she had a big new added attraction in the recent installation of a super-doo-ultra-collosal-hyper-gigantic sun lamp operated on the inverse square system. This lamp is expected to attract all the fun loving, ever joshing, younger set of the Whale.

For the old folks the new lamp and system will adda new zest and meaning to their other wise dull life, and for the others, it wial take the place of the old morning pick-me-up, "Gin and Bitters".

Along with this new attraction Dame Cox is offering her world

continued from page one.

famous collection of, butter-scotch pie, waldorf astoria bread, hot cross buns, lady fingers, and various other nick-nacks that go with making a week-end at the beach complete.

For them that so desire, perfumed toilet waters, a'la crew's head, aqua velva, woodbury's, vitalis and a new imported Hiss is offered free.

Large parties can be handled only by appointment. At this writing, plans are being drawn up for the enlargement of the dancefloor, which is expected to put the old one to shame. Dame Cox as usual will have your favorite orchestra on tap for week-end and holiday parties. We and I'm sure I speak for the younger set, are looking forward to the Gala opening, with the prospects of a hilarious time in the offing. May your new venture be a huge success.

We want you to know that we are all behind you, and if you were walking a plank we would still be behind you.

For reservations call: After-Battery two rings, and you will get the much desired results. (This is a paid advertisement)

"OLD FOLKS".....

LOST...LOST...LOST...LOST....

A book entitled, "The New Yorker War Album", belonging to E.W. Talbot MCMC2e, After engine room. Any one knowing of the whereabouts of this book, or having it, would they please return it to the owner. Your cooperation would be very much appreciated. Thank you...

Man who went lie to a woman has very little consideration for her feelings.

Olin Miller.....

Not only does beauty fade, but it leaves a record upon the face as to what became of it...

Elbert Hubbard.....

In 1773, John Harrison completed the manufacturing of the first somewhat reliable Chronometer, for which he was paid a prize of 20,000 pounds. He was by trade a Yorkshire carpenter.

MINUTE BIOGRAPHIES

or

WHO'S WHO ON THE WHALE

.....By Bundy.....

No. 9 Cox the cook

Brother Cox, a Main man, and when I say Main I mean MAIN man, is one of the few pluggers aboard the boat. In fact, he's so good, a representative from the O.P.M. in Washington will be waiting on the dock when we get in, to award him the Navy "E" pennant.

This distinguished award will be offered him for his consistent efforts in the production of ersatz rubber. And let there be no doubt as to Cox not being on the job, because anyone who can put out so much ersatz night after night must be good.

Not content with this alone, COMRADE Cox will occasionally shift his attention toward the production of construction material, such as; cement and concrete. Of course, he calls these marvelous products bread and biscuits, but, such a slight error can be forgiven. He probably disguises them in this form so that the enemy will never learn his secret.

And, the crew of the Mighty Whale can soon cease to worry about the cock-roach problem, because a mass meeting was held by the little members in the after battery, and the following resolution was passed by the chairman of the cock-roach committee, "Resolved, that due to the amazing lack of edible show put out by this ship's galley, all cock-roaches will jump ship the day we hit the dock.

After his Naval career has come to a close, Cox is going to operate a de-luxe HAMBURGER establishment on Market at 5th. A moment of silence will be devoted now for all his future customers. May their souls rest in peace.
TOMORROW: LOVER MARTINI!

It is not meant that man should live by bread alone.....

As I write this, the Mighty Whale is hot on the scent of further prey, so stand by for further developments.

PORT--The left side of the ship as one faces the bow. Formerly called LARBOARD---A round opening or window in the side of a ship. A strong sweet wine, usually dark red in color. Webster.....



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San Francisco 1958

USS San Francisco 1942

USS San Francisco 2005

An article by Wayne Thomas Nelson

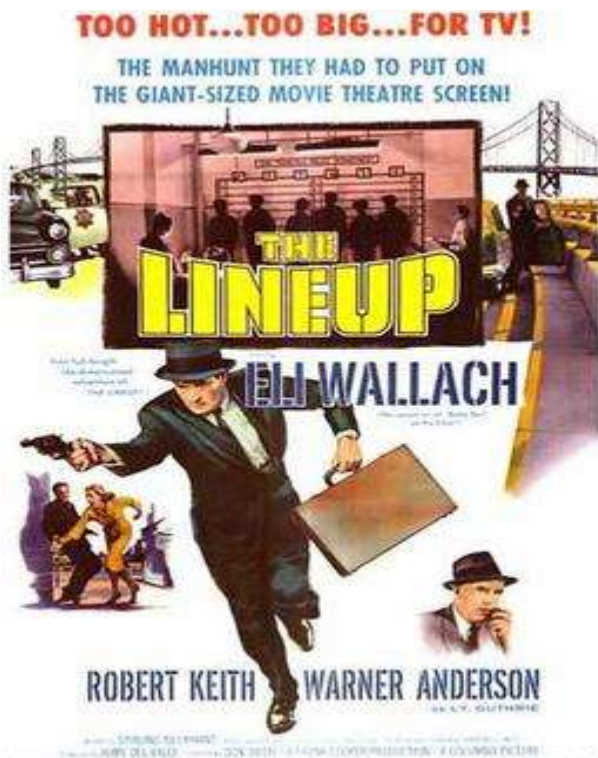
Writers very seldom include in a story or article the inspiration or sequence of events that lead to the idea to write it. Unless it is germane to the story. Then you have me. I find so many things fascinating

and interesting that I feel compelled to include them and if anything it does archive it makes a short story a bit longer while entertaining the reader along the way. And really that is what a writer is supposed to do.

Otherwise a whole story could be told in just a few words or one sentence. Example....."TITANIC HITS ICEBERG AND SINKS".

SAN FRANCISCO 1958 AND SUTRO'S

A couple of months ago I watched an old crime drama titled THE LINE UP which was released in 1958. Now the plot of the film was immaterial as far



Embarcadero freeway he is supposed

as my interest went. It concerned a criminal drug ring in San Francisco who recovered heroin from unsuspecting travelers who bought unknowingly items in the orient that contained the drugs. Part of this ring was a thug played by Eli Wallach who didn't just recover the drugs he had penchant for murder. Now this is where my interest comes in. Before the thug is gunned down by police during construction of the

to drop of the collected drugs at Sutro's Baths out at Land's End. At the amusement venue he is supposed to put the drugs under a gyro compass display I believe. Anyway the big



boss is there in a wheel chair but because the last shipment of heroin was discovered by a little girl in her doll and wasted he tries to tell the boss

what happened and the boss says he is a dead man. So he pushes the old guy over the rail to the ice skating rink below. Then the police car chase starts.

So now the interest for me is that I never have seen the buildings only their ruins in 1967 when my boat the USS Medregal SS-480 was in dry dock at Hunter's Point. You may never have heard of Sutro's but if I had said the Horse and Cow you would have been right with me.

At the Pacific Ocean end of Golden Gate Park is a road called the Great Highway. You head north a bit and it takes you to an area known as Land's End which is also Sutro Heights Park. In 1896 Adolph Sutro the former mayor of San Francisco bought the land and established the Clift House hotel and later restaurant which is still there. However over the years it has burned down several times. He also built the Sutro Bathes. By the time of the movie the baths were covered over by the ice skating rink floor and in 1966 all the structures burned to the ground in a suspected arson caused blaze. Just before the fire Sutro's was closed and sold to a firm which planned to build apartments but after the fire they collected the insurance

money and abandoned the project. Sounds suspicious.

USS SAN FRANCISCO CA-38 1942



The USS San Francisco sails under what else the Golden Gate Bridge in 1942

My interest in Sutro's and the area was renewed and I broke out my 1967 copy of a map of San Francisco and while looking it over saw an area marked USS San Francisco Memorial. Wondering what the ship was I went on line and read up. The ship CA-38 was a cruiser of the New Orleans class that primarily served during WW 2 in the battle for Guadalcanal in 1942. The next words describe that journey into hell pretty fully.....during the battle the ship was heavily damaged.....her captain and admiral killed.....earlier she mistakenly opened fire on the light cruiser Atlanta causing serious damage and inflicting numerous casualties. Well the ship built in 1934 earned 17 battle stars and other awards and she was decommissioned in 1945 at the

end of the war and scrapped finally in 1959. The memorial features the battle damaged bridge wings from the ship.



Two shots of the memorial. Note the shell damage in lower photo.

USS SAN FRANCISCO SSN-711 2005

Well we are submariners and a sub story is actually connected to all of this. In looking over the cruiser San Francisco I found a listing for the nuclear submarine USS San Francisco SSN-711. So after taking you on a tour of San Francisco and the battle of Guadalcanal I finally present the real subject of my story.

The year is 2005.....the date is January 8th.



The nuclear submarine USS San Francisco has departed Guam and is now located some 360 miles southeast of the island in the early morning hours of 8 January. She is submerged at a depth of 525 feet steaming ahead at flank speed (A speed better than 30 knots) when suddenly she is stopped dead in the water by something. Later investigations prove that unknown to the crew and not present on their navigational maps and charts was an undersea mountain! The nose of the submarine was crushed and mangled as far as 20 feet back from the head on collusion but despite this heavy damage the submarine miraculously didn't sink. Every crew member sustained some degree of injury and one later proved fatal. Also the nuclear reactor wasn't damaged and the USS San Francisco after surfacing made her way back to Guam under her own power.

My comments:

The jolt transferred through the hull must have been incredible. Reports of the crew being tossed 20 feet is not surprising. A submarine is not constructed to factor in a 30 knot collusion with an unmovable object. But the fact she did not sink shows the safety of the crew is always top

priority. That being said a submarine is only as safe as its crew is well trained and efficient in emergencies and there is no greater emergency in a submarine as when you are sinking and you will find out below that is what the USS San Francisco was doing.

The above story before my comments was pretty much the story released to the press at the time of the incident. But as you would expect that wasn't the whole story. The Navy did extensive investigations and pinpointed the location as in the Caroline Islands between the Pikelot and Lamotrek Atolls and the exact time to be 02:43 Guam time.

Further inspections made of the damage proved conclusively that the USS San Francisco had indeed hit an undersea mountain known as a seamount. This dispelled rumors in the press of a possibly of another submarine etc.

The investigation into the crew and their actions revealed that the submarine and all aboard were almost lost. There was sever damage to the forward ballast tanks and sonar dome and the ruptured ballast tanks prevented the submarine from surfacing as the boat had lost positive

buoyancy and was sinking. In a desperate and frantic life or death struggle for survival heroic efforts by the crew enabled the boat to surface and she was escorted back to Guam by at least 3 other ships and several aircraft.



This same photo of the damaged sub in dry dock in Guam appeared in several sources. The tarped area was most likely secret equipment.

Investigations also revealed an available chart of the area of the collusion that showed a discolored water area indicating a possible seamount. But this chart was not used. Many crew were given awards for their actions and bravery. But some were given disciplines. Six crew members were cited with “dereliction of duty and hazarding of a vessel” under the overall charges of violation of “several critical navigational and planning procedures” prior to setting sail. They were busted in rank. The captain was relieved of duty. After repairs the USS San Francisco continued to serve the Navy until 2016 when plans were

made to convert her into a moored Carolina.
training ship in Charleston South

Current News

“Plataginet, I will; and like thee, Nero,
Play on the lute, beholding the towns burn” (*Henry VI*, Shakespeare)

Retired Submarine Commander Sues Navy to Release USS Thresher Investigation Staff, USNI News, August 9

A retired nuclear submarine commander filed suit against the Navy to gain access to records classified for more than a half-century after the sinking of USS Thresher (SSN-593) – the Navy’s worst nuclear submarine disaster.

Capt. James Bryant, who served on three Thresher-class subs, including a tour as commanding officer of USS Guardfish (SSN-594), has in his retirement taken to investigating the cause of Thresher’s sinking.

“I’m trying to find out what happened because it’s good lessons learned,” Bryant told USNI News. “You need to have scholars look at this. What are we really protecting? I’m not doing this to embarrass the Navy.”

When Thresher sank to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean 56 years ago, 129 officers, sailors and shipbuilders died. Thresher was supposed to be the most advanced submarine, and its failure during the height of the Cold War was considered a tremendous disaster, Bryant said.

In the aftermath of Thresher, the Navy created its SubSafe program. Bryant says if the facts were released, the incident could serve as a valuable learning tool.

“A lot of things had to have gone wrong for that submarine to sink,” Bryant said.

A year ago, Bryant wrote in Proceedings why he thinks the Navy should declassify the Thresher investigation. On April 8, 2019, Bryant filed a Freedom of Information Act request with the Navy asking for the release of Thresher investigation documents.

Displeased with the slow-pace of the Navy’s response, Bryant filed a lawsuit on July 5 alleging the “Navy has improperly withheld agency records from Plaintiff.”

In response, the Navy denies withholding any records under the Freedom of Information Act, according to an Aug. 8 court filing. A court date for the case has not been set.

Theories about why Thresher sank have circulated since it sent its last garbled report during a deep dive test on April 10, 1963. Some theories revolve any number of possible mechanical failures or design flaws. Others hold to more far-fetched Soviet Navy interference. The official reason involves a ruptured pipe causing flooding that shorted-out electrical panels, resulting in a loss of propulsion at test depth.

Bryant, who spent a significant part of his naval career serving aboard Thresher-class submarines, suspects a problem with Thresher’s main coolant pumps led to the sinking. However, without the Navy records requested in

his Freedom of Information Act request, Bryant said there's no way to determine if any of the theories are correct.

Given the age of the investigation and a 2012 memo from the Navy's director of undersea warfare, Bryant says the bulk of the Thresher investigation should be releasable.

The Navy's director of undersea warfare stated in the 2012 memo, "Approximately 75 percent of the records have been declassified and are available for public release through FOIA. The remaining records are classified and are subject to redaction through a mandatory declassification review process before being released."

However, seven years after the memo, and 56 years since the sinking, Bryant says the Navy has released just 19 pages of more than 1,700 pages of testimony. Bryant is suing to get the Navy to release all declassified Thresher information.

"All they have to do is remove temperatures and pressures and flow rates," Bryant told USNI News. "We're not after reactor design, and I doubt very much the court of inquiry went too much into reactor design."

Bryant also thinks there's a great untold story of how the nuclear Navy survived the sinking. Adm. Hyman Rickover, during his testimony, successfully made a case to continue building nuclear submarines amid advocacy to back away from the new technology involved in the disaster.

"Naval Reactors has a great story to tell here because Rickover beats these people, he saved a very important program," Bryant said. "The diesel boat guys wanted to go back to diesel boats, and the Cold War would have had a different history."

Dog poop, booze and a slap — alleged CPO initiation hazing under investigation **Carl Prine, Navy Times, August 7**

All chief petty officer initiation activities are suspended at Afloat Training Group Pacific Northwest while investigators probe whether selectees were forced to do push-ups in a base housing backyard possibly strewn with dog feces, according to an incident report provided to Navy Times.

Labeled "CPO SEASON INCIDENT," the report indicates that the alleged hazing occurred around 8 p.m. Sunday at a residence in Lake Stevens, Washington, about 10 miles east of Naval Station Everett.

No names are listed in the report, but the suspected offender is described as a male 38-year-old chief petty officer and one of his alleged victims is a male petty officer first class who is three years younger.

According to the incident report, four chief selectees were at the chief's residence when he directed them into push-up positions "where dog feces may have been present." The chief also allegedly slapped one of the selectees.

In the block for alcohol/drugs, the form reads "YES."

"This was not a sanctioned CPO initiation event" and all of the command's official initiation events "are suspended until further notice" while Afloat Training Group Pacific Northwest investigates the allegations, the report indicates.

In Coronado, California, Naval Surface Forces spokeswoman Lt. Patricia Kreuzberger confirmed that there's an ongoing investigation into the alleged incident but said no suspects have been charged with a crime.

She said that when Vice Adm. Richard A. Brown— the commander of Naval Surface Forces — learned about the hazing allegations, he immediately suspended all initiation activities at Afloat Training Group Pacific Northwest until further notice.

Kreuzberger said that the Washington command’s senior enlisted leaders briefed their chiefs on July 26 and July 30 that hazing was not acceptable during the CPO season.

“No service member in the Navy may engage in hazing or consent to acts of hazing being committed upon them,” she said.

Kreuzberger pointed all sailors to the guidance issued in May by Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russ Smith and his fleet master chiefs, an instruction that was

designed to prevent the boozy and abusive shenanigans that marred previous rites of passage into the Goat Locker.

MCPON’s directive holds each command’s senior enlisted leader responsible for what occurs during the initiation season and urges the mess to “actively enforce good order and discipline.”

It also warns that senior enlisted leaders "not following established guidelines will be removed and when necessary, held accountable.”

To Smith, the season’s infamous history of hazing had been “distilled out” of the mess and replaced with a “professional regimen” designed to prep a sailor “for the rigors of becoming a chief petty officer.”

WWII Submarine That Vanished In 1942 Discovered Off Alaskan Islands **David Matthews, New York Daily News, August 6**

NEW YORK — A team of searchers have discovered a WWII submarine nearly 80 years after it disappeared.

The USS Grunion sank during its inaugural mission, taking with it the 70 sailors aboard, according to NBC News.

After years of searching, part of the Grunion was found about 2,700 feet down off the coast of Alaska’s Aleutian Islands.

Tim Taylor, an ocean explorer from the Lost 52 Project, a group searching for submarines that went missing during WWII, said the group used unmanned subs and new cameras to make 3D images of the sunken vessel.

“This goes so far past video or still imagery, it truly is the future of recording historical underwater discoveries,” he said.

The images are so detailed that they will be subject to months of research, he added.

Before it sank, the USS Grunion rescued 16 survivors of an Army transport ship that had been torpedoed. It later sank two Japanese patrol boats. However, it disappeared some time after July 30, 1942 and was declared lost that October.

The sons of the ship’s commander, Mannert Abele, have headed the search for the missing vessel after receiving a tip from “a remarkable Japanese gentleman” in 2006. The brothers, Bruce, Brad and John, then

worked with a geophysics and ocean engineering firm, to map and image large areas of the ocean floor before eventually locating the missing sub.

Russian 'super quiet' submarines feared to be in British waters **Dominic Nicholls, The Telegraph, August 4**

A new breed of “super-quiet” Russian submarines are feared to be operating unseen in British territorial waters, according to military sources.

The new Russian Kilo-Class submarines are feared to be threatening UK security by tracking Britain’s fleet in the North Atlantic undetected or by tapping into under-sea internet cables.

HMS Queen Elizabeth, the Royal Navy’s flagship aircraft carrier, and the nation’s nuclear deterrent submarines could be vulnerable to the Russian boats’ stealth technology, extended combat range and ability to strike targets above and below the water as well as on land.

“The new First Sea Lord needs to deliver the underwater battle,” a senior military source told the Telegraph. “We must be better at what we do.”

“The Russians are benefiting from a huge increase in research and development spending 15 to 20 years ago which is now producing this new class of super-quiet Kilo Submarines.”

Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) speaks with Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Navy Nikolai Yevmenov (R) during the military parade marking the Navy Day in St.Petersburg, Russia. July 28, 2019.
CREDIT: DMITRY LOVETSKY/EPA-EFE/REX/REX

Known as Project 636.3 or Varshavyanka-class in Russia, six of the advanced submarines have already been launched with the first of a second batch of six due to be operational in the Russian Navy by the end of the year.

Designated ‘Improved Kilo-Class’ by Nato, at least one of the low-noise and highly manoeuvrable boats is thought to have tested how easily it could be detected by traversing close to European coastlines in recent months.

The threat is said to mirror the storyline of the 1990 film *The Hunt for Red October*, when the newest and most advanced Russian nuclear submarine is feared to be targeting America.

Armed with 18 torpedoes, sea mines and cruise missiles designated SS-N-27 Sizzler by Nato, the Varshavyanka-class submarines are thought to be able to work in concert with Russian deep-water survey ships to tap undersea cables and eavesdrop on telecommunication systems.

The warning comes as Admiral Tony Radakin, the new head of the Royal Navy has said he wants “less stifling process” to transform the fleet.

In his first public statement as head of the navy, Adm Radakin said: “We’re going to invest even more in the North Atlantic to maintain the freedom of manoeuvre of the nuclear deterrent.

“I also think we need to do more to respond to a changing world where there is more competition [and] greater risk of state-on-state conflict,” he wrote in Navy News.

A recently retired officer told The Telegraph: “The new First Sea Lord has got to his current position through a combination of intellect, ability to innovate and charm. He will now need to bring all of these to bear quickly and in the context of a rapidly changing political environment.

“If not, the change he mentions will be just more change for the sake of it, rather than what is required.”

North Korea, China and Russia are arming Myanmar’s military despite genocide accusations, U.N. report finds **Shibani Mahtani, Washington Post, August 5**

HONG KONG -- A U.N. report released Monday found countries including North Korea, Russia, China and India supplied arms to Myanmar's military in recent years, including weapons used in a crackdown against Rohingya Muslims that has been described as genocidal.

The most extensive study on the military's financing to date also found that dozens of Myanmar companies — some of which spent years on a United States blacklist before sanctions were lifted in 2016 — donated more than \$10 million to the military, responding to a call to fund the Rohingya campaign in 2017. After the army expelled some 700,000 Rohingya from Myanmar, these companies have helped to build infrastructure over the site of massacres.

Two years after their expulsion, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya remain in refugee camps in Bangladesh, with no clear timeline to repatriate them to Myanmar, nor a plan to address their grievances should they return.

"The revenue the military earns from domestic and foreign business deals substantially enhances its ability to carry out gross violations of human rights with impunity," the U.N.-mandated fact-finding mission that put together the report said in a news release.

The mission is mandated to investigate human-rights violations committed by the Myanmar military, and called a year ago for military leaders to be investigated for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. On Monday, it called for an arms embargo against Myanmar and sanctions against the military.

The United States recently imposed a visa ban on Myanmar military leader Min Aung Hlaing and his deputy.

Washington, along with the European Union and Canada, has also imposed economic sanctions on lower-ranking Myanmar generals and troops.

"We'd like to see action extended to full economic sanctions, targeted against the people who lead the military and the military as an institution," said Chris Sidoti, a member of the U.N. mission.

The Myanmar military, known as the Tatmadaw, exercised total rule over the country until 2011, when it gave way to a military-backed government. The country held democratic elections in 2015 in which Aung San Suu Kyi rose to power as the de facto leader of a civilian government, but the military continues to hold significant sway over parliament, key ministries and the economy.

The 2015 elections prompted the United States under President Obama to drop long-standing economic sanctions against the country that were meant to chip away at the dominance of the military leaders and their affiliates. But the Rohingya atrocities in 2017 once again relegated Myanmar to pariah status, and Western businesses have largely stayed clear.

The report highlights the complicity of some of these formerly sanctioned companies, which still maintain close ties with the military, in the crackdown on the Rohingya in Myanmar's Rakhine state. After the purge began

in August 2017, the report says, Min Aung Hlaing held ceremonies to solicit donations "in support of the Tatmadaw's military and other activities in northern Rakhine against the Rohingya."

"During these meetings, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing made statements describing the conduct of the Tatmadaw in northern Rakhine, outlined the policy and military objectives of the 'clearance operations,' denied the existence of the Rohingya and advanced justifications for the Tatmadaw's acts," the report says. The ceremonies yielded over \$10 million in donations.

The U.N. mission also highlights continued cooperation between North Korea and Myanmar, a long-standing relationship that was meant to have ended once the Southeast Asian country started liberalizing after six decades of isolation. The report notes that Myanmar has likely purchased a range of weapons, including rocket launchers and surface-to-air missiles, from one of North Korea's primary arms traders, the Korea Mining Development Trading Corporation. The company is subject to U.N. Security Council sanctions.

"Arms relationships are very much a part of this long-standing relationship between these two countries," said Sidoti. "The [Myanmar] military has shown very little sign of change, and it seems to be quite clear that it is still involved in arms trade with North Korea."

The U.S. government has faced pressure from human-rights groups to impose harsher sanctions against Myanmar. Rights groups say the visa ban against Min Aung Hlaing, the military leader, still falls short and will not lead to accountability nor hurt the military's revenue streams.

Support for the military and its Rohingya campaign has remained high in Myanmar, and many within the country believe the international community's response has been disproportionate. On Saturday, pro-military protesters demonstrated against the U.S. visa ban, and the U.S. Embassy in Yangon warned staff to avoid the area.

Report: ISIS has been rebuilding as US troops withdraw from Syria **Meghann Myers, Military Times, August 6**

Late in 2018, President Donald Trump announced that he was ready to withdraw troops from Syria after a long and successful campaign taking back territory from ISIS. The move, decried by national security experts as premature, was said to have provoked then-Defense Secretary James Mattis to resign days later, and now, the Defense Department has reported the results.

Since about half of 2,000 special operations and other train-advise-assist forces returned to the U.S. in the spring, ISIS has been staging a comeback, according to an inspector general report from DoD, the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development released Tuesday.

"This quarter, ISIS continued its transition from a territory — holding force to an insurgency in Syria, and it intensified its insurgency in Iraq," Pentagon Principal Deputy Inspector General Glenn Fine, who has been filling in as DoD IG, wrote in a memo topping off the report.

The quarterly review compiled congressional testimony, think tank research and media reports, as well as official written responses from DoD, State and USAID, from the beginning of April to the end of June.

During that period, U.S. troops began their ordered withdrawal. As a result, the report found, there has been less support for local partner forces on the ground, and they haven't been able to keep up with ISIS's resurgence.

"We can all certainly be proud of the progress that has taken place since 2015 ... in terms of clearing ISIS from Mosul, from Raqqa, from Fallujah and so forth," Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford

told reporters in July. "But we also know there is still a fairly vibrant insurgency that has reverted to guerilla tactics, and so there is still a threat."

After taking territory back from ISIS, the report said, local forces need more support than ever, to help build credibility with local populations and collect on-the-ground intelligence to get ahead of any insurgent activity.

For now, about 1,000 U.S. troops are set to remain on the ground.

"Drawdown could cause U.S.-backed forces in Syria to look for 'alternate partnerships and resources' to replace the reduced U.S. support, and that in its assessment such an outcome could be 'detrimental to the United States' mission in Iraq and Syria,' " Fine wrote.

Though ISIS cells haven't attempted to regain control of large swaths of land, the report said, militants in both Iraq and Syria have continued a campaign of terror, with "targeted assassinations, ambushes, suicide bombings, and the burning of crops."

There are likely between 14,000 and 18,000 remaining active members of ISIS, but according to the report, estimates have swung widely in both directions.

ISIS's regrouping and rebuilding has taken several forms, the report found, mostly in remote areas controlled by local forces with little capacity to stabilize their areas of operations.

In Iraq, particularly, militants have worked to create safe havens in Sunni-majority areas north and west of Baghdad, the report said.

"... ISIS in Iraq was able to establish a more stable command and control node and a logistics node for coordination of attacks, particularly after the arrival of ISIS fighters from Syria" after U.S.-backed efforts took back their last Syria stronghold in March.

Now, the report said, ISIS is capitalizing on tensions in Iraq, both between the Shia and Sunni Muslim communities, but also between Iraq's central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, which oversees an area in a disputed northern territory claimed by Iraq. In their disputes with each other, the report said, the Iraq and Kurdish authorities are not working together on counter- ISIS policy.

Though the task force has had success in bolstering the Iraqi Security Forces, they have not been able to keep up with ISIS's rebuilding efforts in more remote, hard-to-secure areas.

Officials also believe ISIS to be active in al Hol, an internally displaced persons camp in northeastern Syria "where thousands of ISIS family members now reside, and ISIS is likely working to enlist new members from the camp's large population of IDPs."

And many of those refugees are reluctant to return home to a liberated Iraq, the report said, because of the lack of security and quality of life in the wake of ISIS's defeat.

In that and other camps, the report found, there is opportunity for ISIS to create safe havens among sympathizers who have no where else to go.

A settlement in Rukban made headlines in recent days, as Russian and Syrian troops have reportedly stymied humanitarian aid traveling to the refugees there, claiming that U.S. troops stationed at At Tanf garrison, near the Jordanian border, "made it impossible for the Syrian regime to deliver aid to Rukban," according to the IG report.

"We constantly press the Assad regime and Russia to allow the immediate and unhindered access of humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering at Rukban IDP camp but they have denied UN deliveries since February," Lt. Col. Earl Brown, U.S. Central Command spokesman, told Military Times on Friday. "We stand

ready to provide all necessary security assurances for a UN humanitarian delivery, as we have for past deliveries of life-saving humanitarian assistance from Damascus to Rukban.”

Russian propaganda, according to the report, has claimed that Rukban is housing ISIS terrorists at the U.S.'s discretion, and that aid sent there supports the terrorist group.

Meanwhile, the U.S.'s non-military presence has also decreased.

In May, all non-emergency State Department employees evacuated from the U.S. embassy in Baghdad and Consulate General in Erbil, cutting the staff almost in half and reducing their mission set to four things: “defeating ISIS, countering malign Iranian influence and Iraq, supporting religious and ethnic minorities, and maintaining a viable platform for diplomatic operations.”

However, the reduction in personnel also diminished their ability to provide support to stabilization efforts, according to the report.

Taliban Warns It Will Attack Election **Sayed Salahuddin, Washington Post, August 1**

KABUL — Taliban militants announced Tuesday that they intend to disrupt Afghanistan’s presidential campaign and Sept. 28 polls. Their statement came just hours after U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad reported “excellent progress” during talks with the insurgents in Qatar.

The Taliban urged voters to stay away from election-related events, saying it did not want to harm them. Amid security fears after a bomb and gun attack July 28 killed 20 people at the Kabul office of one vice presidential candidate, Afghan media reported that another candidate had canceled a rally planned for Monday near the capital.

In a statement on its website, the Taliban said the elections would have “no legitimacy” because the country is “under occupation.” It called the elections “a ploy to deceive the common people” and said the “ultimate decision-making power” lies with foreigners who it said are running the process.

The Taliban warning seemed likely to further slow the pace of campaigning. The elections have already been delayed twice because of poor management and bickering within President Ashraf Ghani’s government.

Many Afghans think the vote may be postponed again because of the acceleration of talks between the Taliban and U.S. officials, although Ghani, who is seeking reelection, has said he is determined that it be held on schedule. In addition to the presidential vote, delayed parliamentary elections are scheduled to be held in embattled Ghazni province.

In a statement Tuesday, Ghani’s office said that Afghans “will attend the poll centers and cast their vote to directly elect their future leader and to disgrace the enemies of their freedom.” A spokesman for the Interior Ministry said the government will use all of its resources to protect “the candidates and the election process.”

In its statement, the Taliban alluded positively to the peace talks, saying that “negotiations are underway to bring an end to the occupation and arrangements for intra-Afghan understanding are being put into place.” The elections, the group said, are aimed only at “satisfying the ego of a limited number of sham politicians.”

Combining expressions of concern and threats, the Taliban said that to “prevent losses . . . from being incurred by our fellow compatriots, they must stay away from gatherings and rallies that could become potential targets.”

Taliban insurgents have attacked previous elections, causing two provinces to suspend voting in parliamentary polls last year. No group claimed the July 28 attack at the office of Amrullah Saleh, a former intelligence chief who is running on Ghani's ticket, but he publicly blamed the Taliban.

Amnesty International, the London-based rights group, condemned the Taliban's threat against election rallies. That "demonstrates a chilling disregard for human life," Amnesty said in a statement. "Afghans must be allowed to exercise their rights."

U.S. officials have said they hope to conclude a peace agreement with the Taliban by early September, in part so that elections can take place. But they have also said they place an equally high priority on both processes.

President Trump said recently that he hoped to see American troops leave Afghanistan before the U.S. presidential election in 2020, but many Afghans have expressed concern that a hasty troop departure would give too much power to the insurgents.

The Taliban has insisted on a U.S. timetable to withdraw all troops before it will meet with Afghan officials. But Khalilzad, who heads the U.S. peace negotiation team, has repeatedly said that the withdrawal will be based on the Taliban meeting conditions.

In a tweet Tuesday, he said he spent the past several days in Qatar "focused on the remaining issues in completing a potential deal with the Taliban that would allow for a conditions-based troop withdrawal" from Afghanistan.

"We have made excellent progress," Khalilzad said.

U.S. can't find files on investigation into nuclear arms plant **Dan Elliott, Associated Press, July 30**

DENVER -- The U.S. Department of Justice has lost track of more than 60 boxes of documents from a 27-year-old criminal investigation into safety and environmental violations at a former nuclear weapons plant in Colorado, officials said Tuesday.

The files were gathered in a two-year grand jury probe of the Rocky Flats plant outside Denver, which manufactured plutonium triggers for nuclear warheads and had a history of fires, leaks and spills.

The files have remained secret since the investigation ended with criminal charges in 1992.

Seven groups representing environmentalists, former nuclear workers, nearby residents and public health advocates filed a motion in federal court in January asking that the files be made public. The groups say the documents could show whether the government did enough to clean up the site before turning part of it into a wildlife refuge and opening it to hikers and bicyclists.

Government attorneys are fighting the request.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Denver told the activists in a July 24 email that it cannot find the files.

Kevin Traskos, chief of the U.S. attorney's civil division in Denver, told The Associated Press on Tuesday that officials have done only an initial search so far. "The search was preliminary and is continuing," he said.

The activists plan to ask a federal judge on Wednesday to order the Justice Department to find the documents within 30 days.

Rocky Flats, perched on a windy plateau about 15 miles (24 kilometers) northwest of downtown Denver, operated from 1952 to 1989. It shut down amid the grand jury investigation.

Rockwell International, the contractor that operated the plant, pleaded guilty to criminal charges that included mishandling chemical and radioactive material. The company was fined \$18.5 million.

The government spent \$7 billion cleaning up 2 square miles (5 square kilometers) at the center of the site where the plutonium triggers were built. The former buffer zone around the plant, covering 8 square miles (21 square kilometers), became Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge and opened to the public last fall.

In a separate case, another group of activists filed a federal lawsuit saying the government did not do enough to make sure the refuge is safe. That lawsuit is pending.

New NK sub could carry 3 SLBMs: S. Korea **Do Je-Hae, The Korea Times, July 31**

A newly constructed North Korean submarine seems to be capable of carrying three submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), South Korea's defense ministry was quoted as saying Wednesday.

The defense ministry determined that the submarine is ready to be deployed soon, Rep. Lee Hye-hoon, chief of the National Assembly Intelligence Committee, told reporters after a closed-door briefing by ministry officials.

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un inspected the new submarine, the deployment of which he said was "near at hand," according to reports last week by North Korean media.

The ministry said the submarine appears to be slightly larger than the 2,500-ton Gorae class.

It added that North Korea fired two missiles May 4, revising its earlier report of the North launching just one.

Stratcom: China Rapidly Building Up Nuclear Forces **Bill Gertz, Washington Free Beacon Online, August 1**

OMAHA -- China is aggressively building up nuclear warfighting forces as part of a larger effort to expand power over Asia and globally, according to senior officials of the U.S. Strategic Command.

Vice Admiral David Kriete, deputy commander of the command, said he is concerned by China's rapidly growing nuclear arsenal when combined with other alarming activities in the South China Sea and elsewhere.

"China is and has been for the last couple of decades on a very clear trajectory where they're increasing the numbers of nuclear weapons that they field, they're increasing the number of and diversity of the delivery systems," Kriete said in a press briefing.

"They are working on fielding a triad—ballistic missile submarines, strategic bombers, and land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles."

In addition to a delivery system, Beijing is expanding its nuclear weapons production capabilities that will "allow them to continue on this trend or actually increase it in the future should they so choose," the three-star admiral said.

Regional missile systems that do not have the same range as strategic missiles are being fielded.

Kriete also questioned China's declared no-first-use policy, the statement that Chinese military forces would not be the first to use nuclear arms in a conflict.

"When it comes to the no-first-use policy, I have read about this no-first-use policy," he said. "Beyond that statement, they don't talk much about it, so I'm not exactly sure what it is."

Kriete said the nuclear buildup should be viewed within the context of China's regional and global expansion.

"China's leadership has made it clear in recent years that they have goals of becoming a regional power and exerting—economic and military—over the western Pacific at some point in the future," he said. "And then obtaining some level of global influence at some point after that."

Chinese military activities in the western Pacific are supporting those goals.

Also troubling are China's militarization of disputed islands in the South China Sea.

China has reclaimed some 3,200 acres of islands and last year was detected deploying anti-ship and anti-aircraft missiles on them, along with electronic warfare capabilities.

Kriete said Stratcom is not focused on deterring regional conflicts with China but supports the Indo-Pacific Command in its efforts to do so.

"At the same time we'll work on that strategic deterrent effect vis a vis China as well as Russia and some other countries," he said.

China's buildup of nuclear forces includes several new mobile nuclear missiles, including the DF-41 that is being deployed with multiple warheads. New ballistic missile submarines are being deployed along with a new strategic bomber.

China is believed to have more than 200 warheads for strategic weapons. However, Chinese secrecy has prevented knowing the precise numbers of warheads, which could be as high as 1,500.

China also is nearing deployment of a hypersonic glide vehicle—a maneuvering ultra-high-speed missile that can defeat missile defenses.

The admiral stressed that the United States does not want a war with China or any other country but needs to be prepared to do so.

"We really want a peaceful coexistence in a lot of places around the world, and I think there are ways to achieve that," he said. "The strength that we show through our military force in the region and really domestically back home is an important part of that face that we show to China and other countries around the world."

Another official, Rear Adm. Michael Brookes, director of intelligence for the command, said China's nuclear forces modernization is a concern.

"China has long had a no-first-use policy, and yet they've doubled their nuclear arsenal in about the last decade, and they're on track to double it again in the next decade," Brookes said during a Stratcom conference on deterrence.

"It's a little bit concerning the breathtaking pace of change with regard to their arsenal," he said.

Combined with the nuclear buildup, Chinese leaders "appear to have a disinterest, at least at this time, to submit to any arms control regime."

The Trump administration has said it is seeking to include China in a three-way or bilateral arms control regime. Beijing's military has rejected entering into any negotiation on its nuclear forces over concerns that the talks would undermine its deterrent value.

Brookes said another concern regarding the Chinese nuclear buildup, as well as Russia's nuclear modernization, are worries about their buildup of cyber warfare, space warfare and electronic warfare capabilities that could impact U.S. nuclear deterrence.

These weapons "fan the flames of competition" and jeopardize "the U.S.'s ability for indications and warning and C2 [command and control] of our nuclear forces," Brookes said.

"That's viewed as somewhat destabilizing and inflammatory," the intelligence director said.

The Stratcom officials' comments reflect warnings issued in May by Army Lt. Gen. Robert Ashely, who warned that China also is stepping up nuclear testing by operating a test facility year round.

Ashely called the nuclear modernization "the most rapid expansion and diversification of its nuclear arsenal in China's history."

China's nuclear forces remain couched in secrecy. China operates large-scale underground nuclear storage and production facilities in a tunnel system dubbed the Great Underground Wall.

The system is estimated to include more than 3,000 miles of tunnels and underground plants.

On the topic of extending the New START arms treaty past its 2021 deadline, Kriete said Russia is building new strategic weapons and capabilities that are not covered by the treaty and that pose risks to deterrence.

Moscow has announced the development of a nuclear-powered cruise missile, hypersonic glide vehicles, and a nuclear-tipped underwater drone.

North Korea and Iran also are worried about their nuclear forces.

Stratcom is also assisting with the development of a new warfighting command, the Space Command, that will take over military space and defense responsibilities from Strategic Command. The new command could be stood up in the coming weeks, Kriete said.

Regarding U.S. nuclear forces modernization, Kriete said the military is moving ahead with a new Ground Based Strategic Deterrent—a nuclear missile to replace aging Minuteman III ICBMs.

Kriete said there are no current plans to deploy the new ICBM in a road-mobile launcher, but he did not rule out that mobile basing for U.S. strategic missiles could be used in the future.

France's new 5,181-ton nuclear submarine has no traditional periscope. Here's how that works

Christina Mackenzie, Popular Science, July 31

Submarines are some of the most complex objects made by people. They contain up to 1 million components, compared to around 5,000 for a car or 15,000 for a battle tank. Only four nations in the world have the capacity to build and arm them entirely on their own: the United States, France, Russia and China.

It takes about 20 years and 50-million worker-hours to design and build one, so a nation like France launches a new type of submarine only every 40 or 50 years. “It's not like a Lego box which contains all the necessary bits and pieces together with detailed instructions,” remarked one French military official. “We had to create everything.” As each submarine is used for more than 30 years, that means those launched this decade will still be diving beyond 2060. This is why this month’s launch in France of a new class of submarine is a very big deal in the defense world.

The sub is called the Suffren (pronunciation: souff-wren), and unlike its predecessors, it lacks a traditional periscope. Here's what we know about the new 5,181-ton submarine.

20 million lines of code

The 325-foot-long vessel launched on July 12 is the first-in-class of the French Navy's \$10.3 billion Barracuda program. It is the first of six being built by France's Naval Group and more than 800 suppliers, and will replace the Rubis-class nuclear-powered attack submarines. The new Suffren-class subs dwarf the previous generation—they're 85 feet longer and 2,976 tons heavier. The last of the six of the new subs is scheduled for delivery in 2029.

The Suffren class will carry twice the ammunition of the 30-year-old Rubis-class, packing not only the Naval Group's F21 torpedoes but also Exocet anti-ship missiles, which have a range of around 125 miles, and naval cruise missiles of the 620-mile class. It does not carry nuclear weapons.

Suffren is powered by an on-board nuclear-reactor. Unlike conventionally powered submarines which must surface to recharge their batteries (during that time, a diesel engine runs to provide the power to do that), a nuclear-powered one can stay submerged until food runs out.

The complexity of a submarine becomes apparent if you consider that the vessel is a cigar-shaped steel container solid enough to withstand depths of 2,000 feet, where the water pressure is 60 times greater than at the surface—and there's a nuclear-reactor inside. Within the craft is everything necessary to keep 63 crew members alive and fit for up to 70 days, including equipment to desalinate water, produce oxygen, and deal with waste. It has more than 12 miles of pipes and more than 99 miles of cable. There are 200 different software systems, and 20 million lines of code. And the whole thing must be completely silent—to try to remain undetectable.

Suffren will undertake the three current missions of the Rubis-class subs: protecting the other French submarines that carry nuclear warheads, of which one is always at sea somewhere; protecting the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier strike group; and performing discreet intelligence gathering. But it will also have two new missions: sea-to-land warfare (thanks to its naval cruise missiles) and deploying fully-equipped special forces underwater, thanks to a dry deck shelter. This is a removable steel module which allows divers to exit and enter the submarine while underwater. The US Navy's Virginia-, Los Angeles-, Seawolf- and Ohio-class submarines are all compatible with dry-deck shelters.

The captain of the ship, named earlier as Commander Axel Roche, and his crew of submariners, will start sea trials in early 2020.

Roche will find this beast quite different from the ones he's been used to in the past. To start with he no longer has what is perhaps the most iconic of submarine instruments: the periscope. No more standing alone at the foot of a mast, eyes clamped to a visor, turning slowly on a small platform to take a peek at the world above. But that doesn't mean the sub is blind to the outside— simply that the direct-view periscope, which had to penetrate into the body of the submarine itself through the hull, has been replaced by optronic masts equipped with cameras.

From a design point of view it means the space formerly taken up inside the control room by the bulky periscope and its complex, heavy hoist system, has been freed up. And it also means naval architects did not have

to place the command center right underneath the “sail” of the submarine (that's the black “chimney” atop the vessel). In the Suffren, the command room is set slightly behind the sail.

A traditional periscope is up to 60 feet long, so that the hull can remain hidden underwater while the periscope lifts up hydraulically to poke up out of the waves. It provides a direct optical view of the surface, thanks to prisms and lenses.

The new optronic masts no longer penetrate the hull. They're stored snugly inside the sail when not in use, but can extend upwards out of it to take a look when needed. The information they gather is sent through electric cables that go through the hull, and from an engineering perspective, that interface is much easier to make watertight than the great big hole needed for the traditional periscope. The images are relayed to the work stations in the command room, and can be seen by all those present. That means the captain is no longer alone in taking a decision as to whether it is safe to surface or not but can consult, if necessary, with colleagues.

There are actually two “search mast systems” on the Suffren. The “attack optronic mast,” which is gyro-stabilised, contains an infrared camera, a high-definition TV camera, an infrared beeper (to communicate with special forces), and a back-up camera. There is space inside the mast to fit a laser range-finder and a short-wave infrared sensor should the Navy want to retrofit these at a later date. The second, the “search optronic mast,” can scan the full horizon in a few seconds to create a band of panoramic images simultaneously in both visible and infrared modes. The US Navy's latest submarines, the Virginia-class, are also equipped with optronic masts instead of a traditional periscope.

Other changes, which will also be enjoyed by the 63 crew (plus a dozen or so Special Forces troops, when needed), include improvements for better living conditions. A cruise ship specialist worked on crew comfort, so the lighting is better, each person has their own bunk instead of swapping out, and there are six showers to share instead of three. Plus, cooks will bake bread on board, and limited wine will be served on special occasions. One thing hasn't changed: limited access to the outside world. Crew can send and receive a one-page-length email, vetted by the Navy, every two weeks.

Tactical Nuclear Weapons Could Be a Good Idea for South Korea **Not Attributed, Chosun Ilbo Online, July 31**

The Pentagon-funded National Defense University in a report last week laid out suggestions for the U.S.' new strategy of using "tactical" nuclear weapons on the battlefield. It urged the U.S. government to "consider a potentially controversial new concept involving custodial sharing of nonstrategic nuclear capabilities during times of crisis with select Asia-Pacific partners, specifically Japan and [South Korea]." "Perhaps the greatest advantage would be the increased pressure put on China to constrain North Korea's aggression." It added. The report was put together by incumbent U.S. military officers who are familiar with the North Korean nuclear threat.

The report refers to NATO's "nuclear-sharing" concept, whereby some 150 to 200 U.S. tactical nuclear bombs are deployed in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Turkey, and the Netherlands, which are all part of the 29-member alliance. They signed nuclear-sharing accords with the U.S. and can participate in nuclear policy discussions and voice their opinions in the process. They are authorized to drop tactical nuclear weapons with bomber planes, but the U.S. president has the ultimate power to authorize their use.

But unlike in NATO countries, all tactical nuclear weapons were removed from the Korean Peninsula in 1991. A nuclear-sharing pact with the U.S. that guarantees the South Korean government a say in whether and how they are used would be a major step.

It is becoming increasingly clear that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has no intention of giving up his nuclear weapons, and they target South Korea first and foremost. All Seoul currently has to defend itself is the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Now the North also has nuclear weapons that can strike the U.S. mainland. If its new submarine is equipped with submarine-launched ballistic missiles, it will be even more capable of delivering surgical nuclear attacks on America. If that happens, the U.S. nuclear umbrella may not function properly. Already, U.S. President Donald Trump has said that there is no problem with North Korea's recent missile tests as they are only aimed at South Korea, which has set alarm bells ringing here.

Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha on Tuesday said Seoul is "not considering" a NATO-style nuclear-sharing concept. The government is adamantly opposed to acquiring tactical nuclear weapons for fear of escalating a nuclear arms race on the Korean Peninsula. But its neighbors either have nuclear weapons or can equip themselves quickly. China has 250 nuclear weapons and Russia around 7,500, and Japan could produce one within three to six months and also has the technology to build intercontinental ballistic missiles. Russian and Chinese warplanes have already been intruding into airspace Korea oversees and Japan is stepping up its territorial claim over the Dokdo islets. What is the government's plan to defend the country against such superior forces?

Denuclearization talks with North Korea must continue. But there is a huge difference in negotiations between sitting empty-handed or having a nuclear option available. If South Korea was threatening to acquire tactical nuclear weapons, then China might finally be motivated to get its act together and pressure North Korea to scrap its nuclear program. A contingency plan is needed.

Counting the costs of an 'independent nuclear deterrent' **Robert Forsyth, The Strategist, July 31**

As a former Royal Navy submarine commander, I read with interest Hugh White's suggestion that Australia may, in the decades to come, need to confront the issue of whether it should have its own nuclear weapons. In his new book, *How to defend Australia*, White argues that Australia can no longer rely in the long term on the US's 'nuclear umbrella'.

I've spent some time post-service researching the justification for the UK's decision to acquire, and sustain, a submarine-launched nuclear-armed ballistic-missile system, and the negative effect that decision has had on our armed services and the navy in particular. The UK experience provides some lessons for any state that's thinking of acquiring a 'nuclear deterrent' for the first time.

The first question one must ask is whether nuclear deterrence actually works. Counter to Cold War ideology, and with the benefit of hindsight, it's now quite clear that nuclear weapons have never deterred any aggression against a nuclear-armed state or a state such as Australia that's a beneficiary of US extended nuclear deterrence.

Some would argue that the 1962 Cuban missile crisis was such a time. However, Khrushchev backed down not for fear of massive US retaliation but because he realised, only just in time, that the biggest danger came from losing control of his own deployed nuclear-armed forces who might start a war the USSR didn't want.

It's also significant that US nuclear weapons were irrelevant in the Vietnam War, in which Australia was deeply involved with its largest military commitment since World War II.

Furthermore, and more recently, the risk of nuclear war through miscalculation, mistake or malfunction has, if anything, increased. The much-respected Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, in its 2014 report *Too close for comfort*, documented some 13 separate occasions when the world has come extremely close to that happening. Two recent books, former UK ambassador to Moscow Rodric Braithwaite's *Armageddon and paranoia: the nuclear confrontation* and Daniel Ellsberg's *The Doomsday Machine: confessions of a nuclear war planner*, provide compelling evidence of the dangers inherent in possessing nuclear weapons.

Despite this, and without any apparent current or probable future existential threat—why else, for example, have the UK Trident missiles been at ‘several days’ notice to fire’ since 1994?—the UK has decided to continue with its ‘independent nuclear deterrent’ into the 2060s at an estimated cost of around £150 billion.

However, for all the enormous expenditure, the UK Trident is not independent. In reality, the US—which leases its missiles to the UK from a common US pool, and whose technical design and support for every part of the weapon system to target and launch them is critical—can frustrate the UK from using Trident if it disapproves. So, unlike France, the UK has opted for nuclear dependence on the US.

A force of four nuclear-armed ballistic-missile-equipped nuclear-powered submarines (SSBNs) is required to maintain one continuously on patrol. In addition, to maintain its independence from the US, Australia, like France, would need to design and manufacture its own missiles and associated space-launch system, warheads, specialised satellite navigation, targeting and communications systems. And for that it would need to acquire nuclear submarine design, build, operation and maintenance skills. The UK’s decision to rely upon the US for all of that has predictably resulted in a heavy political as well as still onerous financial cost.

Then there’s the need for a nuclear-powered attack submarine (SSN), plus at least one surface ship and maritime patrol aircraft to protect the deployed SSBN. Experience shows that at least six SSNs are required to

have one always available for this task. Keeping one UK SSBN continuously at sea and undetected places huge and growing strains on a now very depleted and imbalanced navy.

In fact, the cost of maintaining a UK ‘deterrent’ has led to the hollowing out of all the UK’s conventional armed forces to the point where it cannot deter, let alone respond effectively to, aggression against the homeland. For example, the Royal Navy’s fighting fleet has been reduced to six destroyers and 13 frigates—alarmingly, the same numbers of destroyers sunk and frigates damaged during the 1982 Falklands War. There are new frigates on order, but these barely sustain the number of these key workhorses in the navy’s core role of protecting maritime trade and graduated conventional deterrence.

Already the Royal Navy is struggling to have enough units to escort one of the two supercarriers, HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales. How deeply ironic it is that, as we may be about to exit the European Union, we’re having to call on European navies to help protect UK oil tankers in the Gulf because we can no longer do it on our own.

Admiral Lord Nelson famously wrote, ‘Were I to die at this moment “want of frigates” would be found stamped on my heart.’ A growing number of Royal Navy admirals are now expressing similar sentiments.

Australia, with no nuclear propulsion or missile experience to build on, must either be dependent on US technology and support, or embark on an even more costly all-Australian project. I would urge those who advocate either of these approaches to take a long, hard look at the counterproductive effect that sustaining the four UK Trident submarines has had on the defence of the homeland. Simply put, it has denied our armed services, especially the navy, the equipment and personnel they need to meet the wide variety of today’s actual threats.

Our ‘nuclear deterrent’ has degraded our conventional deterrence capability such that a ‘last resort’ weapon system would too quickly become the only option left, with associated loss of credibility.

As Turkey Readies To Invade Syria, U.S. Makes Plea **Staff, Washington Post, August 5**

The Trump administration has launched a last-ditch effort to head off a Turkish invasion of northeast Syria that it expects will come within the next two weeks.

With tens of thousands of Turkish troops massed near the border, a high-level Defense Department delegation plans to present what U.S. officials describe as a final offer to address Turkey's concerns at a meeting Monday in Ankara.

The meeting marks the climax of a years-long dispute between the two NATO allies over U.S. support for Syrian Kurdish fighters who have led the ground war against the Islamic State, but whom Turkey considers a terrorist threat to its own security. Kurdish-led victories against the militant group have effectively left them in control of much of the border area.

Failure of the U.S. effort could throw the war-devastated region into even deeper turmoil, endangering efforts to rout Islamic State remnants and President Trump's goal of withdrawing U.S. troops from Syria.

The proposal includes a joint U.S.-Turkish military operation to secure a strip south of the Syria-Turkey border that would be about nine miles deep and 87 miles long and from which the Kurdish fighters would be withdrawn.

The U.S. and Turkish militaries would destroy Kurdish fortifications and then jointly patrol the area, located in the middle third of the northeastern border stretching between the Euphrates River and Iraq. The other two-thirds would be cleared later.

Turkey has already rejected those parameters, insisting on a "safe zone" at least 20 miles deep and expressing a preference to control it alone. The Turkish government is also looking to establish areas that would allow the safe return of some of the more than 3.6 million Syrian refugees living in Turkey.

It is not the first time Turkey has threatened an invasion. But this time, the threat is real and imminent, according to U.S., Turkish, Kurdish and European officials, some of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the volatile situation.

"Now we are going to enter [Syria] east of the Euphrates," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Sunday at a ceremony opening a highway and hospital in the city of Bursa. "We have shared this with Russia and the United States," he added. "We can only be patient for so long."

If Turkey refuses the U.S. entreaty, the administration has made clear that it cannot, under existing congressional authorities, intervene to protect the Kurdish fighters. The Kurdish People's Protection Units, or YPG in the Kurdish abbreviation, dominate the more than 60,000-strong army, called the Syrian Democratic Forces, that the United States equipped, trained and directed to defeat the Islamic State's self-declared caliphate.

Adding to the extreme tension over the issue, the administration is engaged in a separate conflict with Turkey over its purchase of a sophisticated Russian missile defense system, which already has caused the United States to cancel Turkey's participation in the manufacture and purchase of the F-35, the next-generation American stealth aircraft.

U.S. law also requires Trump to impose economic sanctions on Turkey over the Russian purchase. Trump, to the bipartisan ire of Congress, has so far avoided implementing the mandate, at least in part to keep from destroying any chance of a deal over the Kurds.

At the same time, the Kurds have warned that a fight with Turkey may leave them unable to guard makeshift prisons in eastern Syria holding Islamic State inmates. The militants — 8,000 Syrians and Iraqis and about 2,000 from

other countries — were captured during operations that led to the dismantling of the caliphate earlier this year.

“Either we will fight” the Turks “or guard” the prisoners, said Aldar Xelil, a leading Kurdish politician in northeast Syria. “We cannot do both together.”

He said that Kurdish forces, who were recently visited by Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr., the head of the U.S. Central Command, had agreed with the United States to withdraw from a zone limited to three miles from the border.

“Honestly, we are not using ISIS prisoners as a card” to be played, said Xelil, who was interviewed in the Syrian border city of Qamishli. “But maybe we are going to lose control here. . . . These are not like formal prisons; some of them are just schools where we built a wall and converted it into a prison.”

“If the ISIS members see that there is fighting and that Turkey has attacked . . . they will break the walls and flee,” he said, using an acronym for the Islamic State.

In northeast Syria, the Kurdish administration is preparing for war with Turkey.

Roads in border towns and cities are scarred with freshly dug tunnels, and dozens of homes have been turned into shelters. Makeshift hospitals have been built underground.

The Kurds say they have no illusions about victory against the Turkish military. “If they enter, our territory will be destroyed,” Xelil said.

The bigger problem

The conflict over the Kurds is a story of U.S. efforts to delay dealing with one problem — Turkey — to address what was considered a far bigger one — the Islamic State.

It also reflects the different imperatives of the U.S. military, which has considered the Kurds by far the most effective fighting force available to it in Syria, and the American diplomats responsible for explaining U.S. policy decisions to Ankara.

The U.S.-YPG alliance was formed when the Kurdish forces, aided by U.S. airstrikes, retook the border city of Kobane and surrounding towns and villages from the Islamic State in 2015.

Turkey considers the YPG and its Syrian political affiliate to be subgroups of Turkey’s Kurdistan Workers’ Party. For decades, the PKK, as it is known, has fought the Turkish military, initially to achieve an independent Kurdish state and more recently to gain a level of Kurdish autonomy inside Turkey.

Both the United States and Turkey have designated the PKK a terrorist organization, and Turkish-PKK clashes markedly increased in recent months. Turkey also considers the YPG a terrorist group, but the United States does not. U.S. officials initially told Turkey that their alliance with the YPG was temporary and that the weapons they supplied to the Kurdish fighters to take back Kobane would be reclaimed. But those promises were quickly overtaken by the need to field an effective ground force against the militants in eastern Syria.

American diplomats avoided publicizing their contacts with the Kurds, but the U.S. military was eager to praise their battlefield prowess. More and more weapons were supplied — although not the artillery and other heavy weaponry the Turks have claimed — and U.S. commanders proudly posed with the fighters for photographs published on YPG social media.

Each picture further infuriated the Turks, as did the 2016 U.S.-backed takeover from the Islamic State of the city of Manbij, near the border and about 25 miles west of the Euphrates. The river had long been an informal dividing line between the U.S. fight against the Islamic State and the rest of Syria, where President Bashar al-Assad and his Russian and Iranian allies were battling Syrian opposition forces.

Although a U.S.-Turkish deal to remove the YPG from Manbij was eventually struck, its implementation has been slow and spotty.

Beginning in 2016, Turkish forces moved into western parts of northern Syria, in large part to prevent the U.S.-backed Kurds from uniting with other Syrian Kurdish groups and forming a solid line along the entire border. As it cracked down on the PKK north of the border, Turkey charged that the Syrian Kurds were lobbing mortar shells and artillery into Turkish territory. The Syrian Kurds said it was the Turks who were attacking them across the border.

The phone call

When Trump announced in December — after a phone call with Erdogan — that he was ordering the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria, the U.S. Syrian Kurdish allies said they feared Turkey would increase its attacks against them.

In January, amid a backlash, Trump tweeted that the United States would “devastate Turkey economically if they hit Kurds.” But he added: “Likewise, do not want the Kurds to provoke Turkey.”

The withdrawal announcement was among the factors that led to the resignation of Trump’s defense secretary, retired general Jim Mattis, for whom a permanent replacement was not installed until Mark T. Esper’s confirmation last month.

For the military, the ground campaign against the Islamic State in Syria — supported by U.S. and coalition airstrikes — has been among the most successful and lowest-cost U.S. operations in decades, although human rights groups have said the U.S.-led air war resulted in thousands of civilian casualties.

With no more than about 2,500 deployed at their highest level, most U.S. troops were far from the front lines and took only a handful of casualties over the years. But their presence was seen as a largely symbolic but effective bulwark against Syrian government, Russian and Iranian incursions into eastern Syria.

If it accomplished nothing else, the shock of Trump’s announcement — which was eventually tempered with an agreement to slow-walk the U.S. withdrawal — has helped put the State and Defense departments in closer agreement on how to resolve the Turkey problem.

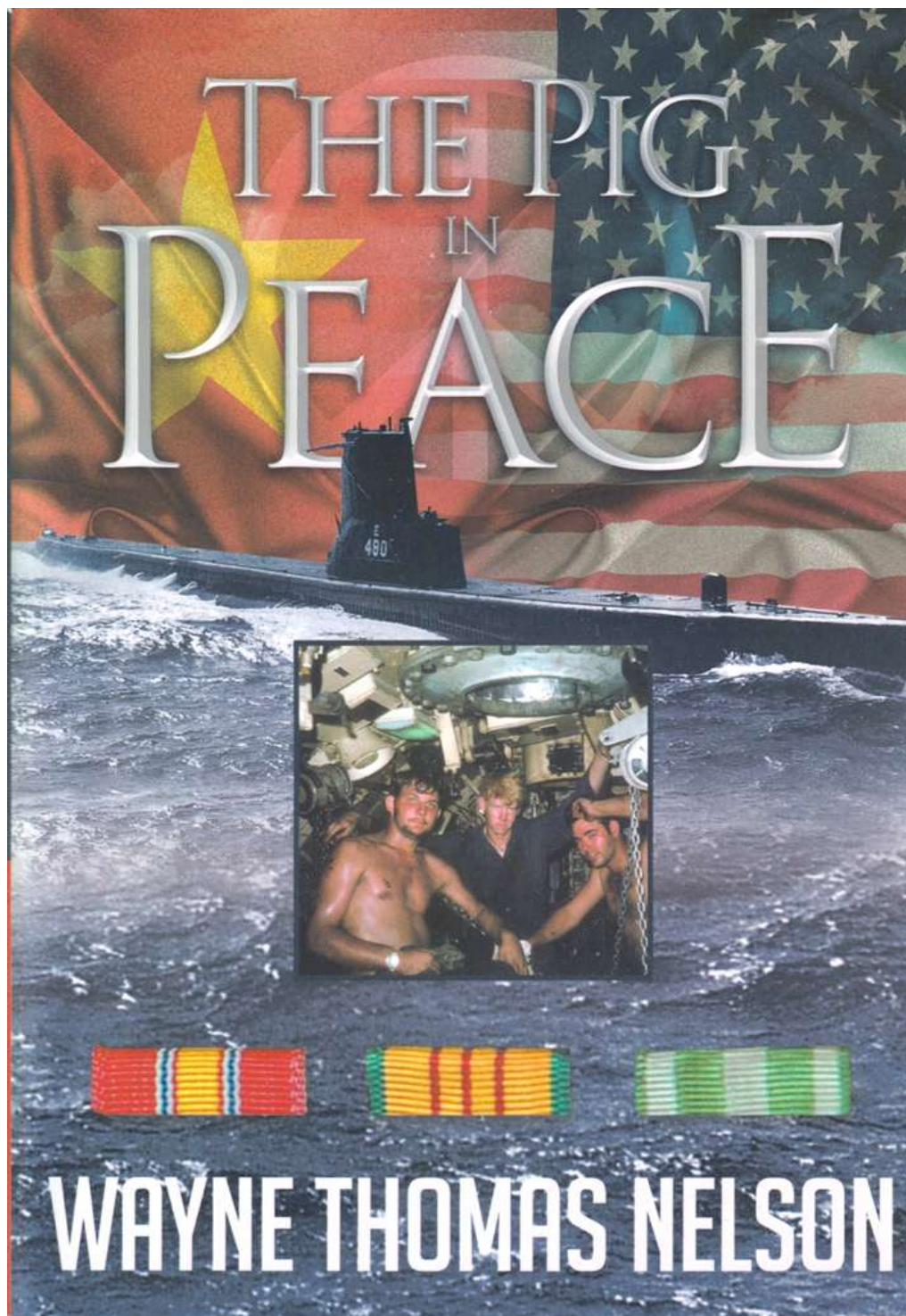
Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has pushed back against what largely had become a military-directed relationship, and the two bureaucracies have found

common cause in dealing with the often-irascible Turks. Trump, with his eye on reelection, is seen internally as having no real objective except bringing home the troops but has also played a sometimes-useful role in placating Erdogan.

The U.S. military presence is now down to about 1,000 troops, a number of whom would be needed to conduct patrols with Turkish forces in the U.S.-proposed safe zone.

The Syrian Kurds are hedging their bets. They are in communication with the Assad regime — where there is little room for rapprochement — and the Russians.

Russia is “suggesting a deal where we push the Americans out, and then they will stop the Turks,” said Xelil, the Kurdish politician. “We told them: ‘How are we going to kick the Americans out? Did we bring the Americans here?’ ”



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