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# BLOW NEGATIVE

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AUGUST ISSUE 2024

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Stuck on a sandbar at Pearl



## USS Guardfish SSN-612

SEATTLE -- Navy documents indicate a nuclear-powered submarine suffered a potentially serious accident that briefly contaminated five sailors off the

Pacific Coast in April 1973, a published report said Monday.

The accident occurred as the submarine, the Guardfish, was about 150 miles off the Oregon coast, heading from Honolulu for weapons tests at Dabob Bay on Hood Canal in Washington state, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer reported.

Navy officials said they handled the incident correctly, but critics said the Navy tried to keep documents about the accident hidden, the Post-Intelligencer said.

Documents show that the Guardfish suffered a leak of radioactive coolant, sending a spray of radioactive steam over the five crewmen, the newspaper report said.

'The maximum radiation exposure received by any individual was similar to what he would have received in getting a common chest X-ray' and was removed with soap and water, said Navy spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Craig R. Quigley, adding tests showed no residual contamination.

The accident on the attack submarine powered by a pressurized-water reactor occurred when crewmen performed a 'leak check' on a discharge pipe in the primary coolant system, said retired Navy Capt. Willis S. Rich, the commander of the Guardfish at the time.

The official Navy record reports that the Guardfish was about 370 miles from Puget Sound when it 'experienced a primary coolant leak. According to the newspaper report, the submarine surfaced, ventilated, decontaminated, and repaired the (mechanical) casualty unassisted.

The newspaper report said the five crewmen were transferred to Puget Sound Naval Hospital for monitoring. Hospital officials confirmed there was no residual contamination of the men, the report said.

Navy submariners say any disruption of a reactor cooling system is treated as a potential catastrophe since a significant loss of coolant could lead to a reactor core's meltdown and the sub's destruction.

Documents on the incident were obtained by Josuah Handler of the environmental group Greenpeace and William M. Arkin of the non-profit Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C.

Arkin noted that the submarine's 'deck log' for April 21-23, 1973, shows no record of the incident. Rich maintains the reactor coolant loss was fully reported within classified channels.

'It isn't enough for the Navy to say that it reported the accident to the Navy,' Arkin protested. 'The documents which they make available to the public say there was no accident, not that what happened on 21 April was classified. Therefore, they are lying.'

But Rich said submarine deck logs, unlike those of surface ships, are unclassified summaries, and anything classified, such as a reactor incident, would not be entered.



The Commanding Officer of the Guardfish, when she became stuck on the sandbar, was relieved of his command. The Guardfish was ordered to drydock to remove coral sand and debris from its main condensers.



## The Past or The Future

No matter where he looked, Hector had an uneasy feeling. The area he was in was dimly lit. The odor was one of old age, stuffy. As he moved through the area he could hear creaks. His shoes made hollowed sounds. Mixed in his uneasy feelings was a sense of reverence. Somehow, he knew herculean acts had taken place. Men had died here. He wanted to know more about the history of this place.

Hector had come to Newport News on a whim. He had been researching WWII naval activity and he began to wonder “What happened to all those ships that survived the war.?” Now he stood among the memorials of the most intense naval conflicts ever having taken place. He was at the James River Reserve Fleet bone yard. Resting place for the Atlantic Reserve Fleet in Virginia.

Both the Atlantic Reserve Fleet and the Pacific Reserve Fleet were created under the joint command of Vice Admirals Herbert F. Leary and Thomas C. Kincaid in 1912. Initially designated the Sixteenth Fleet, it is now known as the ARF.



The ARF has several home ports along the eastern coast and the Caribbean. Along with the James River location, fleet assets are

located at Boston, Charleston, Florida, Connecticut, NY harbor, Norfolk, Philadelphia, and Texas. The Pacific Reserve Fleet (PRF) has home ports at Alameda, Bremerton, Columbia River, Long Beach, Mare Island, San Diego, San Francisco, Tacoma, Stockton, and Olympia.

Philadelphia is the ARF home for some of the heavy hitters among which are the USS John Kennedy, Ticonderoga class cruisers, Oliver Perry-class frigates, and numerous supply ships. Bremerton is the homeport of two dozen submarines, frigates, and numerous supply

ships. The USS Long Beach was part of the PRF. Pearl Harbor holds logistic support ships and amphibious transport dock ships.

In a 1951 US Naval Academy article appearing in *Proceedings*, it was reported that high-ranking members of the US Navy questioned the continued worth of maintaining the Reserve Fleets. Costs were running into the billions of dollars and the fleets were “taking up room” at berthing facilities. Resources could be better used through other naval activities. BUT (wait for it), then there was the Korean conflict. Obsolete landing ships carrying troops and supplies were needed and deployed. Totaling up the original costs of the ships that were in the Reserve Fleets as of July 1, 1950, we find the amazing figure of over 13½ billion dollars.<sup>1</sup> This represents the actual cost at the time of building and does not include the value of supplies or fuel on board or much of the equipment added during World War II. With inflation and increases in wages along with materials. Replacement costs would exceed \$30 billion.<sup>2</sup>

This dangerous trend in thinking should be recorded and fixed in our minds, to prevent its recurrence in later years, when the economy again becomes paramount to all other considerations of defense.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup> \$175 billion in 2024 dollars.

<sup>2</sup> \$390 billion in 2024 dollars.

## Torpedo: Early applications of the self-propelled torpedo.

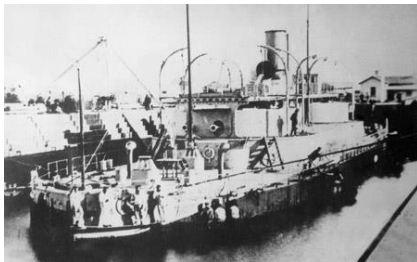
In 1877, the Royal Navy launched a self-propelled torpedo against an ironclad Peruvian vessel during the Battle of Pacocha. The Peruvian craft outran the torpedo. A successful attack when a torpedo sank the Turkish steamer launched from a Russian vessel during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78.<sup>4</sup>

Among the incidents involving a torpedo that reversed course took place during the War of the Pacific in 1879. A Peruvian craft launched a torpedo against a Chilean vessel only to have the torpedo reverse course and head back toward the Peruvians. The launching ship was saved when one of its officers jumped overboard to divert the torpedo.

Ironclad warships were challenged in the late 1890s when both the Chileans and the Japanese launched torpedo attacks against enemy vessels. Sinking and extensive damage inflicted on surface ships began to demonstrate the effectiveness of self-propelled torpedoes.

The elimination of the observable torpedo run due to the vapor stream began in 1876 with the first “electric torpedo”. U.S. Navy Commodore Robert Shufelt praised Chinese-purchased British cruisers as having “Every modern appliance in the art of naval warfare ... hydraulic power, machine guns, electric lights, torpedoes ... etc.” These ships were deployed by the Chinese during the Boxer Rebellion.

In the game of numbers, 300 torpedoes were launched during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. The number of vessels sunk was exceedingly small; one battleship, two armored cruisers, and two destroyers. More than 80 vessels were sunk or destroyed using conventional means including <sup>5</sup>gunfire, mines, and scuttling.



During the Battle of Tsushima, with the Russian fleet sinking and scattering, the Chinese launched twenty-one torpedoes at the pre-dreadnought Russian battleship, successfully sinking the ship with the entire crew of 900+ men lost. The pre-dreadnought battleships were the pre-eminent warships of their time and replaced the ironclad battleships of the 1870s and 1880s. The last decisive clash of pre-dreadnought fleets was between the Imperial Japanese Navy and the Imperial Russian Navy at the Battle of Tsushima on 27 May 1905. The battleships were

threatened by torpedo boats; it was during the pre-dreadnought era that the first destroyers were constructed to deal with the torpedo-boat threat, though, at the same time, the first effective submarines were being constructed. Submarine-launched self-propelled torpedoes were still in design.

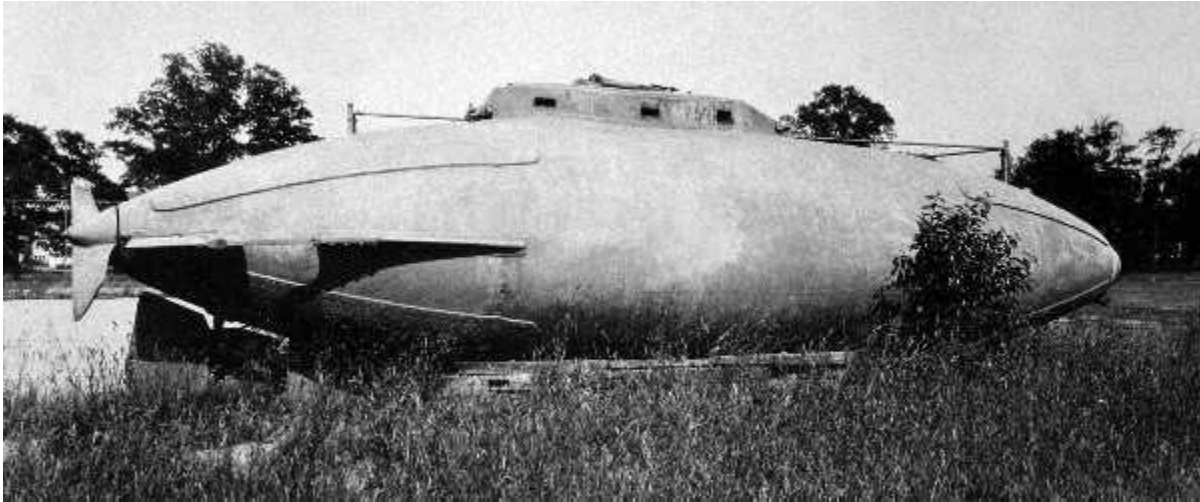
HMVS *Cerberus* (Her Majesty's Victorian Ship) is a breastwork monitor that served in the Victoria Naval Forces, the Commonwealth Naval Forces (CNF), and the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) between 1871 and 1924. Built along the lines of the 1861 Monitor, it utilized turret mounts. Designers were closing in on a successful design of subsurface vessels.



<sup>4</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torpedo>



## Success Breeds Success



**Fenian Ram** is a submarine designed by John Philip Holland for use by the Fenian Brotherhood, the American counterpart to the Irish Republican Brotherhood, against the British. The Fenian Ram was the world's first practical submarine. It was powered by a double-acting Brayton Ready Motor which used kerosene fuel. It was able to dive & submerge successfully. The *Ram's* construction and launching in 1881 by the Delamater Iron Company in New York was funded by the Fenians' Skirmishing Fund. Officially **Holland Boat No. II**, the role of the Fenians in its funding led the New York Sun newspaper to name the vessel the *Fenian Ram*.

*Fenian Ram* was armed with a 9-inch (229 mm) pneumatic gun some 11 feet (3.4 m) long, mounted along the boat's centerline and firing forward out of her bow. It operated like modern submarine torpedo tubes: a watertight bow cap was normally kept shut, allowing the 6-foot-long (1.8 m) dynamite-filled steel projectiles to be loaded into the tube from the interior of the submarine. The inner door was then shut, and the outer door opened by a remote mechanism. Finally, 400 psi (2.8 MPa) air was used to shoot the projectile out of the tube. To reload, the outer door was again shut and the water in the tube was blown into the surrounding ballast tank by more compressed air. It was powered by a 15 hp (11 kW) Brayton piston engine.

During extensive trials, Holland made numerous dives and test-fired the gun using dummy projectiles.

However, due to funding disputes within the IRB and disagreement over payments from the IRB to Holland, the IRB stole *Fenian Ram* and the *Holland III* prototype in November 1883. Although *Holland III* accidentally sank in the East River, the Fenians took the *Fenian Ram* to New Haven, Connecticut, but discovered that no one knew how to operate it. Holland refused to help. Unable to use or sell the boat, the Brotherhood had the *Ram* hauled into a shed on the Mill River.



In September 1927, the submarine was sold to the City of Paterson as a memorial to Holland's work. Today, she can still be seen at the Paterson Museum.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fenian\\_Ram](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fenian_Ram)

## 2024 EVENTS

August 8 – BOD meeting, 1330 at Millers Ale House.

September 15 – Bowling Fundraiser; 1300-1500  
Clermont Bowling Center, 4 Westgate Plaza

October 1 – National Night Out; 1700-200

October 31 – Minneola Halloween, 315 E. Madison.

<https://www.minneola.us/sites/g/files/vyhlif4716/f/uploads>

November 11 – Veterans Day, 330 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Clermont

November 18 to December 18 – Letters to Santa Victory Pointe

November – nominations for Commander and Secretary

Clermont Christmas Parade – this was added after the February 2024 meeting.

December - LIGHT UP CLERMONT; <https://www.clermontfl.gov/254/Events>

December 1 – Annual Tree Lighting, Downtown Clermont

<https://www.clermontfl.gov/254/Events>

December 4 – Minneola’s Annual Christmas Parade; 1800;

[https://www.minneola.us/sites/g/files/vyhlif4716/f/uploads/christmas\\_parade](https://www.minneola.us/sites/g/files/vyhlif4716/f/uploads/christmas_parade).

December 11 – Cookies and Cocoa, participating downtown Businesses.

December 21 – Wreaths Across America, Oak Hill Cemetery, 801 East Ave; 1100

Volunteers needed – Wednesdays, 0900, at TNC. Call Scott (352)429-1200, x103

