

- > Good Day To Remember Those US Submariners
- > (NEW ZEALAND HERALD 25 APR 08) ... David Clemow
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- > On Anzac Day thoughts turn to those who gave their lives during
- > various wars over the last century. But there is one group which
- > has never been given recognition for what they achieved in World
- > War II and that is the United States submariners, 3505 of whom
- > lost their lives, including 374 officers.
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- > When one analyses what they achieved there is no doubt they did
- > more than any other group to defeat the Japanese and save
- > Australia and New Zealand from being invaded.
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- > The reason is simple - they sank more than 60 per cent of the
- > Japanese merchant marine fleet. Without these ships, not only was
- > the Japanese advance stifled, their occupying troops lost their
- > supply lines and they virtually could not be evacuated like the
- > British were at Dunkirk to fight in other battles.
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- > Additionally with the loss of shipping, Japan found it very
- > difficult to supply the home land with raw materials from the
- > conquered territories.
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- > After the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the US instigated a
- > policy of restricting supplies to Japan. This ultimately led to
- > the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941.
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- > The Japanese advance over the next five months was nothing short
- > of staggering _ Hong Kong, the Philippines, Burma, Borneo, Malaya,
- > Thailand, Indo-China (Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam) and Singapore on
- > February 15, 1942 where 80,000 troops surrendered (the largest
- > surrender of British military personnel in history) were occupied.
- > Ships played a most important part in this role.
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- > The Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) was occupied in March and
- > Darwin first bombed on February 15, 1942. The farthest Japanese
- > advance was Quadacanal in the Solomon Islands by July 6. The

> farthest advance in Burma was on May 8, 1942, which was the second
> day of the Coral Sea battle - their first setback, followed by the
> Battle of Midway on June 3-6.

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> Without a huge marine fleet this advance would never have been
> possible. Over the next two years the US Navy submarine fleet went
> to work.

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> Fortunately they had cracked the Japanese naval code so they
> virtually knew their every move. The Japanese had also failed to
> destroy the enormous naval fuel-oil installations at Pearl Harbour
> when Admiral Nagumo did not go ahead with the third wave of air
> strikes.

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> Admiral Nimitz, Commander in Chief of the US Navy Pacific Fleet,
> said that had the tanks been destroyed the war would have been
> prolonged by two years as it would have immobilized every ship in
> the Pacific Fleet.

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> The Japanese had no long-range anti-submarine aircraft and
> probably their destroyers were not that well equipped to deal with
> submarines. The problem for the American Navy was where to base
> the submarines. Darwin was ruled out because the harbour was
> considered too shallow. Finally Fremantle (near Perth) was chosen
> and obviously that was too far away for the Japanese to attack
> with aircraft. It was a long haul for the submarines to the areas
> where Japanese ships were active to the north but on the surface,
> diesel-powered submarines have a tremendous range.

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> Obviously they would sail on the surface for most of their
> operations to and from Fremantle. Evidently Japan never found out
> where the submarines were based. The Fremantle base had 125
> American, 31 British and 11 Free Dutch submarines. The Americans
> deployed 288 submarines during the war so nearly half operated
> from the Fremantle base.

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> Japan started the war with six million tons of shipping and of
> course built more as the war went on. US submarines sank 1314 of
> their ships of more than 1000 tons each, plus 700,000 tons of
> naval ships including eight aircraft carriers, a battleship and 11

> cruisers.

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> They did 416 patrols and fired 14,500 torpedoes. Out of a total of
> 52 subs lost, 48 were lost operating from the Fremantle base.

> American submariners made up only 1.6 per cent of the US naval
> manpower but they had the highest loss rate of US Armed Forces
> with 22 per cent killed.

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> At the German Naval Museum at Laboe, northeast of Kiel, there is a
> memorial to the 3505 American submariners and a memorial to the
> 31,000 German submariners who lost their lives out of a total of
> 39,000 men who served in their U-boats. The Germans built 1154
> U-boats and lost 800.

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> More than 50,000 allied Merchant Seamen lost their lives, many as
> a result of U-boat activity. They, too, have never been given true
> recognition for what they achieved in the Atlantic and the
> sacrifices they made.

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> Last year while in Los Angeles I spoke to a group of American
> submariners. Many did not know of their predecessors' achievements
> in the war and none knew there was a base in Fremantle.

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> They are going to make a concerted effort to bring this oversight
> into prominence when remembrances are held. Their sacrifices
> certainly saved us from invasion. Anzac Day is now also the time
> to remember those 3505 dead submariners of the US Navy.

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> (David Clemow of Auckland is a retired Air New Zealand pilot,
> previous technical director of the Airline Pilots Association and
> a qualified meteorologist.)

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> LCDR Joe Femino
> Commanding Officer
> USS DEXTROUS (MCM 13)
> MCM CREW EXULTANT

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Tracing Paper Blamed In Sub's Grounding

By Andy Greenwood, Chief Reporter, The Herald (Plymouth, U.K.), 22 May 2008

Tracing paper was one of the contributory factors in the grounding of a Westcountry-based submarine which caused damage costing £5 million.

The Devonport-based nuclear-powered submarine, HMS Trafalgar, crashed into the seabed at nearly 15 knots during a training exercise off the Isle of Skye.

A Board of Inquiry into the accident blamed a number of factors including poor planning, poor chart work, the use of tracing paper and poor leadership.

Three trainee submarine commanders were being tested, without some navigational aids, when the boat struck the seabed. Most of the crew were knocked over by the impact and three suffered minor injuries.

But the report said that, just 90 seconds before the crash, "none of the officers holding a key position of responsibility had any concerns about the submarine's position".

One factor contributing to the accident, in November 2002, was that the officer charged with preparing the plan had not conducted it. According to the inquiry, that left "an officer whose knowledge of the plan was superficial being invited to execute it and make rapid and significant changes without detailed knowledge of the area and the factors involved".

The effect of the tidal stream had also been misjudged and the submarine had not made the expected progress, resulting in the boat turning "far too early". That was compounded by chart work "not up to the standard expected from an experienced submarine navigator", which was "increasingly untidy" and contained "elementary mistakes".

"A final criticism made by the board was the decision to use tracing paper overlay," the report added. "This has been a contributory factor in previous groundings and again on this occasion vital information was obscured."

The report, released by the Ministry of Defence under the Freedom of Information Act, concluded: "HMS Trafalgar grounded because of human error. The submarine altered course far too early, principally because the effect of tidal stream had been underestimated and the standard of chart work was poor. The Submarine Command Course student conducting the navigation had, for good reason, been deprived of significant information available only to the command safety team.

"That team, consisting of teacher [an experienced submarine commander] and the submarine's commanding officer, had not appreciated the dangers inherent in the plan."

It added: "Nuclear submarines should only conduct training of this nature if the arrangements for navigational safety are infallible."

Investigators made a number of recommendations, including the use of tracing paper being "strongly discouraged" and the updating of submarine navigation books. The MoD also released some navigation charts, but was unable to locate the submarine's log book. Nearly 18 months after the grounding, Commander Robert Fancy and Commander Ian McGhie faced court martial. They both pleaded guilty to a charge of negligence. The hearing was told that they were concentrating on creating hazards for their students when they should have focused on safe navigation of the vessel. Cdr Fancy was severely reprimanded. Cdr McGhie was given a reprimand.

Are All Our Warships Welcome Here?

A Ban on Nuclear Warships Dampens Spirit of Fleet Week

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Dinkins could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Nearly 20 years later, the unwritten ban has never been lifted. According to a spokeswoman for the Navy, "nuclear propulsion, by itself, does not prohibit visiting New York Harbor." Nuclear-powered ships have nonetheless honored the

unofficial arrangement and avoided the city, as Naval officers assume that these ships are not welcome without an explicit invitation from the city's mayor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Admiral: VIRGINIA-Class Hulls May Benefit from Future Sub Research

By Dan Taylor, Inside Defense, 26 May 2008

NORFOLK, VA – Future Virginia-class attack submarines may benefit from the research and development of the sea-based strategic deterrent, the next-generation replacement for aging Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs), according to the three-star admiral in charge of the submarine fleet.

The \$7-billion program to develop an SSBN replacement in 2029 is starting to “ramp up,” Vice Adm. John Donnelly said here during his May 20 presentation at IQPC’s Fleet Requirements Summit, and the technology developed in that program could be leveraged onto Virginia-class subs by the time the Navy starts work on the fourth block of subs in the late 2010s.

Specifically, the Navy would like to field an advanced sail for the sub with “more internal volume and additional weapons,” he told Inside the Navy in a brief interview following his presentation.

The admiral also addressed the push by House lawmakers to move up production of two Virginia-class subs per year to fiscal year 2010, saying that the move would be a welcome help in mitigating the projected attack sub shortfall in the 2020s and 2030s.

“Every ship I add makes the trough shallower,” Donnelly said.

Trident II D5 (FBMs) Testing

Technology News Daily, 27 May 2008

The U.S. Navy conducted a successful test launch this month of two Trident II D5 Fleet Ballistic Missiles (FBMs) built by Lockheed Martin (NYSE: LMT). The Navy launched the unarmed missiles from the submerged submarine USS Nebraska (SSBN 739) in the Pacific Ocean.

The Trident II D5 missile now has achieved 122 consecutive successful test launches since 1989 – a record unmatched by any other large ballistic missile or space launch vehicle.

The Navy launched the missiles as part of a Follow-on Commander Evaluation Test. The Navy conducts a continuing series of operational system evaluation tests to assure the safety, reliability, readiness and performance of the Trident II D5 Strategic Weapon System, as required by the Department of Defense's National Command Authority. The tests are conducted under the testing guidelines of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

For the tests, operational missiles are converted into inert configurations using test missile kits produced by Lockheed Martin that contain range safety devices and flight telemetry instrumentation.

First deployed in 1990, the D5 missile is currently aboard Trident II Ohio-class submarines and British Trident II Vanguard-class submarines. The three-stage, solid-propellant, inertial-guided ballistic missile can travel a nominal range of 4,000 nautical miles and carries multiple independently targeted reentry vehicles.

Navy submarine hits rocks in Red Sea

By Avril Ormsby, Reuters, 28 May 2008

LONDON – An investigation has been launched after a Navy nuclear-powered submarine hit a rock in the Red Sea, damaging its sonar equipment, the Ministry of Defence said on Wednesday.

HMS Superb hit the submerged pinnacle earlier this week after passing through the Suez Canal, forcing it to surface.

Its nuclear reactor was unaffected and there was no water leakage or environmental impact, defence officials said.

No injuries were reported among the 112-strong crew.

The 272ft long Swiftsure-class attack submarine was about 80 miles south of Suez when the incident happened.

No other vessel was involved.

"There were no casualties and the submarine remains watertight, is safe on the surface and able to operate under her own power," the MoD said in a statement.

"From the initial assessment onboard the submarine, it is clear that there is some damage to her main sonar which prevents her conducting submerged operations, consequently her programme is being re-considered."

Commissioned in 1976, Superb's armaments include spearfish torpedoes.

It is not the first time a Navy vessel has gone aground.

A recent report described how the nuclear-powered submarine HMS Trafalgar struck the bottom of the sea at more than 14 knots off the Isle of Skye in 2002 after basic navigational errors during a training exercise. Tracing paper had also covered vital information.

The destroyer HMS Nottingham hit rocks off the Australian coast, also in 2002, smashing open its hull, while two years earlier, the frigate HMS Grafton ran aground after striking rocks off the coast of Norway.