



UNITED STATES SUBMARINE VETERANS



“To Honor Those Who Serve, Past, Present & Future”

October 2023

Volume 24, Issue 10

**Lest We Forget —
“The USSVI Submariner’s 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 toward greater accomplishments. Pledge loyalty and patriotism to the United States of America and its Constitution.

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News Brief

- Next Meeting:** At 1100, third Saturday of each month at the Knollwood Sportsman’s Club. Mark your calendars for these upcoming dates:
 - October 21**
 - November 18**
 - December 16**
- Duty Cook Roster:**
 - OCTOBER – BRET ZACHER
 - NOVEMBER – TED ROTZOLL
 - DECEMBER – MAURICE YOUNG
- October Birthdays:** Tom Polzin, 13th. Happy Birthday, Shipmate.
- Dues season is here.**
 - Base dues \$15. You may pay ahead for future years.
 - USSVI dues: 2023 annual: 1 year \$30.00, 3 years \$85.00, 5 years \$140.00
 - USSVI Life membership: 45 and younger \$600.00, 46–55yr \$500.00, 56–65yr \$360.00, 66–75yr \$240.00, 76 and older \$120.00

Crash Dive Meeting Minutes September 16, 2023

- 1) Call to Order 1113
 - a) Invocation (Mrs. Janice Hill, 1944-2023)
- 2) Attendance –
 - a) Bret Zacher
 - b) Herman Mueller
 - c) Maurice Young
 - d) Glenn Barts
 - e) Frank Walter Jr.
 - f) Ted Rotzell
 - g) Dave Cornell
 - h) Manny Garmendez
- 3) Reports:
 - a) Secretary's Report:
 - i) Jan Hill's Memorial @ Eernisse Funeral Home in Cedarburg, WI; 1600-1900 on Fri 22 Sep
 - ii) Cobia Working Parties: Tue, 03 Oct thru Thu, 05 Oct; & Monday, 16 Oct thru Wed, 18 Oct
 - b) Treasurer's Report: Total Assets \$20,677.11[from Aug. meeting]
 - i) Funds in GLCU: Checking \$1,339.27, Savings \$1,092.33
 - ii) Crash Dive Memorial: \$6,419.61; Cobia Drydock: \$11,725.90; Petty Cash: \$100
 - iii) +\$80 to treasury from last month
 - iv) Memorial Fund will match up to \$10k for Cobia Drydock

- v) USSVI deal with Blackbaud for website has not yielded desired results
 - vi) Switch to another open-source website provider in progress
- c) Committee Reports
 - i) Newsletter – Chris Gaines [ABSENT]
 - ii) Membership – Chris Gaines [ABSENT]
 - iii) Community Outreach– Bret Zacher
 - (1) Bret attended Operation Handshake: long drive, well attended (~300 people)
 - iv) Hospitality – Bret Zacher
 - (1) District 2 Submarine Ball proposed for Spring 2024; seeking volunteers to help
 - v) Webmaster – Frank Voznak, Jr.[ABSENT]
 - vi) Storekeeper – Herman Mueller
 - (1) National calendars for 2024 to be made available soon, details to follow
 - vii) Eagle Scout – Ted Rotzoll
 - 4) Old (Unfinished) Business
 - a) WWII Chicago Memorial
 - i) Revised date to Veterans' Day, Nov 2024. Order forms by Aug 2024.
 - 5) New Business
 - a) None.

6) Good of the Order

- a) National Convention Report:
 - i) Ted covers hospitality issues during Holland Club Breakfast
 - ii) Events at convention poorly advertised especially for new attendees
- b) Duty Cook
 - i) October – Bret
 - ii) November – Ted
 - iii) December – Maurice
- c) 786 Club
 - i) Luncheon coming up on Oct 3rd; pending geopolitics
 - ii) Pearl trip coming up in mid Jan 2024; boat will be in drydock.
 - iii) New CO took over and made conference call with Club

7) SOUND Klaxon

- a) Next Meeting is 21October 2023 @ KSC [Typo on agenda, Oct not Nov]

8) Adjourn 1228

Lost Boats

| | | |
|--------------|----------|----------|
| USS O-5 | (SS-66) | 10/24/23 |
| USS S-44 | (SS-155) | 10/07/43 |
| USS Wahoo | (SS-238) | 10/11/43 |
| USS Dorado | (SS-248) | 10/15/43 |
| USS Seawolf | (SS-197) | 10/04/44 |
| USS Escolar | (SS-294) | 10/17/44 |
| USS Darter | (SS-227) | 10/22/44 |
| USS Shark II | (SS-314) | 10/24/44 |
| USS Tang | (SS-306) | 10/25/44 |

Taiwan launches its first homemade submarine

By [Mike Yeo](#), www.defensenews.com



Taiwan launched its first domestically-built submarine on Sept. 28, 2023, at CSBC Shipyard in the southern city of Kaohsiung. (Photo by Wang Yu Ching/Taiwan presidential office photo via Flickr)

MELBOURNE, Australia — Taiwan has launched its first domestically-built submarine, marking a significant milestone in its efforts to replace an aging naval capability.

The diesel-electric attack submarine, christened the Hai Kun after a mythical sea creature in Chinese folklore, was launched at the shipyard of CSBC Shipyard in the southern city of Kaohsiung earlier on Thursday, Sept. 28.

The launch ceremony was attended by the self-ruling island's president, Tsai Ing-wen, and comes seven years after [Taiwan](#) first decided to build its own submarines to replace the four elderly submarines currently operated by the country's Republic of China Navy, or ROCN.

Photos of the launch ceremony published by the government and media present showed that the design has an X-rudder configuration for operations in shallow waters, with a pair of additional small horizontal fins.

However, Taiwan has not released the Hai Kun's specifications, although local media has previously reported that it displaces approximately 2,500 tonnes and is 70 meters, or 230 feet, long.

It has also been reported that Taiwan has received significant foreign assistance in building the submarine, although 40% of components are local.

This overseas assistance reported includes a version of the AN/BYG-1 submarine combat management system, used in U.S. Navy nuclear submarines, being sold to Taiwan, along with digital sonar systems, integrated combat systems and auxiliary equipment systems, including periscopes.

The U.K. government has granted licenses to companies to export some \$200 million worth of submarine technology and parts to Taiwan, and retired engineers from Japan's Mitsubishi and Kawasaki Heavy Industries were believed to have provided technical support.

Reuters has also reported in November 2021 that that Taiwan had recruited engineers and retired

submariners from the U.S., U.K., Australia, South Korea, India, Spain and Canada to work on the program and advise the ROCN on submarine construction and operations.

Taiwan is seeking to build eight submarines, with the Hai Kun expected to be commissioned into the ROCN in 2025 after sea trials following its launch.

Taiwan's submarine fleet currently comprises two former U.S. Navy submarines built during World War II and two former Dutch Navy boats acquired in the late 1980s.

Likely wreckage of British WWII submarine discovered after 83 years

What is likely the wreckage of the HMS Thistle currently rests at a depth of about 525 feet near Rogaland. In addition to the submarine, six other wrecks were observed during a cruise this spring. Only one of these was previously known, according to researchers.

By [Chris Oberholtz](#) Source [FOX Weather](#)

See Image Here:

<https://images.foxweather.com/static-media.fox.com/ms/stg1/weather/620/351/play-6b64e92a1000688--26457866906.jpg>

ROGALAND, Norway – After more than 80 years underwater, the wreckage of a [British](#) submarine that sank during World War II has likely been discovered off the coast of southwestern Norway.

A research cruise by the [Mareano](#) program discovered the probable wreckage of HMS Thistle while mapping the biology and geology of the seabed. Although the discovery was made in the spring, it was only recently identified during a subsequent cruise.

"In advance, we knew what characteristics we should look for; thus, we were able to identify the wreck as 'Thistle,' but with a small caveat that it is the Royal Navy who is responsible for the final identification," Mareano cruise leader Kyrre Heldal Kartveit said.

The wreckage currently rests at a depth of about 525 feet near Rogaland. In addition to the submarine, six other wrecks were observed during the cruise this spring. Only one of these was previously known, according to researchers.

In addition to the wreckage, the voyage also encountered a couple of lost shipping containers along with another curiosity.

"What we thought were parts of an old winch, turns out to be most likely an aircraft engine, also from the days of the war," senior engineer Kjell Bakkeplass said.



Probably a torpedo tube.
(MAREANO / Institute of Marine Research)

War grave

HMS Thistle's final voyage ended on April 10, 1940, when it was sunk by a German submarine, resulting in the loss of all 53 crew members.

"At that time, navigators used bearings and squares and not GPS as they do today," Bakkeplass said. "This means that the position for the sinking is inaccurate."



Details on the submarine.
(MAREANO / Institute of Marine Research / FOX Weather)

In addition to the uncertainty about the submarine's last surface position, Bakkeplass added that it is impossible to determine how far it drifted from the time it sank until it came to rest on the sea floor.

Since the submarine sank during a war, it is considered a war grave. The British Royal Navy retains ownership rights under maritime law.

(Images and videos did not copy well for this article. Read the original here: <https://www.foxweather.com/lifestyle/british-submarine-hms-thistle-rogaland-norway> Ed.)

The Oddly Shaped USS Grayback Was A Cold War Submarine Like No Other

The remarkable sub's story includes launching fighter-sized cruise missiles, attempting to rescue Vietnam War PoWs, and getting painted bright orange.

by [Thomas Newdick](#) | UPDATED Feb 14, 2021 5:54 AM EST



Few of the U.S. Navy's post-World War II submarines had such an unusual career as the USS *Grayback*. It went from carrying some of the United States' first strategic missiles to stealthily delivering naval special forces to the coast of North Vietnam during the war in Southeast Asia. It was truly a fascinating and bizarrely-shaped boat whose multiple lives underscored how she was able to change along with a morphing Cold War. Here's her story.

Laid down on July 1, 1954, at Mare Island Naval Shipyard in San Francisco Bay, California, the first of the *Grayback*-class missile submarines was, like its sister, the USS *Growler*, built as a conventionally powered submarine that would have a primary armament of cruise missiles. The pair were the first submarines to be designed around an armament of subsonic [Vought SSM-N-8 Regulus I](#) strategic missiles. Four of these nuclear-armed, turbojet-powered weapons were carried in a pair of huge cylindrical hangars located above the bow.



An SSM-N-9 Regulus II missile is maneuvered aboard the USS *Grayback*, U.S. Navy

The second submarine to carry the name, the USS *Grayback* was launched on July 2, 1957, and commissioned on March 7, 1958, as SSG-574. Ultimately, the submarine was one of five equipped to launch the Regulus I that were in service by 1960. To launch the airplane-sized missile, the submarine first had to surface, before the rear of the hangar was opened, and the Regulus I disgorged onto a trainable ramp that was recessed into the top of the hull, forward of the sail. The ramp was then turned sideways, and the missile blasted off under the power of a pair of solid-fuel rockets before the Allison J33 turbojet kicked in. The missile had a range of around 575 miles.



The USS *Grayback* is waterborne after being launched at Mare Island Naval Shipyard on July 2, 1957., U.S. Navy

The USS *Grayback* made history as the first submarine to carry Vought's next-generation SSM-N-9 Regulus II and undertook trials with this Mach-2-capable weapon off the U.S. West Coast. Two of these weapons could be carried, compared to four of the previous

Regulus I and the first successful launch of the missile took place on September 16, 1958, while the *Grayback* was operating out of Naval Base Ventura County, California. However, the Regulus II was canceled later the same year, by which point the concept of the submarine-launched cruise missile had been overtaken by the development of the Polaris submarine-launched ballistic missile, which promised much greater range, speed, and reliability.

On February 9, 1959, the USS *Grayback* departed Mare Island for Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, arriving at what would become its permanent home base on March 7. Between September and November of 1959, the submarine completed the first of nine deterrent missions, patrolling the Pacific with an armament of Regulus I missiles. In the course of these patrols, the *Grayback* spent more than 20 months at sea and logged well over 130,000 miles.



Another view of a Regulus II on USS *Grayback* emphasizes the scale of these early strategic missiles., *U.S. Navy*

The USS *Grayback* served in its strategic missile role until it was decommissioned on May 25, 1964, as the cruise-missile submarines divested their deterrence duties to the new Polaris boats.

A new lease of life then began when the USS *Grayback* was converted as a submarine transport, initially under the pennant number APSS-574. The ability of submarines to transport personnel and materiel, as well as

launch raiding parties ashore, while using its inherent capabilities to help avoid detection, was well established by the end of World War II, and would continue into the Cold War and beyond. It is a fascinating subset of underwater warfare that you can read all about in this previous *War Zone* article.

The conversion work for the new role was authorized in 1967 and was undertaken at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard between November 1967 and May 1969. This included removing the Regulus equipment and lengthening the hull from 322 feet 4 inches to 334 feet. Mess and sleeping quarters now provided accommodation for up to 67 troops. The missile hangars were converted to carry six swimmer delivery vehicles (SDVs) and a diver's decompression chamber. The SDVs and scuba-equipped divers could be launched and recovered while the submarine submerged. The height of the sail was increased by around 10 feet and a Sperry BQG-4 Passive Underwater Fire Control Feasibility System (PUFFS) was fitted.



A poor-quality but rare image of a swimmer delivery vehicle engaged in daytime launch and recovery operations by the USS *Grayback*. , *National Archives*

The role of the "new" USS *Grayback* was carrying commando and other covert forces on special missions against targets that required a stealthy approach from the sea. Members of the U.S. Navy's SEAL teams and Naval Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT) were certainly carried onboard the

submarine, as were, in all likelihood, U.S. Army Green Berets. UDTs would be used for example, for undertaking reconnaissance of possible landing zones ahead of an amphibious assault, or to clear the approaches to a beach.

As well as its amphibious role, the USS *Grayback* could also perform similar duties as an attack submarine, for which it was armed with the thermal-powered Mk 14 anti-ship torpedo of World War II vintage and the electric-powered Mk 37 anti-submarine torpedo. These were operated using the Mk 106 Model 12 torpedo fire-control system.

From August 1968 the submarine's designation was changed again, to LPSS, indicating an *amphibious* transport submarine, and the new-look USS *Grayback* was commissioned for a second time on May 9, 1969. Thereafter, it was operated by the Pacific Fleet and based at Subic Bay in the Philippines.

By the time of the Vietnam War, the Navy was using specially configured submarines to support special operations, the USS *Grayback* and the Gato class USS *Tunny* working along the coast of North Vietnam, and also helping gather intelligence.

The submarine's most dramatic — and secretive — mission took place in June 1972, during the conflict in Southeast Asia. This was Operation Thunderhead, an attempt to rescue U.S. prisoners of war that were planning to escape from North Vietnam's notorious "Hanoi Hilton" prison. The two PoWs, both aviators, planned to steal a boat and make their escape by river to the Gulf of Tonkin, where they would be picked up by elite troops from the U.S. Navy's SEAL Team One, Platoon A, and Underwater Demolition Team 11 (UDT-11). Exactly how communications were run between PoWs and

rescuers while planning this daring mission has not been explained.

The USS *Grayback* departed Subic Bay to transport the special forces into the coastal waters off North Vietnam, where plans called for one or more Mk 7 SDVs to be launched under cover of darkness. Piloted by two operators from UDT-11, each SDV would deliver four SEALs from Platoon A to an island at the mouth of the Red River, which flowed into the Gulf of Tonkin. The *Grayback* was on station around 4,000 yards from the mouth of the river and at a depth of around 65 feet.



SEALs on board *Grayback* ahead of Operation Thunderhead. Lieutenant Melvin Spence Dry is seated at center with papers in his hands., U.S. Navy

A first attempt to launch a reconnaissance mission on June 3, 1972, ended in failure after the four-man team became lost, struggling with navigation errors and tidal currents that were much stronger than expected. Unable to relocate the USS *Grayback*, the team had to abandon their SDV after the vehicles' batteries ran out. After eight hours they were rescued by a helicopter around 10 miles south of the submarine's position and were then flown to the nuclear-powered guided-missile cruiser USS *Long Beach*, which was stationed approximately 15 miles offshore, serving as the command ship for the mission. You can read all about that particular warship here.

Two days later, the team was to be returned to the submarine by helicopter, with the aim of dropping them into the water alongside the USS *Grayback*, at night. Again, however, the submarine proved hard to find. Once it seemed the infrared locator beacon had been found, the operators jumped from the helicopter, but the chopper was flying too high and too fast for a safe jump and was downwind, meaning the jumpers hit the water with even much greater velocity. Lieutenant Melvin "Spence" Dry was killed immediately, and one other member of the team was seriously injured.



Support divers from USS *Grayback* ready an SDV for launch operations at a depth of 35 feet. The vehicle was manned by personnel from Underwater Demolition Team 12., *National Archives*

Meanwhile, the USS *Grayback* had launched another SDV, but this mission was abandoned too after its crew ran out of air. The second team came to the surface and it was their locator beacon that the first team had inadvertently found. The two teams rendezvoused before both were picked up by helicopter and returned to the USS *Long Beach*. After the United States began sowing mines in North Vietnamese ports and rivers, the chances of mission success were further reduced, and it was decided to abandon the PoW escape effort altogether.

Operation Thunderhead remained classified for many years and it was not until 2008 that Lieutenant Dry's death was finally acknowledged as a combat loss, and he was

posthumously awarded the Bronze Star for Valor.



High-angle stern view of the USS *Grayback* underway. You can see two of the "sharkfin" sonar domes associated with the PUFFS system on the hull., *National Archives*

From 1975 the USS *Grayback* was reclassified yet again, this time as an attack submarine, or SS, for administrative reasons, to ensure continued funding from the U.S. Congress for what was now a true niche capability.



USS *Grayback* underway in the South China Sea in 1982., *National Archives*

Exactly what, if any covert missions, the USS *Grayback* was involved in during the years that followed is not known, but the Navy undoubtedly appreciated the submarine's utility and it remained in service until decommissioned for a second and final time at Subic Bay on June 16, 1984.



The *Powhatan* class fleet ocean tug USNS *Catawba* (ATF-168) towing the former *Grayback* out of Subic Bay in August 1986., U.S. Navy

Befitting a boat with a less-than-conventional history, the USS *Grayback* received a bright orange paint scheme to increase its

conspicuity before it was sunk as a target near Subic Bay on April 13, 1986. It brought to an end the story of a unique submarine — a guided-missile pioneer and a covert amphibious transport with a harrowing Vietnam combat record.

Today, the legacy of the little-known amphibious transport submarines is kept alive by the Navy's four *Ohio* class nuclear-powered guided-missile submarines. They traded their strategic nuclear missile armament and now carry diverse cargoes ranging from Tomahawk cruise missiles to Navy SEALs. In this way, they continue the tradition of the USS *Grayback*, with capabilities befitting the demands of 21st-century warfare.

Submarine Humor From Bob Newhart

<https://youtu.be/RZA47I9f2xc?si=wxrtrEBIYQXrsv7M>

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