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The Silent Sentinel

October 2010



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 and its Constitution.



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The Silent Sentinel via Email

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

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

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

October Meeting

Our monthly meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at VFW Post 3787, 4370 Twain Ave., San Diego. Our next meeting will be on 12 October, 2010. The post is located one-half block West of Mission Gorge Road, just north of I-8. The meeting begins at 7 p.m. The E-Board meets one hour earlier at 6 p.m.

Check us out on the World Wide Web

www.ussvisandiego.org

BINNACLE LIST

Al Strunk is home from the hospital and doing well. Al and Ruth thanks everyone for their prayers and best wishes!

Submarine Losses in September

Submitted by C J Glassford



GRAYLING (SS 209) - 76 Men on Board:
Probably Rammmed and Sunk, on 9 September 1943, by Japanese Transport in South China Sea, West of Luzon :

“ ALL HANDS LOST “

CISCO (SS 290) - 76 Men on Board:
Sunk, on 28 September 1943, by Japanese Observation Seaplane, and Gunboat (ex – US River Gunboat “Luzon “ (PR#7) in the Sulu Sea, off Panay Island :

“ ALL HANDS LOST “



USSVI/USSV WWII 2010 National Convention Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky



Hello all, and another convention has come and gone. I would like to Thank all the folks from the Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky Bases for a good time I had. Conventions are good for finding old shipmates and renewing the friendships that you gained at other conventions or boat reunions. I was at the convention from the 1-5 Sept and took about 1400 pictures. This convention was unique like our convention, but it had a special theme to it. I believe it was the last USSV WWII National Convention. There was a lot of my hero here and lots of stories told in their hospitality room. No to mention there was a lot of adult refreshments there!!!!

The first event I attended was the WWII SOS Breakfast which there was a lot of folks that showed up. There was a lot of socializing and stories going on at all the tables. For the most part it was nice see a lot of the folks from our convention and all the Thanks and praise and how folks had a Great time at our Convention. I was a little disappointed that there was no guest speaker for the event and they ran out of SOS. I ran into a few Boat/Group Reunions during my 1st day there and one of the boat reunions was the WWII USS PARCHE. I asked if any USS Parche Sailors were invited to the reunion and if so how much for the reunion and who to pay!! There were 8 of the WWII Parche sailors and family members of the Parche sailors there. There were 3 Parche SSN sailors there. There were videos of interviews with Capt. Ramage and a recount of the Battle where he earned the Congressional Medal of Honor (CMH). The guys there added lots of other stories from the different War Patrols they were on. There was 1 fellow who made all 6 War Patrols and the Atol bomb testing. I tell you that these men are my HEROS and knowing just a small part of the history they made will be something I will never forget!! Later that night I attended the Welcome Aboard Dinner and Opening Ceremony. The food was pretty good, but nothing special happened. There was a lot of socializing , sea stories, and drinking. Again I ran into lots of folks from the past conventions I have attended.



On Thursday, there was several events hosted but I didn't partake in them. I enjoyed walking around talking with folks and taking pictures. I was invited into the boat hospitality rooms, and the WWII hospitality room. I tell you this there were a lot of interesting folks out there. I attended the Base Commanders Training Seminar in the afternoon. Some of the topics that were discussed were Retention and keeping members involved with the base and National

events and programs. Discussed How to Hold a Meeting and keeping it FUN for everyone and including the spouse and/or family members to meetings and events the base holds. We talked about a Sea Dad Program and Welcome Letters to New Members and giving members a call or letter to see how they are doing. Other things BC can do to keep members involved and active are Pay Attention to the members and listen to them when they have Bitches, complaints, and recommendations. This will help us as an organization to keep the Brotherhood of the Phin alive! Last, to keep in contact with the military commands in your area so the base can have an open relationship with that command. I participated in an interview with the folks from Honor Navy Vets. They are collecting the history and stories from Submarine Sailors from all eras. They are pretty cool folks. In turn they will send you 10 copies of the interview for other family members to have or for whatever you would like to do with them. Pretty Cool!!



On Friday, it was the busiest day at the convention, with little time between events. The first thing was the Holland Club Breakfast with “BIG” Al Konetzni as the guest speaker. I love being able to know and talk to this man. He is a real people person and down to earth. Then I rolled right into the USSVI BC Group Meeting. The first 40 minutes of the meeting was a waste. I really support the Kaps for Kids program and God Bless John (person running the program) who has lots of energy to keep this program running strong. But 40 minutes talking about it was a little excess and later in the day hearing about it 2 more times. We also talked about keeping the base meeting short (business part) and fun and keeping the spouse and family members involved. Discussed other National programs anyone can get involve in like the Sub Memorials and Scholarships. From there I rolled into the Men’s and Ladies’ Luncheon which was pretty good. Both groups had entertainment that was good. I had a short break before attending the Tolling of the Boats Memorial Ceremony. The folks in Cincinnati put on a good presentation for the Ceremony with a USMC Honor Guard, Taps, and Bagpiper to close the Ceremony. Me, as always it gets me all choked up. One cool thing they had was a board with a world map and light that lit up for the location of the lost boat. Now that was a special touch to the Tolling of the Boats Ceremony. For dinner, I went on the Paddlewheel Dinner Cruise. That event was a Touch of Class for all events there. It was a real nice evening.



Saturday was a busy morning at the Annual Business meeting. I know the most important thing folks wanted to know about was the elections and the PA changes. Welllllllll our new National Commander is Mike Bircumshaw, NSVC is Jon Jaques, NJVC is Al Singleman, Treasurer is John Markiewicz, and Secretary is Tom Conlon. All the PA passed. We have over 13,500 members and 158 bases. There was over 800 people in attendance for the USSV WWII/USSVI 2010 convention. Our National archives have been moved to Little Rock AR from Groton CT. There were no problems with the elections with the exceptions of a few write-ins like Micky Mouse! Reviewed the Treasurers report and passed the budget. Mike Bircumshaw is looking for a new Editor for the American Submariner. We also discussed a National Fund Raising Program, Submarine Memorial in DC, Sub Floats to DC for the 2014 Veterans Day Parade for our 50Th anniversary, and the Secretary's report. We voted on having the 2013 National convention in Rochester MN. They had a good presentation and the vote passed. After the 2014 convention, the conventions will be held every other year (even years). On a sad note, we had one of our members suffer a Heart attack Friday night - John Crouse. He was the main drive for the St. Mary's Submarine Museum. Saturday night after the formal part of the banquet was over, the word was passed that John passed away on his final patrol. That night was the Banquet with Rear Admiral McLaughlin as the guest speaker. There was the induction of new officers for the USSV WWII Ceremony and then USSVI Awards. I think the Banquet was a flop because the dinner was served cold and the dinner rolls were served after we finished our meals. The seating was tight. We were sitting 10 people on an 8 people round table. And I thought sitting on the mess decks eating was tight. This was bad. Once I took my last pictures, I started making DVDs of all my pictures for the folks in Cincinnati.



That is all I have on the National Convention. I will hopefully see you next year in Branson/Springfield MO. Be safe and think about our shipmates.

V/R,
 Bob Bissonnette
 Base Commander



CJ GLASSFORD addressing new Chiefs at the the September 2010 Meet and Greet.
(Subvet attendees appear on the front cover of 'this' issue of the Silent Sentinel)

SBSD-Class Submarine Platform

Halibut Hangar, 28 September 2010

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is out with an updated analysis (pdf) of the Navy's 2011 shipbuilding budget for the Sea Based Strategic Deterrent (SBSD; aka SSBN-X or Ohio-class replacement) platform—a mind-boggling \$110 billion dollars for 12 platforms!

Our Navy's current [Cold War] thinking¹ has the SBSD at about the same displacement as the Ohio-class (18,750 tons)², notwithstanding four to eight fewer missile tubes—nearly \$9.1 billion dollars average cost per submarine, including non-recurring costs.

The lead platform in the class will cost a staggering \$13 billion or nearly 700 million dollars per thousand tons!

1. Actually it's an obsolete way of thinking or frozen system of beliefs that's driving our Navy's current thinking—it will not change unless continually challenged and even then with against the greatest of inertia.

Sixteen missile tubes becomes 20 that we'll fill with conventional cruise missile canisters until all this happy talk about zero nuclear weapons from the misfits and misinformed subsides.

2. Unfortunately our Navy seems to have abandoned its initial efforts to pursue a modified modular Virginia-class platform for the new SBSD platform.

Allegedly it is “reviewing” (some in Congress say withholding) a completed study for basing the SBSD on a modified Virginia-class platform (7,900 tons).

The details of our Navy's current thinking for an 18,750 ton SBSD platform and the Virginia-class based SBSD study must be made public.

Is The IDF Submarine Force Going Coed?

By Craig Hooper , Next Navy(Israel), 28 September 2010

The IDF is facing a manning problem. According to Ha'aretz, the Israeli Defense Forces' sub fleet is working to expand the submariner pipeline, growing from three sub teams to a total of ten. Are women going to be a part of this new cadre?

Look, finding enough guys capable of completing the grueling training cycle is hard enough, but, as the IDF sub fleet grows to five hulls, trebling the IDF sub force is pretty much impossible without a new source of recruits. Which gets us to the image at the right, taken from the Ha'aretz story. The sailor training in the background (working in the IDF's sweet new "land-sub" training facility) is either sporting some unusually long-hair or...the sailor is a woman.

Think about that. A woman in an IDF sub trainer. Not that a single photo should stand as proof, but, why else would somebody be in a submarine trainer but to, well, be training to serve on a sub?

If the IDF sub force is integrating (a big "if"), it is wise to recall that the IDF isn't integrating a big, relatively commodious boat. The IDF's modified U212 Dolphins are only about 2,000 tons, berthing a compliment of about thirty (give or take depending upon the mission at hand). And, back in 2006, the sub commander had this to say:

"The submarine was not built to accommodate both men and women. We are unable to allocate a special zone on the vessel for women dormitories. Why should we venture into something that has failed in a large part of the fleets in the world, where there is even more lenience on these issues?" he asked.

So, there we have it. Lot to overcome if they're gonna do it. But there is little reason to have anybody hard at work in a sub trainer unless they, at some point, are going to serve aboard a boat. Just sayin'.

Russia Completes Sea Trials for New Borey Class Strategic Submarines

India Defence Survey, 27 September 2010

2010-09-27 Russia's newest Borey class strategic nuclear-powered submarine, the Yury Dolgoruky, has completed sea trials in the White Sea and returned to its base in northern Russia, the Sevmasch shipyard said. The trials were part of the manufacturer's tests and the sub is now ready for final inspection by a state commission before it enters service with the Russian Navy.

"All systems of the submarine performed well, and the problems revealed during previous tests have been resolved," a Sevmasch spokesman said. The Yury Dolgoruky is 170 meters (580 feet) long, has a hull diameter of 13 meters (42 feet), a crew of 107, including 55 officers, a maximum depth of 450 meters (about 1,500 feet) and a submerged speed of about 29 knots. It can carry up to 16 ballistic missiles and torpedoes.

Construction costs totaled some \$713 mln, including \$280 mln for research and development. Three other Borey class nuclear submarines, the Alexander Nevsky, the Vladimir Monomakh, and Svyatitel Nikolai (St. Nicholas) are in different stages of completion. Russia is planning to build eight of these subs by 2015.

Fourth-generation Borey class nuclear-powered submarines are expected to constitute the core of Russia's modern strategic submarine fleet. The submarine's entry into service could be delayed however by a series of setbacks in the development of the troubled Bulava submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), which has officially suffered seven failures in 12 tests.

The future development of the Bulava has been questioned by some lawmakers and defense industry officials, who have suggested that all efforts should be focused on the existing Sineva SLBM. But the Russian military has insisted that there is no alternative to the Bulava and pledged to continue testing the missile until it is ready to be put into service with the Navy.

Jane's Said That China Has Made Three Yuan-Class Submarines

Chinese Military, 28 September 2010

According to "Jane's Defense Weekly" reported on September 20, China is building new types of "meta" class conventional submarines. Western media that China's new submarine design concepts have been comparable with the advanced Russian-made submarines.

New Design "inclusive"

"Jane's Defense Weekly," the article said that a new submarine recently appeared in a shipyard in Wuhan, is likely to be 041-type "element" class submarines. Displacement of the boat in between 3,000 tons to 4,000 tons, 667-type hull with Russia, "Dallas" class (its export-called "Amur" class) submarines like the command sets sail into the "Kilo" class submarine design. United States, "Strategy Page" Web site on September 23 article also pointed out that the latest a 041-type "element" class submarines that the creativity of the Chinese navy engineers are constantly upgrading.

Reported that China has made the three "meta" class submarines, and in continuous improvement, the appearance is the "dollar" third-class boats, and had the same level of service the two submarines are quite different. "Yuan" class with reference to the first boat, "Kilo" class submarine design of earlier models, but the second ship "Yuan" class boats have seen the new "Kilo" class submarines in the shadow, and "meta" level of third boats designed with the Russian Navy's most advanced "Lada" class similar.

Accordingly the Western media speculation, the Chinese submarine design is clearly coincident with the development of Russian-made submarines, model, and has reached a new level of Russian-made submarines. But the reality is, the Chinese submarine is taking the “inclusive” of the road. United States, “Global Security” website, “Yuan” class submarines into the Chinese self-developed “Song” class submarines and the Russian “Kilo” class submarines in the best design. The “meta” level the larger displacement, the U.S. officials and “Jane’s Defence Weekly” have previously speculated that the level of application of the AIP submarine technology (air independent propulsion system.)

In addition, the “Yuan” class submarines capable of launching China-made active / passive torpedoes and C-801 type submarine-launched anti-ship missiles, but also compatible with Russian TEST-71MKE wire-guided torpedoes and 3M-54E “club” submarine-launched anti-ship missile . Can be seen, after decades of exploration and development, China’s conventional submarines in the field of design and R & D has to keep up with the international trend, not imitation, but more reflect the unique design concept.

Conventional submarines still the main force

In several major countries with nuclear submarines, the United States and Britain is no longer conventional submarines, nuclear-powered submarines equipped only. In contrast, China, Russia and France still insist on “both nuclear” model of development, nuclear submarines in the equipment while continuing to develop high-performance conventional submarines. Western speculation that China has a 13 “Song” class, 12 Russian “Kilo”, three “meta” level, and 25 R-class submarines, which are conventional submarines. In addition, the Chinese Navy also has three “Han” class attack nuclear submarines. Although the “Han” class nuclear submarines cruising in the implementation of the same tasks, but its relatively high noise level can easily be found in the Western anti-submarine equipment, it is still the Chinese Navy conventional submarines “underwater fleet,” the main force.

Some analysts pointed out that the Chinese navy, “both nuclear” submarine development model is consistent with its operational needs. Nuclear submarine construction and maintenance costs high, it is difficult a lot of equipment, especially the development of new models require a long development cycle. In contrast, conventional submarines in the development, construction period is short, a lot of equipment in a short time, the formation of scale advantages. Currently, while several Chinese nuclear submarine naval equipment is mainly used for “strategic deterrence”, and large numbers of conventional submarines cruise take a daily task.

For the Chinese navy, the submarine can take development so as to keep improving; and conventional submarines are first-line equipment, need to “small step Run” through continuous improvement, steadily enhance the combat effectiveness. If the Western media reports and speculation is true, then the new “Yuan” class conventional submarines is the latest incarnation of this model.

Keeping The Pacific Pacific

The Looming U.S.-Chinese Naval Rivalry

By Seth Cropsey, *Foreign Affairs*, 27 September 2010

While visiting Japan in late August, Admiral Robert Willard, the leader of the U.S. Pacific Command, told journalists that China is almost ready to make operational the world’s first anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM). Anti-ship cruise missiles already exist in abundance, but they travel at about one-tenth the speed of a ballistic missile, possess far less kinetic energy, and are proportionately less lethal. According to recent Pentagon reports, the Chinese ASBM will have a range of at least 1,000 miles, whereas a long-range cruise missile has a range of about 600 miles.

Chinese military planners expect that the missile’s maneuverability will allow it to hit and put out of action or destroy large-deck aircraft carriers while they are at sea and too distant from the Chinese mainland, as a result of the fact that even the next generation of naval fighter aircraft will lack the range to return to their carriers safely if launched further than 600 miles from their intended target. This unprecedented missile range and accuracy would allow China to finally achieve its oft-stated goal: denying major U.S. naval forces a significant portion of the Western Pacific.

Ongoing friction between China and Taiwan poses the most immediate threat to U.S. Navy operations in the Western Pacific. Such an extension of Chinese firepower would erode the United States’ ability to honor its commitment to defend Taiwan if it were attacked. The U.S. Navy has no defense against the ASBM, nor does it have one in development. If the United States cannot counter and overcome the ASBM, U.S. influence in Asia will likely decline, China’s implicit claim to regional hegemony will gain traction, and a regional arms competition, driven by territorial disputes in the South China Sea, may erupt. Indeed, U.S. allies, including Australia, Japan, and South Korea, may begin to ask themselves fundamental questions about how to cope without the U.S. Navy’s presence, which has helped keep the peace in East Asia for decades, as exemplified by U.S. President Bill Clinton’s successful use of aircraft carriers in 1995 and 1996 to quell tensions between China and Taiwan in the Taiwan Straits.

If the U.S. Navy recedes from the Western Pacific over the next generation, its withdrawal may result in a regional arms buildup as U.S. allies scramble to fill the vacuum. In July, Tokyo announced that it would enlarge its submarine fleet for the first time in 36 years. In the spring of 2009, Australia announced its largest defense increase since World War II, with plans to double its submarine fleet and purchase powerful modern surface ships. South Korea is also modernizing its naval and amphibious forces but faces an additional consideration: What if China offers to replace receding U.S. influence by providing security to Seoul in exchange for South Korea expelling U.S. troops currently stationed there?

Until now, most U.S. policymakers and analysts have ignored China’s emerging missile capability, reflecting a general sense that the threat of growing Chinese military power is too remote to take seriously at present — a sense born from the United States’ focus

on fighting land wars at the expense of preserving the maritime power on which U.S. grand strategy has historically rested. But China's policy beyond its borders has recently become more assertive — a fact not unrelated to its new military and naval capabilities.

Willard's concern about China's ability to target U.S. aircraft carriers follows several months of aggressive Chinese foreign policy. In March, Beijing announced that the South China Sea is a "core" interest. An international body of water, the South China Sea stretches from China to the Philippines, down to the wide expanse of ocean that separates Malaysia and Vietnam, and serves as the shipping lane through which oil and other critical seaborne trade is transported between East Asia and the Middle East. Its many islands are the subject of disputed claims between China and other South Asian nations, such as Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. By labeling the sea a core interest, Beijing is signaling that it views the international body of water as an asset to be protected at all costs.

In mid-July, four months after its declaration concerning the South China Sea, China continued its expansionist maritime policy. Its official news agency, Xinhua, quoted a Chinese military academic opining that the Yellow Sea — an international body of water located between the Korean peninsula and China — is "pivotal to China's core interests, given that it is related not only to the extension of the country's maritime rights but also to its maritime security." Itself strategically important, the Yellow Sea was the site of a collision earlier this month, when Japanese naval vessels seized a Chinese trawler that had strayed too close to the disputed Senkaku Islands, under Japanese control but claimed by China as well.

Beijing returned its concern to the South China Sea in August, when it announced that it had used small manned submarines to plant China's national flag on the sea's floor. The implicit claim to sovereignty, along with China's earlier diplomatic claim to the South China Sea, is both provocative and illegal. Recent Chinese rhetoric suggests that Beijing is unwilling to compromise on its new claims of influence. In July, when the Obama administration presented a proposal to seek a regional consensus on how to settle disputes in the South China Sea, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi told a Singaporean diplomat that "China is a big country and other countries are just small countries, and that's just a fact."

China's path to regional hegemony raises questions about how the country will wield its new stature. With its military power on the brink of an exponential enlargement that threatens U.S. influence in East Asia, Beijing's recent actions and rhetoric suggest a darkening future for other states in the region that prefer the United States' traditional concern for maintaining freedom of navigation in the region, lack of interest in territorial gain, and policy of preventing the rise of an Asian hegemon — in direct contrast to China's apparent interest in becoming one.

The notion that might makes right has precedent in Asia. So does the use of naval power to support might. In the sixteenth century, Spanish ships seized the Philippines, while England enjoyed naval superiority in East Asia during its reign of empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

But to Chinese leaders, the most instructive example of nautical might translating into political power is that of Japan. Japan's history is an especially prescient warning about the dangers to Asia of an ambitious, well-armed regional hegemon. After becoming the dominant naval force in the Western Pacific during the first part of the twentieth century, Japan invaded, subjugated, and oppressed its neighbors, rapidly expanding its domain of control. Its ability to transport troops and material through the ocean made it a legitimate threat, from India to Hawaii.

The fact that Japan pursued such aggression does not prove that China would do the same if it achieves similar regional preeminence. But China's naval buildup, ASBM rocket technology, and claims to international waters are spurring its neighbors, such as Australia, India, and Vietnam, to substantially increase their naval fleets. Such developments indicate that the stability and security long ensured by a strong U.S. presence in the Western Pacific should no longer be taken for granted.

China's ASBM threat is serious, but the United States has the capacity to respond. Reductions in the size of U.S. carriers, increases in their number, and changes in aircraft design to expand their range, as well as other new technology, could neutralize the threat of Chinese missiles. Yet the growing U.S. deficit makes this unlikely, as does U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates' skepticism regarding the utility of such large naval forces. For the immediate future, the administration is right to shore up U.S. alliances in the Western Pacific and continue to pursue a region-wide agreement on how to resolve territorial disputes in the South China Sea. It should also increase the level of naval exercises with allies in the region and proceed as scheduled with joint naval exercises planned with Japan in December on or around the Ryukyu Islands, which form the eastern perimeter of the East China Sea.

The Obama administration should also lift its seeming gag order on the U.S. Navy's ability to speak candidly about the dangers posed by China's naval enlargement. Allowing the Navy to publicly discuss China's naval buildup as strategic justification for a larger naval force and presence could be useful: it might help build congressional support for reversing the U.S. Navy's virtual self-disarmament. The likely alternative to a more vigorous and robust security and diplomatic policy in East Asia is that the U.S. will be forced to surrender the benign preeminence it has exercised in the Pacific to the benefit of our own economic interest as well as the security of nearly half the world's population. China's anti-ship ballistic missile will not determine the future of U.S. power; the United States' future actions will.

Proposed Ballistic-Missile Submarine Nears Pentagon Review

By Elaine M. Grossman, Global Security Newswire, 27 September 2010

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Navy's emerging plans for a new nuclear-armed submarine are slated to undergo a pivotal Defense Department review in November, with the initial backing of a key congressional committee in hand (see GSN, Aug. 10).

The Senate Appropriations Committee on Sept. 14 said it fully supported the fiscal 2011 plans to perform design, engineering and prototyping work on the next-generation ballistic-missile submarine.

Lawmakers noted, though, that they had imposed a 10 percent reduction in funds on the Obama administration request for \$493 million because program delays this past year would prevent the Navy from completing all its earlier anticipated work for 2011. The partial funding would leave the effort with \$444.7 million for the coming year.

The Senate panel's counterpart committee in the House has not yet acted on an unreleased subcommittee version of the defense appropriations bill. However, according to one Washington insider, the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee offered full funding for the proposed submarine, dubbed the "SSBN(X)."

With the new fiscal year beginning on Oct. 1, Congress is expected to pass a continuing resolution that would allow the Defense Department to maintain operations temporarily until the appropriations legislation is enacted. For the more formal legislation, defense appropriations would likely be consolidated with other funding bills into an omnibus spending package, sources said.

Meanwhile, the Navy this summer reportedly submitted to Ashton Carter, the Pentagon acquisition czar, its major design recommendations for the new submarine, which is to replace today's Ohio-class vessels.

Carter earlier this month said that to cut costs, the Defense Department would limit the replacement submarine's "size and speed," though he indicated that design details remained classified.

An "emphasis on affordability is already being applied to the next-generation ballistic missile submarine, where we are trimming [design] requirements without compromising critical capability," said Defense Secretary Robert Gates, appearing alongside Carter at a Sept. 14 press briefing.

"The per-unit estimated cost had risen as high as \$7 billion. It is now roughly \$5 billion," Gates said. "The goal is a reduction of fully 27 percent in a program where total cost is expected to be more than \$100 billion."

Design features to be decided during the Defense Acquisition Board meeting, led by Carter, will include how many launch tubes each boat will contain, which could affect the number of weapons the vessel can carry, according to defense sources. Today's Ohio-class submarines feature 24 launch tubes, each of which can shoot a single Trident 2 D-5 ballistic missile.

Another detail on the drawing boards is the size of each launch tube, which could affect the types of future missile the submarine might field.

Like today's nuclear-armed submarines, the replacement vessels will initially carry the Trident D-5. The new boats are also expected to be capable of carrying a next generation of nuclear-armed missiles. They might be fitted with a small number of conventionally armed weapons, as well, according to Navy officials.

Retaining D-5 missile capability in the new submarine will help maintain continuity during a 13-year period between 2029 and 2042, when the Ohio-class boats gradually retire and their replacements are introduced into the force, Rear Adm. Terry Benedict, director of the Navy Strategic Systems Planning office, said in July on Capitol Hill.

Under the "New START" nuclear arms control agreement, signed by the United States and Russia in April, the Pentagon anticipates reducing its Ohio-class vessels from 14 to 12 and capping its Trident D-5 missile force at 240.

Today the fleet carries 288 deployed D-5s, armed with a total 1,152 nuclear warheads, according to Robert Norris and Hans Kristensen. The same number of D-5 warheads is expected to be retained after New START enters into force, despite the reduction in missiles, the two nuclear force analysts reported. The numbers would allow for a slightly higher average warhead loading on each missile, if the Pentagon so desired.

If Carter's review board approves Navy plans, the SSBN(X) effort will move into its first major phase as a Pentagon acquisition program, called "Milestone A."

Leading up to the November gathering, the Navy in May 2009 completed an analysis that explored various alternatives for meeting a continued military requirement for a portion of the nation's nuclear stockpile to be deployed on submarines, according to service budget documents. The Pentagon has not released the results of the classified study.

A final report on the Navy's review of options was completed last September and, in December 2009, the Pentagon's Program Analysis and Evaluation Office certified the service's assessment, the Navy documents state.

However, the House Armed Services Committee earlier this year told the Defense Department it was dissatisfied with the process thus far. It admonished the Pentagon for not sharing with Capitol Hill more information about its analysis of alternatives, in advance of the Milestone A decision and the administration's request for hundreds of millions of dollars in new program spending.

The lawmakers said in May that although they support the continuation of a "robust sea-based strategic deterrent force" after the Ohio-class submarines retire, the Defense Department has moved too hastily on deciding what capabilities the new boats must have.

"First," the panel stated in its report on the fiscal 2011 defense authorization bill, "the basic requirement of how much and what type of deterrent capability is sufficient for the national military strategy has not been communicated to the committee."

Second, the lawmakers complained, the House panel "has not been afforded the opportunity to review the analysis of alternatives conducted by the Navy, which determined that a submarine large enough to support the Trident 2 D-5 missile weapons system is the preferred vessel to continue deterrent capability."

Finally, the committee said it "has concerns that the decision to proceed with a submarine program of similar size as the Ohio-class ships was made prior to the analysis of alternatives, and that a potential use of a modified Virginia-class submarine, in production today, was discounted in favor of maintaining the Trident 2 D-5 weapons system."

Using the smaller Virginia-class attack submarine as a basis for the new SSBN(X) could help the Navy avoid billions of dollars in spending on a new design, according to advocates. The drawback, detractors say, is that without a major redesign, a submarine smaller than the Ohio-class design would likely be limited to carrying shorter-range ballistic missiles.

If the Trident D-5 were required to fit inside a Virginia-class design, the service would have to modify the submarine with a “humpback” silhouette to make it capable of housing the weapon’s long missile tubes, Kristensen said last month.

In an e-mailed response to questions last week, he said the time has come to reassess whether such long-range missiles — and a correspondingly large submarine to accommodate them — are still required in the post-Cold War era.

“For the foreseeable future, it simply makes no sense to design an SSBN with a capability similar to what was needed to evade Soviet attack submarines, equip it with long-range SLBMs [submarine-launched ballistic missiles] to maximize patrol areas, and deploy these SSBNs with two crews at an operational tempo that is similar to what we did during the height of the Cold War,” said Kristensen, who directs the Nuclear Information Program at the Federation of American Scientists.

“Given the enormous price tag, Russia’s problems in fielding its next SSBN and SLBM, China’s slow SSBN program and recent SLBM development problems, Britain’s inability to afford a new SSBN, and India’s growing SSBN plans, I think it is time to think about how to limit deployment and operations of nuclear weapons at sea, rather than continuing business as usual but with more [international] players,” he said.

However, one retired submarine officer said it is imperative that the Navy effort embrace new technologies and avoid getting mired in delays. The source asked not to be named in this article because he was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

“We need to move forward with the new submarine. There is no plausible future where it isn’t required,” he told Global Security Newswire last week. “The last ships of the [new] class will still be in service 60 to 70 years from now. That puts a great premium on building in flexibility and adaptability and using the best technology available. That costs money.”

The former officer said Gates should move cautiously in his effort to trim costs on the next-generation vessel.

“Balancing the need for building such a ship with the equally important need to control costs is a real challenge for DOD and the Navy, [but] like so many public policy decisions, it isn’t a choice between right and wrong but a balance between competing-but-incompatible goals,” the retired submariner said.

By contrast, Kristensen suggested that SSBN(X) costs could be more significantly reduced as part of a fundamental reassessment of how strategic security requirements translate into military hardware.

“I’m all for Defense Secretary Gates’ effort to trim the SSBN requirements,” he said. “But it should not just be about saving money, but also about changing the nuclear posture and [reducing] the role of nuclear weapons.”

Kristensen was referring to President Barack Obama’s April 2009 pledge in Prague to “reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy, and urge others to do the same.” A year later, the Pentagon committed itself to implementing that objective as part of its Nuclear Posture Review, a 49-page report on strategy, forces and readiness.

The administration announced some limited changes to nuclear targeting policy in the posture review and has continued Bush-era investments in long-range, conventionally armed “prompt global strike” weapons as a niche alternative to atomic arms.

However, some critics grumble that the administration could take additional substantial steps to bring its warhead and delivery-system investments more in line with the goal of limiting the role of nuclear weapons.

At a July hearing, House Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton (D-Mo.) asked whether the Navy had “done any studies on whether a replacement such as the Virginia-class submarine can perform the same [nuclear deterrence] duties, with obviously an alteration in the missiles and the ship somewhat.”

Navy Undersecretary Robert Work responded that his service had indeed considered that option in its analysis of alternatives.

However, Work said, “the judgment is that because we have elected to go with the D-5 missile, that using the Virginia is not the right way to go, that it is a much better and more efficient thing to exploit our existing infrastructure on a 42- or 43-foot diameter hull.”

Skelton scolded Work for what he said appeared to be a Navy failure to consider the use of a smaller missile in the next-generation boat, which might make the Virginia-class design more feasible as an alternative. Any need to design a larger replacement submarine “might well eat into your attempt” to field a 313-ship Navy, he said.

“I think you ought to ask the engineers about a missile that might fit in the smaller submarine rather than the multibillion dollars you might have to sink into a replacement for the Ohio-class submarine,” the committee chairman said.

Skelton’s panel stated in its May defense spending document that it would “withhold authority” for the Pentagon to obligate more than half of the \$493 million in fiscal 2011 funds requested for the SSBN(X) development program, “until the secretary of defense certifies to the committee the necessity to continue sea-based deterrence with the Trident 2 D-5 weapons system.”

This defense-secretary report is also expected to spell out the guidance the Navy used in crafting its list of alternatives, projected costs and schedules for any alternatives, and the “reasoning” the Navy used in opting to require that the new boat carry the D-5 missile. No similar language was advanced by the committee’s counterpart panel in the Senate.

Groton Tower's Sub-Escape Lesson Sinks In

About 3,000 a year go through practice ordeal

By Jennifer McDermott, *The Day*, 25 September 2010

Groton - Standing near the bottom of a 40-foot tower of water, a young Navy recruit described how he would travel to the top.

Seaman Ryan Straughan, wearing an inflated suit the color of an orange highlighter, told the instructor that he would exhale or breathe normally in the water.

"What do you never, ever do during sub escape?" asked the instructor, Jason Saiz.

"Hold your breath," Straughan correctly replied. Doing so could cause his lungs to overinflate.

A series of accurate answers in the verbal quiz, preceded by multiple briefings, earned Straughan the right to climb the ladder at the bottom of the tower into the escape trunk, similar to the one on submarines that officers and sailors would use to escape in an emergency.

The Naval Submarine School is home to the one-of-a-kind trainer for the U.S. Navy, used to build a sailor's confidence in the escape equipment on a submarine and in his own abilities to use it should he ever need to.

Two U.S. submarines, the Thresher and the Scorpion, sank in the 1960s killing both crews. The Kursk, one of the most advanced vessels in the Russian fleet, sank in the Barents Sea in 2000.

The Kursk disaster prompted the U.S. Navy to review its escape training, equipment and procedures, and then abandon the previous training method used in Groton - non-pressurized training conducted in a pool.

Students climbed out of an escape trunk and jumped into a pool to simulate surfacing, never feeling the buoyancy of their suits or traveling up through a column of water.

Construction began in 2005 on a \$17 million trainer in Groton, and the submarine school formally opened it last fall. The tower holds 84,000 gallons of water, is 20 feet in diameter and 40 feet high. The suit worn by the students is designed for escapes in water up to 600 feet deep.

Frank Gorham, the submarine escape program manager and a retired master chief master diver, hopes the students will never have to use what they learn in the two-day course.

But if they do, he said, "we've given them the best training possible."

Safety precautions taken

Straughan and his classmates took the course this week as part of Basic Enlisted Submarine School. Nine of the 24 students passed the first day's tests- a medical screening, classroom instruction and clearing their ears inside a recompression chamber- and moved on to do the pressurized training in the tower on the second day.

While waiting his turn, Straughan said to the friend next to him, "Dude, this is like the most fun day I've had in the Navy."

"You told me that like 10 times," Fireman Apprentice Eric Schnackenberg, 22, of Iowa, said to him.

"Cause it's true," said Straughan, a 20-year-old from Louisiana.

Inside the dry escape trunk, Straughan held on to a handle with his right hand and plugged a tube from his suit into the air supply. His suit inflated. Water began to fill the chamber.

Once the pressure inside equaled to the pressure at the bottom of the tower, the hatch opened. The air that was trapped escaped to the surface as a large bubble.

An instructor guided Straughan through the hatch and into the tower, where two other divers were waiting. For safety reasons, they hooked Straughan onto a wire that ran to the surface.

One gave Straughan an OK sign. He said his name, rate and "I'm OK!"

The instructor gave a second OK sign. Straughan yelled "Hooyah!" The instructor let go.

Straughan shot up 37 feet through the water. Two divers were waiting at the surface; one grabbed hold of his suit.

"I'm OK," Straughan yelled. After he was unhooked from the wire, he climbed out of the tower and stood on a line for 10 minutes.

Two Navy doctors and the Navy divers working as instructors monitor the students for any physiological problems, including numbness, weakness or changes in coordination and thinking.

The most common injury is ear pain caused by not clearing their ears properly under pressure. The most dangerous is overinflated lungs, since a resulting gas bubble can travel to the brain or heart and cause a stroke or heart attack.

A hyperbaric chamber is near the top of the pool in case of an emergency, but it has not been needed.

Annually, about 3,000 sailors go through the training. The class is not a requirement, since it would be difficult to bring everyone back to the school for the course, but most new recruits take it, along with many officers and senior sailors who return to the school for additional instruction.

After, Straughan said he was nervous that he would not be able to clear his ears. Students wear nose clips since they cannot reach inside the hood to pinch their noses.

Once Straughan realized the technique was working, he said it was "just excitement from that point forward."

"You're just cruising," said Straughan, who plans to be a sonar technician on a submarine.

Seaman Apprentice Nicholas Flanagan, who also practiced an escape in the tower, said he was nervous at first, but the instructors gave such explicit instructions multiple times that he felt comfortable it would go well.

Flanagan, 19, of Minnesota, said his confidence in his ability to get out of a sinking submarine before the training was about a “two.” “Now I’m a nine,” he said, “maybe a 10.”

Israel Navy’s Submarine Fleet: An Intimate But Demanding Unit

By Anshel Pfeffer, Ha’aretz, 27 September 2010

The Israel Navy’s submarine fleet is one of the Israel Defense Forces’ most intimate units. The atmosphere in the unit derives not only from the nature of its missions, which require several dozen men to remain together underwater in an iron tube for many long days, but also because very few soldiers serve in the unit.

In the coming decade, the fleet is to undergo a revolution. It will start when two upgraded versions of the Dolphin submarine join the ranks in the coming two years. But the most significant change will be the expansion of the fleet’s manpower from the three existing teams to ten teams by the year 2018. This will allow the fleet to carry out many more long-range missions.

In the past few years, as the hidden battle intensified against arms shipments from Iran to Hezbollah and Hamas, the navy has taken over from the air force the role of the IDF’s long arm. “From our perspective, the professional achievement of an underwater commando is to be part of the first crew to go into a new arena and study it in depth,” says one officer, with a smile.

The IDF rarely publishes details about the submarines’ operations, but according to foreign publications, in addition to collecting intelligence and conventional sea warfare, the three Dolphins are equipped with both torpedoes and the ability to launch guided missiles armed with a nuclear warhead. When a Dolphin submarine passed through the Suez Canal a few months ago, the foreign media interpreted this as an intention to station an Israeli submarine in the Persian Gulf.

Secrecy is second nature to the submarine crews. “There are many missions where we ourselves don’t know what exactly we are supposed to do,” says a former soldier who recently completed his service in the unit. “We get an order to reach a certain spot and that’s it. Much of the time, even the officers understand what they were doing there only after the mission.”

Cut off from the world

The soldiers begin experiencing isolation already at the initial stages of their training. The training school is part of the busy general Navy training base in Haifa, but their commanders make sure the atmosphere is closed and isolated, like that of basic training in the desert 20 years ago.

“They come for three weeks and the moment they enter, they hand over their cellphones,” explains the commander of the school, Maj. Yisrael. “They can speak with their parents once a week, on Fridays, from a public telephone.”

Demand to join the unit has increased in recent years, and five recruits now compete for every place. However, more than 40 percent drop out during the first few months. “I take them to see a submarine at the beginning of the course,” says Maj. Yisrael. “I tell them that’s the place they will live for four and a half years [since submarine crewmen sign on for an additional year and a half of career army service]. There are some who leave the course voluntarily at the beginning because they feel it’s not sufficiently combative. They want to see the white of the enemy’s eyes.”

During the first four and a half months of the course, the trainees at the base are permitted to move only between the school building, the dining hall and their dormitories. Anyone who leaves the area is punished. “They will live in a submarine for periods of 18 to 30 days,” Yisrael explains. “If we catch them speaking to someone else on the base, the first time they do so they will receive a warning, the second time they will be severely punished, and the third time we will simply have to say goodbye to them.”

He explains that “during the first few months, the instructors are with the trainees all the time and they are under 24-hour surveillance. We see who gets irritated, who is careless, how they work and talk with one another. We take note of the most minute details, and punish them for everything. A submariner has to understand that he has left behind his entire civilian life. This is discipline and meticulousness at a completely different level.”

During the 13 months of training, the soldiers are required to memorize thousands of pages of complicated technical details, and learn not only to operate their own combat positions but also to repair them underwater if necessary. “We look for people who value fellowship, and show responsibility and technical skills,” Yisrael says, “but mainly people who are able to learn a huge quantity of material in a short period. Even after they complete the course, they study all the time in the submarine.”

During the first stage of the course, the soldiers still go out on marches, mainly in order to create a feeling of camaraderie and team spirit, but later the physical side is emphasized less. Submarine crewmen are defined as combat soldiers in every sense, but in terms of weapons training they undergo the same course as non-combat soldiers (“Gunner 02”). Their combat experience takes place in shorts and T-shirts opposite flickering screens, but they are sent to the most dangerous of arenas, far from the Israel’s borders.

1,900 tons under the sea

In order to expand the training possibilities, two advanced simulators were built in the past two years; the trainees practice there for hundreds of hours before they go out on an operational mission. The simulators accurately imitate the combat positions in the submarine’s operational spaces: the combat information center from which all operational systems are deployed and the technical center that controls the 1,900-ton submarine’s engineering systems.

In the technical center, one can generally find a helmsman and two operators (one junior and one senior) as well as a duty officer. They will be the first who need to react in case of an emergency such as water penetrating the submarine or other physical damage. When there is a real fear of serious damage to the vessel, they have to carry out an emergency weapons delivery, and the submarine then empties all its containers simultaneously and surfaces immediately.

The combat information center simulator is defined as a tactical trainer that is capable of creating a scenario of an entire operational mission. It includes 60 computers and setting it up, which is nearing completion, has taken more than a year. The project cost some NIS 30 million.

The center has two periscopes that enable the men to look out of the submarine, a radar detection position, control and supervision positions, weapons, sonar and a navigation table. In a routine sailing, two officers and five other crew members man the center. One officer always has an eye glued to the periscope, and the senior officer in the group is the duty officer effectively in charge of the submarine at a given moment. In addition to the submarine's commander, the team includes three officers who can fulfill this task. "This officer has immense responsibility," explains one submarine officer. "You are close to a hostile shore, looking through the periscope alone at a target, and if you are discovered you have only a few seconds to respond and make a decision."

During an operation, the tiny combat center is filled with some 20 officers and other crew members. "Everyone here knows exactly where he has to stand and when to talk," explains Major Menahem, the commander of the simulator who was the deputy commander of a submarine until a year ago. "It is very crowded here but also very quiet. Messages are conveyed by glancing or uttering one word."

Only some of the people in the center have a chair or a screen of their own. Even the commander of the submarine does not have a chair when there is an emergency, and generally takes his place somewhere between the two periscopes from where he can see all the most important screens. The rest of the crew know which positions they have to take so they can view relevant information without getting in each other's way.

Everything is documented

A large part of the submarines' work is gathering intelligence. The fleet does not give out details relating to the technical capabilities of the detectors and cameras on the two periscopes, or the distance from shore at which they can operate. "Let's just say that I can see inside people's homes," says Maj. Menahem. "We synchronize the equipment with the traffic lights on the coastal highway."

The tactical simulator allows a wide variety of training possibilities, from preparing an individual for the specific position he will man in the submarine to training future team heads and duty officers, and also entire crews. The simulator's instructors feed the positions with the mission plan and unexpected situations. All activities are filmed and after the training session they go to a debriefing room to examine their moves. The facility makes it possible to create an entire mission for the crew, both of the routine and emergency types.

The simulator has also enhanced the competence test that crewmen have to pass every year. The test begins with a variety of scenarios on the simulator, and then Maj. Yisrael and several instructors go out with the crew on a three-day test at sea.

The officers and crew members who will man the fourth Dolphin, which is due to arrive from a German shipyard next year, are currently undergoing training. The fifth submarine will arrive in Israel in 2012. At this stage, the navy is planning to train two crews for every submarine. The main obstacle today to keeping the submarines at sea for longer periods is the need for crews to rest, study, prepare for operations and spend time with their families.

In the future, the navy plans that the moment a submarine returns to base, it will fuel and leave again with a fresh crew. In numerical terms, manpower will be trebled. Veteran officers in the unit - in its 51 years of existence only some 2,000 officers and combatants have served there - are afraid that, at the same time as the unit increases its operational strength, something of the familial feeling will be lost.

The Repo Man Grabs Greek U-Boats

Strategy Page, 26 September 2010

The financial crises in Greece has claimed another victim, the four German Type 214 subs the Greek Navy bought, but was unable to pay for. One of the boats was built in Germany, the other three in a Greek shipyard. But the Greeks owed the German manufacturer, and the Greek shipyard, nearly \$800 million. The Greek government has now admitted that the cash is not available, and is not likely to be for some time. So the 214s will be auctioned off to the highest bidder.

Late payment has not been the only problem with these subs. For the last four years, Greece and German submarine builder ThyssenKrupp have been arguing over the quality of German work on the Type 214 boats. Six months ago, the Greeks finally agreed to the original deal, and declared the quality issues resolved. It was about time. Four years ago, the first Type 214 arrived from Germany. But the Greeks quickly declared that the boat suffered from 400 defects. Meanwhile, the other three 214s were being built in Greece, and the first one of those was about ready for launch.

When the Germans first heard of the complaints, they thought it was politics. A new Greek government had just been installed, and it was common for the new officials to try and make the previous gang look bad. The Germans also expected that the Greeks were using this defect list to renegotiate the contract, and pay less than they had agreed to. The Germans eventually concluded that nearly all the 400 defects were bogus.

Finding that that all the claims were false or exaggerated, the Germans sued for breach of contract. The Greeks responded by refusing to accept the sub, which remained tied up in Germany. Then the Germans threatened to withdraw technical help for the Greek shipyard that was building the other three boats, and go to court to prevent the Greeks from using any of the German technology.

Meanwhile, the three boats constructed in the Greek shipyard are largely finished, but not complete. Two years ago, the Greeks offered to settle the dispute, but they didn't have the cash to make the required payments.

The new deal had the Greeks accepting the first sub, and then selling it. The Greeks still wouldn't admit that their defect list was a fraud. The Germans agreed to resume assisting the Greek shipyard, and withdraw its lawsuits. Greece promised to make required payments, which was not done. It's believed that Greece's current financial problems (spending more than they promised the European Union that they would) was a major factor in this settlement. This debt problem has forced the government to cut way back on spending. That, plus the German threat to, in effect, shut down the Greek shipyard, and throw 1,400 people out of work, forced the government to back down on the crises it had created. But the cash was simply not there to pay for the subs, so now the deal goes back to the courts, and the 214s head for the auction block.

Meanwhile, Greece has eight German Type 209 subs. These 1,100 ton boats entered service in the 1970s and are being kept in service via regular upgrades and refurbishment. The 214s (ultimately eight of them) were to replace the 209s. Since that deal has finally died, the Greek submarine force will just fade away over the next decade or so. Archrival Turkey has bought six Type 214s, with the first arriving in five years.

While U.S. Is Distracted, China Develops Sea Power

By Robert D. Kaplan, Washington Post, 26 September 2010

The greatest geopolitical development that has occurred largely beneath the radar of our Middle East-focused media over the past decade has been the rise of Chinese sea power. This is evinced by President Obama's meeting Friday about the South China Sea, where China has conducted live-fire drills and made territorial claims against various Southeast Asian countries, and the dispute over the Senkaku Islands between Japan and China in the East China Sea, the site of a recent collision between a Chinese fishing trawler and two Japanese coast guard ships.

Whereas an island nation such as Britain goes to sea as a matter of course, a continental nation with long and contentious land borders, such as China, goes to sea as a luxury. The last time China went to sea in the manner that it is doing was in the early 15th century, when the Ming Dynasty explorer Zheng He sailed his fleets as far as the Horn of Africa. His journeys around the southern Eurasian rim ended when the Ming emperors became distracted by their land campaigns against the Mongols to the north. Despite occasional unrest among the Muslim Uighur Turks in western China, history is not likely to repeat itself. If anything, the forces of Chinese demography and corporate control are extending Chinese power beyond the country's dry-land frontiers — into Russia, Mongolia and Central Asia.

China has the world's second-largest naval service, after only the United States. Rather than purchase warships across the board, it is developing niche capacities in sub-surface warfare and missile technology designed to hit moving targets at sea. At some point, the U.S. Navy is likely to be denied unimpeded access to the waters off East Asia. China's 66 submarines constitute roughly twice as many warships as the entire British Royal Navy. If China expands its submarine fleet to 78 by 2020 as planned, it would be on par with the U.S. Navy's undersea fleet in quantity, if not in quality. If our economy remains wobbly while China's continues to rise — China's defense budget is growing nearly 10 percent annually — this will have repercussions for each nation's sea power. And with 90 percent of commercial goods worldwide still transported by ship, sea control is critical.

The geographical heart of America's hard-power competition with China will be the South China Sea, through which passes a third of all commercial maritime traffic worldwide and half of the hydrocarbons destined for Japan, the Korean Peninsula and northeastern China. That sea grants Beijing access to the Indian Ocean via the Strait of Malacca, and thus to the entire arc of Islam, from East Africa to Southeast Asia. The United States and others consider the South China Sea an international waterway; China considers it a "core interest." Much like when the Panama Canal was being dug, and the United States sought domination of the Caribbean to be the preeminent power in the Western Hemisphere, China seeks domination of the South China Sea to be the dominant power in much of the Eastern Hemisphere.

We underestimate the importance of what is occurring between China and Taiwan, at the northern end of the South China Sea. With 270 flights per week between the countries, and hundreds of missiles on the mainland targeting the island, China is quietly incorporating Taiwan into its dominion. Once it becomes clear, a few years or a decade hence, that the United States cannot credibly defend Taiwan, China will be able to redirect its naval energies beyond the first island chain in the Pacific (from Japan south to Australia) to the second island chain (Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands) and in the opposite direction, to the Indian Ocean.

To wit, China is building a blue water navy, even as it is helping to fund and construct ports in Burma, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The Chinese will not have naval bases in these countries: India would find that far too provocative, and the Chinese are taking pains so others see their rise as peaceful and non-hegemonic. Rather, these harbors will be visited by Chinese warships and will provide warehousing for Chinese consumer goods destined for the Middle East. China is building a far-flung trading network, ultimately to be protected by its warships — the British Empire refitted for a 21st-century era of globalization.

America's preoccupation with the Middle East suits China perfectly. We are paying in blood and treasure to stabilize Afghanistan while China is building transport and pipeline networks throughout Central Asia that will ultimately reach Kabul and the trillion dollars' worth of minerals lying underground. Whereas Americans ask how can we escape Afghanistan, the Chinese, who are already prospecting for copper there, ask: How can we stay? Our military mission in Afghanistan diverts us from properly reacting to the Chinese naval challenge in East Asia.

The United States should not consider China an enemy. But neither is it in our interest to be distracted while a Chinese economic empire takes shape across Eurasia. This budding empire is being built on our backs: the protection of the sea lines of communication by the U.S. Navy and the pacification of Afghanistan by U.S. ground troops. It is through such asymmetry — we pay far more to maintain what we have than it costs the Chinese to replace us — that great powers rise and fall. That is why the degree to which the United States can shift its focus from the Middle East to East Asia will say much about our future prospects as a great power. Robert D. Kaplan is the author of “Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power.” He is a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security and a national correspondent for the Atlantic magazine.

Admiral Stirs Questions On Israel’s “Nuclear” Subs

By Dan Williams, Reuters, 22 September 2010

JERUSALEM - An apparently innocuous note from an official history of Israeli submarines has offered a glimpse into the murky depths of the country’s nuclear secrecy.

Contributing a preface and summation chapter for the recently published “Israeli Vessels in the Fourth Dimension”, former admiral Shaul Chorev writes that the five major powers — the United States, Russia, China, France and Britain — have deployed submarines with nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles. With India planning to match them by decade’s end, Chorev writes, it would be “the sixth country in the world to have a sea-based strategic deterrence capability” — implying, by default, that Israel’s submarines carry conventional arms only. That seems hard to reconcile with analysts’ assumptions that Israel’s three, diesel-fuelled Dolphin submarines are “second strike” nuclear missile platforms, deterring any catastrophic attack on the Jewish state by promising retaliation in kind. Though the publishers said the book underwent vetting by military censors, Chorev’s statement also appears to clash with the “ambiguity” policy under which Israel neither confirms nor denies having — or lacking — nuclear bombs in any form.

As current director of the Israel Atomic Energy Commission, Chorev helps fine-tune this four-decade-old official reticence, making it unlikely that he would commit a faux pas in print.

Asked about the book passage, a commission spokeswoman had no immediate comment. But a former Israeli official who had been in charge of safeguarding state secrets played down its impact. “He was writing about foreign navies, so this should not be too much of a concern,” the ex-official said, also acknowledging that censors were generally more vigilant for disclosures about existing Israeli warheads and delivery systems.

Much hangs on what Chorev means by “capability”.

Another former official who spoke on condition of anonymity said Chorev may have been hinting that, while the Dolphins are able to fire nuclear missiles, they are not routinely deployed with them aboard. Unlike nuclear-powered submarines, the Dolphins must be regularly refuelled and serviced in port.

PARSING STRATEGY

“Israel would only need a ‘second strike’ option when there is the threat of it coming under a ‘first strike’, and none of its enemies has the bomb yet. That obviously affects operational planning,” the former official said. Stephen Saunders, editor of Jane’s Fighting Ships Yearbook, said it looked like Chorev was drawing a distinction between major powers’ nuclear submarines, which are big enough to carry long-range “strategic” missiles, and the Dolphin, whose 10 torpedo tubes accommodate much less powerful cruise missiles. “Therefore, with a nuclear warhead, a cruise missile ... could be described as a sub-strategic weapon. Whether or not the Israelis have such a weapon is open to question,” Saunders said.

“I can only suggest that the relatively short range and vulnerability of sub-sonic cruise missiles makes them less credible as a deterrent.”

Independent analysts estimate that the Jewish state has anywhere from 80 to 200 nuclear weapons. Israel has two more diesel-fuelled Dolphin submarines on order from Howaldtswerke-Deutsche Werft, a German firm building them at a steep discount as part of Berlin’s commitment to shoring up a Jewish state founded in the wake of the Holocaust.

Iran To Unveil New Submarines, Frigates

Press TV, 22 September 2010

Commander of the Iranian Army Major General Ataollah Salehi says the country will soon unveil new generations of destroyers, frigates and submarines.

Iran will soon unveil and launch the second generation of Jamaran destroyers, Sina class frigates as well as a new generation of submarines, Salehi said Wednesday.

He made the remarks on the sidelines of a ceremony commemorating the 1980-1988 Iraqi-imposed war on Iran.

Salehi warned against any act of aggression on the country’s territory and said Iran could repel any attack due to its deterrent powers.

“The enemy should beware that if our country is attacked we will not allow them to leave the region safely,” the Iranian commander added.

Jamaran — a multi-purpose warship that blends anti-submarine capabilities with defense systems against surface and air attacks — became operational earlier this year.

Iran has so far launched different classes of advanced submarines including Qaem, Nahang and Ghadir.

Pakistan China Cooperation In Building Submarines, Bigger Ships War Identified

Pakistan Daily, 21 September 2010

After successful completion of construction of three F-22 P Frigates in China, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Noman Bashir said that Pakistan has identified to China the cooperation in the field of construction of submarine, bigger war ships, acquiring modern weapons and equipments. "We have the history of cooperation in the Navy with China like we have cooperation in all other fields", said Noman Bashir while talking to media here at a reception on Saturday evening in which Ambassador of Pakistan to China Masood Khan was also present.

The CNS said that Pakistan Navy has already taken over three Frigates and the fourth one is being constructed with Chinese cooperation in Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works and hoped that like the three frigates, the construction of fourth ship in Karachi will be completed ahead of schedule.

"We will not stop here and this cooperation will continue", said Admiral Noman Bashir while replying to a question.

He said that during his meetings with Chinese side, he had identified areas including building of submarines, as so far we had not entered into joint construction of submarines.

This is one of areas Pakistan would now like to explore, he noted.

He said that Pakistan also like to go for construction of bigger ships with cooperation of China.

These ships would be bigger than the current F-22 P Frigates, he added.

There is lot of discussion that are taking place, he said adding "obviously we will have the ships and submarines which will be according to our requirements and specifications".

Also, the CNS said that in the areas of weapons and sensors we are going beyond what we had.

On floods in Pakistan and Chinese relief assistance, Admiral Noman Bashir said that we are grateful to the government and the people of China for their timely assistance for the flood affected people.

He said that the Chinese Medical team is doing an excellent job and Pakistan Navy has taken the responsibility to look after them.

He said that before coming here he went to the Chinese Mobile Hospital which was established in Thatta and they were doing remarkable job.

In addition to medical team and hospital, there was lot of flood relief supplies we received from China.

Flood had caused great deal of damage in Pakistan, said Admiral Noman Bashir adding that these unprecedented floods we did not experience in our history.

The floods are not confined to one part of the country, but caused widespread damage from north to south, he added.

Sailors Wowed During Tour

By David Hendee, World-Herald Staff Writer, Sept 21, 2010

After 13 years in the U.S. Navy and dozens of ports in Europe, Asia and South America, Lt. j.g. Wesley Hitt found his favorite liberty port in a place far from the world's oceans. Nebraska.

"This week has been the best in my military career," Hitt said Monday during a farewell picnic at the Lake Manawa Sailing Club in Council Bluffs. "I've been to some great ports, but the people here make the difference."

Hitt and five companions from the USS Nebraska ballistic missile submarine wrap up a seven-day visit to their boat's namesake state Tuesday as guests of the Big Red Sub Club. The sailors are part of the crew that recently completed a deterrent patrol aboard the Pacific-based submarine.

They were wowed and humbled.

They toured the Strategic Command near Bellevue, Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Cooper Nuclear Station near Brownville, visited the Forgot Store in Ponca Hills, attended a high school football game, watched the Nebraska-Washington game at Nebraska City's Table Creek Golf Course, toured Homestead National Monument and learned the secret recipe for Beatrice Bakery Co.'s fruitcakes.

StratCom's secret global operations center — which controls the nation's nuclear arsenal and is in constant contact with the Nebraska when it patrols — impressed the sailors, but nothing made a splash quite like the behind-the-scenes tour of the zoo.

"I don't think I'll ever go to another zoo," Hitt said. "Nothing can match it."

The sailors stepped inside the penguin display, stood face-to-face with silverback gorillas, fed giraffes, petted a rhinoceros and held snakes and tarantulas.

They rode a float in Nebraska City's Applejack Festival parade and were stunned at the reaction. Hats came off heads. Hands covered hearts. Applause rippled down the street.

"I've never seen anything like it," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Ruben Jollie, 23, of Brooklyn, N.Y. "It about brings tears to your eyes."

Lt. Cmdr. John Stafford, the crew's 35-year-old executive officer, said the eastern Nebraska tour helps young crew members who serve aboard the world's most powerful warships understand they are part of something bigger than themselves.

"I've never been to a place where the people are so proud of their state," Stafford said, "and that translates into national pride and patriotism."

Stafford said he was determined to recruit during his Nebraska visit, not for the Navy but for the Big Red Sub Club.

"You really don't get what the Big Red Sub Club means to Nebraska until you come out here and see how much the people here appreciate what these men do," he said. "So I'm telling everyone I meet about the Big Red Sub Club and that they should be members."

The club is an all-volunteer organization created in 1993 to continue the strong relationship between the people of the state and the submarine's crew during the vessel's christening and commissioning. The club's 400 members raise money to underwrite the \$6,000 to \$8,000 cost of sponsoring visits by submariners to the state twice a year.

Other crewmen on the trip are Chief Petty Officer Jeremy Ford, Petty Officer 1st Class Kyle Buckingham and Petty Officer 3rd Class Shane Doherty.

The sailors' last stop, Tuesday, is with Papillion-La Vista South High's Navy Junior ROTC.

About the Beatrice fruitcake. The crew is familiar with the dessert. The bakery sends a cake to each crew member in December.

"It's really good," Jollie said. "They told us the secret recipe. Now it's a Navy secret, and it's classified."