

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



The Silent Sentinel

January 2016



Our Creed and Purpose

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

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

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



Captain Charlie MacVean, Ret., will be speaking at the Point Loma Assembly, 3035 Talbot Street from 5:30 to 7:00 P.M., on Jan 14, 2016

U.S. Submarine Veterans San Diego Base

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Position is Open

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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Would like the SILENT SENTINEL emailed: YES _____ NO _____

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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*

January 2016 MEETING

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

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

BINNACLE LIST

Benny Williams

Submarine Losses in January

Originally Compiled by C J Glassford



USS Scorpion: (SS-278) Lost on Jan 5, 1944 with the loss of 77 officers and men in the East China Sea, on her 4th war patrol. It is assumed she was sunk by a mine.

USS Argonaut (SS-166): Lost on Jan 10, 1943 with the loss of 102 officers and men off Rabaul, on her 3rd war patrol. While attacking a convoy, she torpedoed a Jap destroyer who along with 2 other destroyers depth charged her. As she tried to surface, the destroyers sunk her by gun fire.

USS Swordfish (SS-193): Lost on Jan 12, 1945 with the loss of 89 officers and men somewhere near Okinawa, on her 13th war patrol. Probably was lost to a mine.

USS S-36 (SS-141): Lost on Jan 20, 1942 with no loss of life, on her 2nd war patrol. She ran hard aground on a reef and radioed for help. The entire crew was rescued by a Dutch ship after they scuttled her.

USS S-26 (SS-131): Lost on Jan 24, 1942 with the loss of 46 officers and men in the Gulf of Panama, on her 2nd war patrol. She was rammed by the USS PC-460 and sunk within seconds. The CO, XO and one lookout on the bridge, were the only survivors.



San Diego Base, United States Submarine Veterans Inc.
Minutes of Meeting - 8 December 2015

1900 - Base Commander Bob Bissonnette called the meeting to order

Conducted Opening Exercises - Pledge of Allegiance lead by Chief of the Boat Fred Fomby.

Base Commander Bob Bissonnette lead the prayer and conducted Tolling of the Boats lost in the month of November

Base Commander Bob Bissonnette recognized Past Commanders, dignitaries and guests.

Secretary Jack Kane announced 28 members and one guest present.

Treasurer David Ball gave his report.. A copy of the Treasurer's Report will be filed with these minutes.

The minutes of the 10 November 2015 meeting were approved as published in the Sentinel.

Base Commander Called For Committee Reports

Base Commander Bob Bissonnette reported the following on the Binnacle List: Benny Williams and Jack Ferguson.

Parade Chair Joel Eikam reported all Parades finished for 2015. Next year's parade schedule will be discussed under Unfinished Business.

Membership Chair Ray Febrache announced 278 members. Fourteen members paid dues at last meeting. All dues are to be paid by 31 December.

Scholarship Chairman Paul Hitchcock reminded everyone that Scholarship applications are due by 15 April 2016. Applications can be downloaded from the USSVI San Diego website.

Storekeeper Phill Richeson has lots of stuff for sale includin 2016 Calendars.

Base Vice Commander Warren Branges reported we netted \$101.30 on the November Breakfast. Next Breakfast 31 January 2016. Anyone needing to update Food Handler Certificate see Base Commander Bob Bissonnette.

Base Vice Commander Warren Branges announced the next ALL FLAGS Day will be Monday, April 11th.

Float Committee reported the float is in hibernation until spring.

1938 - Base Commander called for a break.

1951 - Base Commander called the meeting back to order. 50/50 drawing was held.

1958 - Unfinished Business

The topic of Parades was opened - Base Commander Bob Bissonnette and Secretary Jack Kane presented their views on "Why we attend parades". A Discussion was entered from the floor. The Parade Committee will present schedule for approval at the February meeting.

Base Commander Bob Bissonnette took questions about the Memorial Day Ceremony for next year. Bob will contact Scamp Base about details of the ceremony.

The Base Christmas Party will be held on Saturday, 19 December. See Vice Commander for reservations and payment.

Base Commander Bob Bissonnette announced that the Western Region Roundup will be held in Laughlin Nevada 1 - 6 May 2106 at the Aquarius Hotel and Resort in Laughlin NV.

Base Vice Commander reminded everyone that we have the following events coming up in the spring.
In February - SUBPAC Sailor of the Year Luncheon.

In Feb/Mar - King HS Veteran Interviews

29 April - The SUBRON Eleven Old Timers Luncheon and Tolling of the Bells

30 April - The Submarine Birthday Ball,

Base Commander reminded everyone that Base Dues are due by 31 December.

Shipmate Mike Hyman asked about the status of setting up Pay Pal and EBay accounts. A discussion followed.

A motion was made and passed to Setup A PAYPAL and a EBay Account to sell our submarine memorabilia. All memorabilia will be inventoried and procedures for selling that memorabilia will be discussed at the next meeting.

Base Commander Bob Bissonnette is still looking for a volunteer to fill the Vacant Chaplain's Post.

2010 - New Business

Base Commander Bob Bissonnette gave short presentation about this year's Ice Camp.

Base Commander Bob Bissonnette asked for volunteers for the Budget/Finance Committee.

A discussion was opened concerning sponsorship of two Submarine Veterans (+1) at the Submarine Birthday Ball in April. The discussion was tabled and will be brought up for a vote at the next meeting.

It was announced that the 2016 National Convention will be held in Reno, NV August 15th - 20th.

2036 – Good of the Order

Submarine History on the back table.

Following events are coming up - Old Timers Luncheon

Submarine Birthday Ball (\$65 per ticket), WWII SUBVET George Kinnison will be Guest of Honor

Vice Commander Warren Branges announced that the Wreath Laying Ceremony for F1/SS21 will be re-scheduled for January. Several Shipmates recollected about the times and exploits of Moon Chapple.

The Meeting was adjourned at 2028

Jack Kane, Secretary

/s/ Jack E. Kane

Sailing List for 8 December 2015

The Sailing List has gone missing. We will publish the list upon its' return. (It's probably on the clipboard in the closet at the VFW - jk Secretary)



A Word To The Wise

Current News

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

How Far Along Are North Korea's Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles?

Ankit Panda, The Diplomat, Jan 11

After grabbing headlines the world over on January 6 for its (dubious) claim of having successfully tested a hydrogen bomb, North Korea released what it claimed was video of successful submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) test on Friday. The test was supposedly carried out in late-December 2015. (You can view the full video [here](#).)

Immediately after the video was released, the South Korean military came out and

said that the video appeared to have been manipulated. North Korea’s SLBM ejection tests have had trouble in the past. Last year’s test of the KN-11/Bukkeukseong-1 (“Polaris-1”) SLBM was shown to have taken place from an underwater barge, undercutting North Korea’s claim of a successful ejection from its Sinpo-class submarine. In late November, Pyongyang attempted a submarine ejection in earnest that was reported to have failed.

Though the South Korean military is yet to release any sort of definitive evidence that the video was altered, the

community of open-source intelligence analysts out there has already gotten hard to work in attempting to prove that the video is less-than-genuine. Notably, the footage released this week does not show any close-ups of the missile unlike the footage from last May, clearly showing the distinctive-looking KN-11 (the missile bears a strong resemblance to the Soviet Union’s R-27/SS-N-6 Serb SLBMs). Dave Schmerler, a researcher with the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, spotted that the footage showing the missile breaking through a layer of clouds is from footage of a June 2014 missile launch. Schmerler additionally geolocated the background of the SLBM test video, showing that it had taken place roughly near North Korea’s Sinpo shipyard.

North Korea releases this sort of footage to send a signal. After widespread reporting of the unsuccessful SLBM test in November and discovery of the underwater barge ejection in the case of the May launch, Pyongyang was likely eager to send a signal that its SLBMs were on track. The nuclear test on the 6th got people to take North Korea seriously; releasing this footage shortly thereafter is an attempt to make the SLBM threat stick. (For what its worth, the release of the footage coincided with Kim Jong-un’s birthday.)

If Pyongyang really wants to show the world that it has successfully conducted a full flight test of its KN-11 SLBM from its Sinpo-class submarine, it would do well to release detailed footage like the sort it showed in May. The long-range shots, speedy cuts, and fast editing with this latest release suggest that Pyongyang is furtively trying to get away with overstating the state of its SLBM progress.

U.S. Admiral Questions Logic of Chinese Submarines on Anti-Piracy Missions

Dinakar Peri, The Hindu, Jan 9

A senior visiting U.S. Admiral on Friday questioned the motive behind China deploying submarines for anti-piracy operations in the Indian Ocean. The comments come in the backdrop of India’s growing concerns over rapid expansion of Chinese maritime capabilities and creation of facilities in the Indian Ocean region to support its forces.

“It’s hard for me as a maritime commander to understand how can a submarine support anti-piracy operations?” U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander, Admiral Scott Swift said referring to Chinese nuclear submarines on anti-piracy missions in the Gulf of Aden.

China which is a major importer of oil has been setting up a series of ports across the Indian Ocean rim referred to experts as “string of pearls” as a means to safeguard its resources traversing the critical choke points.

It has recently announced that it is establishing its first overseas military base in the African nation of Djibouti, sitting on the crucial Gulf of Aden, and also a major reorganisation of its military to make it a leaner and agile fighting force. Without terming it a military base, the Chinese Foreign ministry had stated that the new facility would be used as a supply to Chinese Navy ships undertaking antipiracy missions in the region.

Admitting that a rising power like China would secure its assets and resources, he noted with concern that the issue was the "lack of transparency and intent" on the part of the China.

On Chinese increasing assertiveness in the South China Sea, Admiral Swift said the challenge in the South China Sea is broader than the issue of freedom of navigation. "What is most important is the application of national law in international space. It is a sovereign issue," he observed.

China which claims the part of South China Sea up to the nine dash line as its own has been reclaiming reefs in the region at an alarming rate. Recently it has landed civilian planes on a 3,000 metre air strip on the Fiery Cross reef raising further concerns that fighter jets could follow next.

The U.S. which has strongly condemned China's land reclamation has stepped up efforts to enforce freedom of navigation in international waters. Last year the U.S. Pacific fleet conducted more than 700 days of operations in the South China Sea (if two ships operate in a day it is two days of operations).

Vietnam Deploys Submarines to Scare Off China in South China Sea Staff, Breitbart, Jan 7

Vietnam is preparing to deploy the first of six Kilo-class submarines purchased from Russia into the South China Sea, as a deterrent to China's seemingly endless expansionism in the region.

The Sydney Morning Herald reports that at least one of the submarines has "begun patrolling disputed waters of the South China Sea, as deterrents to China's 10 times-bigger navy," citing Vietnamese officials. Vietnam has only received five of the submarines from Russia so far, the sixth scheduled to arrive in early 2016. The news of a Vietnamese buildup in the Cam Ranh Bay, where all six submarines are scheduled to make their home, comes at the tail end of a week in which China has made at least three landings on manmade islands in the Spratly archipelago, prompting severe criticism from Vietnam and the Philippines. Both contest the Spratly Islands, while China claims most of the South China Sea to be its sovereign territory.

The most recent China provocation occurred on Wednesday, when state outlet Xinhua announced that two planes had landed on an artificial island on the Fiery Cross Reef, territory the international community does not deem to be Chinese. "This is a serious violation of Vietnam's sovereignty, threatening peace and regional stability, threatening security, safety and freedom of navigation and aviation in the East Sea," Foreign Ministry spokesman Le Hai Binh told reporters following the publication of the report.

Carlyle Thayer, a professor from Australia's Defence Force Academy in Canberra, is quoted by The Sydney Morning Herald as saying the submarines may pose a significant problem for China as it continues to construct landing strips and other military facilities in the region. Thayer wrote of the issue:

These weapons systems should enable Vietnam to make it extremely costly for China to conduct maritime operations within a 200 to 300-nautical-mile band of water along Vietnam's coast, from the Vietnam-China border in the north-east to around Da Nang in central Vietnam, if not further south.

This has appeared to be Vietnam's objective since last year, when the government signed a contract with Russia to purchase new submarines. At the time, Reuters wrote that the Vietnamese military had begun emphasizing "high combat readiness" – implicitly against China – and that some military officials were concerned that military conflict with China was unavoidable. "We don't want to have a conflict with China and we must put faith in our policy of diplomacy, but we know we must be ready for the worst," one senior official told the news outlet.

The government of the Philippines has also sounded the alarm on Chinese activity in the South China Sea. "We are very concerned about the fact that China had already flown their flights to Fiery Cross Reef," Albert del Rosario, Filipino's foreign secretary, said Thursday, warning that China may eventually "take a position that an air defence identification zone could be imposed."

An Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) requires any non-Chinese aircraft to identify itself while flying through the territory in question or face military attack. China imposed such a zone in the East China Sea in 2013 in sovereign Japanese territory, though it has ceased enforcing it following a U.S. declaration that any military action against Japanese aircraft will be met with a swift American response, as the United States is bound by treaty to defend Japan.

As international concern develops around how Vietnam may use its new fleet of submarines, a new report from a Filipino protest group that traversed the disputed territory in the Spratly Islands suggests China is building its own submarine harbor on Mischief Reef in the archipelago. The Kalayaan Atin Ito (KAI) movement said in a statement Wednesday:

Palawan is just 135 nautical miles away from the Panganiban Reef, which is being developed by China into a submarine harbor. ... This evil project does not concern the Filipino alone but the entire humanity, including the peace-loving Chinese people.

Members of KAI visited the region in the last week of December as a “freedom mission” to protect Filipino sovereignty from China.

S.O.S. for a Declining American Navy

Seth Cropsey, Wall Street Journal, Jan 6

S.O.S. for a Declining American Navy: Today's 272-ship fleet isn't nearly enough. The U.S. needs 350 ships to meet the rising global dangers.

Late last week China confirmed that it is building its first aircraft carrier from scratch, adding to a fleet that includes a Russian-made carrier. The news cast U.S. military policy in a particularly unsettling light: While China's naval power expands, America has deliberately reduced its presence on the seas. The Navy—after nearly \$1 trillion of Defense Department cuts, in part mandated by the 2011 budget-sequestration deal between Congress and the Obama administration—is already down to 272 ships. That means the U.S. fleet is less than half its size at the close of the Reagan administration nearly 30 years ago (and down by 13 ships since 2009).

The Navy had intended to increase the fleet to 308 ships, including 12 that will replace the nation's aging ballistic-missile submarine deterrent. But in a mid-December memo, Defense Secretary Ash Carter told the Navy to cut the number of ships it plans to build in favor of placing more-advanced technology aboard the existing fleet.

Secretary Carter's plan implies that the deterrent effect of a constant U.S. presence in the world is less important than the Navy's ability to fight and win wars with the advanced weapons he favors. That assumption is mistaken. We need both the ability to be present, which demands more ships than we have, and the related power to win a war if deterrence doesn't work. Even the Navy's now-endangered plan for 308 new ships was far below the approximately 350 combat ships needed to achieve this aim.

With danger rising around the world, from the Persian Gulf to the South China Sea, the increasing military and economic threats cannot be ignored. Here is what an expansion of the Navy to the 350 ships needed to safeguard national security would look like:

. Aircraft carriers. Applying power requires the anti-submarine, anti-surface warfare, surveillance and strike ability of aircraft carriers. It requires an increase from the congressionally legislated level of 11 aircraft carriers to 16, enough so that we could maintain at least one carrier strike group in the West Pacific, the Persian Gulf, and return powerful U.S. naval forces to the Mediterranean.

* Supply ships. The ability to shape events on land is linked to the ability to operate independently of it. Supply ships assure this. The U.S. currently has 29 such vessels but it needs to double the number so that it can provision a larger fleet in the West Pacific and return to the Mediterranean in strength.

* Submarines. The Pentagon's annual report last April on Chinese military power predicts that China will have between 69 and 78 submarines by 2020. The U.S. expects to have about 70 submarines in the same year. Yet repairs, maintenance and rotational cycles mean that only about 25% can be deployed at a time and must be spread around the world.

The U.S. will likely retain its qualitative advantage, but the size and quietness of China's submarine fleet means that America needs a total of 90 submarines to provide a healthy nuclear deterrent, shadow or hunt enemy subs, assure dominance in the West Pacific, and meet additional global challenges.

* Amphibious craft. Increased Russian naval presence in the Mediterranean and that of China and Iran as well as Islamic State's occupation of Sirte on the Libyan coast also demand a return to the amphibious presence that the U.S. maintained during the Cold War. The possibility that China would seize and hold islands in the West Pacific as a means of extending its strategic reach also emphasizes the need for greater amphibious capability. The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps should have 45 ships for these missions, an increase of nearly 50% over the current level.

* Large surface combatants, destroyers and cruisers. These remain the U.S. fleet's backbone. They hunt for subs and other surface ships, project power inland, and protect-and are protected by-aircraft carriers. For the foreseeable future they will be the main defense against proliferating missiles that can be launched against ships from land, air and sea. Weighing China's ability to concentrate naval forces in its adjacent seas against the U.S.'s global commitments, a total of 100 large surface combatants-an increase from the planned 88-is the minimum required to protect each of America's 16 carriers with five ships.

* Small combatant ships. Defense Secretary Carter wants to cut the number of the small naval combatants, called littoral combat ships (LCS), to 40 from 52. Even in its upgraded version, the LCS falls short of the ability both to defend itself and take the fight to an enemy. Instead of building 40 ill-defended combatants, the Navy needs a minimum of 30 new small combatants that possess a real frigate's offensive and defensive ability.

* High-speed vessels. Current plans are right when they call for 11 of the low-cost, unarmed and fast twin-hulled ships that can transport small Army or Marine units along with their equipment.

The fleet described here would number 350 ships, about 240 ships fewer than the Reagan Navy, and 13% larger than the combat fleet the Navy currently seeks. Using the Congressional Budget Office's cost estimates, this would require an annual \$24 billion shipbuilding expense. That means a 45% increase of the current \$16.5 billion shipbuilding budget, or an added \$7.5 billion yearly to the shipbuilding portion of the Navy's budget to reach a 350-ship fleet by 2045. China's shipbuilding plans, as well as other global challenges, show why a larger fleet is needed sooner than 30 years from now. Achieving this would increase annual shipbuilding budgets.

Yes, this is expensive, but it's cheaper than surrendering America's global naval dominance-and that's where the nation is headed, given the trend lines as China's fleet grows. The expense can be moderated. One example is the shipbuilding economies of scale found in the 1980s: The contracts for the aircraft carriers USS George Washington and USS Abraham Lincoln were signed on the same day and the great ships were built nearly simultaneously, saving about \$700 million. More savings are possible if a new president were to overhaul the top-heavy Pentagon and make sorely needed reforms of military management.

Yet the \$7.5 billion difference between the Navy's insufficient current plan and the minimum required to meet foreseeable commitments is a fraction of even the Obama administration's defense budget. What the nation can't afford is to retreat as menaces increase abroad.

(Mr. Cropsey is director of the Hudson Institute's Center for American Seapower. He served as a naval officer and as deputy undersecretary of the Navy in the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations.)

China Building Submarine Base In Panganiban Reef (China)

Jaime Laude, The Philippine Star, Jan 7

MANILA, PHILIPPINES – China is reportedly building a submarine harbor at Panganiban (Mischief) Reef located in the West Philippine Sea near Palawan, the Kalayaan Atin Ito (KAI) movement said yesterday.

KAI has just concluded its nationwide maritime and territorial campaign that was highlighted by the “Freedom Voyage” to the disputed Spratly Islands to protest China’s invasion of the country’s maritime domain.

“Palawan is just 135 nautical miles away from the Panganiban Reef, which is being developed by China into a submarine harbor,” KAI’s student volunteers said in their report after the Freedom Voyage.

Former Marine captain Nicanor Faeldon, who initiated a peaceful protest against China’s occupation of Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal in Zambales in 2012, led the student-volunteers during the trip to Pag-asa Island on Dec. 24.

Located within the country’s 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone, Panganiban Reef was first occupied by Beijing in 1995, purportedly as a shelter for fishermen.

China gradually developed the area and transformed it into a naval facility.

“This evil project does not concern the Filipino alone but the entire humanity, including the peace-loving Chinese people,” KAI said, referring to China’s ongoing reclamation and construction activities on Panganiban Reef.

The Philippine Navy (PN), tasked to secure and guard the country’s maritime domain, has yet to comment on KAI’s claims.

Kalayaan Mayor Eugenio Bito-onon said the KAI report needs further validation, noting the route taken by the student-volunteers during the Freedom Voyage as well as their return trip to Palawan was nowhere near Panganiban Reef.

Bito-onon said the only thing confirmed for now is that China is continuously fortifying its presence on Panganiban Reef.

Panganiban Reef is not only located near Recto Bank where the Philippine government has oil exploration projects, but is also close to Ayungin Shoal, an area being guarded by Navymen (no longer the Marines) stationed on the grounded PN ship BRP Sierra Madre.

Meanwhile, state media reported yesterday that China landed two more planes on Kagitingan (Fiery Cross) Reef, despite international condemnation of a landing at the same location days earlier. Vietnam also claims the reef.

Two civilian aircraft landed during “test flights,” the official Xinhua news agency said.

“This successful test flight proves that this airport is equipped with the capacity to ensure the safe operation of large civilian aircraft,” said Xinhua.

US Nuclear Submarine, F-22 Fighter And B-52 Bomber To Be Deployed To South Korea / Staff, Defenseworld.net, Jan 7

The US, South Korea held discussions on deploying F-22 stealth fighter and B-52 bomber and a nuclear-powered submarine to Seoul after North Korea claimed to have conducted hydrogen bomb test.

South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Lee Sun-jin and commander of US forces in Korea Gen Curtis Scaparrotti discussed Wednesday the deployment of US strategic assets to South Korea, Yonhap news agency reported citing a South Korean Defense Ministry official.

The assets include a nuclear-powered submarine, a F-22 and a B-52 bomber, the news report said.

US Navy SSGN Completes Repairs After Grounding Grace Jean, IHS Jane's Navy International, Jan 4

A US Navy (USN) guided-missile nuclear-powered submarine (SSGN) has completed repairs following a grounding in late 2015 and is expected to re-enter the water this week, officials told IHS Jane's on 5 January.

The Ohio-class SSGN USS Georgia (SSGN 729) has been in dry dock for repairs following an incident, on 25 November, involving a channel buoy as the boat returned to port at Kings Bay, Georgia.

The boat had been conducting local operations off the coast of Florida and was returning to base when it struck the buoy. Lieutenant Lily Hinz, a spokesperson for the USN's Submarine Group 10, told IHS Jane's that the incident caused a partial grounding near the entrance to the channel.

The Navy Hunts for Its Next-Generation Nuclear Submarine Martin Matishak, The Fiscal Times, Jan 5

The Defense Department has given the U.S. Navy the green light to begin entertaining proposals for the service’s next ballistic missile submarine, an effort that could cost nearly \$350 billion over its lifetime. A Pentagon spokeswoman told Bloomberg on Tuesday that Frank Kendall, the agency’s top weapons buyer, told the Navy it could release a request for proposals for the development phase of 12 Ohio-class replacement subs.

The service wants to buy 12 boats to replace the current force of 14 Trident Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines, which entered into service in the early 1980s. Navy officials have pegged the cost of the Ohio replacement program, also known as the SSBN(X), at around \$139 billion dollars. The effort's lifetime cost will come in at roughly \$347 billion.

The Navy budgeted \$1.4 billion for research and design in fiscal year 2016, and the development phase, which will last for years, has an estimated cost of \$15 billion. The Congressional Budget Office says first submarine could cost \$13 billion.

The service has put a premium on the shipbuilding effort, which officials argue is essential for maintaining the country's nuclear triad and keep up with aggressive naval pushes by Russia and China.

On Tuesday, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson released his first strategic guidance document since taking the service's top job and singled out the submarine modernization effort as a way the U.S. can maintain its maritime superiority.

"This is foundational to our survival as a nation," he writes.

Capitol Hill lawmakers, some with major shipyards in their districts or home states, have heard the service's pleas and responded in kind.

The fiscal 2015 defense policy bill authorized a special account for the SSBN(X) effort, dubbed the "National Sea-Based Deterrence Fund." The thinking goes that the sub effort is so large and so expensive that it should be considered a "national" program and therefore funded from accounts throughout the Pentagon, rather than strictly from Navy coffers, thus avoiding painful budget cuts to other shipbuilding programs.

However, congressional appropriators have resisted the move, countering that a special account for the boats would set a bad precedent and that the "national" tag could easily be applied to other expensive weapon platforms, such as the Air Force's \$400 billion F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, and have left the account empty.

Kendall has also derided the deterrence fund as a gimmick that does nothing to alleviate the budget pressures the department has been under the last several years.

The first submarine is expected to be purchased in 2021, with an initial fund request coming in fiscal 2017.

Who will bid on the program is less mysterious, since General Dynamics and Huntington Ingalls Industries are the country's only submarine builders.

Nuclear Deterrent Under Threat From Underwater Drones, Expert Warns

David Connett, Independent, Dec 26

Britain's independent nuclear deterrent could be torpedoed by an increasingly sophisticated breed of underwater drone, a leading defence expert has warned.

Rapid advances in underwater drone technology – autonomous underwater vehicles that can be controlled by ship- or land-based operators – threaten to make the controversial Trident nuclear submarines vulnerable, according to Paul Ingram, the chief executive of the British American Security Information Council (Basic).

Submarines have traditionally been seen as capable of providing stealth and invulnerability to pre-emptive attacks. The current requirement for Trident replacement subs is for them to operate as near to silently as possible.

However, a revolution in underwater drones, as well as advances in sonar, satellite and other anti-submarine warfare systems, mean that even totally silent submarines are likely to become detectable. Some sensor technologies can detect large submerged objects by monitoring small movements of surface water.

Experts warn that as the capabilities of detecting systems improve and their cost falls, large-scale remote and potentially autonomous sensor deployments become possible. The result is that the world's oceans will become increasingly transparent, seriously calling into question the UK's heavy reliance upon the Trident submarine programme for its nuclear deterrence.

"There is a major transition taking place in the underwater battle space and it is far from clear how the new submarine will be able to evade detection from emerging sophisticated anti-submarine warfare capabilities," Mr Ingram said.

The revolution seen in aerial drone capabilities in recent years was likely to be extended to underwater craft, he added. A US study recently reported that up to 50 aerial drones, controlled by one operator, had "swarmed" in a simulated co-ordinated attack.

New algorithms, or mathematical formulas, to command and control much greater drone numbers are already being developed. Similar advances in underwater drone operation would make it harder for submarines to escape detection, he said.

The US navy and other states including China are already known to be carrying out extensive research into underwater drones.

“With satellite surveillance able to look further and further into the water, coupled with the possibility of ‘swarming’ underwater drones which are likely to become cheaper and cheaper to produce, it raises serious questions about the wisdom of putting all your nuclear weapons on board a submarine,” he argued. “The only purpose for doing that, it is claimed, is to make them hard to detect, which could well be impossible to achieve by the time the new Trident programme is launched.”

The Basic think-tank is concerned by the lack of informed public debate about Trident. “The worrying thing is that nobody is debating this. It is an issue that nobody wants to talk about,” Mr Ingram said.

“Campaigners against Trident don’t want to talk about it because it’s not about the purity of their anti-nuclear arguments. Those in favour of maintaining a nuclear deterrence do not want to talk about it because if the seas become transparent then the sense of putting all of our nuclear weapons in relatively slow moving platforms such as submarines will pose fresh difficulties,” he said.

Military experts point out that the Royal Navy has long been involved in “cat and mouse” warfare – with Germany during two world wars and then with the Russians during the Cold War and beyond. They insist that underwater drones are but the latest tool in a race between submariners and their detectors.

In January, Carol Naughton, of the non-proliferation group British Pugwash, will launch a research project into the appropriateness of Trident as a platform for the UK’s nuclear weapons capability.

“We are in danger of embarking on a major spend that will not only fail to deliver the invulnerability required of the proposed deterrent system, but is also likely to add a worrying degree of instability into the nuclear weapons situation,” she said.

Last month the Prime Minister revealed that the strategic defence and security review (SDSR) had put the cost of the four subs at £31bn, up from £25bn nine years ago. The review said a contingency fund of £10bn would be set aside, suggesting the MoD anticipates the costs could rise still further.

The first sub is not due to come into service until the early 2030s.

