

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



The Silent Sentinel December 2019

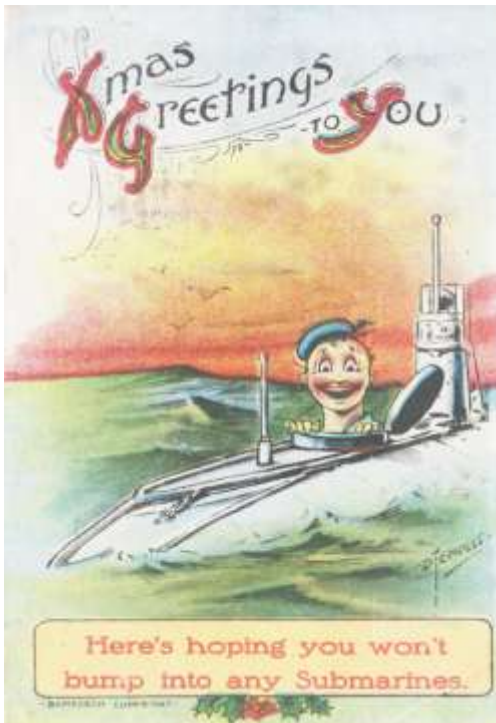


Our Creed and Purpose

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 in 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.



This edition of the Silent Sentinel is dedicated to my wife of 37 years, Hadara Hyman, who entered "Gan Eden" (Heaven) on "7 Kislev, 5780" (5 December, 2019). M. Hyman, Editor

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The Silent Sentinel via Email

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

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

NAME: _____

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EMAIL: _____

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Would like the SILENT SENTINEL emailed: YES _____ NO _____

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

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

December 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 *November 12th*. The post is located one-half block West of Mission Gorge Road, just north of I-8. The meeting begins at 7 p.m. The E-Board meets one hour earlier at 6 p.m.

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

Binnacle List

Len Heiselt, Sergio Frost, Bob Oberting, Joe Peluso and Tony Dack

Submarine Losses in December

Originally Compiled by C J Glassford



USS Capelin (SS-289)

Lost on Dec 2, 1943 with the loss of 76 men. She was on her 1st war patrol, but her exact location, date and cause of loss remain a mystery. She may have been lost to mines or an operational casualty.

USS Sealion (SS-195)

Lost on Dec 10, 1941 with the loss of 4 men. To prevent her from falling into enemy hands, she was scuttled in Manila Bay after incurring severe bomb damage during the initial Japanese attack. One other Sealion man was later captured and died in POW camp.

USS F-1 / Carp (SS-20)

Lost on December 17, 1917 with the loss of 19 officers and men when it was sunk after collision with the USS F-3 (Pickerel(SS-22)) off San Clemente, CA.

USS S-4 (SS-109)

Lost on December 17, 1927 with the loss of 40 officers and men when it was sunk after being rammed by USCG Paulding. Salvaged in 1928 and recommissioned.



*San Diego Base, United States Submarine Veterans Inc.
Minutes of Meeting - 12 November 2019
At VFW Hall, 4370 Twain Avenue, San Diego CA 92120*

1906 - Base Commander Warren Branges called the meeting to order.
Conducted Opening Exercises - Pledge of Allegiance lead by Chief of the Boat Bob Bissonnette.
Base Commander Warren Branges lead the opening prayer and gave an Eternal Patrol Report. TM1(SS)
Christopher J. Sultanta went on Eternal Patrol 27 October 2019. Chris qualified on USS Batfish (SSN-681)

in 1981. He also served on USS Guardfish (SSN-612). Interment will on Wednesday, 13 November 2019, 1300 hours at Miramar National Cemetery.

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

Senior Vice Commander Manny Burciaga recognized Past Commanders, dignitaries and guests

Base Secretary Jack Kane announced 21 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 October 2019 meeting were published in the Sentinel.

Base Commander Warren Branges called for Committee Reports

Binnacle List - Len Heiselt, Sergio Frost, Bob Oberting, Joe Peluso and Tony Dack are on Binnacle.

Parade Committee - Chairman Jack Kane. The next parade is Linda Vista on 25 April 2020. Maps and parade instructions will be distributed when received from the Parade Committee.

Membership Committee - Chairman Ray Febrache reported we have 238 members.

Scholarship Committee - Committee Chairman Paul Hitchcock. The start of the application cycle will be January 2020. Application deadline is 15 April 2020. Any member who sponsors a Scholarship Candidate is advised to review applications before submission. Any submission not meeting minimum criteria will be returned to the candidate without consideration.

Storekeeper - Chairman Paul Hitchcock. Calendars are on order and should be "in-hand" in a week to 10 days.

Breakfast Committee - Chairman Base Commander Warren Branges. The Next Breakfast is 29 December 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 7 December 2019. We will post flags at 0700 and retrieve them at 1630. Design for the new polished concrete markers is progressing. The prototype for polished dolphins was determined not viable. Dolphin insets on the new markers will be made of the same material as the current markers. A fund raising campaign will begin in early 2020 after marketing materials featuring the new markers becomes available.

Float Committee - Chairmanship open. No Report.

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

1919 - Presentations. Shipmate Russ Filbeck presented the memorial shadow box he made in honor of his cousin. Russ toured the museum in Manitowoc WI doing research for this project. His cousin's boat (USS COBIA SS245) is currently on display at the Manitowoc Maritime Museum. Twenty Eight submarines were built at the Manitowoc Shipbuilding Company during WWII. Next month Dean Hickman will give a presentation on the USS Mariano G. Vallejo (SSBN-658) sail Memorial.

1923- Base Commander called for a break. 50/50 Raffle held. The winner donated part of the proceeds the Scholarship Fund.

1940 - 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 December (or later).

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 or early next year.

WREATH LAYING AT 52 BOATS. The Wreath Laying will take place on 6 December 2019 at 0900. 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. 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. We will still put out flags on 7 December.

December 7th Remembrance and Memorial Service. USS BONEFISH Base will host this service at the Veterans Amphitheater on the grounds of the Riverside National Cemetery. 22495 Van Buren Blvd, Riverside, CA 92518. The ceremony will begin at 1000.

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. The Elks Club in El Cajon has not answered our inquiries. Using the facilities at Spring Valley VFW and/or La Mesa American Legion would require us to change our meeting day and time. The Committee will look for other alternatives.

LIVE STREAMING OF OUR MEETINGS. The COB is looking into equipment/platforms/services to be able to stream the meetings on the Internet. Past Base Commander Fred Fomby will find out which USSVI Bases use Live Streaming and ask them for some insight. The Base Secretary reported on the feasibility of using Facebook as a platform.

ANNUAL DUES are currently due. Please pay the Membership Chairman or the Base Commander.

1958 - NEW BUSINESS

THE BASE COMMANDER forwarded an invitation from Terry Ulmer for the Base to hold a meeting at Terry's Facility in Alpine. Discussion was entered and it was decided to move forward with plans for a spring meeting in Alpine.

2000 - Good of the Order

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

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

The 2022 National Convention - will be in Buffalo NY

SILENT SERVICE TV SHOW is available at olgoat.com

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

MEETING ATTENDANCE. A discussion was held on how to increase attendance. Special Recognition was afforded Charlie Tate for being able to attend at 97 years young.

TREASURER MIKE COSGROVE mentioned the Submarine Reef Project currently underway in Sarasota FL. Each submarine lost in WWII will be represented by a coral reef in the Gulf of Mexico just off Sarasota.

SHIPMATE BOB FARRELL related his recent experience seeing the movie MIDWAY.

COB BOB BISSONNETTE offered to take small memorabilia to Ice Camp this year. See Bob for details.

The Meeting was adjourned at 2005.

/s/ **Jack E. Kane**

Jack Kane, Secretary

Sailing List for 12 November 2019

Members

Matt Baumann
Bob Bissonnette
Warren Branges
Manny Burciaga
Kip Casper
Mike Cosgrove
Nicholas Dirckx
Bill Earl

Joel Eikam
Ed Farley
Bob Farrell
Ray Febrache
Russ Filbeck
Rick Hausvik
Dean Hickman
Paul Hitchcock
Jack Kane

Peter Lary
Dennis Mortensen
William Pickering
Mert Weltzien

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 1 April, 1943: "The Rag" No. 15.

CHIEF PRIORITY A CHRISTMAS STORY



CHIEF MARKEL MY SUBMARINE SCHOOL INSTRUCTOR AT HIS HOME CHRISTMAS 1966

BY WAYNE T. NELSON

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I remember a special Christmas. Special because it encompassed the true meaning of Christmas giving. It was my first Christmas away from home. I was in the Navy and attending Submarine School in New London, Connecticut about 3000 miles from my family and home in Tucson, Arizona. The story begins this way.

It was late afternoon on a cool November 1st 1966 when I found myself at a small airport in Connecticut safe on the ground at last after a wild flight. I say this because earlier that morning I was saying goodbyes to my family in Tucson after having spent two weeks of leave with them following my boot camp training in San Diego. My last night in Tucson before boarding a jet for the east coast was Halloween. I remember it well because my sister Marian wore my white Navy jumper and sailor hat as her costume. I carried a photo of her made that night with me during my four years in the service.



My sister Marian Halloween 1966

The first part of the trip was smooth as we flew cross country above the clouds and weather. But the last leg of my trip was a bit much more than I thought it would be for you see my prior flight experience, all of two flights plus the earlier part of that's day's flight, were on BIG jet aircraft. But that all changed when I found out about the last part of the trip. The New York to New London part. It was a short flight but had I known more about the available modes of transportation I would not have boarded that little 2 engine propeller driven plane operated by Allegany Airlines! No! A bus or train would have been just fine! When it comes to planes at least for me, BIG IS BETTER!

For most of the flight I sat frozen in my seat as did most of the other 15-20 passengers. There was a good reason. When a big jet plane banks into a turn you barely notice it. Not so with the little Allegany plane! Shortly after takeoff the pilot took a breathtaking spin over lower Manhattan and I was in the window seat on the left banking side of the plane as it made a long sweeping turn to head north. The view of the downtown skyscrapers was fantastic through air that was perfectly clear that day and the buildings looked like you could just reach out and touch them like they were miniatures in a Hollywood movie set. It was an incredible experience and amazing to see. But for me, great view or not, I sat uneasy clinging with white knuckles to the armrests as I was pressed to the window and left side of the fuselage by the force of the nearly 45 degree angle and sharp turn the plane was in. A similar experience would be like being on a centrifugal motion carnival ride like the Tilt-a-Whirl. Well that was the highlight of the short flight..... A highlight I won't forget. But the low altitude flight also afforded beautiful views of the New England coast line and countryside and that is memorable as well.

So there I was in my dress blues with my sea bag thrown over my shoulder in a little airfield in Connecticut. I wouldn't call it an airport per say as it could only cater to small gas planes near as I could tell.

It was near dusk and there was a slight coolness in the early autumn air. I noticed that several of the passengers were catching cabs at the other end of the small parking lot and I went over there and I flagged one down for myself. I didn't need to report until the next day to sub school so I wanted to get a room for the night and check out the town. I told the cabbie my destination and off we roared. The cab ride from the rural airfield to downtown took only about 20 minutes.

New England in the fall, as I soon discovered, is incredibly beautiful with forests and groves of maples, oak and elm trees all ablaze in shades of reds, oranges and yellows. Simply post card perfect. The people of the area seemed to recognize the importance of trees as although there were plenty of homes and businesses and other buildings the trees dominated the landscape.

The port city of downtown New London was sort of cut out of the trees. The architecture styles of the little city was old and reminded me of my birth city of Racine, Wisconsin also a port city at the mouth of the Root River. Here they were Red brick buildings mostly that were perched on the hilly streets that lined the mouth and banks of the Thames River that cut through downtown New London and separated it from Groton which was on the airfield side of the river.

For a young underage sailor the quaint little town didn't have a lot to offer. It seems that in my mind everywhere the Navy took me I felt I would be picked up and laid by some lonely local female who had a thing for uniforms, particularly a sailor one with me in it. It always seemed to happen in the old 1940's musicals. You know, 3 sailors on liberty in the big city all get a girl by the end of the night! Or at least fight for the same one! But that is Hollywood not reality or at least my reality as it didn't happen for me that night. To be fair in my defense, one of the problems was that as I walked the sidewalks in the cold misty night air they were all but deserted. It is hard to meet someone in those conditions. But I can tell you it almost happened in San Francisco about 8 months later but I was in civilian clothes. Again to be fair New London was not San Francisco. Anyway still under aged to drink I was walking in downtown one night South of Market St. in the seedier area when a woman about 15 years my senior stumbled drunk out of a bar and fell into me. She was pretty looped. She was short against my 6 -5 frame but it appeared I was the nearest "leaning post" and she took hold of my arm and leaned into me. She was nice looking and pretty friendly, probably brought on by the booze. So for about 2 blocks or better she clung to me and about every other step we took her hips bounced off my left thigh. I probably should tell you although I had just turned 20 years of age I was still a virgin. She wanted to accompany me that night probably all the way to her bed. At least that was what I thought based on the continual hip bumping. But fate dealt me a blow or maybe it was just the fact that a drunk can't stand an empty glass, for suddenly, and much to my dismay, the woman pulled my arm and me toward the open door of a bar. She tried to get me in the door, but being a minor I didn't go in. I tried to tell her I was underage but her desire for liquor was greater at the time and she disappeared into the darkness behind a thick curtain that blocked the view inside from the sidewalk. Oh yes I have re-played in my mind that incident many times. At the very worst I could have been kicked out of the bar. Then there are the other possibilities.

So that evening in New London I mostly window shopped the quaint businesses and storefronts the city offered. I also for the first time in my life purchased some cigars. For some reason, part of being a man or something, I had wanted to for a long time. Now being in the Navy and fully making decisions on my own I guess I was ready. But I was a complete novice about the subject. For many years my dad smoked 2 packs of Pall Mall cigarettes a day. Then one day, about 3 years prior in 1963, he came home from work and said he was quitting smoking cigarettes and that was it. Cold Turkey as they say. And he never did smoke again. But during those smoking years he also smoked little cigars on occasion. Philly Cheroots or something in the cheap cigar class. For me that night I had no idea what style or brand to buy. So I bought a gift box of 25 Dutch Master Cigars which offered about 6 varieties. I had first heard of that brand on the Ernie Kovacks show a year or two earlier. Ernie and his wife Edie Adams made cigar smoking sound like a real cool thing to do and that name sort of stuck with me.

WARNING: CIGAR SMOKING ISN'T AN IMMEDIATE LOVE AFFAIR

I wasn't out the door of the shop a minute before I was lighting up my very first cigar. I didn't mess around with the smaller sizes and went right to the top and selected a huge "President" for my first smoke. After a few puffs I was starting to wonder why I was so anxious to smoke a cigar. I found the tobacco a bit too strong for me and I wasn't thrilled with the dizzy feeling I was getting. But like any disgusting nasty tasting adult "thing" you get used to and enjoy iteventually. That cigar in New London was the beginning of a more than 20 year Love affair for me with smoking cigars which I grew to enjoy very much.

After a good night's sleep in the old hotel and getting something to eat I took a cab inland about 7 miles along the Thames River to the Submarine base and checked in. I was assigned a bunk in the barracks and spent the rest of the day looking around the base. The next day I began my schooling and training in submarine operation that would keep me there until mid-February of 1967. There was a lot to learn.

It had always been a goal of mine from a very young age to be in the Navy. I used to have my mother drop in at the Navy recruiter in downtown Racine to pick me up recruit promo. I was fascinated with war ships with their big guns and with submarines. As a kid of about 9-10 I saw 2 submarines on Lake Michigan. One was tied up on the Root River in Racine and the other was on the Milwaukee River in Milwaukee. I had also seen the dry land submarine exhibits at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago on a school field trip in 1958. There is housed the famous captured German U-boat from World War 2.

Submarines hold an air of excitement and adventure just by their very existence. They are marvels of engineering and design in a small space. Then there is the illustrious history created by those men who have the guts to sail those steel cylinders that us veterans affectionately call "pig boats". We yell "Diesel Boats Forever" as our battle cry. Sub school bolstered my interest and appreciation for subs to even higher levels.

Being in the submarine service is entirely volunteer so I wasn't surprised to see several of my friends from boot camp who also signed up for subs in my class at sub school. Like in boot camp we chummed around together during our stay there. So all this talk about volunteering brings another point to mind.....Why did we volunteer for submarine duty? There are several reasons, but chief among them for most sub sailors is the extra

pay. That precedes the eventual love for the boats. Because subs are more dangerous than most surface ships the Navy offers extra pay called "hazardous duty pay" as an incentive to sail the boats.



The big deck gun on the sub school grounds and my friends

That being said I can tell you from my part how I came about to join the Navy and the U.S. Submarine Service. For the explanation we need to go back to my desire to join and why. For various reasons the "real reason" has never before been told. What I am about to relate is the truth.

In high school I was a "jock" and participated in 3 sports including football. My home was a "football nutty" place. Per my dad he had played semi-pro football back in Racine. I have no other details as for who or when. Guess I never asked him. We were raised in Green Bay Packer territory and played in the snow the year my brother and I got Babe Pirelli helmets and pads for Christmas. My brother Ray had played in high school and was now off playing Junior College ball. Well amidst this was me. I loved football and had hopes of playing college and possibly pro. Our team, the Tucson High Badgers won the Arizona state Championship in 1965 and we thought we were Gods. But I was a little constrictive as to my college choices and only wanted to play for the Wisconsin Badgers. When we left Racine in 1960 I had always wanted to return and maybe live there. Anyway my letter to Madison was answered and they wanted me to visit the campus and also send a game film of my best play which my coach did. Well I was pretty excited until the next letter came and suggested I go to a junior college first as this was the "Big Ten". Sort of covertly saying I wouldn't be able to cut it. Disappointed I fell back into my studies and one of these was architectural drawing. My teacher told me when he served in the Navy in WW2 his specialty was that of a Draftsman / Illustrator. I liked the idea and decided to look into it and went to the Navy Recruiter Office in downtown Tucson. I told my recruiter about my teacher and my desires in that field and how it would align with my plans to be an architect. (The next Frank Lloyd Wright) Anyway he assured me it would be NO problem and that at boot camp I should tell the rating (job placement) officers of my desires. The country was in the Vietnam War and it seemed like a good opportunity to serve my country and further my drafting career. So I signed up on a 90 day delay program that would see me in boot camp in July 1966.

In boot camp after a couple of weeks of marching and drilling the day finally came to decide our jobs for the rest of our naval careers. On that day I told the rating officer what my teacher and recruiter had said. I was instantly informed that the rate was not open and I would have to do something else. Did I hear it correctly? The job I dreamed and planned for was closed to me! This shocking news kind of crushed my spirit and I felt I had been tricked by my recruiter and I probably had been as their job is to sign up recruits. I guess it would be chaotic to give everyone the job they want and there are just so many desks to sit behind. I am being facetious here. Anyway it was too late to do anything about it. Of course I had not worked out an option plan and really didn't know what to do. So basically I had only a few minutes to make a choice. A choice that would formulate my naval career for the next 4 years as it turned out. What to do? I could think of only 2 choices, choices I'm sorry to say were based on what seemed like Romantic minded posts I saw in War movies. Gunner's mate and Torpedo man. What was I thinking? Of course about Battleships and Submarines like I did about 10 years earlier!

When I went back and told the rating officer my choices he thought about it a few minutes as he shuffled and looked over his papers and then asked how I felt about being an Engineman? As I considered the offer he briefly described the job and when he was done I said OK and that was that until later at the end boot camp when we got the results.

Also near the end of our boot camp training our company Chief announced that they were looking for recruits to volunteer for submarine service and he mentioned the special extra pay. That seemed to be a go button and quite a few signed up. But by the time the testing, physical exams and other quals were complete only 3 from our company qualified. For us it defined our future for our enlistments. Just before you leave boot camp and change your recruit rank patch you are informed of your actual rank and mine was Fireman Apprentice. In civilian or layman's terms I was part of engineering with no specific rate. That is the truth as to how and why I joined up. I might add a few weeks after I volunteered for the Navy that my draft notice came in the mail.

During the last week of boot camp you have Graduation and the next day is your first liberty day. My family was able to make the trip out and it was so good to see them after the over 3 month separation time. But being a man now and in the Navy there would be more and longer separations periods to come. We went to the wonderful San Diego Zoo that day and had a ball. Then it was back to the camp for the final issuing of orders and other processing and we were done and heading on.



Horsing around in the barracks. Author on left and buddy Doug right behind. I don't remember the names of the others.

RETURNING TO SUB SCHOOL.....

The classes were very interesting and fun as we trained in the basics of operating a SKIPJACK class fast attack nuclear submarine. As it turned out only a few of the class were assigned to a nuclear sub and most of us went to WW2 era Diesel Electric subs as I was. The USS Medregal SS-480, but that is later and months away.

November brought the first snows of the winter season and it started to look and feel like Christmas and everyone was getting into the holiday spirit. I like my friends and others were anticipating spending Christmas on the base and continuing our studies. Then sometime after Thanksgiving we were informed by our instructors that the school would be closed down for a 2 week Christmas vacation and classes would resume on January 2nd. Maybe a portion of a military base, like our school, closes but never the base which is open 24-7. So the Base Exchange, enlisted man's club, theater and galleys would be open as usual. But the good news was that the chow lines would be shorter.

I told you earlier about the cigar smoking first, well that Christmas season marked another first in my vice or nasty habit department.

In the evening after classes or on the weekends when we had no classes we would go to the base Enlisted man's Club. It was a spectacular modern building perched on a hillside on the outermost road on the base. The base itself was surrounded by forests on 3 sides with the river being the 4th side. From the cantilevered club balcony a beautiful picturesque view of the forests and entire base was afforded. Most Navy bases as well as other branches of the service have clubs for enlisted men, officers and for chiefs in the Navy. The clubs were great places to have a 1st class dinner at very affordable prices....let us say cheap. They also offered booze, music and dancing.

This part of the story features my introduction to beer.

It was a Friday night in early November when some of us went up to the club for the first time. Basically we didn't know it existed. Remember we arrived at the base on 2 November and started our studies. Being new we didn't consider a school would have a bar. But it was the Navy and also a submarine base not just a school. The point being there were thirsty sailors in the half dozen or so boats tied up at the waterfront.

Anyway our barracks was located about a half mile from the club and we walked to and from it. On this particular evening in question we had a pizza and as none of us were of age we were drinking soda. That was about to change.

The main part of the club was a large room that had several rows of long banquet tables and chairs, a dance area and a low stage for the band off in one corner. As most clubs go it was dimly lit and loud with what we now call oldies Rock n Roll but at the time it was current music or may be 10 years old meaning the mid-1950s. The place was packed with mostly drunken sailors, a few women and the live band was rocking.

As the story goes my friends and I were sitting at a crowded table and were nibbling at the last slice of pizza. My friends then went off to do something. Maybe get another pizza or pitcher of soda. Moments after their departure I was just finishing the last of my soda when a sailor across the table from me suddenly filled my glass with beer from a large glass pitcher exclaiming as he poured "I hate to see a sailor with an empty glass!". And so it began. I tried to explain to him I was underage but he made this point "If you are old enough to fight for your country.....you are old enough to drink beer!" I was 19 years 6 months old at the time and the drinking age in Connecticut and in most of the US was 21.

(As a note just down the coast in New York the drinking age was 18. I was told a lot of sailors and local high school kids from neighboring states headed down there on the weekends. But if it was just drinking you were interested in and not the "bright lights" of the city, just a mere 5 miles from New London was the ferry boat accessible Fisher's Island which was part of New York State. I only went back into New London another time during my stay but never to the island.)

So there I was with my first beer. I sipped at it at first and really didn't like the bitter taste, but after a while I took bigger drinks and then just downed the rest. For the next 3 hours or so that sailor kept my glass full and by the time I stepped from the club into the cool evening air I was pretty loaded and feeling really good, happy and laughing at everything. It was cold outside but the beer gave me an inner warmth and I remarked to my friends, who had rejoined me that I felt I was walking in the Jet stream. You know that stream of warm air that circulates around the World and sometimes creates warm temperatures in winter? Well, we got back to the barracks and I slept really sound that night. Many more party days would follow that 1st beer night and I started to like the taste more and more.



My classmates-buddies on the ice pond behind the barracks

One week from Christmas we had our last class. That afternoon the barracks were busy with my fellow classmates and others packing their bags and by 8pm the place was nearly deserted. I didn't have the money to go home so it looked like I would for the first time in my life be spending Christmas away from my home and family. As it turned out my two friends didn't go either and we spent the days before Christmas discovering what the base had to offer. We went to a lot of movies as they had special day time showings for the holidays. We also purchased several plastic submarine models from the base hobby shop and assembled them. My friend Doug who I met in boot camp thought it would be fun to burn his model. So we took it onto the iced over pond behind our barracks, doused it with lighter fluid and lit her up. After the flames and thick black smoke died out we return to find the model now a blob of melted gray plastic on the ice. I may have went for a firecracker exploding and blowing the model to pieces, but burning it seemed so boring and the black smoke was just not ok. My models went home with me in February.



Author with cigar and submarine models in the barracks

We were having a good time with our vacation but as the days grew closer to Christmas we started to progressively feel home sick for our families and by Christmas Eve we found ourselves in the dumps of sadness, loneliness and self-pity. We were a mess. On Christmas Eve, with the exception of my friends and I, there were maybe 3-4 others in the barracks and maybe the whole base for that matter for the school was closed and the base basically deserted. Only the guards and base security on watch were there. Other base personnel not on watch were home with family. If Christmas Eve was that bad, what did we have to look forward to on Christmas Day? Not to mention we had the concern that nothing would be open and we might have to go off base to eat.

You learn very early in life that above all else Christmas is for family. A time to share the joys of the holiday, good food, music, conversation and gift exchange with relatives and other groups and families. It all leaves you with a warm heart, a better understanding of others and memories to last a lifetime. So what memories would I take away from Christmas 1966?

That evening in the nearly empty and dead quiet barracks I feel asleep lonely and feeling sorry for myself. I felt that I was in the clutches of a Pre-Christmas Ebenezer Scrooge! You know before he sees the light. I was starting to get second thoughts of my decision to not go home. I probably could have got the money even if I had to borrow it. It seemed ok earlier that month but now it was all bad. Then I considered that I had just been home in October less than two months ago and I would be home again after graduating sub school in February. That was only a couple of months off. It really didn't seem like a big deal until the Christmas season actually started. With each new decoration or Christmas light that went up around the base a little piece of me at a time wanted to go home and be with my family and that Christmas Eve it reached 100%! But my opportunities had passed and it was too late. I had made my decision and now sadly I had to live with it and just to make matters worse it was snowing outside and it would be my first White Christmas since 1959 when we lived in Wisconsin. Occasionally during the winter months and even early spring in Tucson it would snow. Not every year mind you and never at Christmas. Temps in the 70's were more the norm on Christmas day.

But here it was Christmas Eve 1966 and gentle white puffs of snow were fluttering down outside my window. I fell asleep that night with tears in my eyes looking out the window at the developing winter landscape as the snow built up on the branches of the trees and on the roof tops of the surrounding service buildings.

The time between Christmas Eve and Christmas morning went fast. When I opened my eyes I was treated to a spectacular Winter Wonderland outside my second story window. Overnight it had snowed about 5-6 inches. It was still overcast and looked like more was on the way. I didn't get up right away. I just laid in my bunk and thought about what I was going to do that day. I knew I would have to eat for sure so I got dressed and was just about to leave for the galley when I heard someone walking down the barracks floor in my direction. When I looked into the aisle way I was happy and surprised to see my instructor Chief Markel. He saw me and greeted me with a hearty Santa like "Merry Christmas" and I returned the greeting with a smile as I felt better seeing someone on Christmas day. "Get your coat and hat! Your coming to my house for Christmas!" he informed me smiling. What a surprise! I wouldn't be alone on Christmas that year after all. He then asked me who else was around the barracks and I told him about my friends on the first floor as I was the only one on the 2nd.

After rounding up those guys we all piled into the Chief's van and left the base and headed out into the city. As we rode to his house he told us he did this every year as there were always a few students who didn't go home for Christmas in his class. It was a "Chief Priority" of his to make sure no one missed out on Christmas.

It was a very kind and unselfish act and one that captured the true meaning of Christmas giving. Especially for me and my homesick friends. The Chief's home was a modest single story dwelling. It was decorated with strings of colored lights on the eaves and around the doors and windows. Inside it was warm and rich with the traditional smells of Christmas. The turkey cooking in the oven, fresh baked pies and the scent of a freshly cut Christmas tree. It could have been my home or just about anyone's home on Christmas day but on this day it was Chief Markel's. In the corner of the large living room was a fully decorated tree with open presents underneath. The Chief's young children, 2 boys, were playing on the floor with their brand new car racing set, his lovely wife was busy in the kitchen preparing the dinner and his big yellow dog was running back and forth between both rooms.

After we were introduced to his family the Chief had us make ourselves comfortable in the living room and he grabbed one of race track controllers and started to race one of the cars with his son.

As we waited for Christmas dinner I had a few beers, snacked on chips and dips, took my turn at racing the Chief and the Chief's sons and generally just enjoyed the company and the joys of Christmas with friends. It was a Special Christmas that year, one I will never forget. It was rich with friendship and generosity. I think the Chief and his family felt they were just sharing their Christmas with those who had none. But it was more than that for me and probably for the others.

Our lives and up bringing teach us we should never be alone at Christmas. The emotional pain of being alone is too much to handle at that time of the year. Many others recognize that fact and open their hearts to others. Be it family, friends, total strangers or 3 lonely students at submarine school.

Maybe they fear becoming a Jacob Marley after death that sparks acts of generosity this time of the year. Maybe, but I think it is a more basic reason. People are basically good. They love their fellow man down deep and when it comes down to the opportunity to help, they generally do. Especially at Christmas time.

There is another point to mention here of vital importance. "Acts of kindness are contagious and lead to further acts of kindness." Giving to others is the Greatest Gift of Christmas and I try to remember that every Christmas. The Navy was often lonely, so times like this Christmas at Chief Markel's are easy to remember. I have returned the favor many times over during the years that followed. But there is something about experiences in the Navy or other branches of the service that seem to magnify greater than at other times in your life. And Christmas away from home is the granddaddy.

I hope this story opens your heart greater at Christmas to others who may not be family but who may need to be with someone at Christmas.....that was my intention when I wrote this short story.

The End

Merry Christmas to all!

The U.S. Navy's New Orca Drone Submarine Could Get Offensive Role

H I Sutton, Forbes, December 17

The U.S. Navy's Boeing Orca underwater drone could play an offensive role in future conflicts. Writing in the highly regarded U.S. Naval Institute (USNI) blog, retired Commander Brian Dulla argues that the U.S. Navy should invest in mine laying capabilities. It's an arena where large drones like the Orca could have advantages.

Mine warfare feels neglected in the popular defense media. It may be perceived as old-fashioned or uninteresting. The reality can be quite different. Put yourself in the mind of a captain whose ship has just strayed into a minefield. Or the EOD (explosive ordnance disposal) diver sent to defuse the mines. Even low tech or vintage mines pose a very real threat to modern navies. Commander Dulla's mine proposal is innovative. Yet like many good ideas it will seem obvious when you read it. He proposes to combine the range, autonomy and flexibility of a UUV (unmanned underwater vehicle) with the warhead of a mine. This allows it to be used as a moored mine that can propel itself into position, keeping the launch platform far from harms way. It could also be used as an extra slow torpedo to target ships in harbor. Because of its combined features Dulla terms this concept the 'moorpedo.'

At the same time, underwater drones are a hot topic for the Navy. It's a natural pairing because mine laying is dangerous to perform, especially in the enemy's back yard. Aircraft, ships or submarines are put in harm's way and distracted from their primary purposes. Crewless platforms mitigate some of the inherent risks involved.

Although unmanned air vehicles (UAVs) have become a common sight on the battlefield, development has been slower in the undersea domain. And until now the majority of UUVs used by navies have been very small. To lay a minefield a UUV would

have to be much larger, large enough to carry a useful number of mines.

Not surprisingly the U.S. is the first sea power to start building extra-large unmanned underwater vehicles (XLUUVs). But other navies are also entering the arena, including Britain and Japan. And China, Russia, and South Korea also have large UUV projects. Dulla proposes that the Navy's large-displacement drones (LDUUV) could be employed. The Orca design will be even larger and therefore could patrol further and could carry more. The Orca is up to 85 feet long, an order of magnitude larger than anything else out there at the moment. It has a flexible payload section which is large enough to carry multiple torpedo sized payloads. Initially these could be smaller UUVs. In the future they could be Tomahawk cruise missiles, or as the USNI article implies, mines.

Can The U.S. Navy Make Lemonade Out Of LCS Lemons?

David B. Larter, Defense News, December 19

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy's littoral combat ship program endured another round of budget cuts this year to its mission modules, but all is not gloom for the Navy's small surface combatants.

The service has made progress on fielding new ship killing capabilities, demonstrated the ability to autonomously detect then destroy a mine, and has accepted delivery of key components of the anti-submarine warfare package.

And, perhaps most importantly, the ships have begun to deploy again after an 18-month hiatus, and they are making a contribution to the over-taxed Pacific Fleet. In November, the littoral combat ship Gabrielle Giffords conducted a close pass of Mischief Reef in the Spratly Islands, the first freedom of navigation operations conducted by an LCS since the ships began deploying forward again in July.

But the Navy continues to have tough questions to answer about the ships and how they will fit into the Navy's distributed maritime operations concept, which will see the fleet attempt to fight by spreading out over a wider area instead of aggregated around a carrier.

The biggest question? Can the fuel-inefficient littoral combat ship, built primarily for speed over shorter distances, make a meaningful contribution in distributed operations. The ship can dart around at speeds in excess of 40 knots, but to be at their most fuel efficient, they have to operate much slower, which could limit their utility in a sprawling, distributed fight in the Pacific with contested logistics trains meaning it may not always have an oiler nearby to refuel.

Furthermore, there are real questions about the complicated propulsion system that has proven to be tricky and raised questions about reliability. Bryan Clark, an analyst and former submarine officer who works at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments says it's an open question as to what role the LCS will play in a distributed fleet architecture.

"Assuming the Navy is not going re-architect the propulsion system, and address the range problem by adding additional fuel capacity to it, I think you've got what you've got.

"So the key for the Navy will be to mitigate the limitation of LCS. Those are primarily range and reliability, which both get to the question of endurance. And then the other limitation it has arguably is the lack of a significant offensive capacity."

Clark said the Navy should look to use the LCS more as a command-and-control vessel for unmanned vessels. "I think the Navy needs to mitigate those limitations by shifting the use of the LCS to much more of a command and control node, and an unmanned vehicle support node," Clark said. "For example, the [Independence-class] LCS-2 could be a very useful as the host for unmanned surface vessels, or unmanned underwater vessels of unmanned aerial vehicles. And then it could support the larger UUVs and USVs by having them come alongside and use the ship to provide support, repair and fuel to the unmanned vehicles. "Because then you can take advantage of the range of the unmanned vehicle to go do missions, and the LCS doesn't have to drive around, burn up fuel or risk getting stranded somewhere because of a propulsion problem."

The LCS might still have a role in augmenting a surface action group of combatants such as the Navy's stalwart Arleigh Burke destroyers) in the near term. The addition of the Kongsberg/Raytheon Naval Strike Missile, which currently has among the longest anti-surface missile reach in the fleet, could add some firepower against enemy ships. But even in the short term, the range issue rears its ugly head.

"The problem is the range limitations mean it's going to have difficulty hanging with a surface action group -- it will need to be refueled more often, come off station more often. So even though it has this longer-range with the Naval Strike Missile, I don't know if it is going to be a lot of value-added in a surface action group because the surface action group in the near future will have other options to reach targets at that range with the SM-6 and Block 5 Maritime Strike Tomahawk."

Needed Capabilities

Jerry Hendrix, a retired captain and analyst with The Telemus Group, agreed that the Navy needs to find new uses, but said the force still needs many of the capabilities the ship was designed to address in the first place. "The enduring problem is the lack of offensive punch," Hendrix said. "It doesn't have any VLS tubes so I can't pack any of the larger missiles on there. But the thing is I still need those mission modules. Especially the mine-countermeasures mission modules with the Avenger-class minesweepers going away."

Hendrix said the Navy needs to push ahead with fielding the mission modules and seek to find new ways and places to deploy the ships forward to mitigate the range issues. But Congress, frustrated by the long delays in fielding the mission modules, has continually slashed away at the funding for the mission modules. This has created delays in testing, which Congress then uses as justification for further cuts the following year.

While the Navy continues to debate what to do with its ships, Fincantieri's Marinette Marine and Austal USA continue to push out new hulls with an undefined role. At Fincantieri, prime contractor Lockheed Martin announced December 12 that it's 10th

Freedom-class LCS, the St. Louis, had just completed acceptance trials.

“As each Freedom-variant hull deploys, we seek out and incorporate fleet feedback and lessons learned to roll in capabilities for new hulls,” said Joe DePietro, Lockheed Martin’s general manager for small combatants and ship systems in a release. “As a result, LCS 19 includes a solidstate radar, upgraded communications suite, increased self-defense capabilities and topside optimization, among other updates.” Austal USA announced its 11th littoral combat ship completed acceptance trials in late October.

General Dynamics Wins Contract to Continue Navy Submarine Fire Control Systems Modernization, Maintenance

Seapower Magazine, December 19

PITTSFIELD, Mass. — The U.S. Navy awarded a contract to General Dynamics Mission Systems that continues a broad scope of work for fire control systems and subsystems aboard U.S. Navy and United Kingdom’s Royal Navy nuclear ballistic-missile submarines (SSBN), the company said in a release.

The contract has a total potential value of \$299.9 million over the next four years. The omnibus contract is a follow-on to a contract awarded to General Dynamics in December 2015 for the development, production, installation and deployed systems support of U.S. and U.K. Trident II submarine strategic weapons systems and subsystems.

General Dynamics Mission Systems’ Maritime and Strategic Systems line of business will deliver support and modernization of the existing SSBN strategic weapon system including fire control subsystem installation, maintenance, sustainment, training and repairs to navigation and launch subsystems.

The company also will continue development of the fire control system for the U.S Navy’s Columbia class submarine and the Royal Navy’s Dreadnought class ballistic-missile submarine. Work on the development and sustainment of the Navy’s Ohio-class guided-missile submarine attack weapon control system is also part of the contract. Most of the work in support of this contract will take place here.

“Our support for the Navy’s strategic deterrent program spans nearly six decades and forms the foundation of our U.S. Navy business,” said Carlo Zaffanella, vice president and general manager of General Dynamics Mission Systems’ maritime and strategic systems business. “Continuing the work we have done on existing Ohio SSBN fire control systems and the development of the fire control system for the Navy’s newest fleet of submarines demonstrates our ongoing relationship, built on trust, partnership and innovation, with the U.S. and U.K. naval forces.”

Electric Boat celebrates new submarine contract

Staff Writer, Cameron Merritt, December 19

NORTH KINGSTOWN, R.I. — U.S. Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI) and Congressman Jim Langevin (D-RI02) joined workers and managers of Electric Boat Friday morning at the company’s Quonset Point location to celebrate the awarding of the largest shipbuilding contract in U.S. Navy history to their parent company, General Dynamics, as well as Huntington Ingalls Industries in Virginia.

The contract, worth \$22.2 billion, calls for nine new Virginia-class submarines as part of the new Block V generation with an additional option for a 10th vessel to bring the value of the contract up to \$24 billion. Construction is set to begin this month and runs through 2029, which will be split between Electric Boat’s Quonset and Groton, Connecticut facilities and Newport News Shipbuilding in Newport News, Virginia.

“The recent announcement of the Block V contract reflects Electric Boat’s ability to design and build ships of unmatched quality, stealth and lethality,” Electric Boat Vice President of Quonset Point operations Sean Davies said. “Over the life of the Virginia program, we have worked with the Navy and our teammate, Newport News Shipbuilding, to achieve efficiencies in design and production while continuing to provide the fleet with the submarines it needs to sustain the nation’s undersea dominance far into the future.”

Davies praised Electric Boat’s work over the course of the Virginia-class submarine program, decreasing the delivery timelines from 88 months to 68 months since Block I while increasing production of submarines to two per year.

The Quonset Point site will see the construction of the new Virginia Payload Module (VPM), a new addition to the Virginia-class for Block V vessels. The VPM, which was designed by Electric Boat, will add four additional large payload tubes in the submarines’ midships, increasing their fixed strike capacities by more than 230 percent, according to Davies, as well as enable increased capacities for special forces as well as additional weapons, sensors and other special payloads.

In addition to the VPMs, Electric Boat is also working on the full production of the Columbia-class submarine program, with those vessels set to replace the Ohio-class submarines built between 1976 and 1997.

The company also plans to make strategic investments in their infrastructure and workforce, which employs 4,000 shipbuilders in the state, double the amount employed at the facility in 2011, and hope to train more young Rhode Islanders for careers in shipbuilding to bring that number up to 5,500 by 2025.

“Through partnerships with Rhode Island leaders at the state and the national level, we have developed programs that have helped bring new skilled ship workers to the company,” Davies said. “These are well-paying manufacturing jobs with great benefits that offer opportunity for both rewarding and long-term careers.”

For the facilities themselves, General Dynamics is investing \$700 million at the Quonset Point location to expand the General Dynamics/Electric Boat campus by over 600,000, the construction of which Davies estimates will create an additional 600 jobs while greatly increasing their capacity for shipbuilding.

“The 17,000 men and women of Electric Boat are ready for the work ahead and welcome the opportunity to deliver Block V submarines with an unrelenting focus on safety, quality and affordability,” Davies said. “We are grateful for the continued support of political and educational leaders from across Rhode Island for helping us to continue to deliver on our important mission of designing and building the most capable submarines for the United States Navy.”

Davies praised Reed and Langevin for their leadership on these projects in their respective chambers of Congress before introducing Reed, who he called a “true friend” of the Electric Boat workers.

“I’m here simply to say to the men and women of Electric Boat; thank you,” Reed said. “The reason the United States Navy signed the largest (shipbuilding) contract in their history for Electric Boat and Newport News to build these Block V submarines is because of you.”

Reed praised the workers for their hard work, skill and dedication to what they do, and said he believed their combination of pure skill and patriotism helps deliver high-quality vessels.

“You understand that these ships will be in the hands of young American men and women who are going into harm’s way and I am convinced you put a little bit extra into everything you do because you do not want to let those young men and women down, and I thank you for that,” Reed said.

The senior senator recalled his first introduction to Electric Boat as a newly-elected congressman in 1991 when the Navy was considering ending the Seawolf-class program. Reed said with the workers help, they were able to fight back and continue the program, and that same work ethic and dedication has led to the Virginia-class and Columbia-class submarines being produced at Quonset today.

“The submarine is one of our most effective deterrent platforms in our inventory,” Reed said. “When our adversaries are thinking about possibly doing something, there’s always a thought in the back of my mind: where are the submarines? And guess what? They’re probably closer than you think.”

“This is a huge contribution to our peace and stability in the world,” Reed added. “It’s obviously a great contribution to the economy of Rhode Island. We’re talking about good jobs; not just good jobs, but we’re talking about good careers. You will be building submarines for a long time. All of this together is an opportunity once again to finally say simply thank you very, very much.”

Following Reed, Langevin spoke, praising the value of submarines to the nation. “Let me just say that we all know that the finest submarines in the world, really the true unsung heroes of the fleet, begin their journey right here in Rhode Island at Electric Boat,” Langevin said. “The world knows it, and they know that not only deter our adversaries, but they also build up our allies and ensure a more prosperous and secure world.”

Langevin also lauded Electric Boat workers’ professionalism, training and commitment to the national defense. “This has been a great month for Rhode Island and our strong defense industry and the contributions that Rhode Island businesses and workers make to our national security,” Langevin said. “The continued growth of Electric Boat I know will inspire young people, as Senator Reed said, to pursue these high-quality, high-paying jobs boosting our workforce and also keeping Rhode Island families right here in the Ocean State.”

He called ensuring the strength of the Navy as one of his “highest priorities” as a member of the House Armed Services Committee and that this country has the world’s finest military both because of the men and women in uniform who put themselves in harm’s way as well as the men and women like those at Electric Boat who go to work everyday to build the equipment, vehicles and weaponry for them. “Let’s get these boats built, and I look forward to many keel layings and christenings and commissionings in the years to come because of your work,” Langevin said. After the speeches, Reed, Langevin and Davies cut a celebratory cake and walked around to speak to and take pictures with the workers in attendance. Work on the Virginia-class submarines at Quonset is set to begin in a few weeks.

Scientists Warn U.S. Running Out of Time to Modernize Nuclear Weapons Systems

Otto Kreisher, Seapower Magazine, December 16

America’s current nuclear deterrent force is safe, secure and effective, but the nation is running out of time to modernize the weapon systems in the nuclear triad and the infrastructure that produces and sustains them, three senior military commanders and a group of civilian managers and scientists warn.

Potential adversaries have modernized, increased and diversified their nuclear capabilities, while the United States has failed to make the necessary investments to counter the emerging threat, the officers and civilian experts said Dec. 12.

As a result, the missiles, strategic submarines and bombers in the nuclear deterrent triad are aging and approaching the end of their effective service lives and the nuclear warheads they employ are suffering from natural decay and obsolescent components, they said.

A prime example of that emerging crisis is the tight time line the Navy faces to have the new Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines operational before the current Ohio-class boomers can no longer submerge for their strategic missions.

The Ohio-class boats were designed for a 30-year service life, but extended to 40 years and “we have no more margin,” said Vice Adm. Johnny R. Wolfe, director Navy Strategic Systems Programs. “We have to get Columbia out there to replace Ohio.”

Asked about meeting that deadline, Wolfe would not specify how much leeway they have but said the Columbia program

managers “do have a margin to get to that operational date.”

Wolfe said he was “confident” the program had corrected the problems of faulty welding in the Columbia missile tubes, which badly reduced the program time margin. But, he said, “we can’t allow anything to push (the program) to the right.”

Wolfe is responsible for the strategic systems that arm the boomers, including the Trident D-5 missiles, which have aged rocket engines and guidance systems that are being updated.

The Navy test fired five unarmed Tridents this year, two with the new electronics, and all worked as expected, he said. But they will not be able to continue to keep the D-5s flying forever, he added.

Vice Adm. David M. Kriete, deputy commander of Strategic Command, said the command’s primary challenges are “understanding the threat, so we can stay ahead, and modernizing the nuclear forces.” On the threat, Kriete said, “Russia, has continued to develop a whole range of nuclear weapons outside the New Start treaty,” but the United States “has not.” And, “China is moving very aggressively to field new capabilities.” They also are watching North Korea, which has tested nuclear warheads and long-range missiles, and Iran, which currently has no nuclear weapons.

The current nuclear deterrent “is safe, secure and effective. . . . We go to great length to ensure those weapons can get the job done. But we can’t maintain those standards in the future,” Kriete said, citing the age of the Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles, the nuclear-capable B-52 bombers and the nuclear weapons they employ. Despite questioning of the need for the triad, Kriete insisted that the combination of the responsive land-based ICBMs, the survivable ballistic missile submarines and the flexible bombers give national leaders options and create problems for any adversary.

Lt. Gen. Richard Clark, deputy Air Force Chief of Staff for strategic deterrence and nuclear integration, noted that numerous studies, including the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, confirmed the need for the triad, for which the Air Force provides the ICBMs, the bombers and the nuclear command and control system. They all must be modernized, he said.

Charles Verdon, deputy administrator of the National Nuclear Security Agency, and officials from the nuclear laboratories said a major challenge to sustaining and modernizing the deterrent capabilities is the badly aged infrastructure and the need to rapidly replace the nu

William F. Bundy, 1st black enlisted man to rise to sub commander

Mark Reynolds, The Providence Journal, December 17

William F. Bundy, a longtime Naval War College professor and associate provost, who was the first black to rise from the U.S. Navy’s enlisted ranks to take command of a submarine, has died.

Bundy, also a former director of the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, died of a heart attack on Sunday, according to Mike Ritz, of Leadership Rhode Island.

“The community impact on Rhode Island is significant,” said Ritz. Bundy “mentored many to success, particularly those in the African-American community,” Ritz said. “It’s rare that a military officer is so intimately linked to community as Dr. Bundy was.” Bundy started out as an enlisted sailor with sonar expertise. He served on submarines in the depths of the Cold War between the U.S. and Soviet Union. He served as an assistant weapons officer on the USS Sam Houston as the sub carried out patrols to deter the Soviets, according to the TheHistoryMakers.org. In 1988, he took command of the USS Barbel in Sasebo, Japan, and conducted exercises in the Western Pacific. Later, he directed the U.S. Naval Officer Candidate School in 1994. He retired from the Navy in 1994 at the rank of commander.

Along the way, he earned undergraduate degrees as well as a master’s degree in national security and strategic studies from the U.S. Naval War College. He received his doctor of philosophy from Salve Regina University in 2005.

At the Naval War College, he served as the chair of the Warfare Analysis and Research Department. He focused on the challenge of integrating technology in the Navy. Bundy was an adjunct professor and lecturer at Providence College, where he taught leadership, business organization and ethics courses.

Divers Use WWII-Era Equipment For USS Arizona Interment

Associated Press, December 14

HONOLULU — Army personnel in Hawaii used World War II diving equipment for an underwater interment of the ashes of a USS Arizona crew member.

Two divers donned vintage equipment to drop below the surface of Pearl Harbor and inter the ashes of former crew member Fire Control Chief Lauren Bruner inside the Arizona’s submerged wreckage, The Honolulu Star-Advertiser reported Thursday.

The ceremony took place Saturday on the 78th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor during World War II.

Bruner died Sept. 10 at age 98. He escaped death during the attack on Dec. 7, 1941, by climbing along a rope 70 feet (23 yards) above the harbor. Bruner is the 44th survivor since 1982 to be interred inside the ship, where 900 men remain entombed.

The divers with the 7th Engineer Dive Detachment wore lead boots and dry suits weighing about 200 pounds (91 kilograms) and the only vintage Mark 5 hardhats still certified for use. The Mark 5 dive rig was used by the Navy for deep sea and salvage diving from 1916 through the early 1980s, the U.S. Naval Undersea Museum said.

The divers walked across the deck of the sunken battleship and descended 22 feet (7 yards) into a gun turret to place Bruner’s ashes in one of the deepest spots in the wreck. “It was historical. I was left speechless, honestly,” said Spc. Julio Melendez of the

Army dive detachment at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, who placed Bruner's urn on board the Arizona. "It was a very in-the-moment experience," the 21-year-old diver said. "Just kind of taking it all in and realizing what we were doing and the history that's being made and remembering Lauren Bruner and everything that he had done."

Beijing Courts Micronesia In Push For Rival Base To Guam

Tsukasa Hadano, Nikkei Asian Review, December 14

BEIJING -- Chinese President Xi Jinping met with his Micronesian counterpart in Beijing on Friday, promising economic assistance for infrastructure construction, part of China's efforts to chip away at traditional U.S. partnerships in the South Pacific. "China is willing to offer economic and technical assistance to Micronesia within its own capacity," Xi said, according to the state-run Xinhua News Agency. He added that the countries should work together in trade, investment, agriculture, fisheries and infrastructure construction under Beijing's Belt and Road infrastructure-building initiative.

Micronesian President David Panuelo also pledged to expand cooperation in these areas.

As Beijing works to undermine the U.S. alliance with the South Pacific island nations of Micronesia, Palau and the Marshall Islands, Beijing is aggressively courting strategically located Micronesia. Officially the Federated States of Micronesia, the Pacific island nation is relatively near the U.S. naval base in Guam, which houses nuclear submarines and strategic bombers. The federation's Yap Islands are about 700 km away from Guam, and the U.S. Navy is active in the area.

Many believe China wants to set up a deployment and refueling hub for its vessels in Micronesia to counter the American military presence in Guam. Even a purely diplomatic overture would exert pressure on the U.S. Under the Compact of Free Association, the U.S. provides financial assistance to Micronesia, Palau and the Marshall Islands in exchange for them hosting U.S. bases. The three Pacific states may not house military bases of other countries while the agreements are in place.

The current compact between Micronesia and the U.S. lasts until 2023. But it faces heavy opposition on the islands, creating an opening for China to expand its clout. Meanwhile, Beijing has taken a carrot-and-stick approach with Palau, which has a diplomatic relationship with Taiwan. China essentially banned packaged tours to Palau in 2017. Now, some news outlets report it is offering to shoulder the financial aid Palau currently receives from the U.S. if the island nation scraps its Taiwan ties in favor of the mainland.

China's economic influence is a threat, Marshall Islands President Hilda Heine said in Washington in May, according to the Pacific Islands Centre. But it is unclear how successful China's efforts will be, with Pacific nations appearing to play the two sides against each other in hopes of obtaining the best possible outcome for themselves. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Micronesia in August, where he met with leaders from that country, the Marshall Islands and Palau to affirm their economic and security cooperation.

Heine issued a statement in September doubling down on the Marshall Islands' ties with Taiwan. "We've all seen China's attempts to expand its territory and footprint, and this should be of great concern to democratic countries," she said. Panuelo met with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Japan, a U.S. ally, on Nov. 14. The leaders agreed to work together toward the success of the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting to be hosted by Japan in 2021.

The Chinese Navy Is Building An Incredible Number Of Warships

H I Sutton, Forbes, December 15

While the U.S. Navy launches a handful of AEGIS destroyers each year, the single image below of a Shanghai shipyard shows nine newly constructed Chinese warships. China's Navy, known as the PLAN (People's Liberation Army Navy), is modernizing at an impressive rate. And on a vast scale. A key ingredient is the construction of a fleet of large destroyers, amphibious warships and aircraft carriers. The below photo, snapped from an airplane window on December 13, and shared on social media, captures the vast scale of this construction.

Nearest the camera, a line of four newly constructed destroyers catch the sunlight. Two are Type-052D air-defense destroyers, generally equivalent to the U.S. Navy's Arleigh Burke Class AEGIS destroyers. These displace 7,500 tons and can carry 64 large missiles including long range surface to air missiles (SAMs) and cruise missiles. The other two are larger Type-055 Class ships. These are also described as air-defense destroyers but are verging on cruisers in terms of size and fit. These are about twice the displacement and carry over 100 large missiles.

Behind them is the shipyard with its mass of construction halls and cranes. In the basin where the newest ships are docked after launch are another four destroyers. Again there are both Type-052D and Type-055 ships. Together with another Type-055 under construction on the left of the image, this brings the total number of large destroyers visible to 9. To put that into context, the Royal Navy's entire destroyer fleet is just 6 ships. And this yard is just part of a much bigger construction program.

There are also some hovercraft which will be carried aboard the PLAN's expanding fleet of amphibious warships. They will be used for transporting tanks and supplies from ship to shore. These are generally similar to the U.S. Navy's Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC).

At the side of the basin, in a dry dock, is a massive Yuan Wang Class satellite and/or missile tracking ship. These are the sort of ships which look like an ocean liner but with a series of gigantic satellite dishes pointing skyward. When completed this could be used to support missile tests.

But the most impressive vessel is hidden in the background haze, barely discernible to the untrained eye. Beneath several massive gantry cranes in a purpose-built construction area is China's next-generation aircraft carrier. China already has two carriers in service but this new carrier is expected to be significantly different. Known as the Type-003, it is believed to have electromagnetic catapults like the latest U.S. Navy Ford Class carrier. It is not expected to be launched for some time. Other developments are not visible in the photo. It is the same shipyard where China's mysterious sailless submarine has been constructed. Although that submarine is not clearly apparent in the photograph, it may be present in the basin. This image paints an interesting picture of Chinese naval modernization. Yet the biggest takeaway is that this shipyard is not alone. There are many yards across China which are similarly impressive. The Chinese Navy of today, and the future, is changed beyond all recognition from the Chinese Navy of the past. The world naval balance is shifting.

China And India's Maritime Rivalry Has A New Flashpoint: The Andaman Sea

Yogesh Joshi, South China Morning Post, December 14

The Andaman Sea is fast becoming the latest flashpoint of Sino-Indian maritime rivalry in the Indian Ocean. China's increased interest in the region is evinced by the revelation earlier this month that the Indian Navy in September expelled a Chinese research vessel by the name of Shiyan 1 after it was found intruding into the exclusive economic zone off the coast of India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands. As Indian Navy chief Admiral Karambir Singh argued in a press conference last week, the Chinese ship was operating in Indian waters without permission.

China's presence in the Indian Ocean has increased dramatically in the past decade, along with its economic and military rise. While it barely had a footprint there in the late 2000s, today an average of eight to 10 People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) ships, submarines and research vessels are operating in those waters annually. New Delhi has repeatedly expressed its concerns regarding increased Chinese naval activity in the Indian Ocean, which it considers its backyard – but naval intrusions in and around the Andaman Sea are particularly disturbing for the Indian Navy.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands bestow upon New Delhi an immense geographical and military advantage. The Andaman Sea connects the Eastern Indian Ocean with the Pacific Ocean through the Strait of Malacca. Whoever controls the Andaman basin controls the Malacca strait. The islands also allow India to project military power across the Bay of Bengal and Southeast Asia; they are New Delhi's unsinkable aircraft carrier.

In the case of a Sino-Indian maritime conflict, the islands would also constitute India's first line of defence. A swift naval victory around the Andaman basin would result in significant degradation of the Chinese maritime threat in the rest of the Indian Ocean. However, the PLAN is leaving no stone unturned in challenging India's predominance in the Andaman Sea. Since at least 2012, the Chinese navy has conducted regular submarine patrols there. According to Indian Navy sources, an average of three to four Chinese submarine contacts have been identified every three months. The PLAN has been known to use its vast submarine fleet to conduct reconnaissance and surveillance missions in these waters. The Chinese navy's interest in the Andaman Sea is a byproduct

of Beijing's Strait of Malacca dilemma. China's economy relies heavily on sea lanes of communication passing through the waterway; it therefore fears a situation where hostile powers could interdict these vital economic lifelines. Moreover, the geostrategic importance of these waters has increased dramatically under China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Under the infrastructure plan, China is involved in significant economic, connectivity and development projects along the littorals of the Andaman Sea. As a flagship project under the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, Beijing is building a deep-sea port in the Kyaukpyu islands across the Arakan coast. It is also laying down a railway line connecting Yunnan province to Mandalay. The proposed Kra Canal – connecting the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand – would fundamentally transform the geography of the Bay of Bengal and bring China right to the doorstep of the Eastern Indian Ocean. These projects have dramatically changed China's economic and political interests in the Andaman Sea.

The PLAN's strategy to counter threats to China's political and economic interests in the region is one of "sea denial", the military term for denying an enemy use of the sea without controlling it. Unlike the South China Sea, the PLAN cannot project naval power in the Andaman Sea because of its geographical disadvantage. However, using sea-denial platforms such as submarines, it can also eliminate the possibility of India dominating these waters. Therefore, the PLAN's significant investment in upgrading its submarine fleet is not without reason.

India's strategy to counter the increasing Chinese presence in the Andaman basin is to develop the military and economic potential of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Earlier this year, New Delhi announced that it would invest up to US\$50 billion in developing military and economic infrastructure in the islands. By 2022, India plans to station at least 32 of its naval ships there. The main emphasis, however, is on augmenting the Indian Navy's maritime surveillance capabilities. A significant military infrastructure build-up is taking place at the airbase in Campbell Bay, located at the southern tip of the Andaman archipelago. With a refurbished 3,000-metre airstrip, India would finally be able to operate its flagship P-8I maritime surveillance aircraft from the base. The Indian Navy is gearing up to take the PLAN's challenge head-on. In Sino-Indian maritime competition, the Andaman Sea is slowly but surely becoming its most crucial battlefield. The two sides are now locked in a classic security dilemma, in which each is reacting to the other's naval build-up. While this does not necessarily imply that a clash between the two navies is inevitable, the waters around the Andaman Sea will see the two navies jostling more frequently than in the past.

Panel: ‘Maximum Pressure’ Campaign Exposes U.S. Middle East Allies To Iran’s Military Reach

John Grady, USNI News, December 13

The U.S. “maximum pressure” campaign to stop Tehran’s meddling in its neighbors’ affairs, scale back its missile programs and comply with a nuclear weapons agreement has instead exposed America’s regional partners to Iran’s military reach, a panel of regional agreed on Thursday.

The continually tightening economic sanctions, particularly after May’s White House announcement that there would be no exceptions to buying Iranian oil and that businesses and nations would also be hit with penalties, has caused Tehran “to have a much more assertive posture for months and years to come,” David Jalilvan, a Berlin-based energy and security analyst and coauthor

of a new report on the campaign, said at the Atlantic Council on Thursday.

The most noticeable demonstration of that military reach came in September, when Iran conducted a sophisticated cruise missiles strike on critical Saudi petroleum infrastructure. This surprise attack followed several incidents earlier in the summer, when Iranian Revolutionary Guards attached limpet mines to oil tankers transiting the Persian Gulf and when other tankers were seized in Tehran’s answer to the sanctions campaign.

This “much more bellicose” response is not surprising, Jalilvand and others said at the Atlantic Council panel discussion. Some of the youngest Iranian hardliners have combat experience in the Revolutionary Guards’ battle against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, and they have brought that knowledge and attitude back into Iran’s domestic affairs. They now join others who have believed since Iran’s 1979 revolution that Tehran can never negotiate with the United States.

More results of that political change away from further talks likely will be seen following Iran’s parliamentary and presidential elections next year and its future selection of a new Supreme Leader to succeed Ali Khamenei, who has held that position for 30 years. Kenneth Katzman, senior Middle East analyst for the Congressional Research Service, said if “maximum pressure” was working to get Iran to accede to 12 U.S. demands to ratchet down its destabilizing activities in the region, “it wouldn’t carry out” an attack like it did on Saudi Arabia.

He cited Defense Intelligence Agency assessments of Iranian military strength now almost a year into the announced American sanctions campaign. He then quoted the region’s top military officer, Marine Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, that “Iran is in position to attack” the Gulf states while avoiding possible American targets in the region.

“Iran is getting progressively strategically stronger” at relatively little cost, Jalilvand said in answer to a question. Although Iran’s gross domestic product is expected to fall about 9 percent because of the sanctions this year and there have been large demonstrations in a number of its larger cities that have been met with armed force by the regime, he estimated Tehran is spending about \$3 billion a year on its missile program, other military activities and support for proxies like Hezbollah in Lebanon. He said this is a fraction of what American allies like Israel and partners like the Sunni Gulf states spend on their militaries.

There is a firm belief in its leadership that Iran “needs to be able to hit back on others in the area” to keep the revolution intact, he added. The American sanctions and the European Union’s inability to work around them while urging Tehran to stay within the nuclear agreement has produced a “logic [of necessary force] that will not be changed.”

Katzman disagreed with the notion that Iran feels cornered as a result of the campaign. The missile attack on Saudi infrastructure and the mining and seizure of oil tankers were the big reasons “why the UAE is visiting” Tehran and Saudi Arabia “is visiting, and why Mr. [Donald] Trump hasn’t pulled the trigger” in response to the downing of an American drone.

Katzman said “perhaps [the Gulf states] are going to mute” their antagonisms to the Islamic Republic and that could lead to an alteration in U.S. policy in the Middle East. Right now, Jalilvand said Iranian leaders see “confrontation yields better results than engagement,” particularly with Washington and the European Union.

While remaining guardedly optimistic about future engagement with Tehran, such as the recent prisoner exchange, Barbara Slavin, director of the council’s Future of Iran Initiative, said, “there is a lot of confusion over what [the American] goal is” with the campaign and the policy behind it. In many ways, she said the Iranians see the policy as ultimately leading to “regime change.”

Complicating matters in Washington is the administration has had four national security advisers and two secretaries of state in three years saying different things about the Middle East and Iran, she said.

For sanctions to work effectively in having Iran meet the demands concerning its short- and long-range missile programs, backing of Shiite militias in Syria and Iraq, and power centers like Hezbollah, Slavin said there needs to be multi-layered support for them as existed with the European Union before and clear goals. “We don’t have those conditions now.”

Ukraine Would Get New Anti-Ship Missiles Under House Bill

Russia would also get new sanctions under the House version of the defense authorization bill.

Patrick Tucker, Defense One, December 13

Ukraine would get \$300 million in new military aid —and Russia, sanctions on a proposed pipeline — in the House version of the defense authorization act passed this week. “Both are taken ... as an act of support,” Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine’s Deputy Prime Minister for European and EuroAtlantic Integration, said at the German Marshall Fund on Friday.

The bill calls for renewing the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, the military aid that congress had previously authorized for Ukraine, and expands it to include coastal defense cruise missiles and anti-ship missiles as acceptable for export. It futher

authorizes an additional \$50 million in military aid on top of the \$250 million congress had approved in last year's NDAA, "of which \$100.0 million would be available only for lethal assistance."

The bill also requires the Trump administration to impose sanctions "with respect to provision of certain vessels for the construction of certain Russian energy export pipelines" — understood to be the Nord Stream II project. Ukrainian officials have been trying to increase their naval firepower. In September 2018, Ukraine took possession of two U.S. Coast Guard Island-class cutter ships, part of an effort to push back against increasingly aggressive Russian activity in the Black Sea. But the ships came unarmed. Two months later, Russia attacked and seized three Ukrainian warships.

"We will continue working on obtaining more Island boats of that class and hopefully with some of the equipment that you mentioned," said Kuleba, he said in response to a question from Defense One about the anti-ship missiles. The Ukrainian official noted House and Senate support for Ukraine. He said he also had met with members of the National Security Council and the State Department and was going to talk with David Hale, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, in the afternoon.

"I will be able to form my full picture of where the administration stands on this after all the meetings that I hold," said Kuleba. "But so far, messages are constructive, in the sense that the NDAA is adopted; the President will sign it; and we will be working with the administration on making sure that these provisions become reality."

Kuleba said that Ukrainian officials were talking with NATO counterparts on ways they could work more closely with other nations to deter Russian activity in the Black Sea, where Russia has built a heavy military presence in the past couple of years.

"We have to have a talk with NATO, for example, on the Black Sea security. We always make the point that, it's good you have three member states in the Black Sea, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, but if you really want to create strategic balance against Russia in the Black Sea you cannot achieve that without aligning with Ukraine and Georgia," he said.

The issue of lethal aid to Ukraine was not without controversy even before it became a key aspect of the impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump. Following Russia's 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea and its attacks on the Donbass region of Ukraine, the Obama administration provided millions in aide to the country including radios, drones and other capabilities but stopped short of providing the lethal anti-tank weapons that the Ukrainians sought. During the 2016 presidential election, the Trump campaign removed a portion of the Republican Party platform that supported allowing the U.S. government to provide the weapons. In 2017, the Senate voted to give Javelin anti-tank missile systems to Ukraine, a bill that Trump signed.

GOP lawmakers have recently put forward baseless conspiracy theories, as part of their defense of President Trump, that Ukraine may have attempted to interfere in the 2016 presidential election.

Kuleba said that his discussions with lawmakers as well as State Department and White House officials over the last few days had emphasized what he called "fair treatment," for Ukraine. "We don't want to be shamed andblamed" he said. "Ukraine is a natural ally. Ukraine is part of this part of the world... We stand for the same things."