

MINUTES OF THE USSVI NORTHERN VIRGINIA BASE MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2024

The Base CDR, Brian Haller, called the meeting to order at 10:30 on November 9, 2024, at American Legion Post 364 in Woodbridge, VA, and welcomed all the attendees.

MEMBERS AND GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE

Steve Bishop, **Cathy Chatham**, **Howard Chatham**, **Bob Glover**, **Brian Haller**, Chuck Martin, Mark Riethmeier, **Mike Varone**, **Penny Wallace**, George Wallace, **Clifford Whitener**, **Woody Woodworth**, and, via Zoom, **Pat Haller**, Bruce Miller, **Paul Nelson**, **Terry Nelson**, Mike Niblack, and Noland Smith. (18 total)

■ **Holland Club Member**

■ **Associate Member**

■ **Guest**

The Base COB, Mike Varone, led all hands in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Base Secretary, Howard Chatham, delivered the Invocation.

After a moment of silence, the Base Vice Commander, George Wallace, read the list of boats lost in November. These were:

USS Corvina (SS-226)	Nov 16, 1943
USS Sculpin (SS-191)	Nov 19, 1943
USS Albacore (SS-218)	Nov 07, 1944
USS Growler (SS-215)	Nov 08, 1944
USS Scamp (SS-277)	Nov 16, 1944

He then read the list of NORTHERN VIRGINIA BASE members who departed on Eternal Patrol in November of previous years:

- **Lloyd A. Safford**, Qualified onboard the USS Irex (SS-482). Departed on his Eternal Patrol on 8 November 2001.
- **Raymond "Ray" Woodbury Stone**, Holland Club and Lifetime SUBVET Member. Qualified on USS Carp (SS-338), 1964. Departed on his Eternal Patrol on 19 November 2019.
- **Francis (Frank) C. Pasquinelli**, Holland Club and Lifetime SUBVET Member. Qualified on USS Odax (SS-484), 1959. Departed on his Eternal Patrol on 28 November 2020.

The COB then tolled the ship's bell twice in remembrance of the 43 USSVI NOVA Base members on Eternal Patrol.

IN MEMORIAM:

- LCDR Brian Belcher, USN (Ret) – 25 September 2024
- CAPT Thomas Harold Etter, USN (Ret) – 30 October 2024
- LTJG Gary D Ballard, USN (Vet) – 2 November 2024 (Holland Club and USSVI Life member. Qualified on USS Sterlet (SS-392) in 1963 and was USSVI Chesapeake Base member.)

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Base Treasurer, Howard Chatham, reported the following and noted that the NFCU CD was renewed for another year at 4.21% interest rate.

NOVA Base Treasurer's Report for November 9, 2024

● Beginning Cash on Hand:	\$12,451.92
● Plus Receipts:	
•NFCU Checking Account Dividends (October)	\$0.06
•NFCU CD Dividends (October)	\$20.81
•Donation to Base from 50/50 raffle	\$40.00
•Donation to Base – W. Woodworth	\$40.00
•Donation to USSVCF Scholarship Fund – C. Martin	\$20.00
•Base Dues – G. Wallace, R. Rempert, P. Siegrist, S. Treece, & M. Tucci	\$85.00
•National Dues – P. Wallace, R. Rempert, P. Siegrist, & M. Tucci	\$180.00
● Minus Expenditures:	
•Payment to National for USSVCF Scholarship Fund	\$20.00
•Dues to National – R. Rempert, P. Siegrist, M. Tucci, & P. Wallace	\$180.00
● Ending Cash on Hand:	\$12,637.79
Minus Local K4K Restricted Use Funds	\$1,379.40
Minus NFCU 12-month Share Certificate (CD)	\$5,000.00
● Total Local Discretionary Funds	\$6,258.39
● USSVCF NOVA Base K4K Balance	\$2,135.41
● Total K4K Funds (Local + USSVCF)	\$3,514.81

MEETING MINUTES

The minutes of the October 2024 meeting were previously distributed by e-mail and USPS. There were no comments or corrections noted and they were accepted as promulgated.

USSVI and NE DISTRICT 4 NEWS - EN4 District CDR Chuck Martin reported that:

- USSVI will have a vendor table at the NSL Annual Symposium & Industry Update. Volunteers staffing the table include the NE4 and SE1 District CDRs and members from the Buffalo, Capitol and NOVA bases.
- USSVI Chesapeake Base
 - Attended the Annapolis High NJROTC Navy Birthday celebration on 11 October.
 - Tolling of the Boats ceremony at USNA on 7 December 2024.
 - Attended the USNA Dive social event and Submariner Luncheon for submariners and future submariners

- USSVI Mid Atlantic Base will be hosting their Tolling of the Boats ceremony at the Kete Monument Delaware Memorial Park on 20 March 2025 (USS Kete was lost 80 years ago on that date).
- Chuck suggested that each Base have a USSV CF Ambassador.

NAVAL SUBMARINE LEAGUE

- The NSL Annual Symposium and Industry Update will be held on Wednesday and Thursday, 13 and 14 November 2024 at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City, Arlington, VA. As noted above, USSVI will have a vendor table at the Symposium. You can contact Chuck Martin at cdr.ussvine4@mail.com or 240-876-2641 for more information and to volunteer to help staff the table. The Base CDR thanked Chuck for coordinating the USSVI participation in this event again this year.
- NSL will be conducting an Open House at their headquarters on 15 November 2024 from 1000 -1400. This will also be Tim Oliver's farewell as Executive Director.

UPCOMING SUBMARINE REUNIONS:

- USS SCAMP (SSN 588), 1-7 June 2025, Punta Gorda, FL
- USS Sea Leopard (SS 483), 11-15 August 2025, Groton, CT

NEW BUSINESS

- Base Officer Elections
 - The Election Master, Chuck Martin, requested nominations for the 2025 Base Officers noting that the Base can only be successful when its members are willing to step up and volunteer to be an Officer and forge the future of USSVI Northern Virginia Base. The following nominations were made:
 - Base Commander – Brian Haller
 - Vice Commander – George Wallace
 - Treasurer – Howard Chatham
 - Secretary – Howard Chatham
 - Voting will begin on or before 16 November, when the voting ballots are distributed to Base Members. The ballot can be submitted to the Election Master by email (election@ussvinova.org), USPS, or at the beginning of the 7 December Base meeting. Ballots submitted by email or USPS must be received by the Election Master by 2359 (EST) on Friday, 6 December 2024 to be counted. The results of the election will be announced at our Base meeting on Saturday, 7 December 2024.
- Toys 4 Tots – Post 364 participating in the Toys 4 Tots program. Please bring a new/unwrapped present to the 7 December Base meeting to donate to the program.
- ALCON are reminded that Monday is Veterans Day and there are many ceremonies taking place around the Northern Virginia area.
- **Post Meeting Note:** ALCON are reminded that the TRICARE Open Season (when you can enroll in, change, or disenroll from a TRICARE health plan) runs from 11 November to 10 December 2024. Changes you make during the open season go into effect 1 January 2025.

BINNACLE LIST:

PLEASE KEEP THE FOLLOWING IN YOUR PRAYERS:

Steve Jaeger, Terry McNamara, Pat Haller, Tom Perrault, Joe Phoenix, Tim Shannon, Anita Varone, Diane Whitener and Woody Woodworth. Note: Bruce Miller's mother, Mary, is out of the hospital but he asked that you keep her in your prayers.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER - Birthdays for the month are: Rodey Batiza, Anthony "Tony" Cunningham, "Terry" McNamara, Eva Waylett, and the United States Marine Corps.

BASE ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The next regularly scheduled meeting will be on Saturday, December 7th at American Legion Post 364 in Woodbridge at 10:30. After the meeting, we will have our Annual Holiday Luncheon at Madigan's Waterfront Restaurant in Occoquan.

The Secretary delivered the Benediction.

The meeting was adjourned at 1052.

The **50/50 raffle** was won by Mark Riethmeier who donated \$20 of his winnings back to the Base. Thank you Mark.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: these were not presented at the meeting to allow time for the guest speaker's presentation.

EXECUTIVE BOARD – The meeting was held on 30 October via Zoom. The meeting agenda included committee reports, meeting-related items, old business, new business, and meeting/event planning.

Treasurer – The Treasurer initiated additional discussion regarding the draft 2025 Base budget which will be presented to the membership at the December meeting.

COB – The COB reported he had made reservations at Madigan's for the Holiday luncheon and at Armetta's for the Sweetheart's luncheon in February.

Membership – The Membership Chair, Howard Chatham, reported:

- Current Membership information
 - 93 Members
 - 50 Holland Club Members
 - 1 WW II Member
 - 34 Regular Members
 - 15 – Base Life Members
 - 19 – Base Annual Members
 - 09 Associate Members
 - Newest Base Members: Ron Rempert and Paul Siegrist
- Eight Base members have not paid their dues for 2025 and will be contacted by the Treasurer in November to remind them to pay up before new rates for National dues go

into effect on 1 January 2025. Two of those members will be moving or have moved out of Virginia and will likely not be renewing their membership in the Base.

Storekeeper - The Storekeeper, Chuck Martin, still has three USSVI 2025 calendars that were preordered and expects to collect for them/deliver them at the NSL symposium. If you are interested in ordering any submarine related items, please contact him at storekeeper@ussvinova.org.

OLD BUSINESS

The Past Base Commander, Chuck Martin, has spoken with the Post CDR about getting the Base Eternal Patrol and Base Officer plaques displayed at the Post. He was told that the Club Manager is the appropriate POC to get permission for this.

Meeting Minutes Respectfully Submitted by
Howard Chatham
Secretary, USSVI Northern Virginia Base

At the close of the meeting, the Base CDR introduced the Vice Commander as our guest speaker. George presented his concept of the Expeditionary Tender. His remarks are included below.



Northern Virginia USSVI
9 Nov 2024
George Wallace
Copyright October 2024

Today, we are going to look at something a little different. We are going to look at logistics, and specifically the logistics for a forward deployed boat.

Anyone who has ever sailed in the Pacific or has even looked at a map of that broad blue expanse recognizes that it is a big place. Distances are daunting. It is over 3,300 nautical miles from Pearl Harbor, Hawaii to Apra Harbor, Guam. It's another 1,500 nautical miles from there to Taipei, Taiwan, 2,500 nautical miles from Guam to Singapore, and another 3,500 nautical miles to Perth. Any way you look at it, if you need something, it's a long trip home to get it. The tyranny of distance reigns supreme in the Pacific.

In World War II, this immense distance drove both the US submarine campaign and Nimitz's Central Pacific strategy. The fleet boats' long legs, particularly after they developed the ability to transform ballast tanks to fuel tanks, allowed them to roam Japanese home waters while operating out of Pearl Harbor. But it was still a fifteen-day transit back home.

Nimitz's surface fleet battled to capture the Central Pacific Island chains primarily to use them as staging areas, logistics bases, for follow-on operations. All to keep the fleet stocked with food, fuel, and bullets. They brought everything along with them, oilers, tenders, even floating drydocks.

As a military pundit once said, "On the battlefield logistics is the difference between a click and a bang." Let me explain this a little. A "click" is what happens when you pull the trigger, but you have no bullets. A "bang" happens only when you have bullets.

With the realities of today's geopolitical situation, submarines are operating far forward with limited options for logistics or repair support. This would be even more true in the event of

open hostilities when the submarine is one of the very few assets that can operate inside the adversary's anti-access/area denial (A2AD) zone. The choices boil down to Pearl Harbor, Guam, Yokosuka, Singapore, and Perth, Australia. In a shooting war, both Yokosuka and Singapore might be problematic for a variety of reasons. This leaves the submarine that needs material or parts support in a difficult quandary. Neither a long trek home nor a long trek south is appealing if the mission still needs to be accomplished.

To illustrate this, let's look at two hypothetical examples. For the first one, you are the skipper of a Block-V Virginia class submarine patrolling in the Philippine Sea a couple of hundred miles south of Taiwan. China has just commenced its cross-channel invasion attempt against Taiwan, and the U.S. is honoring its treaty obligation to help in the island's defense. You launch your forty land-attack Tomahawk land attack missiles in the first twenty minutes of the war. Your magazines are empty, but there are still hundreds of targets that need taken out. You are now in the "click" phase of the logistics "click – bang" cycle. With a twenty-knot SOA, you are facing a four-day transit back to Guam to reload and another four-day transit back to the firing line, almost ten days off station for twenty minutes of usefulness.

For the second example, you are in command of a 688I patrolling in the South China Sea. In this scenario, while keeping the U.S. busy with feints toward Taiwan, the Peoples Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is moving south toward the trade routes and resources that China really needs to continue its drive to further prosperity. They couch this aggressive move as "defense of the belt and roads initiative". You are assigned to detect, report, and track any major PLAN units operating in the South China Sea. While at periscope depth, you hit a submerged log and bend your number two periscope so that it is not usable and cannot be lowered. The bent scope limits your submerged speed to twelve knots and imposes a depth limitation. For repairs, you are facing a ten-day transit back to Guam to replace the scope. In both cases, if you are routed to Pearl Harbor instead of Guam, triple the transit times; heading to Perth is even longer.

Is there a way to overcome the Pacific tyranny of distance? If you are of a certain age, you will remember when there were ten or more submarine tenders. Then, it would have been a simple matter to send a tender to some out-of-the-way spot in the Philippines as an advanced base to rearm and repair the forward deployed boats. Harken back to World War II and the advanced bases that ADM Nimitz, faced with the same problem, established across the Pacific to more efficiently prosecute the war. Tenders and repair capabilities were only one island chain behind the advancing fleet.

Today's reality is that we have only two active submarine tenders. USS EMORY S. LAND (AS 39) and USS FRANK CABLE (AS-40), both homeported in Guam, are the only ones remaining. They are tasked to cover Guam, Diego Garcia, and all of the ocean in between. That is far too heavy a tasking for two tenders in any kind of shooting war. While the Navy is asking for \$1.7 billion for submarine tender construction in the FY24 budget and more in the out-years, even assuming all the stars magically align, the first time we can realistically expect to see a brand-new tender would be near 2040, and then only if other, higher priority programs don't snatch the funding in the meantime.

"I need it now, and I need it here," is a truism that applies in a shooting war. Waiting for possible Congressional actions and then the vagaries of shipbuilding schedules is not an acceptable option. One of the realities that a combat commander faces is that, when there is a serious capability shortfall, the search for a creative work-around is critical. The work-around may not have all the bells and whistles that the gold-plated solution does, but "it's good enough to get the job done."

Is there a good work-around available to meet this forward logistics and repair requirement? One possible answer is to look to our Marine shipmates and what they are doing

with their Expeditionary Advanced Basing Operations concept. One tool in the EABO tool kit is the Chesty Puller class Expeditionary Sea Base ship (“ESB”). Built to commercial standards on the hull design of an Alaska class tanker, the ESB is a much larger ship, at 90,000 tons versus the 10,000 tons of the LAND or CABLE submarine tenders, but with similar speed (15 knots) and draft (25 feet). At about \$800k per hull and eighteen months from keel laying to sea trials, the ESB vessel is both much cheaper and much faster to build. And more importantly, the Navy already has eight of these platforms in service.

Can a submarine tie up alongside an ESB, and can the ESB provide services? If this question is answered to the negative, the rest of this argument is moot. But, in 2017, SUBPAC ran a number of successful tests to prove that an SSN could tie up to a T-AKE class dry cargo ship. Although a T-AKE is roughly half the size of an ESB, I would submit that it is reasonable to assume that capability for the larger ship. What about shore power and services? Providing the correct shore power capability from the ESB powerplant may require significant re-engineering, but portable diesel-generators placed on the main deck could be a reasonable alternative. A similar case can be made for potable water and sanitary waste.

The ESB is not a tender. The current submarine tenders, CABLE and LAND, are tremendously capable repair and replenishment platforms for forward deployed submarines. When teamed with a floating drydock, these tenders can perform just about any maintenance or repair activity short of a shipyard availability. Even without the floating drydock, there are few repair tasks that a tender is not capable of tackling.

It would require significant changes to an ESB to make it a fully functional tender. But is that really required? Rearming the Virginia boat in the above example requires a certified crane and a stack of Tomahawks. The bent periscope might require a rather simple optical alignment check of the scope bearings, but a crane and a spare ‘scope could be provided. In both cases, the boat transits for a day or so, spends a day alongside, and is then underway on its mission.

Let’s look at the ESB in a little more detail, both at its “tender” capabilities and limitations. Right off the bat, the assigned ESB crew probably would have difficulty *spelling* “submarine” let alone being able to work on one. The submarine support contingent work force would need to be a fly-away augment team. Much like the fly-away teams currently in use in submarine homeport maintenance facilities and on the existing tenders, they would be experienced shipyard repair specialists. The ESB and accompanying accommodations barge can house over three hundred personnel beyond the ship’s crew, so supporting a fly-away team of a few dozen is within its current capability.

The ESB main deck is a large, mostly unobstructed space, perfect for housing CONEX boxes with pre-positioned tools and equipment, essentially outfitted as portable workshops. These might not include many of the specialized repair shops that a tender has, but it is remarkable what a basic machine shop can turn out. The repair philosophy would be to swap out faulted equipment wherever possible rather than repairing the equipment. The bent scope would be swapped with a new scope and the bent one shipped back stateside for repair, not repaired on site. A burned-out fan motor would be exchanged rather than rewound and replaced. The same would hold true for many electronic components. The faulted card or box would be replaced rather than attempting complex troubleshooting and repair in place. Repair cost and efficiency would be a secondary concern behind speed and front-line simplicity.

Think what “print-on-demand” capabilities could bring to the remote “expeditionary tender”. CABLE and LAND have storerooms full of submarine spare parts. For them, it is usually a simple matter of referencing the right stock number to the storeroom location and then grabbing the part off the shelf. Without a great deal of advanced planning and a whole lot of parts shuffling, the “expeditionary tender” would have a much more limited spare parts inventory on

hand. Gathering and storing great quantities of submarine spare parts in the holds of an ESB would negate a great deal of the advantage of the “expeditionary tender” as a pick-up, ready-on-short-notice asset. A robust print-on-demand capability would go a long way toward relieving that component shortfall.

The “roof” on the ESB houses a major heliport with four landing spots for heavy lift helicopters or tilt-rotors. This greatly aids in easing the logistics problem, particularly when the ESB is anchored in a remote location, removed from good roads and major airports. Normal ship-borne replenishment would be the preferred method for most deliveries, particularly large, bulky items like the aforementioned missiles or periscope, but the airborne assets would be a great help in timely delivery of critical components.

The ESB has onboard command and control facilities, but geared toward amphibious operations support, not submarine specific capabilities. Submarine specific communications equipment and staffing would need to be integrated into the ESB network as would any necessary reach-back capabilities. An interesting submarine command and control question arises. In today’s world, the submarine tender frequently serves as the home for an embarked submarine squadron staff. Should the “expeditionary tender” serve as the home for a forward deployed squadron staff? What are the merits and pitfalls with this concept? The optimum answer to this question probably lies with the level of engagement expected from the forward deployed squadron staff. Certainly, maintenance planning, coordination, and progress monitoring would fall under the purview of the squadron materiel office which could be conducted by a “satellite staff” for a single refit or even serial refits. I would expect the operating areas, water space management, and other staffing of an operational nature to be under the officer exercising operational control of the submarine which would most probably be a fleet or COCOM commander rather than a submarine squadron commodore, but that may not always be the case. The “expeditionary tender” concept could easily lend itself to the flexibility of either having an embarked forward deployed squadron onboard, or for it to provide support via a remote (homeported) squadron and only some “satellite staff” for planning and coordination.

Note that I am not advocating building submarine specific ESBs or “taking” an ESB from the amphibious Navy. I am talking about co-existing on the same platform, with the Marines and the submarines using the same ESB at the same forward deployed location.

The juxtaposition of the “expeditionary tender” with the Marine Expeditionary Advanced Base (EAB) can provide some interesting synergies. To successfully accomplish either mission the employed assets need to be as far forward as possible. The ESB’s primary mission is to support the Marines. The “expeditionary tender” would most probably be a secondary or supplemental mission. Are the two missions mutually exclusive, and does that present an insurmountable problem? I propose that the two missions are supportive rather than mutually exclusive. Positioning the ESB to meet the needs of the Marine’s EAB operations necessarily places the ESB in a location that should be a short transit from the submarine’s mission area. Think of the South China Sea scenario with Marine EAB’s in the Philippines facing the South China Sea. Placing the ESB off one of the small islands behind Palawan or south of the Balabac Strait would be reasonable for EAB support. As an added benefit, the Marine defense and security envelope in place to defend the ESB in its EAB role extends to provide security for the far forward submarine repair activity.

The other customer supported by the ESB is the SOCOM community. Placing a submarine support operation in close proximity to the SEALs and Marine special operators far forward should lend to a closer working relationship between the communities, even to the point of staging SOCOM/submarine operations from the ESB vice the long transits currently endured.

Special operators are a lot more effective if they don't have to spend a couple of weeks couped up on a submarine before they are sent out on their mission.

Conclusions

Wartime operations against a land based near-peer Asian adversary require a repair and rearming capability that overcomes the Pacific's "tyranny of distance". Requiring our limited submarine assets to leave station inside the A2AD area and transit for weeks at a time back to Guam, Pearl Harbor, or Perth is not an efficient or winning strategy. With only two submarine tenders currently in commission, the Navy does not have a capability to establish forward repair and rearming sites vis-à-vis World War II operations, nor is it likely that the new construction tenders in the FY2024 budget and beyond will become a reality anytime in the near future. A "good enough" work around is required. The Expeditionary Sea Base ship is designed and built to give the Marines and SOCOM similar support far forward in the same areas of operation. With some planning and pre-positioning of assets, the ESB could be made into an "expeditionary tender" to provide most of, but not all, the repair and logistics support capabilities of a forward deployed submarine tender as a secondary role while still providing the full capabilities that the ESB was designed for.

Thank you.