

American Submariners Inc.
Silent Sentinel
c/o VFW Post 3787
4370 Twain Ave.
San Diego, CA 92120-3404

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 445
Chula Vista, CA



The Silent Sentinel

JUNE 2008



Our Creed

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 towards greater accomplishment and patriotism to the United States of America



Holland Club Induction (earlier this year)

U.S. Submarine Veterans San Diego Base

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Bill Earl

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Membership -- Change of Address

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Chief of the Boat/Chaplain

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Treasurer

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Do not Miss Movement!

All submittals for the next Silent Sentinel must be received by the date indicated on page four. Entries received after the due date will be printed in the following month's issue, space permitting. Acceptable format for text files are TXT and DOC (not DOC1). Questions? Call me at 619-980-0846.

Mike, Editor

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: _____

Would like the SILENT SENTINEL emailed: YES _____ NO _____

Robert Bissonnette
1525 Walbollen St.
Spring Valley, CA 91977-3748

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

Commander's Corner

June 2008

Hope everyone had a Great & Safe Memorial Day weekend. I want to Thank everyone who was at the last meeting. Hopefully we can see more of our shipmates at this months meeting. I would like to congratulate all the new Holland Club members that were inducted in the last few months. Hopefully the pictures will come out in the Sentinel. We have a few more members in the works to be inducted into the Holland Club.

I have talked with Doug Smay from SUBVETs WWII and they are looking forward to a picnic in July. They are going to assist in the cost of the picnic like last year. I haven't talked to the Scamp Base Commander yet, but will by the time this is out on the street. Last year everyone had a Great time and fun on the boat tours too!

That's all for now shipmates. Hope everyone and their families are in good health and good spirits.

Base Commander
Bob Bissonnette

Upcoming Events:

- 31 May - LeMesa Flag Day Parade
- 10 June - Eboard Meeting 6pm at the VFW
- 10 June - Base Business Meeting 7pm at the VFW
- 14 June - Satellite Meeting 1000 at SUB BASE at the The Hub
- 29 June - Base Breakfast 8am - noon at the VFW
- 4 July - Julian 4TH of July Parade / 9am meet

SEE OR CALL MIKE HYMAN, 619-980-0846, FOR ALL YOUR SUBMARINE STORES NEEDS. ASK ABOUT THE SPECIAL OF THE MONTH. SHIPPING IS AVAILABLE FOR "ANY" SIZE ORDER. *Mike*

ALL INPUTS FOR THE JULY 2008 SILENT SENTINEL MUST BE IN MY HAND BY THE 20TH OF JUNE! IT HAS TO BE RECEIVED BY ME BY THIS DATE. I CANNOT ACCEPT SUBMITTALS FOR THE JUNE ISSUE ANY LATER, SO GET THEM IN EARLY. MIKE

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

June Meeting

Our monthly meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at VFW Post 3787, 4370 Twain Ave., San Diego. Our next one is on June 10th. The post is located one half block West of Mission Gorge Road, just north of I-8. The meeting starts promptly at 1900. The "E" Board meets one hour earlier (at 1800).

HAVE FUN AND HELP SUBVETS SAN DIEGO AT THE SAME TIME!

HELP COLLATE THE SILENT SENTINEL IN ORDER TO KEEP COSTS DOWN.

THE JUNE 2008 EDITION SILENT SENTINEL COLLATE PARTY WILL BE HELD ON July 5th, 0900, AT THE TWAIN AVENUE VFW.

BINNACLE LIST

Mike Hyman

C J Glassford (now recuperating at home and doing much better)

Larry Freske

Al Strunk (now recuperating at home and doing much better)

Submitted by Mike Hyman



“ SUBMARINE LOSSES “
“ MAY “

BARBEL [Bell] (SS 580) - 79 Men on Board:

Heavy Seas, on 1 May 1989, Wash Three Sailors from the Deck of the Submarine, While Operating off Kyushu, Japan :

“ 2 MEN LOST “ — “ 1 MAN RESCUED “

LAGARTO [Bell] (SS 371) - 85 Men on Board:

Sunk, on 3 May 1945, by Japanese Minelayer, In the Gulf of Siam :

“ ALL HANDS LOST “

GUITARRO [Bell] (SSN 665) - Duty Section on Board:

Sank, on May 1969, Alongside Pier at San Francisco Bay, Naval Shipyard, Vallejo, California :

“ NO LOSS OF LIFE “

SQUALUS [Bell] (SS 192) - 59 Men on Board:

Foundered, on 23 May 1939, Off the Coast of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Later Salvaged, Raised, Repaired, and Recommissioned, as USS Sailfish (SS192)

*** Crew rescued by First successful use of Diving Bell “**

“ 26 MEN LOST - 33 SURVIVORS “

SCORPION [Bell] (SSN 589) - 99 Men on Board:

Sank, on 27 May 1968, Most Probable Cause of loss was Inadvertent Activation of Torpedo Battery, Resulting in a Possible Hot Run and Torpedo Detonation, Off the Coast of the Azores :

“ ALL HANDS LOST “

RUNNER (SS 275) - 78 Men on Board:

Sunk, on 28 May 1943, by Causes Unknown. Possibly a Japanese Mine or Combined Air and Surface Attack, Off Northeastern Honshu, Japan :

“ ALL HANDS LOST “

STICKLEBACK (SS415) - 78 Men on Board:

Sunk, on 29 May 1958, after Collision with Destroyer Escort Vessel USS Silverstein (DE534)

“ NO LOSS OF LIFE “



San Diego Submarine Veterans Meeting for May 13, 2008

1900 Meeting called to order by Base Commander Bob Bissonnette.

Conducted opening exercises: Reading of the Creed – Pledge of Allegiance – Opening Prayer.

Tolling of the Boats

USS LAGARTO (SS-371)

USS SCORPION (SSN-589)

USS SQUALUS (SS-192)

USS STICKLEBACK (SS-415)

All hands observed a moment of silence.

E-board members present. Junior vice Commander introduced new members and guests.

Secretary reported 35 members and 3 guests.

Treasurer submits his report.

Charlie Marin Inducted 2 new Holland Club members: Bob Grogan & Daniel Eberhardt. 3 other New Holland Club members will have their Certificated and cards mail to them (RJ Berg, John Andrezik, & John Semmelrath).

Base Cmdr stated minutes of the last meeting has been published in the Sentinel and are their any corrections.

Base Commander presented the Binnacle list since Post Chaplin is undergoing at home treatment. Also reported the passing of Bud Ross.

Reports from Mike and additional members from the floor gave positive reports on CJ's condition. CJ seems to be doing better and visitors are welcomed.

Parade committee:

Base Commander reported on the LeMesa Flag Day parade on 31 May. Muster @0900. And he reported on the Julian 4TH of July parade. More info to follow.

Membership Committee:

Ron Gorence state we presently have 342 members on the books, but we need to maintain our membership. We need new members.

Base Scholarship Fund Committee:

Charlie Marin reports that we have 3 applicants this year for the Scholarship fund. The committee we be meeting to review the applicants and choose the winners.

David Ball (Treasurer) Commented that the Scholarship fund only has appox. 300 dollar in it; however it was pointed out that funds would be made available if needed.

Convention Committee:

Mike Hacking Convention chairperson reported the next meeting committee members we will tour the Town and Country Convention Center. We are working on a budget for the convention and looking at the numbers, which are very high. This being the case we must look to fund rising as a way to keep the cost of the convention down. One method we have is selling raffle tickets. We have an opportunity to sell tickets for a nation wide raffle for Submarine Bases and our group will get 50 percent of ticket sales. There is a lot of talk of WWII Sub Vets and International Submarines and Canadian group will attend. We have sent invitations to WWII vets to come and make this the huge convention for all submarine veterans. We would like to put out the word to WWII vets that they are welcomed.

Breakfast committee:

Fred Fomby announced the breakfast will be June 29, 2008. We need volunteers to help serve and clean up for the breakfast. If you can't volunteer come and bring your friends and family to this great breakfast.

1925 Break.....

1935 Base Commander called meeting to order. 40/30/30 drawing was conducted.....

Unfinished Business

Dave Ball was asked about bicycle repair and donations to the San Diego Children's Center. He informed us that no donations or repairs were done this month. We are looking for bigger bikes for the teenagers to be donated.

Base Commander discussed the Base Scholarship Program with comments from Charlie Marin about the program.

Base Commander encouraged members to sell the 2009 Convention Opportunity Drawing Tickets. It's a Base fund raiser. This is a way the base can have some income and the convention committee can have some income.

New business

Base Commander talked about the following Breakfast dates: 29 June and 31 Aug.

Base commander proposed hosting another Picnic in July on Sub Base with SUBVETs WWII and Scamp Base. A motion was made, and the motion second for hosting a Picnic in July on Sub Base. No discussion was made. Motion was passed.

Base commander proposed spending \$125 for a full page ad in the Ft. Worth 2008 Convention booklet. A motion was made, and the motion second for spending \$125 for a full page ad in the Ft. Worth 2008 Convention booklet. No discussion was made. Motion was passed.

Good of the order

Base Commander announced on 26th May, there will be a Memorial Day Service held on Sub Base starting at 1000.

There will be Services held for Bud Ross at FT. Roscrance at 0900 on Thursday 15 May.

One of our members was elected as President of the Naval Submarine League – Don Mathiowetz.

Congratulations!!!!

Fred Fomby has a CD with Joe's war time experiences during World War II. He describes his life adventures during his military service. Fred will make copies of the CD to anyone who is interested.

1950 - Meeting was adjourned by Base Commander

SAILINGLIST:

MIA

BOOSTER CLUB:

John Jenkins, Jr., David Schmidt (x2), Izar Martinez, Darrell Kibby, Wilbur Schultz, James Beard

Thank you all for your support and donation. Sorry if I missed your name as a Booster Club Supporter and please let me know so we can recognize you

Thanks to Greg Batey for his donation to support the Silent Sentinel.

Checking Account Balance @ 2/28/2008	\$ 1,897.80
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INCOME for MARCH 2008

Booster Club	130.00
50/50 (2/12/08 & 3/11/08 Meetings)	130.00
Calendar Sales	22.00
Ship's Store	135.00

Membership	0.00
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Scholarship Income for March	10.00
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Total Income for March (per Bank Stmt)	\$ 427.00
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EXPENSES for MARCH 2008

Silent Sentinel Printing	292.97
Silent Sentinel Mailing	96.23
Mailing Labels for Membership Dept.	58.16
Bulk Mailing Permit Renewal	175.00
Donation to Bullhead Base	50.00
USSVI 2008 Membership	170.00

Total Expenses for March (per Bank Stmt)	\$ 842.36
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Checking Account Balance @ 03/28/2008	\$ 1,482.44
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ASSETS

Base Checking (3/28/08)	1,482.44
Scholarship Fund Included in Base Checking	25.00
Base Savings (3/28/08)	9,318.36
Convention Account (3/31/08)	3,977.74

TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 14,778.54
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NOTES to REPORT

Treasurer was on vacation during much of February and missed meeting so no deposits were made nor checks written. These are now showing up in this March Report.

Checking Account Balance @ 3/29/2008 \$ **1,482.44**

INCOME for APRIL 2008

Breakfast Profit for 3/30	206.00
50/50	83.00
Christmas Party Revenue	5.00
Ship's Store	135.00

Membership 595.00

Scholarship Income for April 0.00

Total Income for April (per Bank Stmt) \$ **1,024.00**

EXPENSES for APRIL 2008

Membership	160.00
Printer Monthly Maintenance - Mar & Apr	103.10

Total Expenses for April (per Bank Stmt) \$ **263.10**

Checking Account Balance @ 04/29/2008 \$ **2,243.34**

ASSETS

Base Checking (4/29/08)	2,243.34
Scholarship Fund Included in Base Checking	25.00
Base Savings (4/29/08)	9,318.36
Convention Account (4/30/08)	3,852.74

TOTALASSETS \$ **15,414.44**

NOTES to REPORT

Thoughts for Memorial Day, 2008

Opinion by M Hyman

I did not make it to Subase for the Memorial Day Service. Just wasn't feeling all that great. On the other hand, CJ Glassford did make it, tolled the bell for each lost boat, and did a fine job from what I hear. Bravo, CJ.

I did watch, however, a documentary on television about emergency medical care for wounded GIs in Iraq and Afganistan. It was quite impressive to see how well these heros are taken care of in the field and the effort which is put into each and every one of them.

It did, however, make me think about something which is troubling--specifically, the fact that more than fifty percent of war injuries are now attributed to improvised explosive devises (IEDs) and most of these widgeits are being supplied by Iran.

Dealing with the Iranians is no easy matter. This is true, especially when the only force shown them up to now has been strong words. Diplomacy, however, does not work in the islamofascist sphere and waiting for them to agree to anything is altogether a waste of time. It never has worked and it never will work.

Non Islamics are considered *Kafir (infidels)* and this is what the Quaran has to say about them:

If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him. (surah 3:85)

Seize them and slay them wherever you find them; and in any case take no friends or helpers from their ranks. (surah 4:89)

For the Unbelievers are open enemies to you. (surah 4:101)

For the Unbelievers, Allah has prepared a humiliating punishment. (surah 4:102)

I will instill terror into the hearts of unbelievers, smite ye above their necks and smite all their fingertips of them. It is not you who slew them; it was Allah. (surah 8:13-17)

Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the last day. (surah 9:29)

Even in a "moderate" Islamic states, non Islamics are restricted in their freedoms. Look at the laws now in place concerning the limitations of the Greek Orthodox Church in Turkey.

For the less moderate Islamic states, few restrictions apply. The murder and mayhem now occuring in the Sudan are against non Islamics, mostly Christians. It is the largest Islamic sponsored massacre to date since the Ottoman Empire murdered close to 2 million Armenian Christians less than 100 years ago. Both fall under the category of government sanctioned events.

This past weekend, the United Nations reported that the evidence for a large scale Iranian nuclear power program is overwhelming. Previous reports (some reprinted in the Silent Sentinel over the past year) have stated that the Iranians (with the help of the North Koreans) have succesfully developed long range missiles which will in time be

capable of delivering a nuclear device.

Regardless of how one feels about the right or wrong of our military involvement in the Middle-East, the fact remains that since the Carter years, the Iranians have decided to aggressively involve themselves in a full scale war against us--the former president discovered the hard way that islamofascists look at diplomacy as a weakness (and as recent events indicate, the man still has not learned his lesson).

The pacifist sentiment of "Think World Peace," is simply offset by the islamofascist proclamation of "Think World Jihad." The concept is nothing new and Irwin Edman described it perfectly in 1944:

The [life force] is a renaissance to the poet; to the barbarian it means brute power. The reactionary forces now in control of France are also exhibitions of the [life force]. . . . There are subterranean vital forces now come to the surface of the world. The world is a machine making devils as well as Gods.

Throughout the history of humankind (though moreso since the Age of Enlightenment), movements subscribing to pacifism have come and gone. The last evolution of this phenomenon started in the mid nineteen-sixties and has continued on in various forms since that time. With few exceptions, most of these movements have been used to further the agendas of other entities.

"All you need is love" is a wonderful thought put to music by the Beatles. Too bad the islamofascists don't hold the same view!

40 years later, sinking of USS Scorpion still debated

By Mike Gooding, WVEC.com, 23 May 2008

NORFOLK – It's been 40 years since the Norfolk-based nuclear submarine USS Scorpion mysteriously sank at the height of the cold war.

The Navy submarine force intends to remember the tragedy with a solemn ceremony honoring the Skipjack class nuclear powered Scorpion. The names of her lost crewmembers will be read one by one.

The incident hits close to home for Navy Lieutenant Shannon Petersen. The father he never knew – Chief Electrician's Mate Daniel Petersen – died along with his 98 shipmates. Shannon was born three months later.

Lt. Petersen isn't sure the full reason for its the sinking will ever be known.

"Most of the people who were around when the boat went down are pretty much gone. And maybe some day we'll know. But this weekend, we're not focusing on that at all. We're focusing on the 99 men that went out and did their job," he said.

Force Master Chief Jeff Garrison calls the lost sailors brothers-in-arms.

"Even though I never knew them, they do have a special meaning to me," he said.

The story's special to former Ledger-Star reporter Ed Offley. His book, "Scorpion Down" questions the Navy's official explanation that there was an unspecified malfunction.

Offley claims it was likely a "hostile incident" initiated by the Soviets. He suggests spy John Walker may have leaked the Scorpion's communications codes.

"I think the most sacred obligation we have is to remember those who died serving their country, especially when the original way, the incident was handled, was in my opinion a disgrace to the families," Offley comments.

The commander of the US Submarine Force, Vice Admiral Jay Donnelly, will be the keynote speaker at Saturday's 10:00 a.m. ceremony at Pier Two on Naval Station Norfolk.

65-year search ends for missing WWII sub

By Imani Tate, *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*, 25 May 2008

Although naval Motor Machinist Mate 1st Class Lee Dale Cooksey had prophetically warned his sister if his submarine was ever reported missing he would be lost to the sea, his nephew Cleo Burton of La Verne and other loved ones always hoped for a miracle.

They believed for years that Dale and 69 other World War II submariners aboard the USS Grunion – missing since July 1942 – would be miraculously found on an isolated island in the Aleutian Islands off the Bering Sea or released from a prisoner camp when the war ended.

If not, Burton and hundreds of other worried relatives hoped they'd receive enough information to find closure.

It would take 65 years for Burton, three generations of other relatives of Grunion seamen and the Navy to discover what happened and the location of the Grunion's watery grave in the Aleutian Islands near mainland Alaska.

"Uncle Dale had made that comment about being dead to his older sister - who was my mother, Gertie Cooksey Burton - when he was home in 1941 on what turned out to be his last furlough," said Burton, a retired bank vice president.

"He said, 'If I'm ever reported missing, you'll know I'm dead because I could never get out of that submarine. I work in the engine room on the lowest level of the submarine.' Unfortunately, he was right," his nephew softly said.

Burton, now 80, was 15 when Dale's mother, Ella Cooksey, and Dale's newlywed bride, Olive Pate Cooksey, were informed he was missing in action. The Cooksey clan received no details because the Navy Department had none to give.

"We all hoped they'd all be alive somewhere," lamented the man who fondly remembers his family hero. "And after a while, many years, when hope of that died, we just wanted closure."

Burton credited the "dogged determination" of the three sons of the Grunion's commander, Lt. Cmdr. Mannert Lincoln "Jim" Abele, for giving him and others the mental peace they needed about the Grunion's fate.

Bruce, Brad and John Abele – who like everyone else called their father Jim, a childhood name Abele picked because he didn't like his formal name – were respectively 12, 9 and 5 when their father was killed.

The elder Abele, restrained by his top secret war patrol mission, left wife Catherine and his boys with simple kisses after a May 24, 1942, Sunday dinner at the officers' club on the New London, Conn., submarine base.

Catherine Abele and the boys only knew Abele was gone when another officer's wife called, saying she'd seen the Grunion leaving the harbor later that afternoon.

Driven by love and the need to know what happened to their father and his crew of five officers and 64 enlisted men, the Abele boys kept searching for answers to the Grunion's mysterious disappearance. Brad did extensive research and wrote memoirs on World War II submarines as well as the prevailing politics and problems within the Navy hierarchy before and during World War II.

The Abele sons remained "focused and relentless" in their pursuit of the truth, Burton thankfully said.

The trio's pioneering careers and financial successes provided the substantial sum needed to fund the successful search for the \$6 million, 1,526-ton fleet submarine christened in Connecticut on Dec. 22, 1941, commissioned on April 22, 1942, and lost to enemy fire on July 30, 1942.

The Grunion, the seventh of eight American submarines lost in 1942, was the only one in the Aleutians that suffered a total loss of life.

The final chapter on the World War II submarine began in 1998 when Air Force Lt. Col. Richard Lane, a military history buff, paid \$1 to an antique store owner for an old Japanese electrical diagram of a ship's winch.

"Wiring diagram of deck winch on Kano Maru" was written in English on the back of the illustration.

The mystery moved closer to resolution in 2001 when Yutaka Iwasaki, a Japanese amateur historian, responded to Lane's Web site information request about the Kano Maru.

Iwasaki translated a Japanese trade magazine article recounting a July 30, 1942, encounter between the Grunion and Kano Maru, a freighter carrying supplies for Japanese forces fighting in the Aleutian Islands.

The article, originally published in 1963 and reprinted in 2001, was written by Kano Maru superintendent and ex-Japanese Navy Capt. Seiichi Aiura and was entitled “We Have Sunk U.S. Submarine: Transport Kano Maru 8cm Gun Got The Target.”

Its details enabled the Abeles to pinpoint their Grunion search to Kiska Island harbor at the western tip of the Aleutians, Burton said.

“It seems the Grunion was ordered to patrol the Kiska harbor,” Burton said. “It torpedoed the freighter and was probably surfacing to finish it off. Those on the freighter fired on and hit the Grunion with 84 shots from an 8-centimeter gun on its deck.”

The last chapter on the Grunion closed on Aug. 22, 2007, when a high-tech underwater camera revealed its remains 1,000 feet below sea level near Kiska. Although the severely damaged submarine and the underwater tracks it gorged on its fatal descent were still there, the bones of its 70 seamen had dissipated at that depth and over time.

The Navy had received no word or sighting of the Grunion’s final fate since its last, garbled transmission was sent July 30, 1942, to Allied operations at Dutch Harbor from the submarine charged with patrolling the seas between Alaska and Japan.

Burton said the Abele boys’ sensitivity was comparable to their mother’s 65 years ago.

“Catherine Abele found and wrote to every wife and mother of the men under her husband’s command after everyone received notification our loved ones were ‘missing in action, cause unknown’ on Sept. 30, 1942,” Burton marveled.

In an Oct. 27, 1942, letter to Ella Cooksey, Catherine Abele wrote “I know how very anxious we all are for any bit of news. Officially, I have heard nothing. Unofficially, I have heard that the Grunion made a very commendable record before she was listed as missing.

“This is a comfort to me for I know it would have been of great satisfaction to the men to have had the chance to make a real contribution to their country,” Abele continued. “My sons and I still have hopes of their returning, but in any case, many God grant us all the courage to carry on as bravely as they would wish.”

Burton said, “Mrs. Abele’s poignant communications comforted my grandmother. And, thanks to her sons, my uncle and 69 other men can rest in peace.”

The Grunion’s Depths

News of the sunken sub brings relief to Gardena man, who mourned brother since 1942

By Catherine Cheney, Daily Breeze, 25 May 2008

From the lonely interior of his home in a Gardena trailer park, Fred Newcomb ran trembling fingers over a black-and-white portrait of his brother.

He smiled to hold back tears he had not expected, and explained how a woman named Rhonda Raye called him “out of the clear blue sky” last summer.

“She said to watch the news,” Newcomb said. “And there it was. They found the submarine.”

The World War II submarine was the USS Grunion, which sank 65 years ago. Among the 69 crew members who were lost when it disappeared in the depths of the Bering Sea was his brother, Arthur “Ginger” Newcomb.

The Grunion, which went down in the summer of 1942, was discovered last year 3,000 feet below sea level off the coast of Alaska.

With the discovery comes a small amount of peace for Newcomb, who will be spending his first Memorial Day today with concrete knowledge about his brother’s fate.

Newcomb was 16 when a telegram arrived at the door of his childhood home in Los Angeles. “I took the telegram and thought what the hell is this?” Newcomb said, lost in memory. “I took it to my mother back in the kitchen. Mother never said anything, but I knew what happened.”

The Grunion might forever have stayed undiscovered if not for the work of the John, Bruce and Brad Abele, the sons of the Grunion’s commander, Lt. Cmdr. Mannert L. Abele.

In August 2006, they initiated a search for the Grunion and the fate of their father. They used side-scan sonar that indicated the submarine was located near the tip of the Aleutian Islands. Last year, they performed dives to confirm their findings.

“We have high definition video of this,” Abele said. “Everyone who has seen this says there is no question about it that it is the Grunion.”

The Navy has not given official confirmation that what the brothers found was the Grunion, but for families of many of the sailors, the news finally brought a sense of closure.

Once the brothers made their discovery, relatives of some of the dead sailors jumped to action. Vickie Rodgers, Mary Bentz and Raye – the woman who contacted Newcomb – made it their mission to contact the families of the men who lost their lives on the Grunion.

“When I first started this I was doing it because it was something my dad would want me to do,” said Bentz, whose uncle died on the Grunion. “But I have become so involved with this story, and each one of these crew members are very special to me because I have come to know each one of their families, and we are now family.”

Bentz, Raye and Rodgers have successfully contacted family members of each of the 70 sailors. Bentz said most are extremely grateful for the news.

“I called one woman and her husband picked up. I asked to talk to his wife and he said she was not available,” Bentz said. “I said I was calling about the USS Grunion, and he said to hold on one minute and not go away.”

The man ran down the street to get his wife, who broke down when she heard the news after a whole life of wondering.

Newcomb does not recall much about his big brother, but the memories he maintains are fond. Ginger would take Fred to the roller coasters, and they shared a room together until Ginger enlisted in the Navy after graduating from University High School in West Los Angeles.

“Those were tough days,” Newcomb said. “It was expensive to go to college.”

Newcomb said his mother maintained hope that her eldest son would come home.

“But when the war ended and nothing happened, I guess she gave up,” Newcomb said. “But she never said anything about it.”

For years, Newcomb kept his thoughts about his brother to himself. But the discovery of the submarine - and the call from Raye – has allowed him to talk about what his mother would never mention. Newcomb visits the Missing in Action marker for his brother at the Los Angeles National Cemetery in Westwood each year.

But this year, for the first time, he will know the true fate of his brother.

“It gave me peace of mind that he probably did not suffer too much,” Newcomb said, looking at the picture. “The ship probably sunk in a hurry and bingo. It was over.”

Learning fate of U.S. sub provides closure

By Imani Tate, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin, 25 May 2008

Lee Dale Cooksey was a hero to nephew Cleo Burton of La Verne long before he was posthumously awarded a commendation for meritorious conduct as a member of World War II's USS Grunion submarine crew.

“Uncle Dale” Cooksey was among 70 men declared missing in action, cause unknown, by the Navy Department on Sept. 30, 1942. The last communication from the submarine patrolling the seas between Alaska and Japan came on July 30, 1942.

It would be 65 years before Burton and his family found out what happened to the uncle who'd celebrated his 31st birthday on June 20, 1942, five weeks before he died.

The 80-year-old Burton's childhood memories of growing up in Arkansas are filled with images of his uncle.

He fondly remembered playing baseball, enjoying target practice, hunting and eating snow ice cream with his uncle during frequent visits to the Arkansas farm of Ella and Henry Cooksey, Dale's parents and Burton's grandparents.

“Family was important to Uncle Dale. He enlisted in the Navy in 1933 because life was hard on the farm, there was the Great Depression and he wanted to help with family finances,” Burton recalled.

Uncle Dale always had time for his nephews and nieces.

“He played with us kids a lot. Of course, we thought he was an old man,” Burton said, laughing. “We all loved going to our grandparents for the weekend. Uncle Dale was great fun.”

Young Cleo frequently wrote his uncle at different duty stations, relating relative and hometown happenings.

In a February 1940 letter to Cleo, Dale expressed glee about a previous letter and promised to send him “a nice fountain pen” when Cleo passed from sixth to seventh grade.

Burton and his wife, Lavena, 73, sat quietly in their living room recently.

Sadness was etched on their faces as they watched a story from “The Today Show” about the recovery of the USS Grunion.

Their eyes shifted away from the screen as an underwater camera panned over the ruins of the Grunion nestled beneath the Bering Sea and Pacific Ocean near Kiska Harbor in the Aleutian Islands.

The Burtons voiced appreciation about finally finding out the fate of Dale Cooksey.

They chose, however, to concentrate on the positive, especially the Grunion’s heroic performance during its short life. Cleo is particularly proud that his uncle was part of the Grunion’s courageous action.

As it maneuvered toward the Panama Canal on its maiden voyage to war patrol in Alaska and the Aleutians, the Grunion rescued 13 military men floating in the ocean after their ship was sunk by a German U-boat, Burton said.

“They dropped these men off in Panama and continued on to Pearl Harbor in Hawaii and then to Alaska and the Aleutians,” Burton said. “Before the Grunion disappeared, it sank two Japanese ships and badly damaged another one.”

Lavena Burton said family history is important, so finally knowing what happened to the Grunion and her uncle-in-law gives them information they can pass on to future generations.

“We’re strongly family-oriented,” added the retired Claremont Travel Agency manager. “It’s important to know about people in your family roots - whether it’s a relative who came to America on the Mayflower or how many times an uncle went to jail.

“There aren’t many divorces in our extended family,” said Lavena, who’s been married to Cleo for 58 years and is still smiling about it.

“We’re a large, loving family. And now we know there’s an uncle in our family who was a World War II Navy hero.”

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Honoring Heroes

By Kelly Puente, *The Long Beach Press-Telegraph*, 26 May 2008

SEAL BEACH – The USS Bullhead was the last of 52 U.S. Navy submarines lost in World War II.

Bullhead was floating on the surface of the Java Sea north of Bali when it was sunk by a Japanese army plane on Aug. 6, 1945 – the same day the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

All 84 men were lost.

To mark Memorial Day on Monday, more than 100 people gathered at the Naval Weapons Station in Seal Beach for the 31st Annual “Tolling the Boats” Memorial Service honoring U.S. submarine veterans.

Under sunny skies, a bell tolled for each of the 52 World War II subs and four lost in the Cold War, as the wives and widows of veterans tossed blue and white carnations in a small reflecting pool to the sound of “Amazing Grace” played on a bagpipe.

The ceremony takes place each year in front of the National Submarine Memorial West, a collection of bronze plaques erected in 1977 that display the names of sunken submarines and each sailor on board.

A guest speaker, U.S. Navy Capt. Paul Jaenichen, commended those who served on the WWII force, which, as it is today, is the Navy’s smallest segment.

“A lot of them will say they were just ordinary men who rose to the occasion,” Jaenichen said. “These are not just ordinary men. They remain our heroes.”

About 3,600 sailors were lost by the war’s end, he said. Those lost at sea are said to be “on eternal patrol.”

James Burnett, president of the U.S. Submarine Veterans of WWII Los Angeles Chapter, said the society of submarine shipmates is a lifelong brotherhood with about 3,500 across the country.

But their numbers are dwindling fast.

Burnett said the chapter has about 100 members, but has been losing people every few months as the veterans push into their 80s.

A handful of original WWII submarine veterans attended Monday’s ceremony, wearing decorated blue vests and hats with white feathers.

“We’re losing WWII vets every day and submarine vets even faster,” he said. “We’re thankful for the ones who can still come each year. They’re living pieces of history.”

James Chavis, 83, remembers sitting in the iron belly of a submarine off the coast of Japan in 1945. Just 19 at the time, he said the sub managed to sink 13 Japanese ships but had a few close calls, including a time when its own torpedo went erratic.

Now retired and living in Mission Viejo, Chavis says he feels lucky to have survived.

“Any day is a good day when you’re not looking at the grass from the bottom up,” he said.

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Story of USS Tang is a study in submariner heroism

Survivors help tell of the sinking of the U.S. Navy's most decorated sub and its crew

By Joseph Gallivan, The Oregonian, 25 May 2008

The Second World War was such an epic of destruction, heroism and terrorism that there's still plenty of work to be done reassembling it, story by story, and the tale of the USS Tang is well worth retelling. The most decorated submarine in the U.S. Navy, the Tang was hit on Oct. 25, 1944, when its final torpedo malfunctioned, boomeranging back and blowing a hole in the stern. Half its crew of 87 was killed instantly, joining the 3,500 other U.S. submariners who died in that war.

But what happened next was extraordinary. A handful of men on the bridge, including the brilliant but sometimes reckless captain Dick O'Kane, and Floyd Caverly, now 90 and living in Springfield, jumped to safety. As the boat sank in 180 feet of water, an air pocket at the bow kept it afloat at a 45 degree angle. Men rushed to the forward torpedo compartment, but there was no way of opening the hatch at that angle, so the crew deliberately sunk it to the bottom and tried, four at a time, to use the escape trunk. Caverly's good humor is a delight, a counterpoint to the captain's more robotic sense of duty.

Told in action adventure prose ("Ooga! Ooga!" reads one line, simulating the klaxon horn at battle stations), Alex Kershaw's "Escape from the Deep: A Legendary Submarine and Her Courageous Crew" moves crisply from scene to scene, shifting points of view and time sequences to keep the survival narrative front and center.

Kershaw captures the feel of life on a sub in details provided by the men who were there. There's the peril of chlorine gas poisoning as water drips into the sub's huge lead-acid battery arrays, and men succumb to heat, atmospheric pressure and toxic fumes from the fire that rages in the next compartment. The men have to wear a breathing apparatus called a Momsen Lung as they ascend a rope to a buoy at the surface, pausing at a knot every 10 feet. Those who panic arrive at the surface with the bends, screaming with bloody ears and burst lungs.

Kershaw has made career of telling tales of American derring-do in books such as "The Bedford Boys" (34 men from the small town of Bedford, Va., were part of the Normandy landings on D-Day) and "The Longest Winter" (one platoon's part in the Battle of the Bulge).

Here he follows the survivors as they are picked up by the Japanese and sent to the prison camp Ofuna (the "torture farm"). The details are skimpy and the men only become more heroic, but their eventual return to life stateside follows a familiar pattern, as domestic struggles take their toll.

Kershaw does a good job of honoring an interesting subsection of the Greatest Generation.

Joseph Gallivan lives in Portland and is the author of the novels "Oi, Ref!" and "England All Over."

Titanic search was Cold War cover story for secret mission to find nuclear subs

By Claire Bates, The Daily Mail, 27 May 2008

A mission to find the lost wreck of the Titanic was actually a cover story for inspecting the wrecks of two nuclear submarines, the man who discovered the famous liner has revealed.

Dr Bob Ballard led a team in 1985 that pinpointed the wreckage of the enormous ship 73 years after it sank in the Atlantic. But he almost didn't succeed after his top secret mission to find two Cold War subs left him with just 12 days to find the Titanic.

The United States Navy lost two submarines during the 1960s - the USS Thresher and USS Scorpion - which had more than 200 men on board.

The Titanic leaves Southampton on its maiden voyage in 1912. Dr Ballard found the wreck in 1985

Officials feared at least one of them had been sunk by the USSR. When Dr Ballard approached the Navy for funding to find the Titanic using his robotic submarine craft, they asked him to discover the submarines first.

"I couldn't tell anybody," the oceanographer said.

"There was a lot of pressure on me. It was a secret mission. I felt it was a fair exchange for getting a chance to look for the Titanic."

He added: "We handed the data to the experts. They never told us what they concluded – our job was to collect the data. I can only talk about it now because it has been declassified."

The USS Scorpion was lost in 1968.

The USS Thresher (SSN-593) was the lead ship of her class of nuclear-powered attack submarines. She was lost during deep-sea diving tests in 1963 after a high-pressure pipe blew causing the vessel to lose power and implode as it sank.

However, the USS Scorpion disappeared in 1968 amid speculation that it was sunk by Soviet forces.

Dr Ballard mapped both submarine wrecks using his newly developed underwater robot craft. He concluded that the most likely cause of the Scorpion's destruction was being hit by a rogue torpedo it had fired itself.

Investigating the wrecks gave Dr Ballard the idea of finding a trail of debris that would lead him to the Titanic. Both the Thresher and Scorpion had both broken into thousands of pieces.

He criss-crossed the North Atlantic seabed and eventually found a debris trail that led him to the luxury liner's final resting-place.

He found the Titanic split in two but had little time to explore further. It was not until he returned to the site in 1986 that he was able to make a detailed study.

General Dynamics Receives \$6 Million Contract Modification for Nuclear Submarine Maintenance

BusinessNews, Hartford, 26 May 2008

GROTON – The U. S. Navy has awarded General Dynamics Electric Boat a \$6 million contract modification for management and nuclear maintenance work on submarines stationed at Submarine Base New London, Conn. Electric Boat is a wholly owned subsidiary of General Dynamics.

Under the terms of the contract modification, Electric Boat will continue to operate the Nuclear Regional Maintenance Department (NRMD) at the submarine base through Sept. 30, 2008. The company will provide project management, planning, training and radiological-control services to support maintenance, modernization and repairs in support of operational submarines. About 25 Electric Boat employees are assigned to the NRMD.

The initial contract was awarded in December 2005 and has a potential value of \$75.4 million over three years if all options are exercised.

General Dynamics, headquartered in Falls Church, Virginia, employs approximately 84,000 people worldwide. The company is a market leader in business aviation; land and expeditionary combat systems, armaments and munitions; shipbuilding and marine systems; and information systems and technologies. More information about the company is available on the Internet at generaldynamics.com/.

Defense Dept. Contracts for May 22, 2008: \$60 Million to Raytheon

US Department of Defense Press Release, 28 May 2008

BAE Systems, Armament Systems Division, Minneapolis, Minn., is being awarded a \$15,159,218 firm-fixed-price modification to previously awarded contract (N00024-04-C-4156) for Long Lead Time Material for the SSN 784 Virginia-class submarine propulsor and the procurement of a spare tailcone. The procurement will provide for the advanced procurement of LLTM associated with the production of the SSN 784 Virginia-class submarine propulsor and the manufacture, machining, and assembly of a spare tailcone. The manufacture, machining, and assembly of the fixed portion of the SSN 784 propulsor system (propulsor and tailcone) will be completed as part of the option when exercised. Work will be performed in Fridley, Minn., and work is expected to be completed by Oct. 2010. Contract funds will not expire at the end of the fiscal year. The Naval Sea Systems Command, Washington, D.C., is the contracting activity.

Lockheed Martin Maritime Systems and Sensors, Liverpool, N.Y., is being awarded an \$8,976,315 fixed-price-incentive with stepladder pricing (for the production units), cost-plus-fixed-fee (for engineering and technical services, test equipment, production representative unit, 3D mock-ups), firm-fixed-price (for Provisioning Item Orders, retrofit

kits, refurbishment, and engineering change proposals) contract for Low Cost Conformal Array Production units (LCCA). The LCCA is a passive planar array mounted on the aft submarine sail structure that is integrated with the Acoustic Rapid COTS Insertion (A-RCI) AN/BQQ-10 system to provide situational awareness and collision avoidance for improved tactical control in high density environments. Work will be performed in Syracuse, N.Y., (97.5 percent); Walpole, Mass., (1 percent); Forrest Hill, Md., (1 percent); and Millersville, Md. (0.5 percent), and is expected to be completed by Jun. 2013. Contract funds will not expire at the end of the current fiscal year. This contract was competitively procured via Federal Business Opportunities website, with one proposal solicited and two offers received. The Naval Sea Systems Command, Washington Navy Yard, D.C., is the contracting activity (N00024-08-C-6283).

General Dynamics, Electric Boat Corp., Groton, Conn. is being awarded a \$6,000,000 modification to previously awarded contract (N00024-06-C-4003) for services required to staff and operate the Nuclear Regional Maintenance Department, Naval Submarine Base, New London, Conn. Electric Boat will continue to perform project management, engineering and planning, training, inspection and services to accomplish submarine maintenance, modernization and repairs. Work will be performed in New London, Conn., and work is expected to be completed by Sep. 2008. Contract funds in the amount of \$6,000,000 will expire at the end of the current fiscal year. The Naval Sea Systems Command, Washington Navy Yard, D.C., is the contracting activity.

Business Briefcase

Orlando Sentinel, 22 May 2008

Lockheed Martin Corp.'s latest Trident-series ballistic missile has cleared a military record for successful test launches, the company said Wednesday. The Navy launched the Trident II D5 earlier this month from the submarine USS Nebraska in the Pacific Ocean, Lockheed said. It was the 122nd straight successful test of the naval weapon – a U.S. military record for ballistic missiles or space launch vehicles, officials said. Lockheed's Trident operation at Cape Canaveral is part of the defense contractor's Navy ballistic-missile team. The Space Coast unit employs more than 400 people in design, development, flight testing and other support services for the Trident program.

Nuclear submarine in £5m crash - because trainees were plotting course on tracing paper

The Daily Mail, 23 May 2008

A British nuclear submarine crashed – causing £5million worth of damage – because its navigators covered their maps with tracing paper.

HMS Trafalgar hit the seabed, injuring three crewmen, during a training exercise.

According to the findings of an inquiry released yesterday, it happened because trainees were instructed to put tracing paper over maps to protect them from damage and to chart their route on the semi-transparent sheets.

Submarine commanders Robert Fancy, right, and Ian McGhie, rear left, at their 2004 court martial over the crash

But the paper concealed contours which show the gradients at the bottom of the ocean and current strengths.

The officers in charge of the £300million vessel, Commander Robert Fancy and Commander Ian McGhie were court martialled and reprimanded following the incident in October 2002.

The submarine's reactor was not damaged during the crash near the Isle of Skye, but extensive repairs to the hull were needed.

'The chart became increasingly untidy and elementary mistakes were made with the generation of the estimated position,' said the board of inquiry report on behalf of the Ministry of Defence.

The HMS Trafalgar, which ran aground during the exercise in 2002

'A final criticism made by the board was the decision to use a tracing paper overlay.

‘This has been a contributory factor in previous groundings and again on this occasion vital information was obscured.

‘HMS Trafalgar grounded because of human error. The submarine altered course far too early, principally because the effect of tidal stream was underestimated and the standard of chartwork was poor.

‘Nuclear submarines should only conduct training of this nature if the arrangements for navigational safety are infallible.’

The report recommends: ‘The use of tracing paper overlays inshore should be strongly discouraged.’

A group of officers were in the last stage of a command examination nicknamed The Pressure Cooker, in which they control the submarine during a simulated attack.

They had submerged and – as part of the test – the trainees were estimating their position from their previous track and depth readings. The tracing paper was put over the chart so they could draw their track on it, but it obscured vital information.

This led the navigators to change course too early and head into water where the seabed was rising sharply. The board of inquiry criticised the captain and senior officers for not monitoring the vessel’s position separately using all the navigational aids which showed exactly where they were.

It also found that they were so absorbed in conducting a test on a potential officer that they failed to spot dangers.

Sweden solves Cold War ‘submarine’ mystery

Russia Today, 22 May 2008

New technology has helped researchers in Sweden solve a 26-year-old deep sea mystery. In 1982, Sweden claimed that it had recordings from a Soviet submarine in the waters of the Stockholm archipelago. It’s now emerged that the recording was of a Swedish charter boat.

The recording was made during a submarine hunt by the Swedish military on October 12th, 1982. It strengthened suspicions that Soviet subs were intruding in Swedish waters.

There were good grounds for such suspicion. Just a year before the recording was made, in October 1981, the Russian diesel Submarine W-137 got stuck on an underwater rock about a mile from the Swedish main Naval Base at Karlskrona.

The sub remained on the rock for nearly 10 days. The Russian Navy sent a rescue task force to the Swedish shores, composed of heavily armed destroyers and high sea tugs.

After days of negotiations between Moscow and Stockholm, the master on the Russian Submarine was summoned ashore for a hearing. The case was swept under the rug and the Soviet sub was released and the case was closed.

The matter was front-page news and closely watched by international media: CBS, BBC, ATV and others. That was the first and the only time a Soviet sub officially violated the borders of Sweden.

Nowadays, the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) was determined to find whether the sound on the 1982 tape came from a submarine or surface vessel’s propeller.

This spring FOI learned that a civil vessel, the charter boat Amalia, happened to be near the area of the Swedish Navy operation when the recording was made in 1982.

Luckily enough, Amalia lasted until 2008 and a test recording of Amalia’s working propeller was made in April.

‘The conclusion is that it was likely the charter boat Amalia, which was in the area the same day, which is the source of the noise from a propeller found on the recording,’ concluded the agency’s statement.

Roger Magnegard, the spokesman for the Swedish Armed Forces, welcomed the finding, but said it did not disprove the theory that Soviet subs were present in the archipelago at the time.

‘This is one part of the puzzle,’ he said. ‘We have no indisputable evidence in either direction.’

Back in 1982 the incident resulted in Operation Notvarp, the most advanced known secret submarine hunting operation ever undertaken by Sweden’s Armed Forces.

During the operation, all of Sweden's submarine hunting forces concentrated in one location following a number of suspected intrusions.

This "submarine fishing" operation implied trapping a presumed foreign submarine and forcing it to the surface by dropping depth charges. Not a single submarine surfaced as a result.

Soon after the operation finished, Sweden launched a special submarine commission which in the spring of 1983 concluded that the USSR was behind the intrusions.

The sitting Swedish government at the time recalled Sweden's ambassador to Moscow and registered an uncharacteristically strong protest to the Soviet government. The centre-right opposition backed up the government.

The 1982 recording was handed to the Soviet side so they could study it. On examination, the Soviet government protested against Sweden's complaint and rejected all claims of incursions.

This old rumble is still poisoning Russo-Swedish relations, even after a quarter of a century. One of the strongest objectives against constructing the Russia-EU gas pipeline, Nord Stream, is that an undersea pipeline will supposedly increase activity of Russian submarines in the waters surrounding Scandinavia.

This is not the first time Swedish experts questioned the "Russian origin" of the sounds on the 25-year-old recording. Some experts insist that propeller noises were mixed up with the sounds of nature, while others suspect other NATO members tested the defence of a neutral Sweden.

Submarine accounts go deep into WWII battles

By Don Oldenburg, Special for USA TODAY, May 20, 2008

No wonder dozens of books have been written about submarines during World War II.

After Japan's devastating attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, which destroyed or damaged the entire U.S. Navy battleship fleet, the submarine service took on a crucial role in stopping the Imperial Navy's Pacific offensive. By the war's end, 52 U.S. subs were lost, and 3,505 submariners – one in five – were killed.

Two new books give accounts of the heroism that ran deep beneath the high seas and confirm the "Silent Service" was the deadliest of U.S. military deployments during the war.

Alex Kershaw's latest page-turner tells the riveting story of the maverick skipper, courageous crew and destiny of the USS Tang, arguably the Navy's most legendary WWII sub. From the first page, the book pulls readers into the deep end of harrowing drama as the Tang patrols the waters off Japan's coast to sink more enemy ships than any other Allied sub.

Escape From the Deep quickly shifts, however, to desperation to survive after the Tang is sunk when a faulty torpedo boomerangs back at it.

A raconteur whose other WWII books include *The Bedford Boys* and *The Few*, Kershaw has a screenwriter's style that's most intimate and spellbinding in portraying the trapped survivors' nightmare inside the Tang 180 feet below and their history-making escape that landed them in yet another nightmare as prisoners of war.

Jonathan McCullough's narrative suffers by comparison. *A Tale of Two Subs* tells the story of the USS Sculpin and USS Sailfish (previously named the Squalus) and the coincidence that became one of the war's bizarre and tragic twists of fate.

Built side-by-side, the Sculpin and Sailfish shared an intertwined history, including a deadly pre-war accident that marked the Sailfish as a cursed boat. And that rep held true.

In 1943, a Japanese destroyer's depth-charge attacks so damaged the Sculpin that the crew abandoned ship. Days later, the hard-luck Sailfish sunk a Japanese carrier, unaware that many Sculpin survivors were aboard as POWs.

McCullough's tale seems forced as he cobbles together two stories of two subs whose greatest claim to fame is their eerie denouement. Neither story alone is powerful enough to sustain a book, which is probably why the author, in his debut, pads throughout with a related but overly complex subplot about the Naval intelligence unit that cracked Japan's code.

Insatiable World War II readers may find merit in McCullough's book where the drama is in the detail, but casual readers should definitely opt for Kershaw's damn-the-torpedoes storytelling.

Are All Our Warships Welcome Here?

A Ban on Nuclear Warships Dampens Spirit of Fleet Week

By Benjamin Sarlin, *The New York Sun*, 22 May 2008

Lawmakers are seeking to overturn a Dinkins-era ban on nuclear-powered Navy ships entering New York Harbor. Some are attributing to the ban the record-low ship count for this year's Fleet Week, which started yesterday, and with the Navy switching most of its fleet to nuclear-powered ships, Fleet Week may be smaller for years to come.

"We put our young American servicemen and servicewomen in submarines and aircraft carriers, and we put them out to sea for eight or nine months at a time," state Senator William Larkin, a veteran of World War II and the Korean War, said yesterday in an interview. "Why would we be putting our members on board these ships and then say it's not safe? I wouldn't have any problem with it."

The last non-nuclear aircraft carrier in the Navy fleet, the USS Kitty Hawk, is expected to be decommissioned by 2009, and the conventionally powered USS John F. Kennedy, which docked in the city during past Fleet Weeks, was decommissioned just last year. Their phasing-out means that new aircraft carriers, such as the USS George H.W. Bush, christened in 2006, will be unable to dock in the city. Port cities such as Seattle and San Diego routinely host nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers.

The unwritten ban on nuclear-powered ships dates back to a dispute over a plan in the early 1980s by President Reagan's Navy secretary, John Lehman, to create a series of "strategic home ports" that would spread America's fleet around the country. One of the locations selected to house a new home port was Stapleton, on Staten Island. While Mayor Koch and Governor Cuomo supported the idea, the Staten Island site sparked fears that mayhem could result if nuclear-armed or nuclear-powered ships had an accident in one of America's most densely populated areas.

These arguments swayed Mayor Dinkins, who announced after taking office in 1990 said he would oppose the presence of any ships armed with nuclear weapons, because they constituted a risk to New Yorkers' health and safety. Mr. Dinkins and a group of New York congressional representatives asked Vice President Cheney, who was then secretary of defense, to halt construction on the Staten Island port, which was never completed. The Navy took the flap to mean that nuclear reactors and weapons are not welcome in New York's harbors.

Mr. Dinkins could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Nearly 20 years later, the unwritten ban has never been lifted. According to a spokeswoman for the Navy, "nuclear propulsion, by itself, does not prohibit visiting New York Harbor." Nuclear-powered ships have nonetheless honored the unofficial arrangement and avoided the city, as Naval officers assume that these ships are not welcome without an explicit invitation from the city's mayor.

Some security experts believe that the policy has outlived its usefulness. While some might point to post-9/11 security threats as a cause to maintain the ban, a partner at security consulting firm PJ Sage Inc., Tim Connors, said yesterday that such concerns are likely overblown.

"When Fleet Week happens there's going to be a lot of security involved," Mr. Connors said in an interview. "I don't lose sleep thinking, 'Gee, somebody's going to be able to penetrate the security measures put in place and attack an aircraft carrier.'"

The director of GlobalSecurity.org, John Pike, said the Navy boasts an "impeccable record" when it comes to safety on its nuclear vessels.

The president of the Institute of Energy and Environmental Research, Arjun Makhijani, an opponent of nuclear power, said terrorism concerns were a legitimate concern.

"I think nuclear and New York City, especially after 9/11, should not be mixing," Mr. Makhijani said in an interview.

He suggested that if the Navy eventually brought nuclear-powered vessels into the city, it should first inform local officials of the potential consequences of a worst-case scenario accident so a response can be planned.

The only Navy vessel ever named after the city was a nuclear submarine, the USS New York City, which was decommissioned in 1997 before ever visiting New York waters. A battleship named after the state, the USS New York, participated in the first hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll, and became so radioactive that the Navy sunk it for target practice shortly afterwards.

The Navy recently completed another USS New York, which was forged using steel from the former World Trade Center site. Because the San Antonio class of amphibious transport ship is diesel-powered, it is free to visit New York City.

State's Great Seal Stays On Dry Land

By Neal Rubin, The Chicago Tribune, May 21, 2008

You can break the seal on a pack of cigarettes on the USS Michigan, but you can't do it near the Great Seal of the State of Michigan.

Capt. Dietrich Kuhlmann, skipper of the only current American warship named for a state shaped like a mitten, thought it might be nice to display the Great Seal aboard his nuclear submarine. He floated that notion in a letter to the Office of the Great Seal in Lansing, which actually exists, though the Great Seal does not have a desk there.

In absolutely direct terms, he was told, "Fuhgeddaboutit." It's not a matter of a lack of patriotism or a bureaucrat having a bad day. It's the law.

If the Great Seal had hands, they would be tied.

Kuhlmann, 47, passed through Detroit this month with a young lieutenant and an even younger machinist mate second class. They did some hand-shaking and recruiting, they attended a Detroit Tigers game where Kuhlmann threw out the first pitch, and they cleared up something I'd wondered about for ages:

Yes, you can smoke aboard a submarine.

The U.S. Navy hopes to ultimately stamp out smoking in its ranks, Kuhlmann says, but for now, "our number of smokers is almost exactly the same rate as in society." Locked in a 560-foot-long tube deep beneath the waves, sailors can light up in either of two high-ventilation areas, the largest being a machinery room.

In February, Detroit News readers sent the newly reconfigured USS Michigan a load of state-themed memorabilia, just to dress up the place and make it feel like home. While not all of it has been mounted yet – things need to be screwed down plenty tight aboard a sub – Kuhlmann says thank you for the flags, posters, sports gear and all the rest.

At least partly because the second-in-command of the crew that alternates with Kuhlmann's is a University of Michigan alumnus, the mess deck has been named the Big House. Also, there's a block M in the tile floor of the Executive Officer's stateroom.

If there's a Great Seal in the vicinity of the Michigan, though, it'll have to be a hefty four-flipper sea mammal, swimming alongside.

The Great Seal's very own legislative act, passed in 1963, spells out specifically what it looks like – the Michigan Coat of Arms, surrounded by some words and a long Roman numeral – and what it can be used for.

The governor's stationery, no. Extraditions, pardons, railroad police commissions and "farm centennial certificates issued where land has been in the family for 100 years or more," yes.

The Great Seal may not be transported outside the state. No reproductions are allowed. Employing it in anything besides the 15 ways permitted by law is a misdemeanor.

It's also against the law to mutilate or misuse the more familiar Coat of Arms, with its eagle, elk, moose and various Latin phrases, but there is a loophole. Burlington Coat Factory can't put the Coat of Arms in a commercial, but a clever entrepreneur who doesn't tamper with it or connect it with an advertisement can sell it as a key ring, postcard or manhole cover.

Had Kuhlmann known, he could have reproduced the Coat of Arms most anywhere on the boat. Instead, he used it as inspiration for a commemorative coin he can fish into his pocket for.

Like nails on a chalkboard

The USS Michigan used to be a ballistic missile submarine, meaning it carried enough nukes to eradicate most of the planet. After three years up on blocks, it's become a guided missile submarine and a shuttle service for as many as 66 Navy Seals or similarly dangerous persons.

Kuhlmann offered me a test ride, but unfortunately, the submarine deploys out of Guam. I asked if he could perhaps take a detour through the Detroit River to pick me up, but as he explained, "In my business, you only get to hit the bottom once."

Scraping the seabed makes a very unpleasant noise, and among submariners, it's considered even worse than misusing the Great Seal.

Jury convicts man of stealing submarine parts in Norfolk

By Patrick Wilson, The Virginian-Pilot, 20 May 2008

NORFOLK – A New York man accused of stealing parts from the attack submarine Hampton was convicted on two charges by a federal jury Tuesday, the U.S. Attorney's Office said.

The jury convicted Frank E. Spaulding, also known as Khalif Immanuel Bey, of one count of theft of public property and one count of a false statement, according to a news release from the U.S. Attorney's Office for Virginia's Eastern District. Sentencing for Spaulding, 37, of Jamaica, N.Y., is scheduled for Aug. 21.

According to trial testimony, he was at Norfolk Naval Station in December 2006 when he found two pieces of submarine equipment at Pier 1, the Attorney's Office said. The steel domes are used as protective covers for anti-torpedo units bolted to each side of the submarine. Each one is 3 to 4 feet high and weighs 230 pounds. They had been removed for refurbishment.

"After examining the domes closely, Spaulding believed that they were a valuable type of metal that he could sell for scrap at a profit," the release said. "He loaded the domes in the back of his pickup truck and removed them," it said.

Spaulding called scrap dealers the next day and sold the domes for about \$2,000 to a dealer in Virginia Beach, the Attorney's Office said.

A week later, a sailor who had worked on the sub saw the domes in the scrap yard. The Naval Criminal Investigative Service handled the case.

Spaulding told investigators he found the domes outside a restaurant. The news release didn't say why he was on the naval base.

Not Katrina: Beijing's media monopoly spins quake disaster and avoids obvious questions

By Sol Sanders, The World Tribune, 20 May 2008

Nothing so characterizes the critical decision facing China and the world at this moment than the fact that the army engineers trying to rescue victims of one of the worst natural disasters in recent times have been building a secret submarine and naval base on the southernmost Hainan Island.

In the analysis of the inevitable chaos of such a tragedy, China's priorities again are coming into sharper focus.

Are they to be vast sums spent on creating a huge military machine against an unidentified and presumably unknown enemy, or are they to be devoted to continuing to expand and broaden an economic miracle that has, albeit, only touched a very small part of its 1.3 billions.

Such natural disasters have a way of punctuating history, sometimes sending it off in another direction. Some Japanese historians are fond of speculating on whether the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 did not change that country's history. It cost 142,000 lives and destroyed much of the country's two largest cities, Tokyo and Yokohama. But an even darker side was the pogrom against ethnic Koreans which followed the fires. All this, according to some, was the end of more than a half century of rising – if not always peaceful – toward Japan's becoming the modern, industrial, democratic state it is today. The interregnum of the Great Depression, the 1936-45 military rule, cost Japan and the world enormously.

The still confused picture of what happened in Szechuan and its aftermath already contrasts remarkably with the Tangshan Earthquake of 1976 when 255,000 officially were reported dead. Perhaps three times that many actually succumbed in what would have been the worst disaster of the 20th century. Then the world – and even the rest of China – learned little of what had happened. A tottering regime, unable to extend assistance, tried to hide as much as it could in the throes of end of the Great Cultural Revolution which had brought the whole country to near chaos.

Whatever else is happening now, Beijing's leadership is not trying to hide the depths of the tragedy. Both President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao have been on the scene and their presence has been widely publicized. The Chinese propaganda organs are making much of the dispatch of the military – even when they have had to be parachuted in – for rescue and to restore and maintain order. After mixed signals – at this writing still confused – Beijing [unlike their sadistic Burmese military protégés] is accepting foreign expert assistance including shipments by the U.S. military, expert rescue crews from Japan, Taiwan, and India.

Reporting on the scene by foreign observers has exposed that there has been additional loss of life – even beyond the inevitable in such a disaster of such magnitude – through faulty building construction due to China's systemic corruption. Complaints to reporters named the local Communist cadre as the culprits, generally excusing the national leadership.

At the same time, there has been an enormous wave of national sympathy and giving for the victims of the disaster. A visiting U.S. National Public Radio team recorded a memorial meeting in the stadium of the provincial capital of Chengdu, not far from the epicenter of the quake but spared damage except through feeling the aftershocks. It went from grief, to exultation, to an expression of Chinese nationalism [with the chant of “China go!”].

It is obvious that the Communist Party leadership, whatever it might have done earlier or wanted to do now, is living in a new era. The ubiquitous cell phone and internet – even with tens of thousands of censors employed to try to control these new modes communication with the of the technology lent by such firms as Microsoft, Yahoo and Google – makes it no longer possible to hide such tragedies. Nor is it going to be easy to quell the reports and rumors of government malfeasance.

Beijing leadership will exploit again, as it has so often done in the past, the overwhelming fear among the Chinese elite of a breakdown and chaos in the Chinese system to justify its continuing petty and gross acts of suppression and internal violence against its own people. But the Party's monopoly of power and control of the media makes corruption endemic and guarantees that it will continue to grow along with the economy, perhaps the greatest threat to stability – as it has been for dozens of earlier Chinese imperial dynasties.

Failings of governance take place in all societies at all times. But under democratic systems, there is hope of reform and renewal. The dismal failure of local government in Louisiana has apparently stirred a movement for reform that could return New Orleans to its once proud position as one of America's most vibrant port cities instead of the burlesque and corrupt theme park caricature for business conventions it had become.

In recent months, through the haze of inner Party dealings and a rootless pursuit of some sort of new ideological basis to replace defunct Maoism, Beijing has been alarmingly consistent. It has shown more and more evidence of hubris arising out of its very real economic accomplishments. And it had pursued a vicious, adventurist foreign policy by supporting and defending the most morally corrupt regimes in the world – from Khartoum to Harare to Yangon. If Beijing thought that were real politische, it has been severely deluded. All of these regimes are fragile as coming events are bound to prove.

In a few weeks the Chinese will be tested by the Olympics. But the games are already not the coming out party that the Chinese had wanted, a celebration of its emergence again as a major world power. The kowtow which was to have come from world leaders at the inauguration of the games won't come off, at least not as planned. Beijing has encouraged its elite to see criticism of its actions in Tibet, Darfur, Zimbabwe, and Myanmar as part of an orchestrated campaign against China's “peaceful rising”. That kind of manufactured nationalism can be turned on, but not always turned off, as China and other authoritarian regimes have found in the past.

As the results of the earthquake play out – the economy is already under great strain from rising food prices – there may also be a reconsideration of policy and strategies. If not, the world is in for even worse news than the loss of life and destruction of property this natural disaster has delivered.

Israel: Russia May Be Selling Syria Arms The Jerusalem Post

By Yaakov Katz, May 21, 2008

Fearing that Damascus is acquiring advanced military platforms, Israel is closely following meetings being held in Moscow this week between a high-level Syrian military delegation and Russian Defense Ministry officials.

Senior government officials in Jerusalem said they have been aware for several days of the Syrians' upcoming visit to the Russian capital but that it was not yet clear which military platforms Damascus was requesting.

According to reports in the Russian media, the delegation, led by Syrian Air Force commander Gen. Akhmad al-Ratyb, will be in Moscow for five days and meet with Russian Defense Ministry and Air Force officials, as well as visit several military bases and units.

According to the reports, the talks will focus on arms sales – including submarines, anti-aircraft missiles, the latest model MiG fighter jets and advanced surface-to-surface ballistic missiles.

Israel is particularly concerned with a Syrian request for long-range S-300 surface-to-air missiles that could threaten IAF jets flying on the Israeli side of the Golan Heights.

The S-300 is one of the best multi-target anti-aircraft-missile systems in the world and reportedly can track 100 targets simultaneously while engaging 12 at the same time. Syria recently received 36 Pantsir S1E air-defense systems from Russia. Iran is believed to have already procured several S-300 systems to protect its nuclear facilities.

Israeli defense officials expressed grave concern over the possibility that Syria would obtain these new military platforms. Damascus, the officials said, had dramatically increased defense spending recently. In the past three years, Syria has spent more than \$3 billion on weapons, up from less than \$100 million in 2002.

Officials said that Israel was working diplomatically with Moscow to prevent the sales, but that for the right amount of money, Russia would likely approve the sales in any case.

According to the reports, Syria is also discussing a purchase of MiG 29SMT fighter jets. Currently, the Syrian Air Force is extremely weak, so advanced long-range MiGs would give it a significant boost.

Israel is also extremely concerned about a possible sale of the Iskander surface-to-surface missile system. The Iskander, Israeli weapons experts said Tuesday, was the heir to the Scud and was far superior to the ballistic missiles currently in Syria's arsenal. The Iskander is propelled by solid fuel and has a range of 300 kilometers, with accuracy of about 20 meters.

"This would without a doubt be a major threat to Israel," one Israeli expert said.

Lastly, Syria is also reportedly interested in buying two Amur-1650 submarines from Russia. The Amur 1650 is a diesel-electric operated vessel and reportedly can strike salvo missile blows at multiple targets simultaneously.

Syria has a navy but does not have operational submarines.

Submarines For Syria?

New York Sun Editorial, May 21, 2008

"We need to be much more clear with Russia when we disagree with them," was the way Senator McCain's national security adviser, Randy Scheunemann, put it to our Eli Lake back in March for an article we ran out on our front page under the headline, "McCain Backs Tougher Line Against Russia." Well, here's a perfect opportunity at which a little American clarity toward Moscow could go a long way.

A group of Syrian military officials arrived in the Russ capital on Monday for a five day visit. According to a report by the Russian state news agency, Novosti, the Syrian delegation is led by Syrian Air Force and Air Defense Commander General Akhmad Al Ratyb. General Ratyb is a regular visitor to Russia; he was also there in December of 2006.

The Russian wire reports that on this week's visit the news is that "Moscow and Damascus had agreed on deliveries of the latest Russian MiG-29SMT fighter. Syria also bought 36 Pantsir S1E air-defense systems from Russia, and hopes to receive Strelets short-range air defense systems, Iskander tactical missile systems, Yak-130 aircraft, and two Amur-1650 submarines."

If Syria had these air defense systems and advanced fighters back in September of 2007, it would have been harder for Israel to have taken out the nuclear reactor that the Damascus dictatorship was building with North Korean assistance. The White House said last month that the Syrian regime "supports terrorism, takes action that destabilizes Lebanon, allows the transit of some foreign fighters into Iraq, and represses its own people."

Why Russia would want to sell arms to this regime is beyond us, but if the Kremlin goes ahead with the sales, it would only reinforce Mr. McCain's call for a tougher line against Russia. And it's a wonder Senator Obama isn't making an issue of the threat that is building.

Arms dealers need customers, but the right way for the Russians to expand their markets would be by backing a free and democratic regime in Damascus that could use its arms to clear Hezbollah, Hamas, and other Iranian-backed terrorist groups out of the Syrian capital so that a productive economy could take root. Until then, arming Syria amounts to a proxy war against America and its friends in the Middle East, including Israel, Iraq, Turkey, and Lebanon.

If President Bush doesn't move to prevent this sale, he will leave a more difficult field of battle for his successor to operate on, not only in respect of the Mideast, but in respect of the whole Kremlin camarilla, which has postured as an ally in the war on Islamist terrorism while all too frequently playing a double game.

Submariners Survive Attack, Not Toll Of Time

Younger Generation Takes On The Task Of Keeping The Memory Alive

By Joseph Cress, Carlisle Sentinel Reporter, May 19, 2008

The hammer blows fell heavy on the hollow metal tube George Hinda Jr. found himself trapped in.

The Middlesex Township man was standing knee deep in salt water in the aft torpedo room compartment trying to plug the leaks as they developed.

Four Japanese destroyers were circling above, on the hunt for USS Greenling after spotting the American submarine on its approach to intercept a convoy.

It was Jan. 24, 1945. Years of attacks on merchant shipping had severely crippled Japan's ability to support its overseas Empire and fend off the U.S. advance.

Severe damage

The Greenling was on its 12th war patrol in waters off Okinawa when it was attacked by enemy escorts, which dumped salvos of depth charges into the water.

"Take a 55-gallon oil drum and pack it with dynamite," said Hinda, 87, describing the weapon, which explodes at a pre-set depth to create an overpressure strong enough to rupture hulls.

The Greenling cruised submerged for 12 straight hours trying to escape the Japanese gantlet. Hinda counted detonations from 130 depth charges.

The constant pounding shattered almost every instrument onboard and came close to buckling the hull plates. One blast was so strong it pushed the sub down 60 feet.

One crewman completely lost it and had to be knocked unconscious because he started to scream. The sound of his panic could have alerted enemy sonar operators.

What was worse, vibrations from the explosions started five torpedoes to run "hot" inside the tubes ramping up the threat level to the Greenling and its crew.

The sub escaped only after it deployed cutting-edge technology in the form of decoys, which drew away the Japanese attacks.

Last call

Hinda would go on to serve 20-plus years in submarines and 22 years with the Navy Inventory Control Point in Hampden Township.

Since his civilian retirement in 1982, he has been president of the Carlisle chapter of World War II Submarine Veterans, which is rapidly losing members to old age.

Hinda explained that when the chapter started, it had close to 50 men and their wives. Now it is down to only six men and three women healthy enough to participate in annual reunions.

“You are with these guys during the war ... You get to know them,” Hinda says. “It’s tough, but we all have to go sometime.”

As president, Hinda is responsible for the chapter newsletter and for organizing conventions with other local and national chapters.

Now he is faced with the hard decision on whether to disband the local chapter this year, because there are not enough members to keep it going.

Plans are underway to merge the local chapter with the Keystone Chapter of US Submarine Veterans, Inc. which draws members from the Korean War, Vietnam War and Cold War era.

Living history

Mike Sobkowski, base commander for the Keystone Chapter, served on the nuclear submarine Bergall during the Vietnam War. He is happy to welcome the World War II veterans.

Part of the mission of USVI is to honor the memory of submariners who gave their lives and raise awareness of the contribution made by the Silent Service, Sobkowski said.

He said about 3,500 U.S. sailors died in 52 boats lost in action during World War II.

Hinda added that not only did American submarines destroy 55 percent of the Japanese merchant fleet, “pigboats” participated in secret missions to gather intelligence on coastlines for future military operations.

He joined the Greenling on its ninth war patrol in spring 1944, duty which included photographic reconnaissance of Guam, Tinian and Saipan — islands later invaded by Marines.

“We fought for your freedom,” Hinda said. “We fought for future generations.”

The Silent Service of World War II accomplished a lot with only 1.6 percent of all Navy personnel in its ranks, Hinda said.

Sobkowski admires Hinda as a friend and brother submariner. He is impressed most with the sacrifices World War II crews made in coping with extremely dangerous work in difficult physical and psychological conditions.

“George is not only a good friend, he is my hero,” Sobkowski said. “He is living history.”

Navy Research Submarine to Dock at Museum

By Mike Allen, May 18, 2008

Stationed here for all of its life, it’s only fitting that the USS Dolphin will have a permanent home at the Maritime Museum of San Diego.

Museum officials passed another regulatory hurdle this month when the San Diego Unified Port District approved berthing the Navy sub at the museum site on the Embarcadero along North Harbor Drive.

“We wanted to get a vessel that has deep connections with San Diego’s history, and reflects both science and the Navy,” said Ray Ashley, president and chief executive officer of the museum.

Commissioned in 1968, the Dolphin served as a test platform for the Navy’s nuclear submarines as well as a research vessel. “It is the only submarine to have fired a torpedo at a depth of 3,000 feet,” said Ashley.

Getting the sub was a coup. The Navy spent \$50 million on refurbishing and upgrades in 2005, but the following year, the Navy decided the \$18 million annual cost to operate the vessel was too much and decommissioned the vessel in 2006.

The sub was slated to be sunk off the coast of Hawaii when the Maritime Museum began working to adopt the boat.

Once the vessel obtains a final permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the submarine will join the rest of the museum's seven ships, including a Russian Foxtrot class submarine, and will be moored alongside the ferryboat Berkeley, Ashley says.

The most famous of the museum's ships is the Star of India, the oldest active square-rigged sailing vessel in existence and both a state and national historic landmark.

Ashley says the museum is attempting to designate the Star of India as a world heritage site through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, or UNESCO.

"There are only 17 world heritage sites in the United States, and it would be a tremendous thing if San Diego could have one of these," he said.

Ashley wasn't certain when the Dolphin would arrive at the museum's space, but was hoping it would be there in time for the Tall Ships Festival, set for Aug. 20 to 24.

Navy Mine Robots To Help Explore Shipwrecks

By Philip Ewing, Navy Times, May 18, 2008

Marine archeologists plan to use the Navy's latest mine-hunting gear this week to explore British shipwrecks off the New England coast, an operation that scientists hope will be the first of many expeditions to adopt military-grade technology for civilian maritime research.

The undersea exploration, arranged with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, is part of this year's Navy "AUVFest," dedicated to autonomous underwater vehicles, taking place until May 23 in Newport, R.I. It's the eighth annual AUVFest, but the first one devoted to the civilian application of undersea robots.

NOAA researchers say the Navy's newest mine-hunting robots see farther and clearer than any other non-military scientific gear now available, making them ideal for detailed surveys of shipwrecks and other undersea archeological sites.

"Particularly interesting to us is the ability to get good bottom-penetrating imagery," said NOAA spokesman Fred Gorell. "If it looks like there's something under the sea floor, now you can see what it is, and look the imagery of the thing is of such good resolution."

The Navy's future generation of mine-warfare equipment relies on underwater robots. Attack submarines and the surface warships have experimented with launching and recovering AUVs, and the mine-warfare module of the new littoral combat ship uses exclusively underwater vehicles that scout ahead for danger.

The sunken ships off Newport that archeologists hope to study include the 28-gun British frigate Cerberus, which tangled during the Revolutionary war with the legendary Navy skipper John Paul Jones. The ship's crew later deliberately sunk the Cerberus with other ships in 1778 to avoid capture by the French fleet, on its way to help the American colonists in the Revolutionary War.

If the shipwreck exploration goes well, NOAA will likely buy some of the same robots and sensors that the Navy uses, Gorell said, and make them available to researchers along with research grants.

House Armed Services Panel Approves \$712 Billion Defense Package

By Otto Kreisher and Andy Leonatti, Congress Daily, May 15, 2008

WASHINGTON (May 15, 2008) – The House Armed Services Committee finally approved a \$712 billion fiscal 2009 defense authorization bill after a marathon session that started Wednesday morning and wrapped up early Thursday.

The committee alternated between quick bipartisan approval of major segments and sharp party-line disputes over specific issues such as ballistic missile defense, the Army's massive Future Combat System and a number of personnel issues.

It cleared the committee on a unanimous 61-0 vote.

Republicans were outmaneuvered by the majority Democrats on amendments that would place some Democratic members in uncomfortable positions. One vote was a sense of the Congress resolution from Rep. Randy Forbes, R-Va., calling on the Congress to pass an emergency appropriations bill for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan unburdened with non-defense spending.

House Armed Services Chairman Ike Skelton, D-Mo., instead offered a second degree amendment to Forbes' original amendment inserting the new language "Congress has provided, and will continue to provide, funds to address readiness shortfalls in the Armed Forces of the United States." Skelton's modifications were approved 33-28.

With repeated interruptions for floor votes, the committee struggled to complete the bill that would authorize total spending of \$712 billion, including \$70 billion in initial supplemental funding for the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The next president would have to decide whether to request additional war funding next year.

The bill is expected to be on the House floor next week.

Armed Services Chairman Ike Skelton, D-Mo., said the committee's priority was restoring the combat readiness of the military, particularly the ground forces, which have experienced severe strains on their personnel and degradation of equipment from six years of combat.

To offset those effects, the bill would allow 7,000 additional soldiers and 5,000 more Marines in the active forces and 500 more full-time support personnel in the Army National Guard and 150 in the Army Reserves. It also would add \$800 million for equipment for the Guard and reserves, to replace gear destroyed or worn out in combat, and \$932 million more for improved maintenance by all the services.

The committee continued the practice of adding half a percentage point to the administration's requested military pay raise, authorizing a 3.9 percent increase. And it rejected for the third year the administration's request for increased fees for Tricare medical and pharmacy services. That forced the House leadership to give the panel an additional \$1.2 billion in budget authority to offset the lost revenues.

The committee's usual bipartisanship was reflected in most of the process, including approving requested funding for most of the major weapons programs.

The full panel endorsed without opposition the Seapower Subcommittee's proposal to provide full or partial funding for four ships in addition to the Virginia class attack submarine, Joint High Speed Vessel and two T-AKE supply ships that were requested. It then adopted an amendment offered by ranking member Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., and Rep. Joe Courtney, D-Conn., to add \$422 million to the \$300 million the subcommittee had provided in advanced funding for another submarine. That would allow the Navy to buy two submarines a year starting in 2010, two years earlier than planned.

It also approved procurement of two more of the troubled Littoral Combat Ships, but reduced the requested funding because of unused money from. But it sought to stop the controversial DDG-1000 program, cutting the requested funding and telling the Navy it could use the money to start construction of another of the \$3 billion-plus warships or to buy more of the proven DDG-51s, which the Navy does not want.

The full committee also endorsed the panel's proposal to require the Navy to consider using nuclear power in future amphibious assault ships, in addition to the existing requirement for nuclear power in the next generation guided missile cruisers. The Navy has expressed concern about the additional cost and construction delay that would cause.

The Air-Land Subcommittee also added substantially to the administration's request, including \$3.9 billion for 15 more C-17 transports that the Air Force wanted but did not request, \$526 million for a second engine for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, which the administration opposes, and \$523 million in advanced funding for 20 F-22 fighters that the Pentagon did not seek.

The first major dispute was over the Air-Land Subcommittee's attempt to cut \$200 million from the Army's massive Future Combat System and to reallocate another \$33 million. Subcommittee Chairman Neil Abercrombie, D-Hawaii,

noted that his panel approved \$3.3 billion for FCS and fully funded every program that is expected to be fielded by 2011.

But Air-Land ranking member Jim Saxton, R-N.J., protested that this would be the fourth straight year of cuts in the Army's major program for future capabilities. He offered an amendment to restore \$233 million to FCS, taking the money from a number of personnel, health care and other Army research programs.

Skelton and Abercrombie both opposed the amendment, arguing that the priority had to be on improving current Army readiness. It was defeated on a party-line 33-23 vote.

The next battle was over the Strategic Forces Subcommittee's proposal to cut half of the funding requested for the ballistic missile defense system President Bush wants to build in Europe. The current year's authorization restricted most funding on the project until Poland and the Czech Republic agreed to host the interceptor missiles and the early warning radar and the systems had been tested.

Strategic Forces Subcommittee Chairwoman Ellen Tauscher, D-Calif., said none of those conditions had been met but the administration requested twice as much as provided this year.

Ranking member Terry Everett, R-Ala., protested the proposed cut, arguing that it would send the wrong signal to the allies and to Iran, whose ballistic missile program was the reason for the European defense site. Everett offered an amendment to restore \$372 million to the so-called "Third Site" program. That was strongly supported by a long list of Republican members, but opposed by Tauscher and Skelton.

The amendment was defeated on a 34-24 vote with one member from each party switching sides.

An amendment by Rep. Trent Franks, R-Ariz., to restore \$100 million to the multi-kill vehicle program, which is intended to counter decoys, was rejected on a similar 34-25 score. And an attempt by Everett to require a study on the potential advantages and cost of a space-based missile defense system was defeated 34-26.

The subcommittee also cut \$719 million from the total request for national missile defense, while providing \$10.2 billion, an increase of \$212 million over the current year. It shifted another \$185 million to four programs providing missile defense for deployed forces and allies. Those included the Navy's Aegis-based system, the Army's Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) and the U.S.-Israeli Arrow program.

The Personnel Subcommittee's proposal drew an array of amendments and provoked some angry complaint by GOP members when proposed amendments were ruled out of order because the increased expense was not off-set or because the subject was within the jurisdiction of another committee.

Rep. Thelma Drake, R-Va., protested Skelton's ruling that her amendment to end the so-called "widow's tax" that reduces surviving spouses benefits had to be approved by the House Budget Committee. She argued that the budget resolution the House approved authorized the increased spending.

But her amendment was tabled on a party-line 32-26 vote.

The committee honored a number of its retiring senior members, with an amendment to name the bill for ranking member Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., and sense of Congress amendments praising Saxton and Everett. All were approved by unanimous voice votes, although Hunter predicted that his honor would never pass the Senate.

New coastal submarine concepts get ready to break the surface Jane's

By Richard Scott, 14 May 2008

The modern non-nuclear submarine is acknowledged to be a highly potent sea denial and intelligence gathering asset and, in the right hands, a very challenging adversary for even the best-equipped anti-submarine warfare (ASW) forces.

Even 26 years on, the UK Royal Navy's (RN's) experience in the 1982 Falklands (Malvinas) conflict serves as a salutary reminder of how difficult a prey the conventional submarine can be. Although it deployed a large taskforce equipped with a full range of ASW capabilities, it failed to detect the San Luis, the single Argentine Type 209 conventional submarine deployed in theatre. It is believed that only a faulty fire-control system prevented the submarine from executing a successful attack on an RN frigate operating close inshore.

The US Office of Naval Intelligence points out: “Operating near busy shipping channels or maritime chokepoints, submarines can covertly lay minefields or attack and disrupt commercial shipping. In this way, even a nation having a few relatively unsophisticated submarines can conduct sea denial and exert regional influence.

“Fitted with improved quieting sensors, weapons and propulsion systems readily available in today’s market, submarines can operate undetected near a regional adversary’s coast, covertly conduct surveillance, engage enemy naval forces and expand their nation’s regional impact still further.”

Covertiness brings another attribute. Operating unseen and unannounced, the submarine can be forward deployed without undue provocation, thereby avoiding crisis escalation or political embarrassment. It can also be employed to support the insertion and extraction of special forces in clandestine missions.

And so for many smaller nations, the conventional submarine remains a prized asset because of the disproportionate impact it can have on military operations in the maritime domain, both above and below the waterline. Its major selling point is as a uniquely cost-effective means of sea denial against far more powerful potential adversaries.

Over the last two decades, the conventional submarine market has been dominated by sales of boats in the 1,400-1,800-ton bracket, typified by German shipbuilder HDW’s best-selling Type 209, the successor Type 214 and the rival Scorpene jointly produced by French naval shipbuilding, systems and support group DCNS and Spanish shipbuilder Navantia. Highly capable, and now increasingly adopting air-independent propulsion (AIP) technology to extend submerged endurance and reduce the indiscretion ratio, they afford a powerful and cost-effective deterrent capability.

However, ‘cost effective’ does not mean cheap and it would be quite wrong to suggest that the acquisition of even a small number of diesel-electric submarines does not in itself constitute a significant capital investment. Furthermore, operating any submarine force in a safe and efficient manner demands the highest levels of design assurance, maintenance, operator and maintainer training and operational control.

As a result, some smaller navies with more limited financial and technical resources - while attracted to the attributes of the submarine - have, to date, shied away from their acquisition. Others, particularly in Latin America, are troubled by the projected costings for the replacement of existing diesel-electric submarines now approaching life expiry.

Acknowledging this fact, four of Europe’s leading submarine design houses have now all sought to craft compact, highly automated ‘entry-level’ submarine concepts specifically engineered to reduce capital cost and support overhead and manning requirements. As well as appealing to navies looking to acquire a submarine capability for the first time, the rival contractors are also eyeing nations that may be looking to recapitalise their existing submarine arms.

Russia joins ‘Bold Monarch’ submarine rescue exercise

By Jon Rosamond, 15 May 2008

Russia is to participate for the first time in a live NATO-led submarine escape-and-rescue exercise, according to Allied Maritime Component Command (MCC).

Exercise ‘Bold Monarch’ 2008 is due to be staged near Kristiansand, in the Northern Skagerrak region of Norway, from 26 May to 6 June.

Three submarines – one each from the Netherlands, Norway and Poland – will be positioned on the seabed to simulate ‘subsunk’ casualties.

Support personnel and equipment from Canada; France; Germany; Greece; Israel; Italy; the Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Russia; Turkey; Ukraine; the UK; and the United States will endeavour to solve complex rescue and medical problems in a variety of scenarios.

The phased exercise will culminate with a “large-scale co-ordinated rescue and evacuation of survivors from a disabled submarine”, said the MCC in a release issued by its headquarters in Northwood, UK.

Global Scrutiny Follows Reports Of Chinese Nuclear Base

By Jonathan Adams, The Christian Science Monitor, May 13, 2008

The naval buildup on Hainan appears to be part of Beijing's long-range plan to increase its military presence, but the new base has alarmed neighboring countries and the US.

posted May 13, 2008 at 9:50 am EDT

Reports of a massive new naval base in southern China have fueled more concerns in the West and Asia about the rapid rise of China's military.

The underground base can reportedly hold up to 20 submarines, including new nuclear-armed submarines. It is also apparently big enough to hold future aircraft carrier groups if China decides to build them.

Military analysts say that the base is part of China's long-term plan to beef up its naval and nuclear might. They say the expansion is aimed at deterring Taiwan from making its de facto independence permanent, better protecting China's seaborne energy supplies, and projecting Chinese power far beyond its shores.

China is also replacing about 20 silo-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) capable of hitting the US with a new strategic force that includes road-mobile nuclear ICBMs and submarine-launched, nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles, which are less vulnerable to attack. Jane's Intelligence Review, the British-based defense periodical, reported that commercially available satellite imagery had confirmed China's construction of the new base near Sanya, on China's southern Hainan Island. Military sources knew about the planned base since 2002.

China's nuclear and naval build-up at Sanya underlines Beijing's desire to assert tighter control over this region. China's increasing dependence on imported petroleum and mineral resources has contributed to an intensified Chinese concern about defending its access to vital sea lanes, particularly to its south. It is this concern that in large part is driving China's development of power-projection naval forces such as aircraft carriers and long-range nuclear submarines.

China has pursued this build-up at Sanya with little fanfare, offering no public explanations regarding its plan to base nuclear weapons or advanced naval platforms there.

China's foreign ministry refused to confirm or deny the report about the base, according to Reuters.

"China is going down the road of peaceful development. China's national defence policy is defensive. Other countries have no reason to fear, or make a fuss about it and be prickly," [Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang] told a regular news conference.

Meanwhile, some US experts are calling for a strengthening of alliances in the region to counter the growing military challenge from China, reports Agence France-Presse. Arthur Waldron, of the University of Pennsylvania, said the US should strengthen alliances with Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Singapore to contain China's military strength.

James Lyons, an ex-commander of the US Pacific Fleet, said the US should use the same tactics it used to contain the Soviet Union during the cold war. One of Lyons's suggestions: increase US ties with the Philippines by leasing fighter jets and Navy vessels to the island nation.

The revelations about the base near Sanya come as the Pentagon is seeking to forge better ties with its military counterparts in China. The Christian Science Monitor reported earlier this year that US-China military relations still lag behind the two countries' diplomatic and economic relations. The Pentagon hopes that better communication can help clarify the intent behind China's rapid military buildup.

The new base is also raising concerns in India, reports the Asia Times from New Delhi. It said Indian defense experts view China as a long-term military threat, since the two countries have overlapping interests in the Indian Ocean. India recently tested its own Agni III ballistic missile, that will be capable of hitting Beijing and Shanghai.

Indian Express reports that the new Jin-class submarine deployed at the base carries 12 nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles. It notes that the new base in Hainan is 1,200 nautical miles from the Malacca Strait, through which some of China's energy supplies pass from the Indian Ocean.

The new base could help provide China with the ability to cut off commercial traffic through the strait in a crisis. It said China's new base could also spur India to accelerate its own nuclear submarine program. Sea trials for the first sub are set for next year.

The Times of India reports that the extent of the new Chinese base has "jolted the Indian defence establishment." India has nuclear weapons, too, but has yet to develop its own nuclear-armed submarines, a deficiency that "has long troubled defence planners."

While an adversary can take out missile silos and airbases in pre-emptive strikes, it's difficult to target nuclear submarines which can remain underwater for prolonged periods.

The sheer importance of the underwater nuclear deterrent can be gauged from the fact that even the US and Russia will ensure that two-thirds of the strategic warheads they eventually retain, under arms reduction agreements, will be in the shape of SLBMs [submarine-launched ballistic missiles].

Writing in the Federation of American Scientists' Strategic Security Blog, Hans Kristensen strikes a skeptical note. He says that the Chinese have very little experience in operating ballistic missile submarines, so it's not clear yet how strategically significant the new base will be. He suggested that the US could easily monitor Chinese movements from the base, which is near deep water.

The U.S. navy has several decades of experience in trailing Soviet SSBNs [nuclear-powered submarines armed with ballistic nuclear missiles] in the open oceans; shallow waters are much more challenging. And the South China Sea is a busy area for U.S. attack submarines, which have unconstrained access to the waters off Hainan Island. And I'd be surprised if there were not a U.S. "shadow" following the Jin-class SSBN when it arrived at Hainan Island.

The Daily Telegraph quoted a leading arms control expert in saying that China was giving its nuclear forces a major overhaul.

Bates Gill, head of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri), said that [China] was developing more flexible delivery systems, including from submarines, as well as the capacity to use multiple warheads.

"Among the major nuclear powers China stands out in its effort to modernise, expand and improve its nuclear weapons capability," he said in Beijing today.

"We see some very interesting and quite dramatic changes in the way its nuclear deterrent operates."

But the Telegraph says China's arsenal is still the smallest of the five big powers – also including US, Russia, Britain, and France – at only 100 to 200 warheads.

Coast Guard Pushing Congress to Outlaw Drug Trafficking Subs

Quick-Sinking Vessels More Prevalent

By Rebekah Gordon, Inside Defense, May 12, 2008

The Coast Guard is pushing for an amendment to outlaw the outright operation or embarkation of one of the latest cocaine smuggling tools traversing the high seas: self-propelled semi-submersible submarines.

The amendment, to the Crimes and Criminal Procedure Code (Title 18), is part of the 2007 Coast Guard Authorization Act, which was approved by the House last month but awaits determination in the Senate.

The stateless vessels, which the Coast Guard says have no legitimate purpose, travel mostly beneath the water's surface, making them difficult to detect. Typically less than 100 feet long, SPSS vessels can carry about four crew members and up to 12 metric tons of illicit cargo at speeds of up to eight knots. These subs can travel from the north coast of South America to the southeastern United States without refueling, according to the Coast Guard.

To stay one step ahead of law enforcement, SPSS vessels are designed to be abandoned and sunk easily and rapidly – within 15 minutes – sinking the drug evidence along with them.

"This isn't an entirely new phenomenon," said Lt. James Binniker, a drug interdiction specialist with the Coast Guard Office of Law Enforcement. "Drug traffickers have been using low-profile vessels for years. This is just the latest in that evolution of their capabilities. And they are much more capable now than they have been ever."

Besides enabling prosecution in the absence of recovered drugs, outlawing the vessels outright is crucial to mitigating the dangers that scuttling poses to Coast Guard personnel.

“They’re mostly under water as it is, and the way that they operate is as soon as a law enforcement asset or a boarding team arrives at the scene, they scuttle it, Binniker said. “So we’re dealing with a sinking vessel every time. To make them illegal in their operation significantly reduces the risk to our boarding teams to have to go on board and try to collect physical evidence to prove that they are smuggling.

“Essentially, we would have to send a boarding team member inside of a sinking tube in the water that’s already mostly submerged, and that’s just not a risk we’re willing to take for a drug prosecution or a drug interdiction,” Binniker added.

The stateless nature of the vessels is key to their interception, as a stateless vessel is subject to the jurisdiction of any state under international maritime law. According to Lt. Brian Robinson, legal advisor for the Office of Law Enforcement, a stateless vessel on the high seas has been described by U.S. courts as an “international pariah.”

“Theoretically, if there were somebody who were using a submersible or semi-submersible vessel for a legitimate commercial, recreational or research purpose, that vessel should, under international law, be registered,” Robinson said. “The law is only targeting stateless submersible or semi-submersible vessels on international voyages, outside of any state’s territorial sea, or craft crossing a lateral line in a state’s territorial sea.”

SPSS-related drug smuggling appears to be on the upswing. According to the Consolidated Counter Drug Database, there were just 23 incidents between January 2001 and September 2007. But in the four-month span between Oct. 1, 2007 and Feb. 1 2008, there were 27 encounters that recovered 111 metric tons of cocaine.

In February, a Coast Guard law enforcement detachment working with Joint Interagency Task Force South encountered a vessel about 80 nautical miles west of Buenaventura, Colombia, with four Colombian crew members. The crew sunk the stateless vessel and escaped on a small boat, but the detachment recovered 59 bales of cocaine. In March, a detachment interdicted a vessel 375 nautical miles west of the Galapagos Islands, with four Colombian crew members who jumped into the water as the stateless SPSS sank. No drugs were recovered.

The Coast Guard estimates there will be 85 encounters with SPSS vessels carrying 340 metric tons of cocaine during fiscal year 2008 alone.

The Coast Guard saw earlier generations of the homemade vessels made out of fiberglass, but is now seeing construction made from a fiberglass-steel combination or steel alone. They have only seen the vessels, which have a single or twin diesel engines, used for transporting cocaine from Colombia. But smuggling of weapons or other contraband is possible, said Lou Orsini, the chief of the interdiction division at the Office of Law Enforcement.

“There’s obviously the potential for a great threat, given their capacity to carry large loads as well as their increasing stealth and their increasing ability to move great distances,” Orsini said. “The potential is becoming more all the time as to what they can do. It just depends on how much more technology they can manage to buy. And with the amount of money they have at their disposal, it’s almost unlimited.

Nuclear Sub, Desert Guerilla

By Joseph C. Goulden, The Washington Times, May 11, 2008

As any serious student of the subject realizes, “intelligence” is a term that goes far beyond espionage and the cloak-and-dagger shenanigans so beloved by the writers of spy thrillers. This has been true since Biblical times, when Moses, acting on command of the Lord, sent scouts “to spy out the land” – which meant reconnaissance. (Numbers 13) And indeed, some of more valuable achievements of the intelligence community during the Cold War fell far outside the parameters of what the laymen might call “spying.”

Such was surely the case in 1970, when the nuclear submarine USS Queenfish (SSN-651) slipped under the Arctic ice pack and found its way 3,100 miles through uncharted waters to explore the continental shelf off the Siberian coast, site of many Soviet testing grounds and sensitive nuclear sites. The story – and it is a truly astounding one – is told by the Queenfish’s captain, Alfred S. McLaren, in *Unknown Waters* (University of Alabama Press, \$29.95, 243 pages, illus.) Capt. McLaren is a graduate of the US Naval Academy, class of 1955.

Queenfish truly went into harm's way. The Soviet military, understandably, considered the area that it traversed to be highly secret. Thus Queenfish "sailed black," its identifying numbers stripped away. (When it surfaced briefly near the North Pole so that crewmen could be photographed on the ice to record their historic mission, paper numbers were temporarily taped on the bridge. Moscow claimed a 230-mile territorial limit, which encompassed most of the continental shelf. The United States recognized a 12-mile limit (as did international law, in the main), so Capt. McLaren had to take care to remain in those bounds.

What the United States feared was that Soviet nuclear subs would lurk under the ice pack, to emerge and fire missiles at our mainland in time of war. Capt. McLaren's mission was to determine whether American "killer subs" could find safe passages to follow in tracking down putative enemy subs.

Queenfish left Pearl Harbor on Aug. 10, 1970, and during the next two months, it traveled more than 14,000 nautical miles, almost all of it submerged. It carried a full complement of torpedoes and missiles.

There were moments of sheer terror. Sonar, radar and other electronic guidance equipment sometimes gave misleading signals. Thus Capt. McLaren found Queenfish trapped in a narrow dead-end "ice garage," with no exit save the rear. Backing up a submarine is considerably more complex than putting an auto into reverse, but he managed the maneuver.

There were also moments of levity. Off the New Siberian islands, Capt. McLaren raised the periscope to see a polar bear striding along the ice. The curious bear plopped into the water and swam directly towards the periscope, Capt. McLaren watching through the cross-hairs. "Its great white head loomed larger and larger and soon filled the entire field of view ... the idle thought entered my head, 'How on earth are we going to explain teeth marks on our periscope when we return to port?'" The bear then veered away, and two "bright-eyed cubs" were seen in her wake.

Capt. McLaren is lavish in his praise of fellow officers and his crewmen, for in the best Navy tradition, he realizes the team effort required to carry out such an intricate and dangerous missions. Thanks be that the route he plotted was never used in wartime. But in retrospect, it is comforting to know that it existed.

Going Ballistic: India Looks To Join Elite Missile Club

By Rajat Pandit, The Times of India, May 13, 2008

NEW DELHI: By 2010-2011, India hopes to gatecrash into a very exclusive club of countries, which have both ICBMs (intercontinental ballistic missiles) and SLBMs (submarine-launched ballistic missiles) as well as BMD (ballistic missile defence) capabilities.

Only the US and Russia strictly qualify for this club as of now, if all the three capabilities – ICBM, SLBM and BMD – are taken together, with countries like China not too far behind.

Top defence scientists, on the sidelines of the annual DRDO awards on Monday, told TOI they were quite confident India would have ICBMs and SLBMs, even though their strike ranges would be much lesser than American, Russian or Chinese missiles, as also a functional BMD system soon after the turn of this decade.

DRDO, of course, often promises much more than it delivers. But this time, it's ready to walk its talk, emboldened by the successful test of the 3,500-km range Agni-III missile last week.

Take ICBMs first. "We have already started the design work for Agni-V, with a range of over 5,000-km. It basically involves development of a third composite stage for the two-stage Agni-III," said Agni programme director Avinash Chander.

"We will be ready to test Agni-V by 2010," he added. There will not be an Agni-IV missile, with DRDO leapfrogging from intermediate range Agni-III to the almost ICBM-like Agni-V. "We have the capability to go for even longer ranges but it's for the political leadership to take a decision on such matters," said Chander.

As for the fledgling but "unique" two-tier BMD system, capable of tracking and destroying hostile missiles both inside (endo) and outside (exo) the earth's atmosphere, it will be tested again in July.

The BMD system has been tested two times till now. The first test was in November 2006 when an "exo-atmospheric" hypersonic interceptor missile successfully destroyed an incoming Prithvi missile at an altitude of around 40-50 km, demonstrating a capability akin to the Israeli Arrow-2 BMD system.

The second time, in December 2007, an “endo-atmospheric” interceptor successfully took on the “enemy” missile at a 15-km altitude, on the lines of the American Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) system. “Around July, we will test the exo-interceptor again. This time, we will test it at an 80-km altitude against a longer range ‘enemy’ missile. Then, in September-October, we will test the exo and endo together,” DRDO chief controller for missiles V K Saraswat told TOI.

“BMD is very important since there are ballistic missiles all around us. If you are strong in your defence, an adversary will think twice before any misadventure,” he added. The BMD system should be ready for deployment by 2011 or so, after several tests against a variety of missiles to ensure a kill probability of 99.8%, said Saraswat.

The third capability in the shape of the K-15 SLBM, which has been tested only from submersible pontoon launchers so far, should also be ready by that time to be integrated into the indigenous nuclear-powered submarines being built under the secretive ATV (advanced technology vessel) programme.

The initial range of K-15 will, however, be limited to 750-km, far less than the over 5,000-km range SLBMs brandished by the ‘Big-5’ countries. Nevertheless, it will mark the completion of India’s “nuclear triad”, which so far is limited to the Agni missiles and fighters like Mirage-2000s jury-rigged to carry nuclear weapons.

Indian defence planners have long bemoaned the absence of nuclear-powered submarines, armed with nuclear-tipped missiles, since they are considered the most reliable, survivable and deadly nuclear weapons platforms.

Rothesay remembers ‘midget’ submariners

Memorial for victims of Loch Striven tragedy

By Mike Blair, *The Buteman*, May 8, 2008

“AGE shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.”

The simple words of the well-known prayer sounded out over Rothesay’s High Kirk cemetery on Saturday afternoon as the Submariners’ Association chaplain, Pat Lang, led an act of remembrance for the midget submariners buried in a quiet part of the cemetery with its views over Barone Hill.

Three men lie buried here after drowning in an accident on board the midget submarine XE11, when she hit a boom defence vessel in Loch Striven in the penultimate month of the second World War.

Lieutenant Aubrey Staples SANF (V), the submarine’s commanding officer, died along with Able Seaman J.J. Carroll and Stoker E. Higgins on March 6, 1945 when XE11 struck the boom defence vessel *Norina* while rising to the surface in Loch Striven.

The vessel’s first lieutenant, Sub-Lt Bill Morrison RNVR and E.R.A. Les Swatton, both survived, setting a world record for the deepest unaided ascent in the process after XE11 hit the sea bed at a depth of 210 feet.

As well as the three sailors lying at rest in Rothesay, Pat Lang also prayed for all of their comrades for whom there is no grave other than the waters of the deep sea.

The party of former submariners and their families, which included for the first time the widow of Mr Swatton, arrived in Rothesay on board the fleet auxiliary vessel *Omagh* and visited the two submariners’ memorials in Port Bannatyne before going up High Street to the cemetery.

The party had a busy day, having also visited the cairn at Lochranza near to where HMS *Vandal* sank in 1943 with the loss of 37 lives, and Dunoon cemetery, where they paid tribute at the graves of the 36 crew of HMS *Untamed*, who died when their submarine was flooded by sea water off Sanda, also in 1943.