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**From the Desk of the Commanding Officer**

March 17, 2018

Greetings,

Happy St. Patrick's Day! My Executive Officer LCDR Scotty Murphy, Chief of the Boat Bryan Randall and I had the honor of attending the USS COLORADO (SSN 788) Commissioning Ceremony today; mostly in support of our shipmates on that fine boat, but also to take notes on our own upcoming Commissioning that will occur later this year. It is hard to believe that it has been 2 ½ years since the first crew members arrived here at Electric Boat shipyard, and looking back I am amazed of the progress that has been made building our fine warship, and especially amazed at the progress my crew has made in learning to operate her.

Things are coming together very quickly now. Since my last writing, SOUTH DAKOTA has left the shelter of the large construction building 260 that was her home for more than 2 years, and she now floats in the water proudly under the sun and stars, where she is undergoing her last 4-5 months of construction. Although only half of our boat's hull is wet, the completion of "float-off" has energized my crew and me, spurring us on through the most difficult part of the New Construction period for a submarine crew.

Now, we focus both on supporting the rapid-paced end of shipyard construction, but even more so on heavy training to learn how to operate our submarine as a team in all conditions. We are training to operate the myriad of mechanical, electrical, and electronic systems in normal and casualty modes of operation. We are also learning to combat casualties such as fires and flooding, etc. It's all coming together now!

In closing, thank you for all of your support for the crew of SOUTH DAKOTA and our families. Also, thank you for your support of the Submarine Service, the US Navy, and all the armed forces.

*Hoka Hey! Let's Roll!*

Sincerely,

CDR Ron Withrow  
Commanding Officer  
PCU SOUTH DAKOTA (SSN 790)