



PCU SOUTH DAKOTA (SSN-790)

**From the Desk of the Commanding Officer**

May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Greetings,

Happy Cinco de Mayo, and happy spring to everyone! As Mother Nature emerges from the hibernation of winter, the trees and flowers blossoming, and birds returning impart an exciting energy into our surroundings. As with me, I am sure many of you are well on your way to “celebrating” the rites of deep, spring cleaning (Field Day as we call it in the Navy), lawn work, etc.

A similar excitement is beginning to take shape amongst the crew of PCU SOUTH DAKOTA as we progress further along in the construction process, and as we anticipate the return of nearly half of our crew from duty on other submarines in June/July.

In late April, we completed a major milestone of fitting up the major two sections of the submarine, bringing together the forward end and aft end in preparations for the last hull. This will make us “Pressure Hull Complete” in early June. The “nukes,” aka nuclear-trained Engineering Department personnel, continue working in concert with Electric Boat personnel to complete propulsion plant system testing which will span over the next year. The non-nuclear trained personnel are now working hard on learning the submarine inside and out, completing necessary qualifications that will certify them as ready to stand watch onboard later this year in support of further testing and at-sea operations. The phase the personnel are going through is very similar to the phase the nukes began a year and a half ago.

It is exciting to know that the crew will begin coming together in sync with the boat coming together. We have a very long and challenging road ahead as we learn to work together as a crew, and build our teamwork skills at the same time as we increase our level of knowledge of the submarine.

I am excited to announce that in the upcoming weeks our crew, led by our Senior Chief Christopher Peddycort, one of two South Dakota natives, and our senior culinary specialist

onboard, will be undertaking a very important initiative in the life of a submarine – naming our galley aboard the boat (i.e., our cafeteria). Boat galley names are always symbolic of the heritage and legacy of the state, city, or person the boat is named after, and I can't wait to announce the name in a future Captain's Log update.

Our terrific Commissioning Committee has also been very busy arranging for several important state visits by member of the SOUTH DAKOTA crew in 2017. I know I speak on behalf of the entire crew when I say we are extremely excited to be able to visit the great state of South Dakota again, meeting all of the wonderful people and educating them about the Submarine Service. I also know I speak on behalf of the entire crew in giving thanks to the Commissioning Committee for their hard work, as well as giving thanks for the incredible hospitality extended to us by every South Dakotan, every time we visit.

I am a bit of a history buff and also feel it is important to share a little about the history of our Submarine Service. As warriors of the "Silent Service," as the US Naval Submarine Service is referred, we don't speak much about the secretive nature of our profession. But we recognize the importance of educating the public about our heritage and the legacy of those who have sacrificed so much in defense of our country. So to that end, I want to close by sharing with you some of our history, from our humble beginnings 117 years ago, to today:

The US Navy's Submarine Force was founded on April 11, 1900 when John P. Holland sold his internal combustion, gasoline-powered submarine, Holland VI, to the Navy for \$160,000 after demonstration trials off Mount Vernon, Virginia. Later that year, on October 12<sup>th</sup>, the USS HOLLAND was commissioned, commanded by Lieutenant H. H. Caldwell. This primitive boat would quickly evolve into the formidable classes of fleet boats, which took the fight to the enemy in two World Wars, the Korean War and the Vietnam Conflict. The incredible sacrifices of the men who manned these boats during our second great war immensely contributed to our war efforts, sinking over 4,800,000 tons of Japanese merchant ships and 214 naval vessels. But this came at an incredible cost; 52 of the 288 U.S. submarines and 3,505 men (1 in 5) who manned them were lost. In 1955, the USS NAUTILUS, the world's first nuclear-powered warship, was put to sea, ushering in the modern age of naval nuclear propulsion. NAUTILUS, and the fast attack and ballistic missile submarines that would follow for decades to come, would earn the US Submarine Force, through their secretive Cold War exploits, the title of "Silent Service." In 2018, when PCU SOUTH DAKOTA (SSN 790) will be commissioned as USS SOUTH DAKOTA (SSN 790), she will join an illustrious war-fighting force of over 70 nuclear-powered fast attack, ballistic missile, and guided missile submarines protecting our way of life, and defending our interests and our allies around the globe.

I, along with the rest of the crew of SOUTH DAKOTA, and all the women and men of the Submarine Service are proud to be a part of this heritage, working hard every day not only with deep-found respect for our brothers who have sacrificed so much in ages past, but also in recognition today of our solemn responsibilities as defenders of our Nation, and as stewards of the resources bestowed to our care by the citizens and taxpayers of our Country.

***Hoka Hey! Let's Roll!***

Sincerely,

CDR Ron Withrow

Commanding Officer

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