

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



## *The Silent Sentinel* October 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 their sacrifices made possible the freedom and lifestyle we enjoy today.

**There is no way you can drink all night  
and do PT at 0600-hrs.**



**Marines: Challenge accepted.**

**Sailors: WTF is PT?**



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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: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

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*

## *October 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 *October 8th*. 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](http://www.ussvisandiego.org)*

## *Binnacle List*

*Heiselt, Sergio Frost, David Martinez, Chris Sultana, Bob Oberting, Matt Baumann,  
Joe Peluso and Tony Dack*

## *Submarine Losses in October*

Originally Compiled by C J Glassford



USS Seawolf (SS-197)

Lost on Oct 3, 1944 with the loss of 83 officers and men and 17 US Army troops when she was sunk just north of Moritai by USS Rowell, a Destroyer Escort (DE). In this tragic error, Rowell mistook Seawolf for a Japanese submarine that had just sunk another Destroyer. Seawolf ranks 7th for enemy ships sunk.

USS S-44 (SS-155)

Lost on Oct 7, 1943 with the loss of 56 men when it was sunk off Paramushiru, Kuriles. S-44 was on her 5th war patrol after attacking a target thought to be a merchant on the surface, S-44 found herself in a losing gun battle with a heavily armed Japanese destroyer. Two men were taken prisoner and survived the war.

USS Wahoo (SS-238)

Lost on Oct 11, 1943 with the loss of 80 men near La Perouse Strait. Under command of one of the great sub skippers of World War II, LCDR "Mush" Morton, Wahoo was on her 7th war patrol. Wahoo had won a Presidential Unit Citation and ranks 5th in the number of enemy ships sunk. She was lost to depth charges dropped by a Japanese patrol aircraft.

USS Dorado (SS-248)

Lost on Oct 12, 1943 with the loss of 77 men when she was sunk in the western Atlantic near Cuba. Newly commissioned, she had departed New London and was enroute to Panama. She may have been sunk by a U.S. patrol plane that received faulty instructions regarding bombing restriction areas or a German U-boat that was in the vicinity.

USS Escolar (SS-294)

Lost on Oct 17, 1944 with the loss of 82 men. She was on her 1st war patrol and was most likely lost to a mine somewhere in the Yellow Sea.

USS Shark II (SS-314)

Lost on Oct 24, 1944 with the loss of 87 men when she was sunk near Hainan. The second boat to carry this name during World War II, she was on her 3rd war patrol. Shark was sunk by escorts after attacking and sinking a lone freighter. Compounding the tragedy, it turned out that the freighter had 1,800 U.S. POW's on board.

USS Darter (SS-227)

Lost on Oct 24, 1944 when she became grounded on Bombay Shoal off Palawan and was then destroyed to prevent her falling into enemy hands intact. The entire crew was rescued by USS Dace. Winner of one Navy Unit Commendation, Darter had sunk a heavy cruiser and damaged another and went aground while attempting an "end around" on an enemy formation in hopes of getting in an attack on a battleship.

USS Tang (SS-306)

Lost on Oct 25, 1944 with the loss of 78 men in the Formosa Strait. Tang was on her 5th war patrol. Tang ranks 2nd in the number of ships sunk and 4th in tonnage, and had won two Presidential Unit Citations. During a daring night surface attack, Tang was lost to a circular run by one of her own torpedoes. Nine of the crew were taken prisoner, including CDR. O'Kane and five who had gained the surface from her final resting place 180 feet below. All survived the war, and CDR O'Kane was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

USS O-5 (SS-66)

Lost on October 29, 1923 with the loss of 3 men when rammed and sunk by SS Abangarez off the Panama Canal.



## **San Diego Base, United States Submarine Veterans Inc. Minutes of Meeting - 10 September 2019 At VFW Hall, 4370 Twain Avenue, San Diego CA 92120**

**1907 - Base Commander Warren Branges called the meeting to order.**

Conducted Opening Exercises - Pledge of Allegiance lead by **Past Commander Fred Fomby.**

**Base Commander Warren Branges** lead the opening prayer.

**Base Treasurer Mike Cosgrove** conducted Tolling of the Boats for boats lost in the month of September.

**Base Secretary Jack Kane** recognized Past Commanders, dignitaries and guests

**Base Secretary Jack Kane** announced 17 members and 1 guest present.

**Base Treasurer Mike Cosgrove** presented the Treasurer's report. A copy of the Report will be filed with these minutes. Minutes of the August 2019 meeting were published in the Sentinel.

**Base Commander Warren Branges called for Committee Reports**

**Binnacle List** - Len Heiselt, Sergio Frost, David Martinez, Chris Sultana, Bob Oberting, Matt Baumann, Joe Peluso and Tony Dack are on Binnacle.

**Parade Committee** - Chairman Jack Kane announced the next parade is San Diego Veterans Day Parade on 11 November. Parade starts at 1000 vice 1100. Muster between 0900 and 1000 on Harbor Drive near Grape Street. Maps and further information will be sent via e-mail upon receipt from the Parade Committee. No Parking is available for this Parade. Best suggestion is for members to park at Trolley Stations (Old Town, Grossmont, etc.) and take the Green Line to Little Italy/County Center Station. The Seaport Village and Santa Fe Depot Stations are close to dispersal area for this parade. We had a good turnout for the Poway Parade. All seats on the float were filled. Shipmate Jim Boydston used his opera talent to lead the choir in many a chorus of Anchors Aweigh.

**Membership Committee** - **Chairman Ray Febrache** reported we currently have 240 base members.

**Scholarship Committee** - **Committee Chairman Paul Hitchcock** received Thank You notes from 2 Scholarship recipients. Paul noted that a total revamp of the scholarship program should be put on the agenda.



The Base Commander will query USSVI National as to the feasibility and process needed if we were to turn our Scholarship Program over to the USSVI Charitable Foundation.

**Storekeeper - Chairman Paul Hitchcock** has some calendars left.

**Breakfast Committee - Chairman Base Commander Warren Branges.** 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. Some volunteers are needed for this Breakfast.

**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 revamp of 52 Boat Memorial has begun. The Board is working with San Diego Park and Recreation on Right of Entry. They also have begun procuring new polished concrete markers to replace damaged markers. All granite markers will be replaced with polished concrete on a graduated schedule. The Committee will start a fund drive soon to finance the changeover.

**Float Committee - Chairmanship open.** The battery on the float has been replaced.

**Eagle Scout Program - Co Chairs Nihil Smith and Glenn Gerbrand.** No report.

**1921 - Presentations. None.** The Base Commander has asked Captain Charlie MacVean to give a presentation at a future meeting. Captain MacVean will probably be available in January or February.

**1924 -** Base Commander called for a break. 50/50 Raffle held.

### **1945 - 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 October (or later).

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

**VFW STORAGE AREA.** We will help the VFW rehab the storage garage after the Solar Parking Area is completed. The Base Commander will call for a working party later in the year.

**WREATH LAYING AT 52 BOATS.** The Wreath Laying tentatively scheduled for 7 December 2019 will 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 year's event. We will still put out flags on 7 December. Donations for this year's wreaths are now being accepted. See the Base Commander if you want to donate. Each wreath costs approximately \$15.00.

**PROPOSED CHANGE TO MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY/TOLLING OF THE BOATS.** We are looking at ways to increase participation at the ceremony. An option to move the ceremony to 52 Boat Memorial is a non-starter due to conflicts with other events, insurance and permitting problems, etc. One option is move the ceremony to the afternoon vice morning on Memorial Day. This would help eliminate the inherent conflict with the concurrent ceremony at Rosecrans National Cemetery. The Base Commander will discuss this time change with CSS-11 who co-sponsor the Ceremony. The Commander will also discuss base access with CSS-11 and Naval Base Point Loma for the event. We may be able to use pre-approved access list rather than escorts.

**CONVENTION REPORT.** Base Secretary **Jack Kane** gave a short rundown of the National Convention in Austin. Chief of the Boat Bob Bissonnette will give a more comprehensive report at the next meeting. Next year's Convention will be held in Tucson AZ, August 24th through 30th 2020.

**REPORT ON POTENTIAL MEETING PLACE RELOCATION.** Shipmate Kip Casper and Chief of Boat Bob Bissonnette are contacting area venues. No venue has been identified to date. COB will give a report at the next meeting.

**LIVE STREAMING OF OUR MEETINGS.** The COB is looking into equipment/platforms/services to be able to stream the meetings on the Internet.

**SCAMP BASE Raffle.** The Base Commander will find out who won the Raffle this month.

### **1954 - NEW BUSINESS**

**DATE FOR 2020 SUBVET PICNIC.** Available dates for next year's picnic are 11, 18, 25 July and 1 Aug. We will vote on a date at the next meeting.

### **1956 - Good of the Order**

**2020 NATIONAL CONVENTION -** will be in Tucson AZ - 24 30 Aug 2020.

**2021 NATIONAL CONVENTION -** will be in Orlando at Rosen Shingle Creek.

**SILENT SERVICE TV SHOW** is available at [olgoat.com](http://olgoat.com)

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

**CSS-11 had a Change of Command.** Captain Freidman relieved Captain Cavanaugh. The CSS-11 and Naval Base Point Loma CMC positions will be changing.

TREASURER Mike Cosgrove reminded us to fly our flags at half-mast tomorrow, 11 September.

Ed Farley read missives from Jim Harer who is on a long car trip. Jim says the temps were: Fort Mojave 117, St George UT 106, Provo UT 90 and Laramie WY 84. Jim says hello to everyone.

The Meeting was adjourned at 2000.

/s/ **Jack E. Kane**

Jack Kane, Secretary

### **Sailing List for 10 September 2019**

#### **Members**

WWII Veteran Charlie Tate

Warren Branges

Manny Burciaga

Kip Casper

Mike Cosgrove

Nicholas Dirx

Joel Eikam

Ed Farley

Bob Farrell

Ray Febrache

Fred Fomby

Dean Hickman

Paul Hitchcock

Jack Kane

William Pickering

Chris Stafford

Greg Vechinski

#### **Guests**

Jessie Chang Farley

## ***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 29 March 1943: "The Rag" No. 13.

TWENTY FIRST EDITION

MARCH 29, 1943

"Men must be habituated to obey or they cannot be controlled in battle, and the neglect of the least important orders impairs the proper influence of the officer."  
-----General Lee.

To the Editor of the "RAG"

T. Thompson, commonly known as "HER-BEE" by his most intimate friends, requests that anyone having a large tool box bring same to maneuvering room as his supply of ENGINE ROOM FOOLS has greatly expanded the little electrical box of his, and are beginning to clutter up the desk. (Don't ever bring the tools back Tommy, Of course I don't suppose that would help the congestion in the maneuvering room much.)

Anonymous.....

Last evening, shortly after surfacing, we, and I repeat, we the crew members of the Mighty Whale sat down to what promised to be a good, wholesome, hot meal. The usual noise that accompanies a meal was in full swing, arms and hands were flying in all directions at once and, the lower jaws of every one seemed to be swinging in the usual manner. All of a sudden, the racket and noise ceased, a death like silence seemed to permeate the atmosphere along with the distinctive odor of the putrified contents of the sanitary tank. But, after a close investigation, it was discovered that it wasn't the sanitary tank venting inboard, as every one had thought, but, that it was two heaping deeps of CURRIED shrimp manufactured in Dame Cox's Sloppe Shoppe. And stink! Ye Gods! or as Andy the Yeoman put it, Small bad---Oh! My----

It was noted that Creek and Martini as usual, scooped their fill with relish.

War is the outcome of the growth of societies which can never be uniform, but varies with varying degrees of climate, land, race, religion, and tradition. No superstate can prevent this diversity nor repress the expansion of a vigorous community. The establishment of a world-state would no doubt be the end of international wars, but they would reappear as civil wars....

#### MINUTE BIOGRAPHIES

or

WHO'S WHO ON THE WHALE

.....By Buddy.....

No. 5---VANSTRANDER.

Van, that spie-itch insurance salesman from Hartford, Conn., is our ideal of real "Cafe Society". When ashore, he can be found cutting a dashing figure, (usually horizontal) at or under the nearest bar. And in the most exclusive places too. To date, Van has been given ye olde heave ho out of such popular establishments like the green mill, TROPICS, AND TED LEWIS'S, not to forget that sordid affair at the "COTTAGE", when Van tried to bring back two "filles de joy" as souvenirs.

Friend Van is on very intimate terms with the local shore patrol, and he has also spent several delightful hours at the village bastille. Fast is he has been carted about so much in the S.P. Black Maria that it's been considered to soak him for overhead such as gas and oil.

When black eyes are being passed out and about, Van can always be found at the head of the line. He is usually sporting a single or double, in shades ranging from baby pink to mid-night blue. Never let it be said that Van ever walked away from a fight. He always has a couple of buddies standing on the side lines to carry him off.

Our young man about town hasn't the faintest recollection of that vacation at the Royal Hawaiian. He was physically disabled from the first day till we returned to the boat. The only signs of life he showed, was when walking thru the corridors of the hotel in the wee hours in the morning clothed in nothing but his famous "Down to the ankle, draped in the rear" Zoot-suit scivvie. And here's the secret of Van's perennial inebriation. Seems whenever he's indulging in double shots of gin or boiler makers, he always spills half of it in his beard. Thus, if he decides to go on a cheap binge, all he has to do is stick his nose in all that alfalfa and inhale deeply. And Van is once again lit up like a Xmas tree.

**AN EXCLUSIVE REPORT WITH NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED  
PHOTOS**

**The Sinking of the  
USS REDFISH**

**And the near tragedy of the USS Medregal  
The true Terrifying story from those who lived it.**

**By Wayne T. Nelson**

**With additional material by Ronn Broadway**



The above photos of the USS Redfish were taken during a secret mission during the Korean War. And I thought going up the Oregon – Washington coast in winter was cold.



If in March 1969 you were to grab a copy of the San Diego base publication, PERISCOPE, you would find the below story concerning the submarine exercise to sink the USS Redfish SS 395 off the San Diego coast.

# periscope

PATROL 18, RUN 10 SUBMARINE FLOTILLA ONE

MARCH 7, 1969

## "Coup de Grâce" For REDFISH

On 7 February 1969, a torpedo fired by USS MEDREGAL (AGSS-480) ended the 25 year long career of Ex-REDFISH. Ex-REDFISH was decommissioned 27 June 1968.

Ex-REDFISH was towed to the exercise sinking area near San Diego by USS COCOPA (ATF-104). On board the submarine during the tow for her last trip to sea was the tar-

get control team, which consisted of LT. A. Amaro, of Submarine Division 33, QM1(SS) Lloyd B. McConkey of the USS SPERRY (AN-12), GMCS Harry K. Carlis from the USS CHANTICLEER, ENC(SS) Wilbikin, EM3(SS) Richard D. Bolanos, and MM3(SS) M. C. Dye, all from SubRon THREE.

Upon arriving in the exercise area,

the 6 man crew was taken off by helicopter and transferred to USS PRINCETON (LPMS). Shortly after, MEDREGAL sent Ex-REDFISH on her final plunge to the bottom.

The USS REDFISH (AGSS-395) was commissioned 12 April 1944, and was ready for sea in time to make two war patrols. In spite of her brief war experience, REDFISH had very successful patrols. On her first patrol she sank 5 ships and damaged 3 others. The second patrol was even better, as she sank 5 ships, including the Japanese aircraft carrier UNRYU, and damaging another carrier. In revenge for the UNRYU's loss, the escorting Japanese destroyers attacked REDFISH with a depth charge barrage that inflicted enough damage to put the sub out for the remainder of the war, but not before REDFISH had sunk or damaged 123,920 tons of Japanese shipping. Because of the outstanding record she made against the enemy, REDFISH was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation on 17 August, 1945.

After being repaired, REDFISH served with the Pacific submarine force and made many cruises to overseas ports. She operated extensively in the San Diego area as a unit of Submarine Flotilla ONE. The accomplishments of this gallant lady will long be remembered in submarine history.

The USS MEDREGAL, who sent Ex-REDFISH to her watery grave, was commissioned on 14 April 1945 and was fitted out in time to see the end of World War II. With the cessation of hostilities, she was home ported in Key West, Florida, and made several trips to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In 1957, her home port was changed to Norfolk, Virginia, where she was converted to a missile guidance submarine. She spent 2 years operating out of Norfolk, and was then moved to Pacific waters and Pearl Harbor, where she served with Submarine Squadron ONE. She participated in fleet exercises and made several WestPacs, until she was home ported in San Diego on 1 May 1967. MEDREGAL, one of the submarines attached to Submarine Squadron THREE, is commanded by CDR R. C. O'Sullivan.



Ex-REDFISH descends for the final time after being mortally wounded by a torpedo fired from MEDREGAL.



USS MEDREGAL (AGSS-480)

Understandably if there were any problems that occurred but did not result in severe damage or loss of life the Navy would not publically report the near tragedies of the Navy's blunders or mistakes. So below you will find my story as it appears in my book, THE PIG IN PEACE. Only the above PERISCOPE article accompanied the story but in this exclusive article for the Silent Sentinel I am including never before published photos. They are from a private collection and the Navy photographer is unknown and the source of the photos remains anonymous.

## THE SINKING OF THE USS REDFISH (AGSS 395)

I returned from leave on 27 January 1969, and little over a week later, we went to sea for a very special assignment that few submarines in those days got to do—fire live torpedoes at an actual target!

The target in this case was the Redfish, a decommissioned submarine that that had an amazing record during world War Two! The boat came into the war late, but even so, she did two patrols and sank ten enemy ships including the Japanese aircraft carrier the Unryu. She also damaged three others. In all she sank 123,290 tons of shipping. For her distinguished service, she received the Presidential Unit Citation in August 1945.

On February 7 1969, the Redfish which had been decommissioned on 27 June 1968 was towed to an exercise area off of San Diego and left. As if in an actual battle situation, we submerged and made a tactical approach to the target at periscope depth. When the target was locked on, we fired two torpedoes, and one of the fish struck and exploded near the stern of the Redfish, and the old girl took on water and slowly slipped stern first beneath the waves of the blue Pacific. It was over that fast for the proud Redfish.



EXCLUSIVE: USS Redfish through the periscope of the USS Medregal SS 480 before the torpedoes were fired.



EXCLUSIVE: The stern of the Redfish explodes violently after being torpedoed by the USS Medregal. In this photo the bow of the Redfish is facing to the right.



EXCLUSIVE: The last photo of the USS Redfish

So what about the other torpedo? Was it a miss, which ran out of fuel and sank to the bottom? Yes and no! For sure it missed the target, but it didn't run out of fuel and sink to the bottom! At least not right away.

In WWII, they used very unsophisticated torpedoes called the Mark 14. They were fired from the torpedo tube with compressed air, and a little engine propelled them in the direction they were fired sometimes hitting the target if the calculations were correct. Not very high tech and a degree of error resulted in a miss.

But in the modern submarine Navy of 1969, we had those old fish plus wire guided Mark 37 torpedoes that would seek out the sound of the enemy targets. The wire guide is exactly as it sounds. There was a wire attached to the torpedo, which received directional information from the tracking device onboard the submarine. Call it an early computer. So when the fish is fired, it receives information through the wire until it zeros in on the noise from the target. When the wire runs out, the torpedo is on its own.



So now we have already established that one of these torpedoes missed the target, so where did it go?

The Redfish was damaged and sinking, but we were still around and our screws were making enough noise to attract the torpedo, which did a wide arch and headed back for us! With this realization, the captain, our new captain by the way, Commander R.C. O'Sullivan, took immediate and urgent evasive actions.

For this special event, we had Navy brass onboard and some civilian VIPs. They, as well as the crew, were shocked and confused when emergency crash dive was sounded! Rapidly the boat went into a steep dive angle that tipped over several tool boxes and supply cabinets in our engine room. Everyone outside of the control room wondered what was happening, we had been gently cruising at periscope depth, and suddenly we were dropping like a rock!

After the sinking of the Redfish, we were briefed on what the hell had happened and, much later, shown a film of the event shot from a helicopter. A single torpedo struck the Redfish in the stern. The ensuing explosion blew the after decking and pieces of shredded pressure hull hundreds of feet into the air, and the old girl started to sink stern first. After a few minutes, the ship took a steep angle, and moments later a profusion of bubbles and foam spewed from her bow and she slipped below the surface to a watery grave below.

As far as the crash dive? The crew was informed that the second torpedo went awry, looped back, and was chasing us. The captain ordered the crash dive to submerge below the torpedo's operating depth and get out of range. His quick action probably saved our lives as the hot fish ran out of fuel and sank just five hundred yards off our stern! Never a dull moment underway in a WWII submarine!

After my book was published two maybe there are others but a least two former shipmates criticized my adaption of the incident as containing errors.

Well I based my story on the briefing we were given. Maybe I should have taken notes? But my story was from an engineman's point of view and understanding and of course my memory. But there is your problem right there. What do engine room grunts know from torpedoes or tamales? Anyway below is the story from someone who was in the "white room" during the incident. My friend and former shipmate Ronn Broadway. Oh yes "white room" refers to spaces outside the engine rooms. In

particular Control. My dear friend and also former shipmate Ed Hinman coined the term.

### ***RADIOMAN RONN BROADWAY'S VERSION***



Ronn Broadway tending line 4 the sailor not wearing a hat

Bill Abbey, others and I are on the same page.

I was not in the radio room at the time. My station was in the Ward Room (aka plotting) with an officer in contact with the Conning tower. Short of room, I stood in the passageway. Hey, everyone had to be somewhere right? I found it a bit odd I was not with the RM gang in the radio room. But being 3<sup>rd</sup> in seniority it made sense.

The first torpedo fired was in fact a dud. It malfunctioned. Went out about 500 yards and died. There was a short wait period, if I recall, for a Torpedo Retriever to recover the dud torpedo.

The second torpedo, described as an Acoustic Wire guided Torpedo, had its wire break. It was supposed to power off after so many angular degrees as I understood then. 32 degrees I believe. HOWEVER, it chose to return from its original course back to the Medregal! Upon hearing this, orders were given for a steep diving angle (I don't recall how much: but it was an angle never experience previously) to take her to "200 feet" post haste and go "all silent". With the fans off, the boat began to get pretty hot. We didn't move. Some were unconsciously holding their breath. Some

resorted to removing their shoes as we waited in utter silence. We whispered only when necessary to communicate.

THE SECOND TORPEDO DIED, if I recall correctly, approximately 200 yards from the USS Medregal.

After the terrifying ordeal Ronn concludes with one more section. Filling in the void a little the Medregal came back to periscope depth and made another run on the redfish and fired one more torpedo. But you might have thought after all the bad torpedo luck and almost sinking ourselves they might have called things off and wait for another day for the sinking.

Ronn's final words follow:

The third and final torpedo, found its target, which we in the Ward Room, and the rest of the crew from their watch stations without a doubt heard and cheered.

### MY FINAL THOUGHTS

As you see mostly my errors where in number of torpedoes and sequences of events and a little in distances. 200 yards is a hell of a lot less than 500!

Because the torpedo didn't hit Medregal we (meaning the crew) are around today to look back on the incident as an exciting experience in our lives. During WW2 there were several boats and crews lost to torpedoes run amuck and circling back to explode and sink the boat. So it was a close shave for sure and one I will never forget.



The PIG IN PEACE by Wayne Thomas Nelson was published by Page publishing of New York City in 2018 and is a copyrighted work. It is available from Amazon.com and BarnesandNobel.com. Also from the publisher and the author at [nelsonsparaypaintart@gmail.com](mailto:nelsonsparaypaintart@gmail.com) . Your questions and comments are welcome and will be answered.

Wayne Thomas Nelson EN2 (SS)

Former Medregal Engine room Crew 1967-1970

## Current News

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

### Electric Boat facing mounting challenges as sub work ramps up

*Ana Radelat, The CT Mirror, September 26*

**Washington** – Earlier this month, Electric Boat broke ground on the centerpiece of the company’s expansion plan in preparation for the construction of a new line of submarines.

But a new Congressional Research Service report shows there are continued concerns about EB’s abilities to build the new Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine alongside the smaller Virginia-class attack submarines that have for nearly 20 years been the mainstay of that shipyard.

The report also cited a number of other problems in the construction of submarines by Electric Boat and its partner, Virginia’s Newport News Shipbuilding.

One is the result of a big change in the Virginia-class submarine program.

The Navy plans for Electric Boat and Newport News to continue to build two of these submarines a year, and three of them in 2023. The Virginia-class attack submarine was designed to be less expensive and better optimized for post-Cold War missions than older fleets of U.S. subs.

But the Navy wants to boost the attack power of the Virginia-class boat. The next block of subs will be larger, adding dozens of missile tubes and about 85 feet to each of the new Virginia Payload Module (VPM) subs. The cost will also increase, from about \$2.8 billion to roughly \$3.2 billion for each submarine.

Last spring, Electric Boat and Newport News struggled to meet scheduled delivery times as the Virginia-class program transitioned from production of two “regular” Virginia-class boats per year to two VPM-equipped boats per year.

“As a result of these challenges...the program has experienced months-long delays in efforts to build boats relative to their targeted delivery dates,” the report said.

The shipbuilders have also had problems with design work and welding.

“Program officials said vendor quality issues with welding on VPM have caused a 3.5-month delay in the schedule for the payload tubes for the first two submarines with VPM,” the report said.



Right now, Congress is struggling to pass a 2020 defense budget that would substantially boost the Navy's budget for submarines. The CRS said "another issue for Congress concerns three Virginia-class boats that were reported in 2016 to have been built with defective parts, and the operational and cost implications of this situation."

Electric Boat declined to respond to concerns raised in the report, referring all questions to the Navy.

The Navy had no response to the issues raised in the report.

U.S. Senate demands answers

The U.S. Senate, in its draft 2020 defense spending bill, demanded the Navy submit a slew of reports on the Virginia-class submarine program by October 1. Those include reports on the cost to repair the rubber-like quieting material that has started to peel off the hulls of the newer Virginia-class subs.

But the bigger problem is staffing.

In 2021, construction of the massive, new Columbia-class ballistic submarine will coincide with the continued construction of the Virginia-class subs.

Once the Virginia Payload Module is added, Virginia-class subs will require 25% more work. And the Columbia subs will require about 2.5 times more work than an original Virginia sub.

To prepare for the boost in construction, the workforce at Electric Boat's shipyard in Quonset Point, R.I., where the Columbia is already in production, has been increased from about 2,000 workers a couple of years ago to roughly 4,250 today, on its way to about 6,000.

But Electric Boat's facility in Groton is facing a dip in employment before it ramps up its production on the Columbia.

The shipyard's planned overhaul of the USS Hartford will help ease the dip in employment, but a gap in 2023 remains.

And, according to the U.S. Naval Institute, Electric Boat yards have significantly less experience per employee than they did previously. The average worker at Groton had 23 years of experience in 2010 and just 13 now, and the average Quonset Point worker had 15 years of experience in 2010 compared to 7.6 years now.

The Senate defense bill said "expanding the capability and capacity of the submarine industrial base workforce is imperative to keeping pace with Navy shipbuilding requirements."

"Numerous manufacturing capabilities must be addressed, including the need for more qualified and Navy-certified welders," the bill said. "The committee is concerned that the Navy-certified welding workforce may be insufficient to meet Navy demands on time with the required quality."

The committee recommended the Navy increase its research and development budget for submarine workforce development by \$8 million and "develop and implement a strategy for strengthening the workforce pipeline for critical defense industries, including new submarine construction."

For nearly a year, the Navy and Electric Boat have been struggling to finalize a contract for "Block V" or the next group of Virginia-class submarines.

Yet Electric Boat officials were upbeat at the Sept. 13 groundbreaking ceremony for the yard's \$850 billion expansion project.

"We hope to continue to hire and train thousands of new employees and will help grow our supply base of more than 3,000 companies to ensure the successful execution of the Columbia program," said Jeffrey S. Geiger, president of Electric Boat, at the groundbreaking ceremony.

Later that same day, amid mounting challenges, Electric Boat announced that within two weeks it would replace Geiger with Kevin Graney, president of General Dynamics' NASSCO shipyard in San Diego.

And, as the Navy is months behind schedule getting its latest batch of Virginia-class subs under contract and no solution appears imminent, there are increasing concerns that Virginia-class delays will affect the Navy's top acquisition priority, the Columbia-class submarine.

## **Nuclear submarine USS Thresher was said to be America's best, then tragedy struck**

***Michael E. Ruane, The Washington Post, September 26***

Tom Wiley was sitting in his dorm room at Purdue University listening to his transistor radio when he heard about the missing submarine.

The radio hadn't been working lately, but his roommate got it on just as the bulletin came about the USS Thresher. Wiley's big brother, John Joseph, "JJ," was a 23-year-old officer on the submarine. A Naval Academy graduate who had been handed his degree by President John F. Kennedy, JJ — one of the six children of a locomotive engineer from Altoona, Pennsylvania — was among the Navy's best. He was Tom's hero.

JJ was aboard a nuclear sub that was one of the Navy's latest, with 128 other elite sailors, officers and shipyard personnel. The Thresher was the first of its class of nuclear-powered attack submarines. It was undergoing deep-diving trials on April 10, 1963, when the Thresher went silent in 8,500 feet of water off the coast of New England. The last thing an escort ship had heard was an ominous rumble from far below.

On Thursday afternoon at Arlington National Cemetery, Thomas Wiley, now 75, a retired Secret Service special agent in charge, was to be part of a dedication of a granite memorial to the crew of the Thresher, the sinking of which is said to be the deadliest submarine loss in maritime history.

Crew families, as well as friends, legislators, and current and former Navy officials gathered to honor the men who perished when the boat burst a leak and imploded under the pressure of the ocean as it drifted out of control past its "crush" depth.

Historians believe the implosion happened in milliseconds at about 1,500 feet, and that scattered pieces of the boat then drifted to the bottom more than a mile below.

No bodies were ever recovered, and their loss was front-page news across the country. The wreckage was found a few months later.

(In the 1980s the Navy and oceanographer Robert Ballard secretly teamed up to dive on the Thresher's sunken nuclear reactor, which in 1985 was found to be intact, according to the National Geographic Society, where Ballard is an explorer in residence. After the Navy mission, Ballard had 12 days left over. He used it to find the Titanic.)

"The guys on the Thresher were the cream," said Kevin Galeaz, a submarine veteran and president of the project and foundation that got the monument built. "You took the best, you took latest and greatest ship, gone, and it just stunned everybody."

Two members of the crew were brothers — Master Chief Electrician's Mate Benjamin Shafer, 36, and Senior Chief Electrician's Mate John Shafer, 33.

The boat's skipper, Lt. Cmdr. John Wesley "Wes" Harvey, 36, had served on the USS Nautilus, the first nuclear-powered submarine, and had taken command of the Thresher four months earlier. But he had never before been to sea in the boat, according to John Bentley, author of the book, "The Thresher Disaster."

Neither, apparently, had Lt. (jg) Wiley.

One sailor, Alan Sinnett, 29, had been on Thresher for only six days.

Fifty-five-year old Henry Charles Moreau, a World War II veteran and longtime employee of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, where the Thresher was built, was onboard as an air conditioning expert.

Thresher officer Raymond McCoolle was ordered off the boat hours before its fatal trip. His wife had suffered an accidental eye injury, the boat was crowded with 21 observers, and the captain needed an extra bunk.

Afterward, to McCoolle's dismay, he was hailed as the luckiest man alive.

Then there was Machinist's Mate 2nd Class George John Keisecker, 48, a World War II veteran who had been on a submarine that entered Tokyo Bay when the war ended. He was terrified of the Thresher, telling his wife the boat was troubled, not ready for sea, and was a "coffin."

The Thresher had been in commission only 20 months, and was beset with problems. It had spent the previous nine months in port for repairs. And Keisecker felt the fixes had been rushed.

"Honey, I have a feeling this will be our last trip," he reportedly told his wife, Lily, just before the boat sailed. "You will be a wealthy widow before the week is over."

The Thresher left the Naval shipyard at Kittery, Maine, at 8:05 a.m. on April 9, after a tedious nine-month overhaul, and headed for the open ocean to conduct test dives.

The boat's capability was such that its deepest diving test had to be conducted beyond the shallow water of the continental shelf, where the water is less than 600 feet deep. And after some initial tests in the shallow water, the Thresher headed out to where the ocean was 1,400 fathoms, or a mile and half, deep.

The sub was escorted by a rescue vessel, the 17-year-old USS Skylark. The Skylark carried special equipment and a submarine rescue chamber. But the chamber could only go down to a depth of 850 feet. It could work well in the waters of the shelf, but would be almost useless where the Thresher was headed.

It's not clear how far down the doomed sub intended to go on its main test dive, nor at what depth the boat would be destroyed by the enormous water pressure if it went too deep.

Naval historian Norman Polmar, in his book "Death of the Thresher," estimated that boat's test depth was 800 to 1,000 feet, and that its "collapse depth" was about 1,200 to 1,500 feet.

Collapse occurs in a split second, Galeaz, of the monument project, said.

"In one twentieth of a second, literally, it implodes," he said in a telephone interview. "Poof, like that. It is so fast [that] one of the small blessings of this is that even though the guys knew they were going down ... [the end] happened instantaneously."

On the morning of April 10, the ocean was calm, with a slight swell, a Navy inquiry found later. Visibility was 10 miles. An 8-mile-an-hour breeze was blowing from the north. No other ships were known to be around.

The Thresher was so crowded, with 12 officers, 96 enlisted men and 21 observers, that 30 temporary bunks had been set up in the empty torpedo room, according to Bently.

At 7:47 a.m., the submerged submarine told the Skylark via an underwater acoustic "telephone" that it was starting its deep dive.

The escort ship was about 2 miles away. The Skylark's captain, Lt. Cmdr. Stanley W. Hecker, later said he knew little about the Thresher. "I had no information as to ... her depth, speed and range," according to Polmar.

As the dive proceeded, the submarine reported its depth to Skylark.

At 7:52 it reached 400 feet, and paused to check for leaks.

At 8:09 it was halfway to its test depth. All seemed well.

Lt. (jg) James D. Watson, the Skylark's navigator, was on the "phone" with the submarine.

At 8:27 the Thresher started toward its test depth.

The sub checked in at 9:02 and 9:12.

Then, at about 9:13, the Thresher reported: "Experiencing minor difficulties. Have positive up angle. Am attempting to blow. Will keep you informed."

In hindsight, this was alarming, Galeaz said. It suggested something was wrong and the sub was blowing air into its ballast tanks to head toward the surface.

Two impulses were detected, from 9:09 to 9:11 and from 9:13 to 9:14, which might have been made by the sub blowing its ballast tanks.

At 9:14 Skylark lost contact with the Thresher.

Hecker, the Skylark's skipper, called the submarine and three times asked, "Are you in control?"

There was no reply.

Four minutes later, a "high energy, low frequency noise disturbance," was heard from far below, the Navy inquiry said.

It was the sound of the Thresher being crushed.

Back at Purdue, Tom Wiley hurried from his dorm room to find a TV. After seeing the television reports, he returned to his room. The radio was now off, he recalled. His roommate said it had cut out just as Tom had left the room.

"The radio never worked again," he said.

He called his mother, who confirmed the bad news, and caught a train for Altoona the next day.

It was a 12-hour trip: "Every train stop, I got off the train hoping to hear the good news that the submarine had been found and they were all safe."

"It never came out," he said.

## **The worst submarine disaster in US history is finally getting a memorial at Arlington National Cemetery**

***Julia Bergman, New London Day, September 26***

Judy Douglas has waited 56 years for this moment.

Her brother Lt. John Smarz Jr. was one of the 129 men who died when the USS Thresher, the most advanced submarine of its era, sank to the ocean floor during a deep dive test on April 10, 1963, about 220 miles east of Cape Cod. The event remains the worst submarine disaster in U.S. history.

On Thursday, the 79-year-old Douglas, of Shelton, Conn., will gather with other family members of the deceased at Arlington National Cemetery for the unveiling of a memorial in honor of the Thresher crew and the submarine safety program that came afterward, which, Douglas said, she considers part of her brother's legacy. She and about 50 others will be taking a bus down from Norwich organized by the memorial fundraisers, who had raised \$60,000 in private donations for the marker.

"Long time coming," Douglas said of the memorial. "I mean it's going to be quite an experience."

The effort to memorialize the 129 men was spearheaded by Kevin Galeaz, a submarine veteran who lives in New Hampshire. The memorial, which went through various levels of approval and ultimately was endorsed by the secretary of the Army, will be located on the Roosevelt Drive walkway that runs between the cemetery's welcome



center and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Former chief of naval operations, retired Adm. John Richardson, is among those expected to give remarks at the dedication ceremony.

On Wednesday, before boarding a bus for the dedication ceremony, Douglas recalled how she'd been out shopping with her mother when she first heard the news

about the Thresher. The song "Our Day Will Come" was playing on the radio.

"They broke in and said that the Thresher was missing," she said.

Her mother shut out the world after her brother was reported deceased but kept thinking he would eventually come home.

"You know when something like that happens, that's what you do, you wait for them to knock on the door because you don't have anything to prove that they're gone," said Douglas, who brought with her a copy of the Aug. 11, 1963, edition of the Evening Sentinel, a newspaper based in Ansonia, Conn., the front page of which reads in big letters, over the fold: "Hope dies for 129 men on sub."

The page features an article with a picture of her brother, the headline of which reads, "Shelton Navy Lieutenant missing on Navy sub."

Her brother, who was 33 when he died, left behind his wife and three small children, two of whom will be at the memorial dedication.

Several former crew members also are expected to attend, including 82-year-old Ira Goldman of Waterford, who would have been on the Thresher if he hadn't gone to a Navy training school for machinist's mates.

Goldman has kept a Thresher scrapbook, which includes biographies of the crew members and photos and articles from major milestones in the submarine's life. Family members who were too young to remember their deceased relatives have relied on him for information.

The Navy has said the most likely cause of the sinking was a failure in either a pipe, a pipe valve or a hull weld, causing flooding near the engine room. In response to the tragedy, the Navy created a program that developed new submarine safety standards, known as SUBSAFE, that's still in existence today. No submarine certified under the program has been lost.

"This memorial not only perpetuates memories of men lost, but also the submarine safety legacy that has and continues to protect the lives of the men and women who serve on our nation's submarines," Galeaz said.

A retired Navy captain, James Bryant, in early July filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit against the Navy, seeking records related to the sinking of the submarine, which, he has said, could help shed light on possible causes that have not been made public.

Bryant, who was hoping to get the information before the dedication ceremony, said by phone Wednesday that he is meeting with Navy officials in Washington on Thursday morning to try to resolve the suit.

Galeaz said the families are mixed on whether they want to re-examine the loss. Some still are curious about what happened, while others see no value in releasing more information to the public.

Douglas said she believed the Navy's version of what happened and didn't seem interested in finding out any potentially new information.

## **New burial rules seek to extend Arlington Cemetery lifespan**

***Matthew Barakat, Associated Press, September 25***

**FALLS CHURCH, Va. (AP)** — In an effort to save dwindling space, the Army is proposing new rules to limit who can be buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Under the current rules, the cemetery would run out of space by the mid-2050s, the Army says. The proposed restrictions would preserve the cemetery's lifespan for another 150 years.

"Arlington National Cemetery is a national shrine for all Americans, but especially those who have served our great nation," Acting Secretary of the Army Ryan McCarthy said in a statement. "We must ensure it can honor those we have lost for many years to come."

Under the proposals, veterans who retired from active duty and were eligible for retirement pay would no longer be automatically eligible for in-ground burial. They would be eligible, though, for above-ground "inurnment" of cremated remains.

Those who were killed in action or received awards such as the Purple Heart or Silver Star could still receive an in-ground burial. U.S. presidents and vice presidents also would retain eligibility.

The proposed rules will now be subjected to the federal rulemaking process and published in the Federal Register, which allows the public to submit comments. If the public comments prompt no revisions, the new rules could take effect in about nine months.

The cemetery, which is managed by the Army, has already conducted extensive public outreach to collect feedback on how it should shepherd its existing space. More than 250,000 people responded to a survey by the cemetery, and officials say roughly three-quarters of respondents favored restricting eligibility for burial in some way to preserve the cemetery's lifespan.

The cemetery's founding dates to the Civil War, when Union soldiers commandeered the estate of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee overlooking the Potomac River and the nation's capital to bury the war dead.

More than 400,000 people are buried in the cemetery, and only 95,000 burial spaces remain, though a planned expansion will add 37 acres (15 hectares) of burial space and more than 10 years of life to the cemetery under the existing rules.

Even with the expansion, though, the cemetery faces a severe capacity problem in coming decades. Under the current rules, nearly all of the 22 million living armed forces members and veterans are eligible for burial at Arlington, the Army said.

The proposed new rules restrict in-ground burial to those killed in action, award recipients of the Silver Star and higher who also served in combat, Purple Heart recipients, former prisoners of war, presidents and vice presidents of the U.S., and those who died in combat-related service deaths while conducting uniquely military activities. Exceptions can also be made for veterans with combat service who "also served out of uniform as a government official and made significant contributions to the nation's security at the highest levels of public service."

Eligibility for those opting to be cremated is broader.

## **With Korea Exercises Canceled, Troops Could Spend More Time Training in Alaska**

***Gina Harkins, Military Times, September 23***

Military leaders are considering holding more large-scale exercises in Alaska after the Pentagon canceled several training events on the Korean Peninsula.

About 3,000 Marines and sailors spent this month in Alaska, where they're completing the first iteration of Arctic Expeditionary Capabilities Exercise. They carried out cold-weather amphibious landings, practiced getting fuel ashore in remote locations, and used their underwater robots to hunt for mines in the frigid waters there for the first time.

"One of the reasons we're actually operating here is because ... last year we suspended all exercises on the Korean Peninsula," said Navy Rear Adm. Cedric Pringle, Expeditionary Strike Group 3's commander, told reporters on Monday. "So instead of doing maybe about four exercises per year on the Korean Peninsula, we needed to find another location to do them. This was the perfect environment to do that."

The military this spring canceled the large-scale exercises in South Korea days after President Donald Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong Un failed to reach during a nuclear summit. The decision left critics concerned that the U.S. had caved to the hermit kingdom, since Kim Jong Un frequently complained or lashed out during the exercises.

That appeared to be true even this summer when U.S. and South Korean troops carried out a deeply scaled-back version of one military exercise. The North, in apparent retaliation, fired off a series of ballistic missile tests in apparent retaliation.

Since sailors and Marines couldn't go to the Korean peninsula for exercises such as Foal Eagle or Exercise Ssang Yong, leaders were looking for a place to test logistics operations and keep their troops sharp, Pringle said. That led them to Alaska, where the Marines and sailors on the amphibious dock landing ship Comstock operated in the south-central part of the state and along the far-western Aleutian Islands.

Some portions of the exercise were also held in San Diego. Pringle said the Marines and sailors demonstrated their ability to command and control forces over an area of operation about 2.2 million square miles in size.

The exercises were in many ways similar to those the sea services used to complete in South Korea, he said. But the climate forced them to put their skills and gear to the test in a new environment.

"We need to diversify where we operate and how we operate, because our Navy and our integrated maritime force, it's a global force, and it has to be able to be applied anywhere," he said.

It's likely the Navy and Marine Corps will continue testing putting troops ashore, and then practicing ways to provide logistics in an austere environment, he said.

It's not yet clear how often the services will conduct Arctic Expeditionary Capabilities Exercise in Alaska, Pringle said, or if it will serve as a permanent replacement for any of the canceled South Korean events. The cold-weather exercise could get even colder next time if they push it to later in the year when the temperatures are even more frigid, he said.

"I think we have to challenge ourselves, we have to stretch ourselves," Pringle said. "We have to find the hard venues and prove that we can operate in them."

## **Investigators probing four suicides involving carrier crew *Staff, Navy Times*, September 23**

Hampton Roads authorities have joined federal law enforcement agents investigating the recent suicide deaths of four sailors assigned to the aircraft carrier George H.W. Bush.

Although two of the sailors killed themselves on the same day, Navy officials have distanced themselves from internet rumors describing their deaths as an "epidemic." They insist authorities in Portsmouth, Norfolk and Naval Criminal Investigative Service agents haven't been able to link the deaths to each other.

"The sailors did not serve in the same departments, and there does not appear to be a connection between their deaths," said Cmdr. Jennifer Cragg — the spokeswoman for Commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic — in a prepared statement emailed to Navy Times.

No enlisted or commissioned leaders have been relieved or reassigned in the wake of the suicides, Cragg added.assistance.

Norfolk Police began investigating the death of Machinist's Mate 3rd Class Robert John Bartulewicz III on July 16. His was the first suicide involving a Bush crew member since late 2017, Cragg said.

Last week, authorities in Norfolk and Portsmouth ruled three more deaths — one on Sept. 14, two on Sept. 19 — as suicides: Chief Electronics Technician (Nuclear) James Harold Shelton, Aviation Ordnanceman 1st Class Vincent Michael Forline and Airman Ethan Thomas Lee Stuart.

No deaths occurred on the carrier, which is at Norfolk Naval Shipyard undergoing 28 months of Docking Planned Incremental Availability repairs.

Cragg said that carrier's commissioned and enlisted leaders are "engaged with their crew and focused

on taking care" of sailors and their families. Chaplains, psychologists and counselors are helping those who are grieving and a special psychiatric rapid intervention team — SPRINT — is on board the vessel.

"As a crew and as a family, they are grieving," said Cragg. "They are supporting each other, and are comforting those in need."

Next of kin have been notified and Navy officials have asked reporters to respect their privacy while they mourn the deaths.

Navy records indicate that between Jan. 1 and Sept. 5 — the last official update — 46 active duty and four reservists died by suicide.

Both the number of suicides and the rate of the self-inflicted deaths in the sea service have increased steadily since 2016, when 52 sailors died.

Last year, the Navy recorded 68 active duty suicides — about 20.7 per 100,000 people.

For comparison, officials point to the most recently available and demographically adjusted civilian rate from 2016, which lists 26.8 suicides per 100,000 people.

The rate is adjusted to reflect the relatively larger number of men aged 17 to 60 in the Navy.

September is Suicide Awareness Month throughout the Navy.

## **End Of An Era: Pearl Harbor Survivors Close Chapter**

***Not Attributed, San Diego Union Tribune, September 22***

The San Diego chapter of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, maybe the last one still operating in the United States, held its final meeting Saturday, a bow to the relentless march of time. What had once been a group with 586 men now has seven.

They will socialize when they can, and chapter President Stuart Hedley, a fixture at veterans events here for decades, plans to continue speaking at schools and appearing at parades and memorial gatherings, but their official business — monthly meetings, financial reports, officer elections — is finished.

"It's certainly the end of an era," said Hedley, who turns 98 next month, "and it leaves me a little heartbroken."

Hedley said the group, which at its peak was believed to be the largest chapter in the nation, can't continue because it needs at least two survivors to serve on the board. After Jack Evans, the vice president, died in February at age 95, no one else was ambulatory enough to take his place.

“There’s no way around it,” Hedley said. “We are a dying organization.”

About 50,000 American service members were on Oahu on the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, when waves of Japanese airplanes arrived from aircraft carriers offshore and decimated the Pacific Fleet in a surprise attack that shoved the United States into World War II.

About 2,400 Americans were killed and another 1,200 injured. More than 30 ships and hundreds of airplanes were destroyed or damaged. Those who survived — no one knows how many there are — picked themselves up, helped win the war and got on with their lives in a way that led them to be called the Greatest Generation. They are all pushing the century mark now. The only other San Diego survivor able to attend Saturday’s meeting, Clayton Schenkelberg, will be 102 next month.

He and Hedley were among about 100 people who gathered in an auditorium at a Mormon church in La Mesa Saturday for the final meeting, which was scheduled to coincide with the chapter’s founding 56 Septembers ago.

“You taught us the definition of bravery by your actions that day long ago, and by the way you have lived your lives since,” said Scott Herrod, a church official. “You demonstrated courage, and what it means to fulfill your commitments.”

The meeting drew relatives, friends and admirers of the survivors, many of them dressed in Hawaiian shirts or dresses and donning leis. Lunch was Hawaiian, too, and singers entertained with songs from the South Pacific, as well as patriotic numbers and a medley of 1940s hits.

When lunch was over, the chapter board held what Hedley called “its shortest meeting ever.” He said prayer, called roll, expressed regret that it had come to this.

Then he tapped a gavel on the table and said, “We are done.”

### **How it started**

Like many World War II veterans, the Pearl Harbor survivors didn’t talk much about their experiences, at least not at first.

In 1954, 11 men who had been on one of damaged battleships gathered on Dec. 7 for a reunion at a restaurant in Gardena. A reporter for the local newspaper covered the event, and as he talked to the attendees he told them he, too, had been there during the attack, attached to a bomb squadron at Hickam Field.

They shared memories and paid tributes to the fallen, and when they were done vowed to meet again a year later and invite others. From that came the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, and soon chapters opened all across the country. At its height, the association had close to 30,000 members in dozens of chapters.

The one in San Diego drew from a large pool of veterans because of the county’s longstanding ties to the Navy. “I think we like to get together because Pearl Harbor was a one-of-a-kind experience,” the late Bob Ruffato once told the Union-Tribune. “Unless you were there, it’s hard to understand what it was like.”

The members here, as elsewhere, wore Hawaiian shirts and white slacks to official functions. The shirts were a nod to their location when the Japanese planes attacked. The white pants spoke to the innocence of those killed in a war they didn’t even know had started.

The survivors put into practice a key part of the association’s motto: “Remember Pearl Harbor.” They gave talks to school children and on military bases. They rode in Veterans Day parades and spoke at Memorial Day commemorations. They sent letters to congressional leaders, urging continued vigilance against foreign threats.

In his 2016 book, “Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness,” author Craig Nelson wrote, “It could easily be said that Pearl Harbor would not today hold the special place it does in American hearts if not for their efforts.”

San Diego’s chapter was uncommonly influential. Members here led by the late Gordon Jones badgered the Navy for 15 years to name a ship after Pearl Harbor, well aware that the military service preferred that honor to go to someone or something identified with triumph, not defeat.

The survivors got their wish in 1998 when the Pearl Harbor, a dock landing ship, was put into service and home-ported in San Diego. Its crew members forged a bond with the survivors, sometimes attending the monthly meetings and helping to swear in new officers.

Baseball hats worn by the ship's crew members speak to the way the survivors came to see themselves, and their nation, in the aftermath of the attack. The hats have on them a phoenix, rising.

During the production of "Pearl Harbor," the 2001 movie starring Ben Affleck, Kate Beckinsale, and Josh Hartnett, filmmakers consulted with local survivors. Even though the movie was panned by critics, who noted numerous historical inaccuracies, the vets here were proud of one thing: They'd convinced the script writers to tone down the profanities.

"It's just not how we talked," the late Ralph Lindenmeyer told the Union-Tribune at the time. "Sure, there were four-letter words, but not that many."

### **Unmistakable trend line**

In 2011, 70 years after the attack, the national survivors association called it quits because so many of its members had passed away. Fewer than 3,000 were left.

Many of the individual chapters shut down, too, and shifted into being social clubs. Most of those have ceased as well.

San Diego kept its chapter going by moving under the umbrella of the non-profit Veterans Museum at Balboa Park. That enabled them to continue having monthly meetings and collecting dues. Membership was expanded to include the wives and children of survivors, as well as honorary members, and that kept the total at about 100 for several years.

But the trend line was unmistakable. At Saturday's final meeting, a table in the back was crowded with memorabilia from the chapter, including two-dozen framed photos of survivors at various events over the years. Almost everyone in the photos has died. Several scrapbooks were filled with newspaper clippings of their obituaries.

In the past year, in addition to Evans, several more have died. Ray Chavez passed away in November at age 106. He had been the oldest survivor in the U.S. Gordon Jones, 96, died last August; Adam Romero, 98 in April; Ray Richmond, 100, just a month ago.

It used to be when one of them died, the chapter's funeral detail swung into action. At the memorial service, three survivors would perform a traditional Navy farewell known as the two-bell ceremony. One would give a eulogy, one would read from a script, and one would ring the bell.

Now it will be Hedley and whatever volunteers he can find.

"Being a Christian, I recognize the fact there is going to come a day for all of us," Hedley said. "The way I've overcome all this loss is when I lose one, I pour my life into the others."

On Tuesday, he's heading to the World War II Museum in New Orleans. He has a couple of middle-school speaking appearances scheduled for November, as well as a Veterans Day parade in National City, where he will be the grand marshal.

He's also been asked to attend the annual Dec. 7 memorial in Hawaii, but there's a yearly event on the USS Midway Museum, too, and Hedley has already agreed to be there.

"Lord willing," he said.

## **IG complaint pits Trump, decorated operators against rear admiral who fired a SEAL team triad**

***Carl Prine, Navy Times, September 25***

A complaint filed Tuesday afternoon with the Defense Department's Inspector General blasts Rear Adm. Collin Green as a scheming martinet willing to trash the reputations of bonafide SEAL combat heroes to preserve his precarious perch atop Naval Special Warfare.



The 17 pages of detailed allegations by ex-SEAL Team 7 leader Cmdr. Edward J. Mason and Master Chief Special Warfare Operator Hugh C. Spangler come in the wake of their Sept. 6 firing by Green, whose command cited “a loss of confidence that resulted from leadership failures that caused a breakdown of good order and discipline within two subordinate units while deployed to combat zones” for their removals.

Also canned was Lt. Cmdr. Luke Hong Il Im, the team’s executive officer, but he did not put his name to Tuesday’s filing.

Stamped 2019-0924164500084, the complaint urges Pentagon investigators to polygraph Green and his top enlisted adviser — Force Master Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) William A. King — to prove they tolerated a boozy culture overseas, where liquor is banned for other military personnel.

King also stands accused of stating “that any enlisted SEAL who ‘played lawyer games’ by asserting rights provided under Navy Regulations would summarily lose their SEAL tridents,” according to the complaint.

Navy spokesman Rear Adm. Charles Brown told Navy Times that it would not be “appropriate to discuss a complaint submitted for consideration and potential review by the Inspector General” before adding that “we take allegations of misconduct seriously and the IG investigates all credible allegations.”

Naval Special Warfare officials referred all comments to Brown, the chief of naval information.

The detailed complaint arrived at the IG two days before the new chief of naval operations, Adm. Michael

Gilday, is slated to visit Green’s Naval Special Warfare HQ in Coronado, California.

The filing asks Gilday to “order a Command Climate Survey regarding the leadership ability of RADM Green and CMC King which will inevitably provide the additional compelling evidence” to detach them from Naval Special Warfare for cause.

Prepared by San Diego attorney Jeremiah J. Sullivan III, the complaint depicts the highly decorated Mason and Spangler as war heroes “unjustly fired” as “expendable scapegoats” and “victims of flagrant abuses of power and deliberate retaliation” by Green.

They ask to be “immediately reinstated” at SEAL Team 7, which apparently remains without a command triad.

Central to the IG complaint is the accusation that Green’s “duplicitous actions were done in an attempt to bolster his own reputation and protect his own career” while a string of public scandals involving SEALs played out.

They included SEAL Team 7’s Foxtrot Platoon — which got booted from Iraq back to Naval Base Coronado following a July 4th party that included alcohol, with ongoing investigations for sexual assault, fraternization and other allegations of misconduct trailing in their wake — but included what Green allegedly termed the “Gallagher Effect,” according to the complaint.

On July 2, a military panel of his peers at then-Special Warfare Operator Chief Edward “Eddie” Gallagher’s court-martial trial in San Diego cleared him on premeditated murder, obstruction of justice and all but one other charge tied to a 2017 deployment with Alpha Platoon, SEAL Team 7, to Iraq.

Gallagher, 40, was found guilty only of appearing in a photograph that depicted him near a dead Islamic State prisoner of war, an allegation he never denied.

Gallagher’s name peppers the complaint 17 times, alluding to concerns Green allegedly harbored about the special operator, a SEAL who also captured the attention of President Donald J. Trump.

The complaint contends that Green “has openly challenged the clear direction provided by the President, undermined the verdict rendered by an impartial jury, and retaliated against the leadership of (SEAL Team 7).”

Although Gallagher was long gone from the team when Mason took command in late 2017, the complaint reveals a meeting where Green allegedly accused the commander of failing to adequately address a lingering “Gallagher Effect,” a phenomenon which is never defined in the filing.

But their apparent failure to properly address the so-called Gallagher Effect partly led to their firings, actions by Green that “publicly undermines the President in front of the (Naval Special Warfare) community,” the complaint alleges.

On March 30, Trump took to Twitter to announce that he ordered the Pentagon to release Gallagher from pretrial confinement in San Diego’s Naval Consolidated Brig Miramar.

A day after the verdict in Gallagher’s court-martial case, Trump also tweeted congratulations to the SEAL, his wife Andrea, and his entire family, and he later nixed the Navy Achievement Medals for junior prosecutors and legal clerks who worked on a case riddled with allegations of attorney and Naval Criminal Investigative Service misconduct.

In the aftermath of the Gallagher verdict, Green met with then-Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson in Washington, according to the complaint.

The SEALs allege that Richardson confronted Green about the state of Naval Special Warfare but allowed him to return to Coronado to carry out what became a “back to basics” initiative designed to anchor the teams to Navy standards for discipline, grooming and accountability.

In California, Green “unleashed a toxic plan” through “his own series of meetings where he yelled at subordinates as he scrambled to save his career,” according to the complaint.

Whipping him along was Richardson, who allegedly made multiple angry calls to Green to fix Naval Special Warfare, “putting immense pressure on him,” the filing states.

During at least one of Green’s sessions with subordinates, he allegedly “admitted that one of the unlawful driving factors in deciding to fire CDR Mason and CMC Spangler was that they had each already decided to retire with honor and dignity,” according to the filing.

But “Green’s transparent conduct backfired and undermined his own integrity” and officers and their SEALs “know what happened and they know who is to blame” and they’ve “lost confidence” in Green partly because he engages in “leadership by tirade,” Sullivan wrote.

The complaint paints a different picture of high ranking brass in Iraq who allegedly backed Mason and Spangler while Green moved to relieve them, including Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve Lt. Gen. Paul Joseph LaCamera.

On July 31, LaCamera told SEAL Team 7’s leaders that he had their “complete trust and confidence,” despite the Foxtrot Platoon problems, and that comment became an electronic Situation Report — sitrep — that made its way to Naval Special Warfare, according to the filing.

But that allegedly drew a rebuke from Green, who told the three-star that the remark failed to “fit his narrative,” the complaint states.

During a two-day mid-August visit to Mason’s command in western Iraq, Maj. Gen. Eric T. Hill, the commander of Special Operations Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve, allegedly echoed LaCamera by saying he remained “confident in their ability to lead the command.”

Support also allegedly came from an unnamed investigator in Iraq who had probed allegations of misconduct there. A portion of an email is included in the complaint which indicates he was “absolutely appalled and

disgusted that they did this to [CDR Mason] and CMC Spangler.”

“You did everything right,” it continues. “I guarantee you did far more than the other 99 percent of commanders SOF wide to ensure the correct ethical climate was established, and I stand 100 percent behind my recommendation that you and the CMC should not be held liable for the actions of a few sailors who willfully and maliciously acted in direct conflict with your orders.”

On the day Mason was relieved, he allegedly brought up “the outstanding support he received from his chain of command in Iraq following his relief from command,” but Green brushed off their assessments by saying “they are only tactical,” according to the complaint.

The complaint states that Mason asked Green why he didn't take a call from Iraq that would "provide context and details regarding the situation," the Naval Special Warfare commander answered that he was "in charge of 10,000 people and can't dive into every situation."

The complaint accuses Green of failing to understand key aspects of SEAL deployments, including how a Special Reconnaissance Team trains before an upcoming tour.

That's important because Green took Mason and Spangler to task for problems apparently uncovered with Coronado-based Special Reconnaissance Team 1, according to the filing.

The complaint reveals concerns that Special Reconnaissance Team 1 had not worn military uniforms in two years and Mason also directed them to shave their beards because "there was no compelling reason for them to have facial hair."

Some Special Reconnaissance Team 1 members also allegedly conducted operations off base without Mason's approval, sparking "shocking" results from an internal probe and a crackdown by the SEAL Team 7 leader, according to the complaint.

Navy officials declined comment.

## **China is preparing to show off some incredible weaponry. Here's what it could be**

***Brad Lendon, CNN, September 26***

**HONG KONG** -- Powerful, domestically-built and in the People's Liberation Army arsenal right now -- China is expected to show off some of the most advanced weaponry the world has ever seen during a special National Day military parade in Beijing on Tuesday, October 1.

About 15,000 personnel, more than 160 aircraft and 580 pieces of weaponry and equipment will be part of the 80-minute procession through the Chinese capital, which will highlight the country's military advances in the 70 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China.

Key among those is drone technology -- of which Beijing boasts some of the world's best -- and advanced missile systems.

Maj. Gen. Tan Min, executive deputy director of the Military Parade Joint Command Office and deputy chief of staff of the Central Theater Command of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), said at a press briefing this week that all weapons to be on display were in service and made in China, highlighting the country's ability to innovate in defense research and development.

Here are some of the key items to look out for Tuesday.

### **DF-41 missile**

Much of the parade hype has focused on this powerful intercontinental-range ballistic missile, thought to be the mainstay of the People's Liberation Army Rocket Forces (PLARF) arsenal for years to come -- and, by some estimations, the most powerful missile on the planet.

Under development since 1997, the DF-41 was rumored to appear in parades in 2015 and 2017, but instead was kept under wraps.

Rumors that it will get a showing this around were sent into overdrive following reports in China's state media that the missile was spotted during parade rehearsals in Beijing earlier this month.

The Missile Defense Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies says the DF-41 will have a range of up to 9,320 miles (15,000 kilometers), more than any missile on Earth, and will be capable of carrying 10

independently targeted nuclear warheads. From launch in China, it could theoretically hit the continental United States in 30 minutes, the Missile Defense Project says.

Mobile-launched DF-41s can be carried by trucks and trains. Satellite photos taken earlier this year showed DF-41 mobile launchers in the PLARF Jilintal training area in Inner Mongolia, according to the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), which monitors world nuclear arms developments.

Those satellite photos also show what "strongly resembles" a silo, according to Hans Kristensen, director of the Nuclear Information Project at the FAS, who analyzed the images.

Kristensen wrote the possible missile silos appeared to bear more of a resemblance to Russian ICBM versions than existing silos for older, liquid-fueled Chinese ICBMs. The DF-41 is solid-fueled, like the Russian missiles. Solid-fueled missiles are easier to deploy and quicker to launch than liquid versions.

The backbone of the United States nuclear arsenal, the Minuteman III missile, is a solid-fueled, silo-based weapon. However, it carries only one warhead, as its original three-warhead design was limited by nuclear treaties with Russia.

China may be ready to deploy the DF-41 in numbers. At least 18 of them appeared to be at the Inner Mongolia training ground in satellite photos earlier this year.

Though capable of carrying 10 warheads, it is likely only three would be on each missile, with the rest being dummy or decoy warheads, according to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (BAS).

Part of that has to do with warhead availability. China's nuclear warhead inventory is estimated at 290 for use on ballistic missiles and bomber aircraft, the Bulletin said in its 2019 report on Beijing's nuclear forces.

#### JL-2 submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM)

This is the main weapon aboard China's Jin-class fleet of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines. Four of the subs are in service, with two more under construction.

Each sub can carry 12 of the single-warhead JL-2 missiles. With an estimated range of 4,473 miles (7,200 kilometers), it is regarded as more of a regional than global weapon.

That range puts targets from India to Alaska in range from coastal Chinese waters, the BAS report says. But for it to threaten the continental US, for instance, the subs would have to get past formidable US anti-submarine choke-points around Japan and deep into the Pacific.

A longer-range SLBM, the JL-3, was reportedly tested in late 2018 and again in June this year, according to Jane's Defence Weekly, but that missile remains in development and it would be a surprise to see it on October 1.

Still, the Chinese SLBM force falls short of the US. The US Navy's Ohio-class ballistic submarine fleet numbers 14, with each of those subs capable of carrying 20 Trident missiles. Each of those missiles can carry up to 10 warheads.

#### DL-17

This is an example of a hypersonic glide vehicle, or HGV. It is launched via a standard missile rocket -- but after reaching the desired altitude, the booster rocket is jettisoned and the HGV carries the missile payload to target.

HGVs can fly low and fast -- at least five times the speed of sound, or 3,800 mph (6,115 kph), according to the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance -- with maneuverability to avoid enemy radar detection and air defenses.

China has been testing HGV technology since 2014 and is expected to deploy it in 2020, according to the Missile Defense Project. The DF-17 will be capable of carrying both nuclear and conventional warheads, it added.

A Congressional Research Service report from September 17 notes that the US trails China -- and Russia -- in hypersonic development and is not expected to have an operational weapon before 2022.

The US is also not expected to have a an HGV with nuclear capability, the CRS says. "As a result, US hypersonic weapons will likely require greater accuracy and will be more technically challenging to develop than nuclear-armed Chinese and Russian systems," the report adds.

#### H-6N bomber

The H-6 has been Beijing's core long-range bomber for years, but images taken during flyover rehearsals for Tuesday's parade show what could be a significant upgrade.

Photos posted on social media sites in China -- which have been popping up on Western sites -- show what appear to be points to mount large missiles.

These could be DF-21 anti-ship ballistic missiles, according to Joseph Trevethick, writing on the War Zone blog.

The ability to carry the DF-21 would give the bomber "an impressive stand-off capability against large enemy warships, especially aircraft carriers," Trevethick said.

Jane's Defense Weekly noted another update on the H-6N over its predecessor, the H-6K -- a nose-mounted probe for aerial refueling. That gives the bomber the ability to fly deeper into the Pacific from the Chinese mainland.

Combined, the two developments mean US aircraft carriers would need to stay further out to sea during conflict and their aircraft, predominantly F/A-18 jets, would have more difficulty reaching targets.

#### DR-8 drone

This stealthy drone is drawing lots of attention leading up to the parade, much of that due to its sleek shape and supersonic speed.

Thought to be able to fly up to five times the speed of sound, the main mission of the DR-8 could be to get close to foreign aircraft carriers during conflict and send targeting information back to missile launchers, reports say.

Some analysts note that satellite images of what is believed to be the DR-8, as well as tarp-covered objects seen in parade rehearsals, resemble the US military's D-21 supersonic reconnaissance drone, which was introduced in the 1960s.

The D-21 would self-destruct after dropping its high-resolution camera payload into friendly hands. The program was canceled in 1971 after four of the aircraft were lost in missions over ... China.

#### Sharp Sword drone

China military watchers have been tweeting images of what they speculate is the Sharp Sword, a bat wing-shaped drone designed for use from aircraft carriers.

The drone is thought to have two internal bomb bays and its stealthy design indicates it's built for a new type of drone warfare, says analyst Sam Roggeveen, writing on the Lowy Institute's Interpreter blog.

"What makes Sharp Sword different ... is that it is stealthy, which means it is built not for Afghanistan-type scenarios, where the enemy is equipped with little more than rifles, but for situations where it might have to evade sophisticated air defenses," Roggeveen says.

The Sharp Sword was first tested in 2013, and an appearance in the October 1 parade could signal that it's close to deployment.

Other countries, including the US, have been developing drones to use off carriers. The US Navy's MQ-25 Stingray has just started flight tests with an eye to deployment in 2024 as an aerial tanker.

Drone submarine

Images have appeared online of what looks like a large torpedo on the flat bed of a truck.

The state-sanctioned Global Times noted its appearance in rehearsals, adding: "More mysterious was an image of a large autonomous underwater vehicle. Its mission remains unknown."

This could be one of China's first undersea drones. A 2015 report from the Rand Corp. think tank said the Beijing government, relying mainly on military funding, had set up at least 15 research teams at universities and institutes to develop technology for unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs).

Tanks

Images have surfaced of Type 99 main battle tanks and Type 15 light tanks during parade rehearsals.

A story on the PLA's English website notes the parade would mark the public debut of the Type 15.

It also noted a change in the Type 99s, desert camouflage, which was "delighting enthusiasts who recalled the jungle look of previous parades."

There was no indication as to why the camouflage scheme was changed, but it prompted speculation about whether China sees a new mission for its ground forces.

## **Satellite images suggest North Korea working to hide launch of missile submarine'**

*Jamie Crawford, Zachary Cohen, CNN.com, September 23*

**LASHKARGAH, Afghanistan** -- Hundreds of Afghans marched on Tuesday in protest against the deaths of at least 40 wedding party guests who were caught in the crossfire of a clash between U.S.-backed government forces and Islamist militants.

With presidential elections due this coming Saturday, the killings and the many more before them threaten to alienate Afghanistan's people from elites in the capital Kabul.

"The government is busy with its election campaigns, they have no plan for the protection of the people and that

is why civilians get killed and bombed every day," said Mullah Amir Mohammad Akhundzada, a tribal elder who took part in the demonstration in Lashkargah, the capital of Helmand province.

"In such a situation people will boycott the elections and nobody will vote," he said.

Civilians have paid a heavy price in a war that has intensified since U.S.-Taliban peace talks collapsed two weeks ago. The wedding deaths occurred days after a U.S. drone strike killed 32 pine nut harvesters but which officials said was aimed at militants.

On Sunday night, members of the wedding party were caught in the crossfire of explosions and bullets during a U.S.-backed Afghan government force raid on a nearby Islamist hideout, officials in Helmand said.

Tuesday's marchers demanded an investigation into the deaths and justice for the victims.

Though the protest was peaceful as it wound through the city's main bazaar, anger was palpable as demonstrators chanted a call for death to the civilians' killers, a Reuters reporter said.

Some said civilians had been deliberately targeted, others expressed fatigue at the frequency of such events.



"These incidents happen in every corner of the country every day, yet there is no responsible agency to ask to investigate them," said Abdul Wali.

Last week President Ashraf Ghani promised measures to reduce civilian casualties. On Monday, he called for "extra caution" in military operations and ordered investigations.

## THE RAID

It was not immediately clear who was responsible for each of the deaths.

Afghan officials said a house being used by the Taliban to train suicide bombers was located next to the bride's home that came under fire during Sunday night's commando assault in the Musa Qala area of Helmand.

Colonel Sonny Leggett, a spokesman for U.S. forces in Afghanistan, said on Monday most of these killed were struck by the gunfire of militants or from detonations of their explosives caches or suicide vests.

A Taliban spokesman said the U.S. and government forces killed the wedding guests.

On Tuesday, Afghanistan's intelligence service said that Afghan forces killed six al Qaeda and 17 Taliban members and arrested 14 others.

Among the captured were five Pakistanis and a Bangladeshi national, the defence ministry said separately.

When U.S. President Donald Trump's tweet two weeks ago abruptly ended Washington's peace talks with the Taliban, the hopes of many Afghans after almost 18 years of war were shattered. They fear the war will not end and civilians will continue to be killed.

"People have no option but to stand against these incidents and those who oppose peace," said Wali, the marcher. "Peace is our priority and the warring sides should listen to the people."

--Reporting by Mohammed Stanekzai in Lashkargah, Abdul Qadir Sediqi and Rupam Jain in Kabul

## **China launches amphibious assault ship, giving a big boost to its coastal warfare capabilities**

***Brad Lendon, CNN.com, September 26***

China's ability to fight island and coastal conflicts got a big boost Wednesday when the country's navy launched its first amphibious assault ship.

The massive ship, which was floated at a shipyard in Shanghai, is the first in China's Type 075 class of amphibious assault ships, according to the People's Liberation Army's English language website.

Analysts said the launch is yet another indication of the growing power of the Chinese fleet.

"It highlights China's growing maritime power projection and the expansion of its amphibious warfare ambitions and forces," said Carl Schuster, a former United States Navy captain and Hawaii Pacific University instructor.

Amphibious assault ships -- sometimes called helicopter landing docks -- can be described as small aircraft carriers designed for island or coastal assaults.

China provided no details of the size and capabilities of the new ship.

But, in general, the flat-topped ships have the ability to carry dozens of aircraft -- helicopters in the case of the Type 075 -- along with hundreds of ground troops, their vehicles and equipment. The ships have internal docks that allow those troops to load into smaller vessels to be carried ashore.

"The Type 075 gives them not only a significant increase in assault lift, but also provides their Marine Corps with a vertical assault dimension and air mobile force projection capability," Schuster said.

The US and Japanese navies also operate amphibious assault ships in the Pacific.

The USS Wasp was just left the region this month after more than 18 months operating out of Japan. It will be replaced by the newer and slightly larger USS America later this year, according to a US Navy release.

Japan has two Izumo-class helicopter destroyers, which function much like amphibious assault ships.

The US ships can carry fighter jets, the short-takeoff and vertical landing capable F-35B. Japan also plans to give its ships the ability to carry the F-35Bs.

China, however, does not yet have an aircraft with the vertical landing capability of the F-35B.

But Schuster said it's likely that such a jet is in the works and the Type 075 has the size to accommodate it.

In announcing the launch of its new amphibious assault ship on Wednesday, the Chinese military noted the ship still has some work to do before it's commissioned into the active fleet.

"In the next phase, engineers will start outfitting and fine-tuning the vessel's equipment and then conduct mooring tests and sea trials," the Chinese military said.

But even with that, analysts noted the frenetic pace of Chinese naval shipbuilding. The ship launched just five months after pictures of its keel under construction were seen, wrote Joseph Trevithick and Tyler Rogoway on the The War Zone blog.

"The speed with which the Chinese have been able to execute its construction is as impressive as the ship's size," they wrote.

The US Department of Defense, in its annual report for Congress on the state of China's military released in May, noted that China was the world's top shipbuilding nation.

It has been churning out advanced destroyers and submarines, and it has one domestically built aircraft carrier in sea trials and another under construction.

The US Defense Department report noted that the new Type 075 will join a fleet of eight smaller Type 071 amphibious transport docks. Those ships have limited flight deck and handle only about four helicopters, according to the report.

It also noted how China was improving and refining amphibious warfare capabilities as well as bulking up its marine corps.

Schuster said he expects China to eventually build three of the Type 075s with them conducting exercises and showing the Chinese flag into the Indian Ocean to Africa and possibly the Mediterranean.

## **North Korea continues to build new ballistic missile submarine – 38 North**

***Not Attributed, Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), September 26***

**WASHINGTON** -- North Korea has continued to build a new ballistic missile submarine at its Sinpo shipyard, a U.S. monitor said Thursday, citing recent commercial satellite imagery.

38 North, which monitors activities inside the North Korean regime, said satellite imagery of the shipyard from Aug. 26 and Sept. 23 showed the movement of parts and equipment near the construction hall, indicating construction has continued since North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's reported visit to the site in late July.

However, the type of submarine under construction and whether it is nearing completion remain unclear, the monitor added on its website.

Photos of Kim's visit to the shipyard suggested the submarine he inspected was a modified Soviet ROMEO-class conventional submarine, not the SINPO-C class ballistic missile submarine widely believed to be under construction, it said.

Preparations for a preliminary test could also be seen.

"The presence of a cylindrical canister and support vehicles near the submersible test barge berthed at the secure boat basin strongly indicates that preparations are underway for the testing of a dummy round from its missile launch ejection system," the monitor said. "This test is routinely done prior to actual missile launches, to ensure that the missile can be ejected at the proper speed and angle before committing to ejection and launch from the submarine."

Meanwhile, analysis of the imagery produced measurements consistent with a missile launch canister for the Pukguksong-1 (KN-11) submarine-launched ballistic missile.

The Pukguksong-1 missile is believed to be 8.6 meters long and 1.5 meters in diameter, according to 38 North.

## **As North Korea expands arsenal, Japan's missile defense shield faces unforeseen costs – sources**

*Tim Kelly, Reuters, September 27*

**TOKYO** -- Additional tests may add at least \$500 million to Japan's price tag for two U.S.-built ballistic missile interceptor stations that could struggle to shoot down the latest North Korean missile types, four government and defense sources said.

The tests are required to show the system is working properly, according to Lockheed Martin, the manufacturer. Held in Hawaii rather than Japan, they would cost about \$100 million per launch.

"Japan is waiting to hear back from the U.S. Missile Defense Agency about what tests will be required," said one of the sources. "Those tests haven't been budgeted for."

As part of a major defense upgrade, Japan in 2018 agreed to buy the land-based Aegis Ashore sites offered by Washington, rejecting a new U.S. Navy radar offered by Raytheon Co in favor of one designed by rival Lockheed Martin Corp.

The Japanese defense minister at the time, Itsunori Onodera, did not know Japan would also have to pay for missile launches to test the Lockheed radar, the sources said. One of the defense sources said the Japanese government had thought computer-simulated tests would be sufficient.

All four asked not to be identified because they are not authorized to talk to the media.

An official at Onodera's parliamentary office declined a request to interview the senior ruling party lawmaker about the issue. It is unclear whether other Japanese officials knew about the tests.

"That topic would have been addressed in government-to-government discussions," said Lockheed Martin spokeswoman Mona Neuhass. "Regardless of the radar selected, a live fire test will be required to verify the fire-control loop."

Japan's Ministry of Defense said it had no immediate comment.

The Japanese government, among the top three foreign buyers of U.S. military hardware for the past three years, must now explain additional spending on a multibillion-dollar project.

The contract for the Aegis Ashore systems has not yet been signed. The systems are scheduled to be operational by 2024.

"It may be an opportunity for Japan to rethink Aegis Ashore in favor of integrated air missile defense," said one of the sources, who is familiar with Japan's military planning.

Integrated air missile defense (IAMD) is a broader approach to defense, with multiple components to counter threats ranging from warheads plunging from space to lower-altitude attacks such as cruise missiles.

This year, North Korea tested ballistic missiles whose warheads appeared to maneuver in flight, making them harder to shoot down.

Lockheed Martin referred requests to comment on new North Korean missiles to Japan's Ministry of Defense and the Missile Defense Agency.

So far Japan has budgeted \$1.2 billion for Aegis Ashore hardware but expects other costs, including construction, maintenance and operational expenses over three decades to put the final tally for two sites at \$4.31 billion.

Hiranao Honda, a lawmaker with the opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan and director of its security division, said the additional costs showed the program should be shut down.

"There are a series of costs that have yet to be budgeted for, such as construction, and we still have to pay for the missiles. There has not been an adequate explanation from the government," said Honda, who has requested more details from the defense ministry on Aegis Ashore costs.

He noted that Japan already had eight warships with a similar but less-capable Aegis system that can attack incoming missiles.

## ALARM

A recent series of short-range missile tests by Pyongyang, which U.S. President Donald Trump dismissed as unimportant, have prompted alarm in Japan.

Former defense chief Takeshi Iwaya said last month that those launches appeared to test new missiles with irregular trajectories designed to penetrate ballistic missile defenses, including the Aegis Ashore stations. Typically, such defense systems are designed to counter projectiles on predictable flight paths.

Both Lockheed Martin's Solid-State Radar and Raytheon's SPY-6, which the U.S. Navy is putting in its latest Aegis-equipped ships, promise a major boost to Aegis's ability to detect and hit incoming targets.

Japan will also have to buy interceptor missiles along with the radar. The latest missile for the Aegis system, the SM-3 Block IIA, jointly developed by Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Raytheon, cost about \$30 million each.

Using some of those missiles for tests would add to the cost of setting up the system, as would paying for targets that mimic incoming warheads.

## TESTS OVERSEAS

Holding those tests in Japan could crank up tensions in East Asia, so Tokyo would conduct them at a more isolated test site in Hawaii, according to three of the sources.

Japan would have to pay for a temporary Aegis Ashore site there as well as interceptors, including the pricey Block IIA, which would be destroyed in any test.

Aside from personnel and target missiles, Japan would also pay for an exclusion zone to keep commercial shipping and aircraft away from the tests.

One test could cost about \$100 million, according to one of the sources, who has knowledge of past tests conducted by the United States in Hawaii.

Configuring Aegis Ashore to fire other interceptors that could target newer North Korean would require additional tests, he added.

## **U.S., Saudis Look for Iran Link to Attack**

***Not Attributed, Wall Street Journal, September 23***

**BEIRUT** -- Weapons experts are inspecting GPS systems recovered from the Sept. 14 missile and drone strike on Saudi Arabian oil facilities for evidence that could reveal their origin and flight path, people familiar with the investigation said.

Officials in Riyadh and Washington have blamed Iran for the attacks and are searching for "smoking gun" evidence. They say they can't galvanize world support for their view unless they can draw a clear link back to Tehran, which has denied any role in the attacks.

The GPS systems could allow investigators to trace the drones and missiles back to their runways and launchers, which Saudi and American officials believe were in Iran. Inspectors from around the world -- including the U.S., France and the United Nations -- are scrutinizing pieces of the weapons from the attacks, which temporarily knocked out half of Saudi oil production and rattled the global economy.

The GPS examination is part of a more expansive investigation that includes efforts to trace serial numbers of the weapons used in the attacks back to their origin. The probe is going forward as Washington and Riyadh weigh a response to the attack.

The U.S. is deploying more troops and military firepower to the Middle East after the attack, which Saudi officials are privately calling their 9/11, believing Iran has crossed a red line.

But some countries, including European allies, are waiting to see more evidence before they can determine whether Iran launched the attacks, slowing down any movement toward a retaliatory response.

President Trump is hoping to use this week's U.N. General Assembly gathering in New York to build an international coalition to pressure Iran. He will be accompanied at the U.N. by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who has been calling U.S. allies and traveling to the Middle East to build support for a unified response to the attacks.

Before the attack, diplomats from around the world had been working to pave the way for a potential meeting between Mr. Trump and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani at this week's U.N. meeting. But the strikes upended the efforts, and both Washington and Tehran say the two leaders are unlikely to meet.

"Nothing is ever off the table but I have no intention of meeting with Iran," Mr. Trump said on Sunday.

Iranian-aligned Houthi rebels in Yemen claimed responsibility for the attacks. Iran has been steadfast in its denials of involvement, saying the attacks were carried out by the militants as retaliation for Saudi airstrikes that have killed civilians. The civil war in Yemen has triggered the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

"Those who want to attribute the region's incidents to the Islamic Republic, it is like all their disclosed lies," Mr. Rouhani said on Sunday. "If you are honest and really seek security for the region, they should not send this many weapons, planes, bombs and dangerous arms."

U.S. and Saudi officials have dismissed the Houthi claim as a transparent attempt to conceal the role hidden by Iran in orchestrating the airstrikes.

While European officials have been wary of blaming Iran, some have said in recent days that the Houthi claims of responsibility aren't believable.

U.S. and Saudi officials say they have strong circumstantial evidence linking Iran to the attack. The drones and cruise missiles appear to be of Iranian origin, they said. U.S. officials said there was suspicious movement at an Iranian base in southwestern Iran shortly before the attacks. And Houthi forces have never used the kinds of drones deployed in the attack, Saudi officials have said.

Saudi and American officials recognize that they may need to find a "smoking gun" before wary allies will accept their conclusions that Iran staged the attack.

That is why investigators are focused on the GPS systems recovered from the attack sites. The systems should include information that would allow weapons inspectors to trace the missiles and drone routes back to their origin.

## **Iran's foreign minister 'not confident' his country and the U.S. can avert war**

***Camilo Montoya-Galvez, CBS News, September 22***

As tensions between Tehran and Washington reach a boiling point over U.S. accusations that Iran was behind a high-profile attack on Saudi oil fields last week, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said he was not confident his country and the U.S. could avert a full-blown conflict.

"No, I'm not confident that we can avoid a war," Zarif said on "Face the Nation" Sunday. "I'm confident that we will not start one but I'm confident that whoever starts one will not be the one who finishes it."

Asked to clarify his seemingly ominous statement, Zarif said any potential conflict between the U.S. and Iran would not be a "limited" one.

Last week's early morning attacks on oil processing plants in Saudi Arabia represent the latest flash-point in more than 40 years of geopolitical enmity between Iran and the U.S. that began after the American-backed monarchy fell in 1979.

The strained relationship had entered a period of relative stability under the Obama administration, which partnered with other world powers to broker a deal to reduce Iran's medium-enriched uranium stockpile in exchange for lifting economic sanctions, but it has worsened since Mr. Trump took office. In May 2018, the president withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear accord, deriding it as a one-sided deal.

Since then, the Trump administration has imposed crippling economic sanctions on Iran and accused the regime of being behind several aggressive actions in the region, including attacks on international oil tankers and the downing of a U.S. Navy drone.

Top U.S. officials like Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have publicly blamed Iran for the oil plant attacks. After days of considering options to respond, Mr. Trump on Friday ordered the deployment of additional troops and missile systems to both the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

But during his interview on "Face the Nation," Zarif denied any Iranian involvement in the attacks, saying the country's supreme leader would have had to order such an operation, and he did not. He accused the Trump administration of "posturing" by sending more troops to the region, which he said would benefit from an end to the Saudi-led military intervention in war-torn Yemen.

Zarif suggested his government would be open to allowing a team of international investigators to probe the attacks and determine the culprit. But he said they needed to be "impartial."

"Let them do that because it would take a miracle for them to claim that, because it didn't come from Iran. Period," Zarif said.



# U.S. launches strike in southern Libya as UN warns of escalation

*Aidan Lewis, Reuters, September 25*

**CAIRO** -- U.S. forces said on Wednesday they killed 11 suspected militants in their second air strike in a week near the southern Libyan town of Murzuq, as the U.N. envoy warned of a growing risk of armed escalation and rights abuses in the country.

The strike comes as rival factions have been locked in a battle around the capital Tripoli, about 500 miles (800km) to the north, which forces loyal to eastern-based commander Khalifa Haftar have been trying to capture since April.

The U.S. attack, carried out on Tuesday deep in Libya's southern desert, followed a Sept. 19 strike that the U.S. said had killed eight suspected militants.

"This air strike was conducted to eliminate ISIS (Islamic State) terrorists and deny them the ability to conduct attacks on the Libyan people," Major General William Gayler, director of operations for U.S. Africa Command, said in a statement.

Some Islamic State militants retreated south into Libya's desert as the group lost its stronghold in the coastal city of Sirte at the end of 2016.

The U.S., which has carried out occasional strikes in desert areas, has said it will not allow militants to use the fighting around Tripoli for cover.

The offensive on Tripoli by Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) upended U.N.-led plans to broker a political settlement in Libya and soon stalled in the capital's outskirts.

The conflict has spread outside Tripoli, with air and drone strikes against the port city of Misrata, Sirte, and Jufra in central Libya, U.N. Libya envoy Ghassan Salame told the U.N. Human Rights Council on Wednesday.

It had also triggered a "micro-conflict" in Murzuq, where more than 100 civilians are reported to have been killed over the past two months, he said.

"The conflict risks escalating to full-blown civil war," Salame said by video link. "It is fanned by widespread violations of the U.N. arms embargo by all parties and external actors."

"Serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law have been committed with total impunity, including increased summary executions, enforced disappearances, torture and ill-treatment as well as conflict-related sexual violence."

Libya has been divided between rival factions based in Tripoli and the east since 2014, three years after a NATO-backed uprising ended Muammar Gaddafi's four-decade rule.

Haftar's LNA is battling forces aligned with the Government of National Accord (GNA), which was set up in 2016 following a U.N.-brokered deal.

Haftar's foreign backers include the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, who diplomats and analysts say are vying for influence in the oil-rich nation with regional rivals Turkey and Qatar.

At least 128,000 people have been displaced by the fighting since April, according to U.N. estimates.

## **US, Polish presidents sign pact to boost American military presence in Poland**

***Jaroslav Adamowski , Defense News, September 24***

A Russian Navy vessel out on a science expedition was attacked and might have been sunk, not by an enemy ship, but by a walrus protecting her calves, officials say.

The joint expedition by Russia's Northern Fleet and Geographical Society was sailing in the Franz Josef Land archipelago in the Arctic Ocean last week when the incident occurred.

Russian military officials said in a statement that the vessel was attacked as researchers were making a landing at Cape Heller on Wilczek Land, an island on the archipelago.

"A group of researchers had to flee from a female walrus who attacked an expedition boat when protecting her cub," the Russian military statement reads, according to the Barents Observer, an English-language news site in the region.

The Russian Navy said "serious troubles were avoided" and that the crew was able to get away without harming the animals.

However, the Russian Geographical Society said the attack had one casualty: The landing boat.

"The boat sank, but the tragedy was avoided," the Geographical Society's statement reads, per the Barents Observer.

All crewmembers safely made it to the shore, the Geographical Society also said. The groups said the expedition continues.

According to a 2018 article on walrus interactions with humans published in the peer-reviewed journal *Ambio*, the animals have been known to be aggressive, especially if their calves are threatened.

## **A Walrus Attacked A Russian Navy Vessel In The Arctic Ocean, Officials Say**

***Ryan W. Miller, USA Today, September 19***

Maritime operations, missile tests, landing exercises: the Pentagon has been sharply stepping up its efforts to counter China's growing military power, seen increasingly as a threat.

On Friday an American warship approached the Paracel Islands, an island chain claimed by Beijing in the South China Sea, to affirm international "freedom of navigation" in the region.

The USS Wayne E. Meyer, a guided-missile destroyer, passed near the islands to contest Beijing's sweeping claims to the seas around the archipelago, which is also claimed by Taiwan and Vietnam.

The Chinese claim would block "innocent passage" by other countries' ships and is "not permitted by international law," a US Seventh Fleet spokeswoman, Commander Reann Mommsen, said.

Friday's was the sixth "freedom of navigation operation" - - or FONOPS in naval jargon -- this year, a clear acceleration in pace.

There were a total of eight in 2017 and 2018, and only six during the entire Obama presidency.

On Wednesday, the US Marine Corps announced it had conducted exercises on the Japanese islet of Tori Shima, hundreds of miles south of Tokyo, to practice landings on "hostile" shores and the seizure of landing strips.

The exercises were clearly designed to highlight the ability of the American military to invade a disputed island and establish a supply base for aerial operations.

"This type of raid gives the commanders in the Indo- Pacific region the ability to project power and conduct expeditionary operations in a potentially contested littoral environment," one of the officers in charge, Commander Anthony Cesaro, said in a statement.

Such a forthright description, coming from a Pentagon hardly known for unguarded talk, reflects the fresh impetus Defense Secretary Mark Esper has given to the US policy of "strategic rivalry" with China and Russia.

Esper, who chose Asia for his first overseas trip only weeks after being sworn in as Pentagon chief, has made clear that the US wants to rapidly deploy new missiles in Asia -- possibly within months -- to counter China's rising military power.

On Thursday, acting US army secretary Ryan McCarthy, speaking in a Senate confirmation hearing, defended the development of such new missiles.

He said the new medium-range conventional missiles Washington wants to develop -- now that the US is no longer constrained by the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, which the Trump administration abandoned last year -- would "change the geometry within Southeast Asia."

"If we can get the appropriate partnerships, expeditionary basing rights with partners within the region," McCarthy said, "we can change the geometry and basically reverse anti-access, area-denial capabilities that have been invested by near-peer competitors" -- jargon for pushing back against sovereignty claims by China and Russia.

Last month the Pentagon chose the Pacific Ocean for its first test of a conventional medium-range missile since the end of the Cold War -- effectively driving a nail into the coffin of the INF treaty, which banned the use of land-based missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers (310 to 3,400 miles).

And in late August, Washington formally established its Space Command, or Spacecom, a new unified command charged with ensuring US domination in space, where China has been increasingly active.

Beijing rattled US military officials in 2007 when it launched a missile that located and then destroyed a Chinese satellite, in a dramatic demonstration of China's growing ability to militarize space.



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