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 San Diego, CA 92120-3404

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The Silent Sentinel
 September 2009



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.

Convention 2009, San Diego, CA



U.S. Submarine Veterans San Diego Base

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The Silent Sentinel via Email

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

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

NAME: _____

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*

October Meeting

Our monthly meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at VFW Post 3787, 4370 Twain Ave., San Diego. Our October meeting will be on 13 October, 2009. 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

Mike Hyman (recuperating at home)

C J Glassford (recuperating at home)

Dick Fullen, unfortunately is back in the Nursing Home with Pneumonia. Seems to be doing OK, but is no longer recuperating at home. Can be visited/called at: Villa Monte Vista, 12696 Monte Vista, Poway, Ca 92064, 858-487-6242, Room 119. Dick's wife said he'd be pleased to see/hear from any of us.

Tom Warner's wife Sherry is doing very well and walking two and one-half miles each day.

Submitted by Mike Hyman

Submarine Losses in August

Submitted by C J Glassford



“ SUBMARINE FORCE LOSSES “ “ AUGUST “

GRUNION [Bell}(SS 216) - 70 Men on Board:

Sunk, on 16 Aug 1942, by Gunfire from Torpedoed Japanese Transport, 10 Miles North of Segula, near Kiska Island, Aleutians : “ALL HANDS LOST“

S - 39 (SS 144) - 46 Men on Board:

Destroyed, on 16 Aug 1942, after Running Aground on a Reef, South of Rossel Island : “NO LOSS OF LIFE“

BASS (SS 164) - 51 Men on Board:

Fire in After Battery Room, on 17 Aug 1942, Asphyxiates part of the Crew : “25 MEN LOST“

POMPANO (SS181) - 76 Men on Board:

Sunk, on 29 Aug 1943, Causes unknown, Possibly a Japanese Mine, or combined Air and Surface Attack, off Northeastern Honshu, Japan : "ALL HANDS LOST"

FLIER (SS 250) - 80 Men on Board:

Sunk, on 13 Aug 1944, by a Japanese Mine, South of Palawan, in the Balabac Strait :

" 78 MEN LOST – 8 SURVIVORS "

HARDER (SS 257) - 79 Men on Board:

Sunk, on 24 August 1944, by Japanese Coastal Vessel, Off the West Coast of Luzon, Philippines

" ALL HANDS LOST "

BULLHEAD (SS 332) - 84 Men on Board:

Probably Sunk, on 6 Aug 1945, by Japanese Army Aircraft, off the Bali Coast, in East Java Sea.

* Last Submarine Sunk During World War Two : " ALL HANDS LOST "

COCHINO (SS345) - 68 Men on Board:

Foundered and Sank, on 26 Aug 1949, Caused by After Battery Explosion and Fire, During a Severe Storm off the Northern Coast of Norway : " 1 MAN LOST "

TUSK (SS 426) - 81 Men on Board:

Six Crew Members washed Overboard, on 26 August 1949, while trying to rescue Crew Members of Fire damaged USS COCHINO (SS 345), in the Norwegian Sea:

"SIX MEN LOST"



Commanders Corner

September 09

Hello everyone!! Well, the convention is almost here and by the time you read this, it will be upon us. I want to remind everyone that **there is no base meeting in September. Again, there is no base meeting in September.** Our next Base meeting will be held on October 13. Hoping to see everyone in September at the Town and Country Hotel for the best convention USSVI has ever held.

As always, I hope that we think about and pray for our shipmates and their families to keep them in good health and for their safety all the time.

Sincerely,

Bob Bissonnette
Base Commander

Minutes of the San Diego Base Submarine Veterans Meeting, August 11, 2009.

1858 - Monthly meeting called to order by Base Commander, Bob Bissonnette.

Conducted opening exercises:

Reading of the Creed:

Pledge of Allegiance: Lead by David Ball.

Base Chaplin lead in opening Prayer and Tolling of the Boats for June.

USS 39 (SS 144) 14 AUGUST 1944

USS BASS (SS 164) 17 AUGUST 1942

USS POMPANO (SS 181) 29 AUGUST 1942

USS FLIER (SS 250) 13 AUGUST 1943

USS HARDER (SS257) 24 AUGUST 1944
USS BULLHEAD (SS332) 06 AUGUST 1945
USS COCHINO (SS345) 26 AUGUST 1949

ALL HANDS OBSERVED A MOMENT OF SILENCE.

Secretary's report: Sailing lets shows 51 members and guests present.

Treasurer report: Copy of report has been submitted to the membership.

All members of E-board are present.

VIPs introduced and guest present.

Chief William Longworth presently serving in the USS HAMPTON.

Seymour Phillips and Glenn Gerbrand.

The Presentation of USSVI Scholarship will be postponed because Samuel Radinsky is not available to be present to receive the award.

Holland Club new members: Three members were given certificates for Holland Club Membership: Everett Mauger, Seymour Phillips and Charlie Tate. We still have 14 more Certificates to hand out but we will mail or pass them out at the Convention.

Call for Committee Reports:

Chaplin's Report: CJ presented the Binnacle list to the membership.

Parade report: The parade committee for the Coronado parade said our organization we are welcomed to participate in the upcoming parade.

Membership: Our organization has 339 members listed. Tonight we has signed up a new member, Glenn Gerbrand.

Convention: We need your help there are a lot of openings for different jobs that need to be done during the convention. This August 22, at 10 am here at the VFW we will be presenting a watch bill for all the days of the convention. We need as many volunteers to help provide service to all attendees. Presently we have register 1400 people and are getting more everyday. We have convention coins and some patches for sale. Coins are 10 dollars apiece. Dates of the convention is 08 -12 September.

To help defray the cost of the convention we are having a raffle for 10 dollars. The grand prize is 6000 dollars and the runners will get 600 dollars. We will get some of the money for the base to help with convention expenses.

Breakfast committee: Enjoy a good breakfast this 30 August, from 8 – 12am. Come on out and support the base. Pass the word its open to everyone.

1925 break...Conducted 50/50 drawing

1938 Base Commander recalled to meeting order.

Picnic recap: The picnic on Sunday 19 July was a great event, 60 some folks enjoyed a good day at the Sub Base. Thanks to David Ball and Ron Gorence for their help.

Unfinished business:

The Submarine Float and trailer update: We have found someone in Poway to fix the float.

It will be about 60 dollars. We will need the weight of the float for a static display at the Convention Center. The next parade is the Veterans Day parade but it will be on display at convention.

New business: There will be no meeting in September due to the Convention.

A member suggested printing more Sentinels' for passing out at the Convention it maybe a good membership advertisement tool.

Our Non profit postage stamp has come up for renewal in March of next year and the moment it is listed under Birchenshaw. Fred will get more information and try to get the Post Office to change in our name.

Good of the order: Information for the Sentinel I encourage you to go to the Submarine web site were there is a lot of good information. The USSVI magazine has link and sub links.

Written articles about Tricare for life, will be available after meeting.

Staff shirts for the Convention are available after the meeting.

Raffle tickets will be available until last Friday before Convention.

1953 meeting adjourned

Sailing list:

FRED FOMBLY	BILL EARL	RICK BITTNER
BOB BISSONNETTE	BENNY WILLIAMS	MIKE HACKING
CJ GLASSFORD	NIHIL D SMITH	WILLIAM JOHNSTON
CHARLIE MARIN	CHARLIE TATE	BOB (DOC) COATES
ED WELCH	BOB OBERTING	EVERETT MAUGER
TOM POLEN	HARRY MCGILL	CHUCK BABCOCK
BOB MEDINA	DAN EBERHARDT	JOHN GRIENENBERGER
DAVID BALL	TOM WARNER	ROBERT G WEILAGO
FRANK WALKER	DENNIS WORTENSEN	DAVID KAUPPINEN
JACK KANE	BUD ROLLISON	JIM TREGURTHA
JACK ADDINGTON	AL V. POBLETE	JACK FERGUSON
PHILL RICHESON	J.R. ACAY	MANNY BURCIAGA
JOEL EIKAM	PAUL HITCHCOCK	CHRIS STROWS
RON GORENCE	BOB FARRELL	GLENN GERBRAND
DENNIS MCCREIGHT	JIM MALDON	JACK SADLER
WILLIAM LONGWORTH	JOE DUBOIS	MATT BAUMANN
STEVE LAMPRIDES	CHARLES A. SIMMONS	MIKE HYMANN
BOB WELCH		

It ain't just *my* opinion

By Ron Gorence

DBF vs. Nuke-

Fast-Attack Sailors deride Boomers for continuously “making-two-knots-to-go-nowhere.” You’ll hear smokeboaters—who had been disparaged as young smart-alecks when they were learning their craft from WWII Submariners—scoffing at all nukes, while glow-boaters counter that their ships are the only *true* submarines.

Part of the problem is that every submariner innately *knows*, for a fact, that ‘his boat’ is superior to all others. Relentless ‘Pinging’ between brothers of the ‘Phin, rarely leads to nullification of a psychologist’s verdict of mental stability, but, like blood-brothers, these brothers have been known to fight.

The simple fact is that nobody ever chose when he was going to be born, or even had a much of a choice when Sub School handed out assignments, but from the day BuShips started removing deck-guns from Fleet boats, through our agonizing shift to nuclear power, submariners have simply shrugged, adapted, and did their jobs superbly—just like those before them.

I was a QM, and in my day, we’d double the watches if there was any sea-ice in the area., and though many boats ran aground *on purpose* in WWII, fear of grounding caused me to hone my skills until I could fix the location of my ship within two miles at all times. Once they plowed at full speed through shoaling waters, and now submariners play tag with whatever lives under the North Pole and navigate with an accuracy of two yards. These things are impossible for me to wrap my brain around—the only thing I can think to say about those who came before me or those who man the boats today is: “Wow!” I’d put my hands in my pockets—and not touch anything—but I’d be a kid in a candy store if I could sail alongside either of them today.

I’m not saying anything new here. A guy who the sub school shrinks would probably pass right through, “. . . was a beggar in streets of Athens. . . made a virtue of extreme poverty . . . lived in a large tub . . . walked through the streets carrying a lamp in the daytime, looking for an honest man . . . continued to pursue a life not dependent upon the luxuries of civilization. . . .”

Over a thousand years ago, he said:

“When brothers agree, no fortress is so strong as their common life.” —Diogenes (~400 BC):

Membership Report for August '09

New Members: Welcome Aboard to our three new Chiefs: Bill Longworth, who earned dolphins in 2000 aboard the Bremerton (SSN698), Mario Resurreccion, who earned dolphins in 1958 aboard the Skate (SSN578), and Robert Wielage, who earned dolphins in 1943 aboard the USS Bluefish (SS222),
— bringing our WWII membership to.

Status: 341 members as of 8/11/09. Our best recruiting year in the last century was 10 new members in 1996. In 2007, we jumped to 15 and soared to 25 last year—we have 15 to date for 2009.

Demographics:

Number of Men qualified before 1946: 35. Since 1973: 35. Qual before 1942 =1.
Since 2002 = 1

Number of Men born before 1926: 37 Since 1950: 36. Born before 1916 =1.
Since 1982 = 1

Number of men qualifying on Diesels: ~340; on Boomers 39; on SSNs: 35. (22% Nukes, and increasing).

There are 64 officers or 19% of the SD Base. There are 34 EMs, 25 each of ENs & RMs, 21 STs, 17 each TMs & QMs, 16 MMs, 14 ETs, 11 HMs, and 10 YNs—all other ratings are represented with fewer than 10 members or are among the 35 who are too bashful to let me know (I'll begin bringing a roster to meetings to pass around so members can verify/check/change data—but you guys gotta show up!)

My rant at the last meeting: I know Mike Hyman needs 20 hours to set it up, and Fred Fromby stays up half the night printing the Sentinel, plus it takes at least 10 man-hours to post it. Mike Hacking spends his nights (and Linda's) putting together nametags or table decorations, etc. for the Convention. Parades and breakfasts and snacks don't just happen. Every shovel has pounds of dirt for each grain of gold—but it's worth it! Volunteer again (like you proudly volunteered for an opportunity to earn dolphins)!

Be safe,

RonG

U.S. Submarine Veterans of San Diego

*USSVI National, and San Diego Base Membership Application

Name: Qual Boat (Hull #, Year):
 Address: Other Boats (Hull #, Year):
 City, State, Zip:
Home Phone:
Cell Phone:
e-mail:
 Date of Birth:

Service Dates From-To):

Highest Rank/Rate attained: (continue on reverse if rqd.)

Medals, Ribbons, etc.: Notable duty (non-subs):
 (continue on reverse if rqd.)

Wife's name (or next of kin)
 (Address/phone if different): (continue on reverse if rqd.)

Names of Children: Civilian Occupation:
 (continue on reverse if rqd.) *Job Description*

of Grandchildren: *Date Retired*
Great-Grandchildren: *Company/Organization*

Home Town Service Clubs, Fraternal
Organizations, other
Veteran's Groups:

Biography:
 (Hobbies, interests, fraternal
 orgs, memberships, etc.):
 (continue on reverse if rqd.)

*United States Submarine Veterans, Inc.

Annual and Life Membership Dues:

Annual Membership	National	Base	National plus Base
1 Year	\$20	Same	\$40
3 Years	\$55	Same	\$110
5 Years	\$90	Same	\$180
Life Membership			
Age 76 & Older	\$100	Same	\$200
Age 66-75	\$200	Same	\$400
Age 56-65	\$300	Same	\$600
Age 46-55	\$400	Same	\$800
45 and Under	\$800	\$500	\$1,300

Mail application to:
Ron Gorence
2563 Roseview Place
San Diego, Ca 92105
 Make all checks out to:
"USSVI"
 Questions?
mgorence@yahoo.com
(619) 264-6995



**San Diego Base Commander Bob Bissonnette
Welcomes Three San Diego Base Members to
Holland Club**



Charles Tate Seymour Phillips Everett Mauger



Bob Bissonnette Charles Tate



Bob Bissonnette

Everett Mauger



Charles Tate Bob Bissonnette

Seymour Phillips

Navy Creates A Virtual World To Test Submarine Design

By Joab Jackson, *Government Computer News*, August 24, 2009

When visualizing data, sometimes a map or graph isn't enough. Setting up an entire virtual world occasionally is the best way to understand new information.

The Naval Undersea Warfare Center is doing that with an experimental approach to submarine design. It has created a Second Life-like virtual replica of a proposed design of a submarine's control hub using architectural renderings of the new design. By being immersed in a new environment, submarine commanders will have a better idea of the proposed changes to the hub and can offer more constructive feedback.

"We would like to support rapid prototyping," said Douglas Maxwell, technical lead for the project. "Basically, we would like to create an environment where the fleet, shipbuilders and scientists can collaborate on platform design. We could create many iterations of advanced design and let the users tell us which ones work and which ones don't."

Moreover, by using a virtual replica, the center could save the expense and time of sending Navy personnel to its Newport, R.I., location to try a mock-up.

The Naval Undersea Warfare Center is using a submarine's combat systems center as a test case. In modeling the hub of the submarine where commanders and sonar operators do their jobs, the center used virtual workplace software Qwaq Forums, from Qwaq.

The software works like other online immersive environments. All clients get a dedicated application, which offers them a menu of active forums. After a user logs on to the combat center forum, he or she can walk an avatar into an accurately depicted and fully operational combat center. The avatar can operate sonar console software, for instance, just as the user would do with the real thing.

"When you are looking at a Qwaq console, the screen being displayed to you is a live, running operational system on your network," Maxwell said. Testers are put through a scripted concept-of-operation exercise, where they undertake the normal functions of a mission. They can offer their insights with the design engineers through chat software that is part of the application.

The submarine environment is based on the computer-aided design files developed by engineers. One of the chief features of Qwaq - one missing in Second Life, for instance - is that it can ingest and re-render CAD drawings. "We can create an entire environment based on that CAD file," Maxwell said. Qwaq translates the CAD models into the Croquet format. The software offers a number of other operational advantages, Maxwell said. For one, it has the ability to tap outside applications, such as software for the sonar operator's console, and run them in the virtual environment. Also, the software can run entirely behind a firewall, though Qwaq offers a hosted version, too. The client software uses a minimal number of ports to communicate with the main servers, which makes it easier to manage in terms of security. The server software is a virtual appliance, a Linux-based environment running within a VMware container.

Bowermaster's Adventures — Russia's Nuclear Legacy

By Jon Bowermaster, *Gadling News*, August 24, 2009

Just around the corner from Petropavlovsk, ten miles by land or sea, located across Avachinskaya Bay on a small peninsula called Krashenninnikova sits Russia's largest nuclear submarine base. It is off limits to outsiders and a shell of what it was during the Soviet Union's heyday. Today - judging by a simple Google map search - there are just a half-dozen active nuclear subs sitting at its docks. Worrying to those who pay attention to such things are the shadows on the far edge of the docks on the same map, indicating somewhere between a dozen and twenty subs piled up next to each other. They are said to be at varying degrees of decommissioning.

For decades the submarine station and a couple nearby support bases provided good jobs for locals and drew many Russians and Ukrainians to live in this easternmost outpost. They are also the reason that until the end of the Cold War Kamchatka was off-limits to the rest of the world. Even today, twenty years later, Russia continues to maintain a heavy military presence here.

The operation of nuclear-powered submarines generates considerable amounts of nuclear waste. Liquid and solid radioactive wastes need to be removed from submarines and stored. In addition, periodically the submarine needs to be refueled, thus spent fuel needs to be removed from the submarine and also stored. Decommissioning a nuclear submarine generates these streams of waste and in addition, the refueled reactor compartment must be dealt with.

It is a little worrying to me, an outsider, that the region's two biggest industries overlap: Nuclear sub decommissioning and fishing. If the same worries locals, I can't get it out of them during my day wandering the streets of Petropavlovsk. Most likely they are concerned too but are not going to share their feelings with a stranger.

Occasional testing of local air and water for radiation is done and recent tests suggest levels of both near the Rybachiy base had "slightly-elevated-levels. How much radioactivity is too much? One expert told me a story of some smalltime crooks

who broke into the subs waiting to be decommissioned to steal gold used in their construction; stashing the goods under their beds was apparently not a very wise thing to do, given their radioactivity, which extracted the ultimate payback.

There are other concerns. In recent years there have been a handful of accidents involving Russian subs, fires, mostly and a couple very publicized sinkings. The Russian Northern Fleet's main storage for nuclear waste at Kola Peninsula is reportedly leaking radioactivity. During 1997 all spent nuclear fuel, which was sent to Andreeva Bay, was stored in the open, without protection. At other big submarine bases, including the big one at Murmansk, there have been reports of nuclear subs being scuttled - sunk to the bottom of the ocean - without proper clean-up of the nuclear reactors aboard. Russians have previously admitted to dumping nuclear waste at sea, off the coast of Japan. The future of Ribachiy remains a big question.

This is from a U.S. State Department report: "In Russia every step of the process is facing problems. The support complex which was already in poor shape and accident-prone during Soviet times has been particularly burdened in the last few years. Shore-side waste sites are full of low-level radioactive waste and spent fuel. Shipments of the spent fuel for reprocessing have been delayed due to lack of funds and equipment. The service ships, which unload the spent fuel from submarines, are also full and in poor shape (and some have suffered accidents). The shipyards where the work is done are facing financial shortages, power blackouts and strikes. There are no final land-based storage sites for decommissioned reactor compartments removed from submarines, so they are being stored afloat in bays near naval bases. Finally, contamination is widespread at waste storage sites in the North and Far East due to accidents. Lower-level contamination is thought to plague virtually every support facility for the fleet. In addition, accidents on submarines have led to contamination of the surrounding area.

"The massive retirement of nuclear powered submarines has further aggravated this problem. The number of nuclear-powered submarines has declined substantially since the end of the Cold War as many first and second-generation nuclear powered submarines have been decommissioned. Also, due to lack of financing and arms control treaties, even third generation submarines are being removed from service. The Soviet Union/Russia constructed some 248 submarines by 1996 and some 150-170 have been removed from service. Only some third of these have had their spent fuel removed. Of the fifty or so submarines that have had their fuel removed only some 20-25 have been partially scrapped and their reactor compartments removed, sealed up, stored afloat. A particular problem is that at least one submarine in the Northern Fleet and three submarines in the Pacific Fleet were retired due to nuclear accidents. They have damaged spent fuel on board and the Russian Navy is uncertain about how to decommission them.

"Another concern with decommissioned submarines which still have their spent fuel onboard is accidents. Naval officers fear another major accident could occur, like what transpired on 10 August 1985 when an Echo II nuclear-powered submarine reactor exploded during a refueling at the Chazhma Bay shipyard. Another worry is that a decommissioned nuclear submarine could sink at dockside. On 29-30th May 1997, this happened when a decommissioned submarine sank at the submarine facilities in Kamchatka. Reportedly a vessel collided with the moored submarine, and it sank. The Russian Navy claimed all fuel had been offloaded from the submarine, and it posed no environmental hazard. However, such reports are not reassuring.

"The most acute problem today is that of the decommissioned submarines and the shore-side support facilities and maintenance ships. Little thought or planning had gone into what to do with retired submarines prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since 1991, a lot of thought has been devoted to this problem, but the absence of finances has meant serious environmental problems continue, and will probably continue for a decade or more to come. The Russian Navy and surrounding countries remain concerned that a major accident could ensue.

"In March 1993, after several years of revelations about the dumping of radioactive waste at sea, the Russian government released a White Paper describing some 30 years of the dumping of radioactive waste at sea. The so-called Yablokov report detailed how 18 damaged naval nuclear reactors and two internal reactor screen assemblies were dumped in the seas around the Soviet Union. Sixteen reactors were dumped in the Kara Sea and 2 in the Sea of Japan. One reactor screen assembly was dumped in the Kara Sea and one off Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky in the northern Pacific Ocean.

"Several scientific expeditions to the dump areas in the Arctic found local contamination from dumped materials. But there is no evidence of migration so far. However, all dump sites were not found and fully investigated."

After reading various high-level reports, and looking out over what would appear to be a beautiful northern Pacific seascape from the hills above Petropavlovsk ... I don't think I'll be buying second-home property here.

HILARIDES: Lessons Learned From ASDS Will Be Applied To JMMS

Navy seeks \$43.4 million in FY-10 for R&D

By Dan Taylor, Inside the Navy, August 24, 2009

The Navy and U.S. Special Operations Command will try to take the "body of knowledge" learned from the failed Advanced SEAL Delivery System effort and apply it toward the replacement Joint Multi-Mission Submersible (JMMS), Rear Adm. William Hilarides, program executive officer for submarines, told Inside the Navy earlier this month.

In 2006, major performance and reliability problems with ASDS led then-Pentagon acquisition executive Kenneth Krieg to kill the program. The ASDS is a submersible designed to transport SEALs in clandestine operations.

Krieg commissioned a group of officials to study ways to improve the one-and-only mini sub built, but plans to buy two more subs of the same design were scuttled.

The existing prototype, ASDS-1, caught fire last year and SOCOM has said the service will not fix the vessel.

The Navy has asked for \$43.4 million in this year's budget to start JMMS. Through fiscal year 2009, \$963 million has been spent on the ASDS effort, according to Lt. Cmdr. Fred Kuebler, a SOCOM spokesman.

The fire on ASDS-1 was caused by lithium ion batteries, Hilarides said, adding that it prompted the program to take a "big step back."

"We came to the realization that the energy density and manufacture of those batteries is — we probably stretched a little bit past our technical comfort zones," the admiral said. "So we stepped back and said we're going to slow down on lithium ion."

But JMMS may leverage some aspects of the ASDS, Hilarides said. The vehicle itself "actually served us fairly well as a prototype," he said.

He posited that the program had learned a lot from its mistakes.

"We didn't understand the hydrodynamics, we didn't fully understand the control systems," he said. "We learned, we fixed, we put it back out, we fixed, we put it back out. So what we glean from those 10 years is a tremendous amount of knowledge about how to go about building a combat submersible."

An atmosphere of tightening budgets in the Pentagon is likely behind the decision to not fix the prototype, Hilarides said.

"You look at it and say, 'Well, it's a pretty expensive thing to repair,'" he said. "With a new-start program, the judgment is, 'Hey, on balance, moving forward may be the best idea given the constrained resources.' I think if it weren't for constrained resources, it would be fixed."

Research and development work on JMMS will probably start within the next six months if the funding is in place, he added.

Construction Problems Found On Four Newport News-Built Submarines

By Peter Frost, Newport News Daily Press, August 22, 2009

NEWPORT NEWS — Weapons-handling systems on at least four Virginia Class submarines were installed incorrectly by workers at Northrop Grumman Corp.'s Newport News shipyard, restricting the ability of sailors to move torpedoes into launch tubes.

Northrop and the Navy on Friday confirmed the problems, which were found on the North Carolina, New Mexico, Missouri and California. Of the four boats, none are under way. Only the North Carolina is commissioned, but it is in a maintenance period. The other subs are in various stages of construction in Newport News and in Groton, Conn.

The problem involves improperly installed bolts and fasteners that hold together tracks on which weapons are moved in the sub's torpedo room.

Improper installation of these pieces could result in a misalignment of the equipment, preventing the movement of weapon cradles within the torpedo room. That "could compromise the integrity of the weapons handling system in a shock event," according to written responses from the Navy.

Matt Mulherin, the general manager of the Newport News shipyard, said Friday that a misalignment could restrict sailors' ability to position weapons in torpedo tubes, essentially disabling the sub's ability to launch attacks or defend itself.

"I'm certainly disappointed to be in this position — both personally and professionally," Mulherin said. "Is this embarrassing? Yeah. I don't know how you say it isn't. This isn't a conversation I want to have with anybody."

Northrop's sub-building partner, General Dynamics Electric Boat, discovered the problems earlier this month on the Missouri. The company notified the Navy on Aug. 6.

Once the initial problems were found, Electric Boat and Northrop began investigating the issue to determine if other boats were involved. The companies are scheduled to provide a combined assessment to the Navy within two weeks, the service said.

Mulherin said the problems appear to be a "workmanship issue." The bolts and fasteners, he said, were not made in accordance with construction drawings.

The company is still investigating why the problems happened, and Mulherin said it's too early to determine if the probe will expand to aircraft carriers.

"Rest assured, we will get to the root cause," he said. "We are absolutely committed to quality, and that means 100 percent quality. We know what that means. We have zero tolerance" for construction errors.

As a result of the additional inspections and required re-work, the delivery of the submarine New Mexico likely will be delayed, Mulherin said. That boat was scheduled to go on its first set of sea trials early next month and be commissioned in November.

"It's going to take some time to come through" the required re-work on the New Mexico, he said. It's unclear how long the delay will be.

The construction problems revealed Friday mark the third high-profile incident involving the Newport News shipyard.

In December 2007, inspectors found that yard welders and pipe fitters used incorrect metals to weld together piping and joints on submarines and surface ships. The use of the wrong material could lead to cracking, and eventually, leaks. More than a dozen ships built and/or serviced in Newport News between 2000 and 2007 were included in a joint Navy-Northrop probe.

That investigation led to sweeping changes in Newport News, including a mass re-training of waterfront workers.

Then earlier this year, a weld inspector at the Newport News shipyard admitted to signing off on the quality of welds that he did not inspect. The inspector, Robert Ruks, was fired. The issue is still under investigation by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, said Ed Buice, an NCIS spokesman.

Mulherin insists that the three problems are unrelated.

On the initial weld problems, Mulherin said “we have pretty well beat that issue down.” The company was required to submit to the Navy a several-hundred page weld re-inspection and remediation plan on that investigation, which the Navy has yet to approve. The service has agreed to Northrop’s recommendations on some ships, but not all, Mulherin said.

In the weld inspector case, Mulherin said the problem was due to “a bad apple.”

Neither the Navy nor the shipyard would give cost or repair time estimates on the four affected submarines.

Submarine problems

- North Carolina, New Mexico, Missouri and California submarines have weapons-handling systems that were installed incorrectly.

- The construction problems mark the third high-profile incident involving Northrop Grumman’s Newport News shipyard.

Electric Boat wins contract to fix sub’s cracked hull

By Robert McCabe, Virginian Pilot, Aug. 21, 2009

The Navy has awarded a contract worth \$717,000 to Groton, Conn.-based General Dynamics Electric Boat to replace a cracked hull casting on the Toledo, a Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine. The submarine had left Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding, Newport News in February after a period of extended maintenance.

“The entire casting will be removed to allow the Navy to try to determine when and how the crack formed,” said Alan Baribeau, a spokesman for the Naval Sea Systems Command in Washington, in an e-mail.

The work will be done by 12 to 15 people and take about 65 days, said Robert A. Hamilton, an Electric Boat spokesman. It will take place at Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, he said.

The Connecticut-based submarine was preparing to go to sea when the crack was spotted by crew members on July 17, according to the Navy.

The Toledo, commissioned in 1995, entered Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding in December 2006 for the 27-month overhaul.

The Navy said the crack being addressed on the Toledo is unrelated to welding problems at Northrop Grumman that surfaced in late 2007.

“Casting is a different process from welding,” said Monica McCoy, a spokeswoman with Naval Sea Systems Command.

“These are separate issues and unrelated,” said Jennifer Dellapenta, a Northrop Grumman spokeswoman.

Navy Fires Top Officer At Bangor Nuclear Weapons Facility

By Josh Farley, Kitsap Sun, August 21, 2009

BANGOR — Capt. Timothy J. Block, the commanding officer of Bangor’s nuclear weapons facility, has been relieved of duty, according to a Navy spokesman.

Rear Adm. Stephen E. Johnson, the Navy’s director of strategic systems programs, removed Block on Friday because of “a loss of confidence in his ability to continue to lead,” said Cmdr. J.A. “Cappy” Surette, a spokesman at the Pentagon.

“An officer in command has a unique position of trust and responsibility, and has a key role in shaping morale, good order and discipline within the command,” Surette said. “Because of this unique position, his immediate superiors must have full confidence in the officer’s judgment and ability to command.”

Surette said there was no “specific issue or incident” that led to Block’s removal and that public safety was not jeopardized at the facility, which assembles, stores and places nuclear weapons on submarines.

He is the second SWFPac commander in six years to be relieved of duty for “a loss of confidence.” Capt. Keith Lyles — along with his executive officer, weapons officer and command master chief — was dismissed after failing a nuclear weapons inspection.

That inspection came six weeks after a ladder was inadvertently left inside a missile tube on the Trident submarine USS Georgia. As a nuclear missile was being lifted into the tube, the missile’s nose cone was punctured by the ladder and the lifting operation only stopped when the ladder was inches from the nuclear warhead.

The Nov. 7, 2003 incident, which occurred on the Bangor waterfront, was described by a local congressman who had been briefed on it as “serious” but not life-threatening.

Block was about a year into his three-year tour. He has been reassigned and his next duty station has not been determined, Surette said.

Navy Capt. Kevin Zumbar, deputy director of strategic systems programs based in the Washington, D.C., area, will assume command until a permanent replacement is found.

The Strategic Weapons Facility Pacific is home to about one-fourth of the nation's nuclear weapons, according to a 2006 report by the The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, a nuclear weapons watchdog group.

Sub Commands Get Breathalyzers As Part Of Alcohol Policy Overhaul

By Andrew Tilghman, Navy Times, August 21, 2009

The Submarine Force is sending Breathalyzer devices to all submarine commands, the latest piece of the Navy's overall crackdown on drinking.

In June, the Atlantic and Pacific type commands began providing the devices to all crews and shore commands in the submarine fleet. Nearly all commands currently have at least one device, a Navy official said.

The devices will be used "for random inspections to support the health, welfare, readiness and safety of command members at the expiration of liberty," said Cmdr. Patrick McNally, a spokesman for Submarine Forces in Norfolk, Va.

"Just like other inspections, commanders can choose to randomly select members for testing or to sweep the command or a sub-unit of the command. Sailors exhibiting unusual or abnormal behavior may also be inspected," McNally said in a written statement.

The initiative began the same month that the Navy overhauled its drug and alcohol policy. The new policy includes sweeping rules that allow the Navy to kick out any sailor who has two drunken-driving incidents during his career.

It also comes several months after authorities say a drunken submariner caused a fatal crash in Connecticut by driving onto the wrong side of a highway without his headlights on. He collided with a van full of college students; a 20-year-old woman was killed, police said.

Machinist's Mate 2nd Class (SS) Daniel Musser, 24, allegedly caused the fatal crash after drinking at a nearby casino. He was charged with second-degree manslaughter with a motor vehicle while intoxicated, second-degree assault with a motor vehicle, first-degree reckless endangerment, driving under the influence and driving the wrong way on a highway.

STEPPED-UP TESTS

In June, submarine commands began receiving Breathalyzer devices. Commanders can use them as they choose, and several rules will apply:

Personnel who are under the influence of alcohol will not be able to assume duty status.

Medical commands could be alerted that a sailor is in need of observation.

The command drug and alcohol program adviser could be alerted that a sailor is exhibiting high-risk behaviors and needs to be interviewed.

Shortly after the fatal crash, sailors at Naval Submarine Base Groton faced an immediate crack-down, Chief Navy Diver (DSW) Jose Castilla said.

"We were having a [drunken-driving arrest] like every week," Castilla said, referring to the base.

Sailors there immediately saw more on-base checkpoints, closer scrutiny coming through the gate and a lower threshold for the blood-alcohol levels that define drunken driving, Castilla said.

"That's what people were upset about — I can't even have one beer and drive home," Castilla said. "It got to the point where people wouldn't go to the clubs on base. It was right there on the line between promoting safety and harassing the base residents. But that's what it takes some-times.

Lasers keep submarines in touch through the big blue

New Scientist, Aug. 19, 2009

THE water that hides enemy submarines also makes it hard to contact the friendly ones from the air — unless they surface. Reaching submerged subs has required giant transmitters sending very low-frequency radio waves, which limits data transmission speeds. Now the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency is turning to new blue lasers to get the message through.

It has long been known that blue light penetrates water well. DARPA tried to develop blue laser links to subs around 1980, but failed as the lasers available were inefficient.

DARPA's fresh shot utilizes new compact lasers that emit blue light, and receivers with filters which transmit that wavelength and block any background light. Fitting them in planes and ships should provide a high-bandwidth link with allied subs.

China to display nuclear submarines in Qingdao fleet parade

Kingdoms Blog, Aug. 19, 2009

China will display its nuclear powered submarines for the first time in history during a fleet parade to mark the 60th anniversary of the People's Liberation Army Navy, a senior navy officer said on Monday.

Ding Yiping, deputy commander of the PLA Navy, made the remarks during an exclusive interview with Xinhua, but did not disclose any further details about the submarines.

It is not a secret that China has nuclear submarines, which are key to safeguarding our country's national security," Ding said, adding that the number of China's nuclear submarines were far less than those of the United States and Russia.

Ding stressed that China's national defense policy and nuclear strategy is purely defensive in nature, and that the country's naval forces would not pose any threat to other countries.

The PLA Navy will continue to make contributions to maintain world, regional and maritime peace," he said.

The PLA Navy will celebrate its 60th birthday on Thursday this week joined by 21 naval vessels from 14 other countries and delegations from 29 other countries.

A four-day celebration that includes seminars, a fleet parade and a sampan race will be held off the coast of the eastern city of Qingdao.

San Diego Yacht Club Sponsors Submariners' Regatta

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Chelsea Radford, Navy Public Affairs Support Element – West, Aug. 18, 2009

SAN DIEGO – Sailors assigned to submarines homeported in San Diego had the opportunity Aug. 15 to operate wind-powered surface vessels at the San Diego Yacht Club's (SDYC) 6th annual Submariners' Regatta.

Sailors from USS Albuquerque (SSN 706), USS Hampton (SSN 767), USS Jefferson City (SSN 759), USS San Francisco (SSN 711) and USS Asheville (SSN 750) participated in the event, which included a race and a barbecue.

Garrett O'Brien, a SDYC member and the Submariners' Regatta event coordinator, began the event six years ago in an effort to show his appreciation for military service.

"We put this together as our way of showing our military members how much we appreciate their service," said O'Brien.

O'Brien also commented that his service as an Army captain during the Vietnam War contributed to his appreciation of the military.

The submariners had the chance to experience sailing a yacht and spent time with their shipmates outside of work.

"I feel like it's a really good experience," said Machinist's Mate Fireman Michael Barboan, assigned to San Francisco. "It's so nice to be on a boat and feel relaxed."

The Sailors formed groups, ranging from two to six people, and were placed on 12 different yachts. Aboard the yachts, the submariners learned the terminology and the workings of a sailboat.

"I'm just so amazed by the talent and the spirit and the capability of these young kids," said retired Vice Adm. John Nickelson. "They work so hard, whether they're on patrol or when they get back, and to get some recognition and a chance to interface with other people, I think it's really big."

No Fish Story: Ballistic Missile Sub Rescues Mariners

By Philip Ewing, Navy Times, Aug. 18, 2009

Five Bahamian fishermen clinging to their capsized boat were rescued Aug. 11 by what could be the world's least likely ship to render aid on the high seas – a U.S. ballistic missile submarine.

The ballistic missile sub Rhode Island was underway on the surface in the Atlantic Ocean when its crew spotted the overturned fishing vessel, according to a Navy announcement, and the boat's Gold Crew commanding officer, Cmdr. Kevin Mooney, decided to turn around and investigate.

Sailors from the Rhode Island pulled four men and one 14-year-old boy off the boat and onto the submarine's missile deck, where Senior Chief Hospital Corpsman (SS) John Renn treated them for dehydration. One of the men hurt his leg when the boat capsized, and Renn prepared the wound for more complete treatment at a shore hospital.

After the men were attended to aboard the Rhode Island, they were transferred to a Navy boat that took them to shore.

Lt. Rebecca Rebarich, a spokeswoman for Submarine Group 10, acknowledged it was highly unusual for a ballistic missile submarine – ships that usually operate invisibly, or behind a thick screen of security – to help mariners at sea. In June, Navy security teams confronted two fishermen off Key West when they got too close to the guided missile submarine Georgia, which was training nearby on the surface.

But Rebarich said Mooney felt obligated to help the Bahamian fishermen, who had been adrift on their upside-down boat for four days.

"They were in the right place at the right time, and the commanding officer felt it was proper to render assistance to a vessel in distress," she said.

The rescued men joked with the Rhode Island's crew that no one would believe the story of how they were rescued, according to the Navy's announcement, but Mooney gave each one proof – a ship's command coin.