

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



The Silent Sentinel

February 2017



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.



COMSUBPAC's 2016 Sea and Shore Sailors of the Year Announced (See Page 12)

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Chaplain
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.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

EMAIL: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

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*

February 2017 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 *February 14*. 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

Phil Richeson, Harry Humpreysville

Submarine Losses in February

Originally Compiled by C J Glassford



USS Barbel (SS-316) Lost on Feb 4, 1945 with the loss of 81 officers and men on her 4th war patrol. Based on Japanese records, she was bombed near the southern entrance to the Palawan Passage. The day before, she reported she survived 3 depth charge attacks.

USS Shark I (SS-174) Lost on Feb 11, 1942 with the loss of 59 officers and men on her 1st war patrol. Shark was the 1st US submarine sunk by enemy surface craft in the Pacific. She was most likely sunk by depth charges.

USS Amberjack (SS-219) Lost on Feb 16, 1943 with the loss of 72 officers and men on her 3rd war patrol. Off Rabaul, she was attacked by a Japanese patrol plane, attacked by a torpedo boat and then depth charged by a subchaser. One additional man was killed earlier on the last patrol.

USS Grayback (SS-208) Lost on Feb 26, 1944 with the loss of 80 officers and men on her 10th war patrol. She appears to have been caught on the surface in the East China Sea by a Japanese carrier plane whose bombs made a direct hit. During this patrol she sank 4 ships totaling 21,594 tons and was tied for 11th in the number of ships sunk.

USS Trout (SS-202) Lost on Feb 29, 1944 with the loss of 81 officers and men on her 11th war patrol. She was sunk by escorts in the middle of the Philippines Basin after sinking a passenger-cargoman and damaging another in a convoy. She carried out several notable special missions, including carrying over two tons of gold bullion out of Corregidor in February 1942.



San Diego Base, United States Submarine Veterans Inc. Minutes of Meeting - 10 January 2017

1900 - Base Vice Commander Warren Branges called the meeting to order

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

Treasurer David Ball lead the prayer

Base Treasurer David Ball conducted Tolling of the Boats for boats lost in the month of January.

Base Vice Commander Warren Branges recognized Past Commanders, dignitaries and guests.

Secretary Jack Kane announced 20 members present.

Treasurer David Ball gave his report. General Fund is \$20552.52, Checking Balance is \$8255.23 Charlie Marin Scholarship Fund is \$1085.00. All Bank Accounts have been transferred to Navy Federal Credit Union. A copy of the Treasurer's Report will be filed with these minutes.

The minutes of the 13 December 2016 meeting were approved as presented to the Membership at this meeting.

Base Commander Called For Committee Reports

Acting Chaplain David Ball reported the following on the Binnacle List: Harry Humphreys, Frank Walker and Phill Richeson.

Base Secretary Jack Kane reported that the next parade is Linda Vista on Saturday, 22 April 2017. The Parade will march off at 11:00am sharp.

Chairman Ray Febrache reported 256 members in San Diego Base. It was pointed out that USSVI did not have enough War Veterans (90% of membership) to retain our WAR VETERAN ORGANIZATION STATUS. Consequently contributions to USSVI in 2017 are not tax deductible. USSVI does retain a tax exempt status as a 503 C (19) - Veterans Organization.

Scholarship Chairman Paul Hitchcock noted that the Scholarship Form is on the website. Application deadline is 15 April 2017.

Nominations Chairman Paul Hitchcock hasn't received any nominations for Base Officer positions. All Base Officer positions are open.

Storekeeper Phill Richeson is on Binnacle List. No Report.

Base Vice Commander Warren Branges reported the next Breakfast is 29 January 2017. Some volunteers are needed. Warren will circulate a signup sheet for wait staff for the event.

Base Vice Commander Warren Branges reported that the 52 Boat Memorial has 3 damaged markers at repair shop. The recent Go Fund Me Drive and direct donations raised \$14,600. The Memorial Board is working on developing ongoing relationships with Point Loma Rotary, Midway Museum and Naval Submarine League. Next ALL FLAGS day is 11 April 2017.

The Float Committee will be doing some maintenance and upkeep before the April Parade.

Boy Scout Committee Chair Nihil Smith reported that 3 Eagle Scout Presentations have been done recently. Eagle Scouts are presented Certificates and a set of miniature dolphins. If anyone knows of upcoming Eagle Scout Ceremonies let Nihil know so the Committee can make arrangements for presentations.

1922- Base Vice Commander called for a break.

1933 - Base Vice Commander called the meeting back to order. 50/50 drawing was held. \$45.00 was raised for the Operating Fund.

1940 - Unfinished Business

Base Vice Commander Warren Branges briefed and/or reported on the following:

Nominations are open for new Base Officers. All Positions are open - Base Commander, Base Senior Vice Commander, Base Junior Vice Commander, Secretary and Treasurer. Send Nominations to Paul Hitchcock. Elections will be held in February.

Base Treasurer David Ball presented the 2017 Budget - A motion was made and passed to accept the 2017 Budget at presented. Discussion centered on Fund Raisers. Suggestions were made including Car Washes, Raffles at SUBVET Picnic and Christmas Party, and soliciting donations (Room Nights, etc) from local casinos.

A Presentation will be made to PO2 Yentzer at the next meeting. PO2 Yentzer setup the Go Fund Me Drive for the 52 Boat Memorial. He will be presented a 3year USSVI Membership.

The SUBPAC Sailor of the Year Luncheon will be held on 27 January 2017. The Luncheon will be held at the Oceanview Rooms on Naval Base Point Loma (fka SUBASE San Diego) from 1100-1330. Email Rocky Rockers for reservations and cost.

2000 - New Business

Base Vice Commander Warren Branges briefed and/or reported on the following:

Preliminary planning has started for Sponsoring WWII SUBVETS at the Submarine Birthday Ball. We are looking for eligible WWII Veterans to sponsor. LA/Pasadena, Bonefish and Trieste Bases will be contacted. If you know a WWII SUBVET who may be interested let Warren know. The cost is approximately \$300 to sponsor a SUBVET for the evening. The Submarine Birthday Ball is on 6 May 2017.

2010- Good of the Order

If you are on COX Internet please reset your email to allow messages from: stamps@fortunesofwar.com. This email was erroneously marked as SPAM by the COX System.

If the members are interested, the Lawyer in Blue Jeans would like to give a presentation at one of our meetings. The members are interested. Paul Hitchcock will arrange for a presentation at our March or April meeting.

Naval Submarine Newsletters are available on the table by the door.

Master at Arms says: Pick up your trash on the way out.

Cox Cable has an Allegiance Program. Mention that program to a COX Rep and you can cut you bill.

Verizon has a Veterans Discount.

If you buy on-line use Amazon Smile program and designate USSVI as your charitable organization.

You can get refurbished surplus government computers for song. If interested call Ron Gorence.

The Meeting was adjourned at 2015..

Jack Kane, Secretary

/s/ Jack E. Kane

Sailing List for 10 January 2017

Fred Fomby
Jack Kane
Bob Bissonnette
Warren Branges
Mike Hyman
David Ball
Joe Turskey
Robert Golembieski
Bob Farrell
Bill Earl
Chris Stafford
Matt Baumann
Paul Hitchcock
Ray Febrache
Dennis Mortensen
Ron Gorence
Peter Lary
Nihil D. Smith
Mert Weltzien
Jim Harlow (? sp)

Counterfeit German WW-II Memorabilia: An ID Booklet for the Commander of Unterseeboot-398

by M. Hyman

Over the last few years or so, an interesting group of German military personnel identification books--supposedly from the Second World-War era--have appeared on eBay. They are sold by a variety of sellers, all from the Ukraine. The ID booklets are made from stiffened canvas and certainly look their stated age. Still, there are some tell-tale signs which suggest that they are far from what they appear—and one should be aware of them.

A few weeks ago I was browsing on eBay when I discovered a German identification booklet for the commander of a U-Boat. Granted, authentic U-boat items are quite hard to find these days; but an item such as this would have always been next to impossible to obtain. In the case of this ID booklet (Image 1), the subject's photograph is riveted as well as glued to the booklet blank, a very common practice from the WW-II era. On closer observation, however, something seems odd—in fact, something seems very odd—specifically, the rivets which go through the subject's photo are heavily rusted on both sides of the booklet, suggesting that moisture must have been present at one time. This in of itself is not odd; what is, however, is that the photograph hasn't the slightest suggestion of rust marks on it nor is there any indication of the photo's edges lifting. Moreover, there is no suggestion of water stains on the photo nor is there any indication of ink having run nor bled as a result of the moisture. In so many words, this is no longer within the realm of the odd; rather, it now has entered the domain of the next to impossible. In addition, a data check concerning the subject's name against the actual commanders of U-398 itself is quite telling. First of all, no one with the name, Paul "Bruno" Scholtz, ever commanded U-398; and second, no one holding the name Paul "Bruno" Scholtz ever served in the Unterseeboot section of the Kriegsmarine—albeit, one other man holding the family name Scholtz did serve in unterseebooten (Image 2). Give the facts, this ID is without a doubt a fake—admittedly, a good looking, cleverly crafted one—but still a fake.

You might ask, how was it possible to create a booklet blank, an ink stamp, an embosser, and the photo itself since they all look so real. Frankly, they look real because they are indeed real. A large number of German materials—ID booklet blanks, rubber stamps, embossers, and so on--stayed within the Ukraine after the fall of Germany. These were hidden by former Ukrainian nazi sympathizers (those who had worked for the Germans after being promised by them an independent Ukrainian state) because materials such as these were simply too dangerous to destroy in the open (the Soviets did not ask questions if they believed one was a nazi sympathizer—they merely dispatched whom they perceived to be an offender, no questions asked—therefore, it was simply too dangerous to risk openly showing that these items were in one's possession). Years later, after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, things began to change. Those who were adults during the WW-II era were starting to die. Individuals (now in various stages of adulthood) sorting through the items of a deceased relative were discovering German materials which had been hidden away, suggesting that a parent, a grandparent, or someone close may have collaborated with the nazis. Materials such as these were then often sold by the same individual to a local collector—who coincidentally happened to be a memorabilia Internet dealer as well as a counterfeiter (not all that unusual for Eastern European dealers of WW-II German memorabilia)—and this takes us to the present.

Without a doubt, the booklet blank itself is authentic and the photo is a real image from the era (though it is not the image of Paul Scholtz), the ink stamps are as good as they get, and the embossings are bona fide. Nonetheless, there are tell-tale signs that something is not right—for example, rusted rivets but no sign of water damage on the booklet which includes a photograph appearing almost pristine along with the lack of blurred or running ink. The booklet based on this alone was clearly a counterfeit. Additionally I went to uboat.net—the best U-boat reference site on the web—in order to see about the data (Image 3) contained in the ID. It, too, was bogus!

A seller's reputation or feedback rating means nothing unless one personally has had experience with the person, believes his judgement, and knows him to be an acknowledged expert in the field—someone completely reliable and trustworthy. In the case concerning this ID booklet, the Ukrainian eBay dealer who sold it still possesses a 100% feedback rating, as good as it gets on eBay—which suggests that the old adage, "There's a sucker born every minute," is still quite valid.

In conclusion, if you believe that most auction sellers are above reproach and that feedback ratings are the last word in determining trustworthiness, then collectible memorabilia is the last thing that you should be purchasing—in particular, German memorabilia from the era of the Second World War.

image 1



Image 2



Klaus Scholtz

Born on 22 Mar 1908 in Magdeburg.
Crew 27. Fregattenkapitän (1 Jul 1944)
Knights Cross winner (26 Dec 1941)
Died on 1 May 1987, Bad Schwartau, Germany.

Commands:

U-108

Image 3

U-398

Type	VIIIC		
Ordered	20 Jan 1941		
Laid down	26 Aug 1942	Howaldtswerke AG, Kiel (werk 30)	
Launched	6 Nov 1943		
Commissioned	18 Dec 1943		
Commanders	18 Dec 1943 - 8 Nov 1944	8 Nov 1944 - 9 Nov 1944	9 Nov 1944 - 17 Apr 1945
	Korvkpt. Johann Beckhoff Oblt. (R) Wilhelm Granz		
Career	18 Dec 1943 - 31 Jul 1944		
2 patrols	1 Aug 1944 - 31 Oct 1944		
	1 Nov 1944 - 17 Apr 1945		
	5. Flottille (training) 2. Flottille (active service) 22. Flottille (active service)		
Successes	No ships sunk or damaged		
Fate	Missing since 17 April 1945 in the North Sea or North Atlantic. No explanation exists for its loss. 43 dead (all hands lost).		
Loss position			

[View the 2 war patrols](#)

U-398 was ordered to operate west of the English Channel and was not seen or heard of after sailing from Kristiansand on the evening of 17 April 1945. It was posted as missing after failing to return to port or signal its position after the cessation of hostilities.

There is a chance that **U-398** was sunk instead of **U-1017**, by a British Liberator aircraft (120 Sqn RAF) on 29 April 1945. Both boats disappeared without a trace en route to the same operational area.

Schnorchel-fitted U-boat

This boat was fitted with a Schnorchel underwater-breathing apparatus in June 1944. Read more about the [Schnorchel](#) and see list of [fitted boats](#).

Ten lost from U-boats

Unlike [many other U-boats](#), which during their service lost men due to accidents and various other causes, **U-398** did not suffer any casualties (we know of) until the time of her loss.

Current News

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

Britain's Entire Fleet Of Attack Submarines 'Out Of Action' Laura Hughes, The Independent, February 10

The Royal Navy's fleet of attack submarines are all currently out of action, according to reports. Britain's seven 'hunter-killer' vessels are understood to be 'non-operational' as they undergo repairs and maintenance. HMS Astute is the only vessel currently at sea, but she is still "weeks away" from active service. Theresa May is said to have been kept in the dark by Defence chiefs, the Sun reports. A Whitehall source told the newspaper: "No one is being honest about the scandal." It is the first time in decades that Britain does not have an attack submarine on stand-by in the event of an attack. Sources say the three new Astute class subs, which cost £1.2billion each, are beset by technical problems. Five of the fleet, including one of the new type, are having refits or maintenance after breaking down. And HMS Ambush is also being repaired after crashing into a tanker near Gibraltar last year. It comes after Britain's ability to defend itself against a major military attack was called into question after an investigation found Navy warships are so loud they can be heard 100 miles away by Russian submarines. A Royal Navy spokesman said: "We don't comment on specific submarine operations. "Britain has a world-class fleet, the Royal Navy continues to meet all of its operational tasking, deploying globally on operations and protecting our national interests as Britain steps up around the world."

Strategy To 'Destroy' North Korea Missiles To Be Applied During Exercises **Elizabeth Shim, UPI, February 7**

A bilateral U.S.-South Korea strategy to detect, defend, disrupt and destroy North Korea missiles, also known as 4D, is to be applied to the upcoming Key Resolve joint military exercises.

The 4D operations, jointly approved in November 2015, were first employed in drills in 2016.

In March, the strategy is to become more "concrete," according to Yonhap news agency.

The Command Post Exercises are to simulate a full-scale war scenario that assumes the deployment and readiness of THAAD, the U.S. missile defense system, at its designated location in central South Korea.

This year's Key Resolve exercises are expected to be the largest on record.

Details of strengthening the Key Resolve and Foal Eagle exercises were discussed during recent talks between U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis and his Seoul counterpart Han Min-woo, a Seoul defense official told Yonhap.

"The United States is in talks regarding the deployment of U.S. strategic assets to the peninsula," the unidentified official said.

The possible deployment of the B-1B strategic bomber from Andersen Air Force Base in Guam, the B-2 stealth bomber from the U.S. mainland, the B-52 long-range nuclear bomber, and F-22 stealth fighters maintained by U.S. Forces Korea are being discussed, according to the report.

In a separate development, South Korea is to deploy a new 1,800-ton class submarine on the second anniversary of its submarine headquarters, local news service EDaily reported on Wednesday, local time.

Seoul's submarine headquarters was created in the aftermath of the sinking of the South Korean ship Cheonan.

The submarine can be equipped with the Haesung III, an anti-ship cruise missile with a range of 300-600 miles, according to the report.

Grounded: Nearly Two-Thirds Of US Navy's Strike Fighters Can't Fly **Christopher P. Cavas, Defense News, February 6**

WASHINGTON - The US Navy's F/A-18 Hornet and Super Hornet strike fighters are the tip of the spear, embodying most of the fierce striking power of the aircraft carrier strike group. But nearly two-thirds of the fleet's strike fighters can't fly - grounded because they're either undergoing maintenance or simply waiting for parts or their turn the aviation depot backlog.

Overall, more than half the Navy's aircraft are grounded, most because there isn't enough money to fix them.

There isn't enough money to fix the fleet's ships, and the backlog of ships needing work continues to grow. Overhauls - "availabilities" in Navy parlance - are being cancelled or deferred, and when ships do come in they need longer to refit. Every carrier overall for at least three years has run long, and some submarines are out of service for prolonged periods, as much as four years or more. One submarine, the Boise, has lost its diving certification and can't operate pending shipyard work, and leaders claim that if more money doesn't become available five more will be in the same state by the end of this year.

The Navy can't get money to move around service members and their families to change assignments, and about \$440 million is needed to pay sailors. And the service claims 15 percent of its shore facilities are in failed condition - awaiting repair, replacement or demolition.

The bleak picture presented by service leaders is in stark contrast to the Trump administration's widely-talked about plan to grow the Navy from today's 308-ship fleet goal to 350 ships - now topped by Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson's new Force Structure Assessment that aims at a 355-ship fleet. Richardson's staff is crafting further details on how the growth will be carried out -- plans Congressional leaders are eager to hear. It seems to many as though the Navy will be showered with money to attain such lofty goals.

Yet for now, money is tight, due to several years of declining budgets mandated first by the Obama administration, then Congress, and to the chronic inability of lawmakers to provide uninterrupted funds to the military services and the government at large. Budgets have been cut despite no slackening in the demand for the fleet's services, and the Navy, to preserve shipbuilding funds, made a conscious choice to slash maintenance and training budgets rather than eliminate ships, which take many years to build and can't be produced promptly even when funding becomes available.

In 2017, Congress failed for the ninth straight year to produce a budget before the October 1 start of the fiscal year, reverting to continuing resolutions (CRs) that keep money flowing at prior year levels. CRs have numerous caveats, however, and many new projects or plans can't be funded since they didn't exist in the prior year. There is widespread agreement that CR funding creates havoc throughout the Pentagon and the industrial base that supports it - often substantially driving costs higher to recover from lengthy delays. Yet, like the proverbial weather that everyone talks about but no one can change, there seems to be little urgency in Congress to return to a more business-like budget profile.

The current continuing resolution through April 28 marks the longest CR since fiscal 1977 - outstripping 2011 by only a couple weeks, noted Todd Harrison of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, posting on Twitter. This also marks the first CR situation during a presidential transition year.

And while the talk about building dozens more ships grabs headlines, it is not at all clear when or even whether Congress will repeal the Budget Control Act - sequestration - which if unabated will continue its restrictions to 2021.

Meanwhile, some details are emerging of the new administration's efforts to move along the budget process. In a Jan. 31 memorandum, Defense Secretary James Mattis described a three-phase plan that included submission by the Pentagon of a 2017 budget amendment request. The request would be sent to the White House's Office of Management and Budget by March 1.

Under the plan, the full 2018 budget request is due to OMB no later than May 1.

The third phase of the plan involves a new National Defense Strategy and FY 2019-2023 defense program which "will include a new force sizing construct" to "inform our targets for force structure growth," Mattis said in the memo.

The services will make their case to Congress this week, when the vice chiefs of the Air Force, Army, Navy and Marine Corps testify in readiness hearings before the House Armed Services Committee on Tuesday and the Senate Armed Services Committee the following day.

The vice chiefs are expected to make their pitches for money that can be spent right away, rather than funds for long-term projects that, with only five months left in the fiscal year even if Congress passes a 2017 budget, can't be quickly put to use.

"If we get any money at all, the first thing we're going to do is throw it into the places we can execute it," a senior Navy source said Feb. 2. "All of those places are in ship maintenance, aviation depot throughput - parts and spares - and permanent changes of station so we can move our families around and fill the holes that are being generated by the lack of PCS money."

The backlog is high. "There's about six to eight billion dollars of stuff we can execute in April if we got the money," the senior Navy source said. "We can put it on contract, we can deliver on it right away."

Even if the budget topline is increased, Navy leaders say, the immediate need is for maintenance money, not new ship construction. A supplemental Navy unfunded requirements list for 2017 sent to Congress in early January and still being revised made it clear maintenance needs are paramount.

"Our priorities are unambiguously focused on readiness -- those things required to get planes in the air, ships and subs at sea, sailors trained and ready," a Navy official declared. "No new starts."

The dire situation of naval aviation is sobering. According to the Navy, 53 percent of all Navy aircraft can't fly - about 1,700 combat aircraft, patrol and transport planes and helicopters. Not all are due to budget problems - at any given time, about one-fourth to one-third of aircraft are out of service for regular maintenance. But the 53 percent figure represents about twice the historic norm.

The strike fighter situation is even more acute, and more remarkable since the aircraft are vitally important to projecting the fleet's combat power. Sixty-two percent of F/A-18s are out of service, 27 percent in major depot work and 35 percent simply awaiting maintenance or parts, the Navy said.

With training and flying hour funds cut, the Navy's air crews are struggling to maintain even minimum flying requirements, the senior Navy source said. Retention is becoming a problem, too. In 2013, seventeen percent of flying officers declined department head tours after being selected. The percentage grew to 29 percent in 2016.

Funding shortfalls mean many service members are unable to relocate to take on new assignments. So far in 2017, the Navy said, there have been 15,250 fewer moves compared with 2016.

Under the CR, the senior Navy official said, another 14 ship availabilities will be deferred in 2018 - 1 submarine, 1 cruiser, 6 destroyers, 2 landing ship docks, 1 amphibious transport dock, and 3 minesweepers. Programs seeking to buy items that were not included in the 2016 budget can't move forward, including CH-53K helicopters, JAGM Joint Air-Ground Missiles, LRASM Long-Range Anti-Ship Missiles and littoral combat ship module weapons. Many more programs that planned to increase 2017 buys over 2016 levels can't do so.

And with only five months left in fiscal 2017 even if a budget is passed in late April, there is some talk about a year-long CR - a prospect at which the senior Navy official shook his head.

"The full CR is not a good situation at all," he said.

Russian Pacific Fleet's Resurgence Sets Off Alarm Bells In Washington Staff, Russia Beyond The Headlines, February 6

After losing its powerful aircraft carriers and nearly all major surface combat vessels during the disastrous dive of the post-Soviet era, the Russian Pacific Fleet is making a strong comeback with new ships, naval bases and infrastructure.

Having yielded considerable space to both the U.S. Navy and the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) in the Pacific, Moscow now wants to reclaim some of it.

The Pacific Fleet is slowly but steadily gaining critical mass. The pride of the fleet are two Borei-class submarines - the Alexander Nevsky and the Vladimir Monomakh - which are counted among the deadliest submarines in the world.

An improved version of the Borei will be capable of launching between 72 and 200 hypersonic, independently maneuverable warheads on the sidwinding Bulava missile. In theory, a single Borei volley could render any country in the world unfit for human life.

After beefing up the Baltic and Black Sea Fleets, the Russian Defense Ministry's main resources are now being invested in the modernization of submarine bases in the Far East, in the city of Vilyuchinsk in the Kamchatka Region.

The Vladimir Monomakh is now permanently based at the Rybachiy Nuclear Submarine Base in Viliuchinsk on the Kamchatka Peninsula. Rybachiy - which is home to the majority of Russia's submarine fleet in the Pacific - could end up harboring a total of four Borei subs.

Predictably, the Russian resurgence has set off alarm bells in the Pentagon. The head of the U.S. Pacific Command, Admiral Harry B. Harris, testified before the U.S. Senate Armed Service Committee last year: "Though focused on Europe and the Middle East, Russia is engaged politically and militarily in the Indo-Asia-Pacific. Russian activity is assertive, but not confrontational. Ships and submarines of the Russian Pacific Fleet and long range aircraft routinely demonstrate Russia's message that it is a Pacific power."

Harris added: “Russian ballistic missile and attack submarines remain especially active in the region. The arrival in late 2015 of Russia’s newest class of nuclear ballistic missile submarine (Dolgorukiy SSBN) in the Far East is part of a modernization program for the Russian Pacific Fleet and signals the seriousness with which Moscow views this region.”

Reality check

Military hype, however, needs to be viewed in the backdrop of Washington’s insatiable hunger for newer weapons. Pentagon generals are known to pump up any Russian military activity as an opportunity to wring more funds from their civilian government.

The U.S. pivot to Asia has brought huge numbers of sailors, ships and aircraft to the region. The U.S. Pacific Fleet comprises 200 ships, 2000 aircraft and 250,000 Navy and Marine personnel. The Russian Pacific Fleet may be growing but it could take decades – if at all – before it reaches such numbers.

The reality is that Russian naval build-up is mainly focused on bastion defense rather than strategic warfare. A bastion in naval strategy is a heavily defended area of water in which friendly naval forces can operate safely. Typically, that area will be partially enclosed by friendly shoreline, defended by naval mines, monitored by sensors, and heavily patrolled by surface, submarine and air forces.

On Jan. 31, the Russian Navy announced that the Pacific Fleet would induct a state-of-the-art-warship armed with the latest missile launch technology and a stealth radar system. The warship, a Steregushchy-class corvette, is scheduled to join the fleet in the first half of 2017.

The 343-foot vessel, named Sovershenny (Unbeatable), is currently undergoing sea trials. It will be armed with the newest guided missile launchers that have the abilities to strike ships on the water as well as submarines, aircrafts and shore-based targets.

What is interesting is the Russian Navy’s declaration that the Sovershenny is designed to defend its eastern coasts. This indicates the focus of the Pacific Fleet is currently bastion defense rather than blue water power projection.

Even in the domain of sub-surface warfare, the focus seems to be on beefing up defenses close to Russia’s eastern coastline. According to Igor Kasatonov, former deputy commander-in-chief of the Russian Navy and former commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Russian shipyards will build six Varshavyanka diesel-electric submarines for the Pacific Fleet. These submarines are equipped with the new Kaliber-PL missiles, which can strike targets 2500 km away.

The reason for opting for bastion defense rather than extended blue water operations is that unlike the 800-ship Soviet Pacific Fleet – that legendary Admiral Sergei Gorshkov built for offensive ocean warfare – the current fleet lacks the muscle to take on its numerically larger rival, the U.S. Navy. Even China’s PLAN – though technologically backward – makes up in quantity what it lacks in quality.

While major strategic weapons are trickling in, plans to go for a major upgrade are likely to remain on the drawing board because of budget cuts. The Russian military budget is only \$66 billion versus China’s \$215 billion. In 2016, Russia cut its defense budget for the first time since the 1990s, indicating that low oil prices were impacting its economy.

In this backdrop of budgetary constraints, the Russian Pacific Fleet is looking at strategic deterrence. This involves attacking the U.S. Navy several hundred kilometers from Russian shores and targeting the American mainland with ballistic missile submarines protected in Russian bastions like Kamchatka. For the moment, taking the battle into American waters – a capability that Admiral Gorshkov had achieved by the 1970s – will remain in cold storage.

Russia will therefore rely on ballistic missile submarines such as the Boreis – and in future the super silent Yasen – to get the job done. Major surface warships such as missile cruisers and destroyers will be few and far between and the chances of the Pacific Fleet getting an aircraft carrier are slim.

Key advantage: Naval aviation

In contrast to the western navies, Russia has several classes of strategic naval aviation – complementing both the surface and subsurface elements. The Pacific Fleet can rely on the twinjet Tu-95M Backfire – a supersonic bomber based in Vladivostok.

This aircraft carries a very sophisticated air-to-surface anti-ship cruise missile with an effective range of approximately 555 km. With refueling capabilities, it can fly up to 4600 km out into the Atlantic or Pacific. As well as an array of surface to air missiles, the coastline is protected by MiG-31 jet fighters – just four of them linking their powerful Zaslon radar can cover a 1000-km front.

So, even with fewer surface ships today, the Pacific Fleet remains a potent force that can take down a larger foe.

Chasing a legacy

To be sure, despite its shortcomings in strategic surface vessels, the Pacific Fleet isn’t confined to a littoral role. In keeping with its impressive legacy, its warships left Vladivostok for a long voyage in October 2016.

They have visited Indonesia, where they participated in the International arms show Indodefense-2016, Thailand’s Sattahip port, and in mid-December, the group stopped in India, where together with Indian warships they practiced an encounter battle in the Bay of Bengal in the Indra Navy-2016 joint drills.

On the way back home, the Pacific Fleet flotilla paid a goodwill visit to Manila, and in early January was received in South Korea’s Busan.

The Russian Pacific Fleet may no longer subscribe to a doctrine of sea dominance, but advances in technology could one day allow Moscow to do more with less.

According to Donald D. Chipman of the U.S. Navy Reserve: “Russia has the world’s longest maritime frontier, and the Russian people have always loved the sea. It is Soviet manifest destiny, argued Gorshkov, that the nation should go to sea.”

EB buoyed by possibilities as Trump envisions 350-ship Navy

Julia Bergman, New London Day, February 2

President Donald Trump, continuing his push to slash the cost of defense programs, wants to build more submarines but for less money.

"We're lacking submarines, and we're going to build new submarines, but the price is too high, so I'm cutting the prices way down," Trump said in a Jan. 26 interview at the White House.

The Navy did not immediately return a request for comment.

"I am pleased the Trump Administration recognizes the strategic importance of a strong submarine fleet," said Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., the top Democrat on the Armed Services Committee.

"One of the ways to achieve future cost savings is by making smart investments in a skilled workforce and state-of-the-art facilities, which is something we've done here in Rhode Island over the last several years," Reed said.

"We are currently only building one kind of submarine - the Virginia-class program, which is under cost and ahead of schedule," Reed said. "The Columbia-class program, which will replace Ohio-class submarines, is still in the design phase, but the shipbuilders and the Navy are working to reduce construction costs to make the boat as efficient and cost effective as possible."

On the campaign trail, Trump called for a 350-ship Navy but never detailed how he'd beef up the fleet. In recent years, the total number of Navy ships has hovered around 270 to 290. The current count is 274.

"It's a good thing to have a new president who is on track with all the force assessments and strategic reviews that confirm the value of the undersea fleet," said U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-2nd District.

Courtney said he is looking forward to the Trump administration's involvement with the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee, of which he is ranking member, in developing this year's defense bill. The subcommittee has oversight over the military's air and sea programs and is where vital discussions about funding for shipbuilding occur.

Late last year, the Navy released a proposal calling for 355 ships, including 18 more attack submarines. If the service's lofty goals are met, it could cost an additional \$3.5 billion to \$4 billion a year, according to a study by the Congressional Research Service. And that's just shipbuilding costs. More money would be needed to operate and maintain the additional ships and for additional personnel, the study points out.

The Navy expects to have 52 operational attack submarines in 2017.

Attack subs cost \$2.7 billion each, and the new ballistic missile submarines are expected to have a price tag of \$8 billion each.

Electric Boat President Jeffrey Geiger said in January that the company is poised to meet the Navy's demand for more submarines, provided it has the time to build up its workforce, supplier base and facilities. Already, Electric Boat is in the midst of a hiring spree to carry out its current workload.

Electric Boat, with facilities in North Kingstown and Groton, Connecticut, and Newport News Shipbuilding build two Virginia-class attack submarines a year. Former Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, in one of his last visits to Electric Boat, handed out mock punch cards that said "Buy 9 subs, get the 10th one free!" referencing the \$2 billion in savings achieved through a \$17.6-billion contract, the largest in Navy shipbuilding history, awarded to Electric Boat in April 2014.

In the negotiation of that contract, certain initiatives were put in place to reduce design costs, the most significant of which was a redesigned bow that included a new sonar array and two larger payload tubes instead of 12 individual, vertical-launch missile tubes. About 20 percent of the ship's design was changed to save about \$100 million per submarine. Other cost-saving measures included the ability to buy materials far in advance.

"Those of us who have worked with EB over the years know that affordability is a factor in their business model," said Bob Ross, executive director of the state's Office of Military Affairs.

The company is "well aware" that it is "incredibly expensive" to build submarines and works "very hard to be as efficient and affordable as they can," Ross said.

But he noted that a high price tag is inevitable given the advanced technology being built.

"There's more technology in the Virginia-class submarines than in the space shuttle program," he said. "It's never going to be a low number."

Generally speaking, the Virginia program has been hailed as a success for the on-time and under-budget delivery of the submarines, despite setbacks when inspectors discovered unauthorized and undocumented weld repairs that affected at least three of the submarines. After delivering the Navy's newest attack submarine, the USS Illinois in August 2016, EB estimated the boat came in more than \$100 million below target.

On-time and under-budget delivery is why the Navy continues to invest in EB, according to U.S. Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., who said in a statement that he won't stop fighting for "strong federal investments that ramp up our submarine force and the local jobs it supports."

The new class of ballistic missile submarines, known as the Columbia class, is expected to cost \$128 billion. That number is almost \$50 billion lower than original procurement cost estimates due to reducing the number of ships in the class from 14 to 12 and the number of number of missile tubes from 20 to 16, among other initiatives.

Given that the program is well into the design stage, "future decreases will be more difficult to achieve," Frank Kendall, the Pentagon's top weapons buyer, said in approving the program to move on to the advanced development phase.

The best way to keep costs down is to stay on schedule, said U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn. He noted that the Navy and EB have been working "tirelessly" and "relentlessly" for years to reduce costs and increase efficiency.





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From the Cover

COMSUBPAC's 2016 Sea and Shore Sailors of the Year were announced January 27th at an Awards Banquet at the Ocean View Club at Pt. Loma Naval Base. COMSUBPAC, RADM Fritz Roegge, was the Guest Speaker. The Sea SOY is YN1(SW/IW) Mujahideen Alikhan and the Shore SOY is STS1(SS) Marquis Perry. Other CSP SOY finalists were: STS1(SS) Barry Maag, EMN1(SS) Dylan Castonguay, HMI(SW) Elisabeth Oakes, STG1(SW/IUSS) Beth Mele, IT1(SW/IW/EXW) Nicholas Stenftenagel, STG1(SW/EXW/IUSS) Sarah Gregory, NDI(DSW/EXW) Andrew Murphy and FCI(SW) Nathan Becker. Western District 6 Commander Rocky Rockers and San Diego Base Vice Commander Warren Branges presented recognition certificates and monetary gifts to the winners and finalists on behalf of USSVI.