

Captain's Log – April 5, 2016

This marks my first Captain's Log entry, so I will take time to bring everyone up to speed on significant events to date. Most notably was the Keel Laying Ceremony, which took place at General-Dynamics Electric Boat Quonset Point, Rhode Island on April 4<sup>th</sup>. This shipyard event was attended by the crew, and served as the first of three significant milestones in the construction of SOUTH DAKOTA, the latter two being the Christening and Commissioning ceremonies. We were honored to have the ship's sponsor, Mrs. Deanie Dempsey, participate in the event, and look forward to building a strong relationship in the coming years; a relationship that all SOUTH DAKOTA sailors will be reminded of as they view Mrs. Dempsey's initials, welded into steel and prominently displayed onboard for all to see. It was also great to meet the South Dakota state delegation, US Senator Rounds and State Senator Brown.

Our first two "increments" of personnel reported between the months of August and October 2015. "Increments" refer to the phased manning approach used to initially man new construction units. Phased manning allows the right people to report to the boat at the right time to ensure personnel report aboard with sufficient time to complete training and achieve qualifications to test and operate equipment as it is made available by the shipyard construction team. The first two increments that reported aboard last year were comprised of the Command Team (Commanding Officer (CO), Executive Officer(XO), Chief of the Boat (COB)), Department Head Officers, the majority of Engineering Department personnel, and those personnel critical to administrative and computer network functions. Since then, a number of additional personnel have reported aboard, bringing our total number to approximately 70; 64 shy of the 134-person crew that will man SOUTH DAKOTA at sea. We will reach this final end-strength in September 2016, when the final increments report aboard.

I would now like to provide a very simplified overview of the construction process and an update on where SOUTH DAKOTA is at in the process. The submarine is built in several large cylindrical hull sections, with each section internally populated by large rafts containing the majority of the equipment. These sections are then welded together, and final equipment installation and testing completed on the inside. The new construction process, begun in March 2013, takes 5 years to complete, and will conclude upon delivery of the boat by the shipbuilder to the Navy in early 2018. Currently, sections 6 and 7 containing two-thirds of the propulsion plant is "on yard" at the Electric Boat Groton facility where we work. Sections 8 and 9 (containing the remainder of the propulsion plant and stern of the ship comprised of the stern planes, rudder, and propulsor), as well as sections 2B through 5 (the forward part of the boat from aft of the sail structure to forward of the propulsion plant) are undergoing construction at the Electric Boat facility located in Quonset Point, Rhode Island. We anticipate these sections being delivered to the Groton yard in April. Finally, sections 1 and 2A, which includes the bow dome to aft of the sail structure, are undergoing construction at the Huntington Ingalls – Newport News shipyard in Newport News, Virginia.

The construction process would not be successful without people; particularly the team comprised of highly-trained and competent Navy submariners and civilian shipbuilders. As I previously stated, our first two manning increments were comprised mostly of nuclear-trained Engineering Department Officers and Enlisted personnel. These personnel must report very early in the manning process because of the extensive, technically rigorous nature of their qualifications necessary to safely and efficiently test and operate the nuclear propulsion plant. Their initial training, which occurred in New York from September through October of last year, served to establish a baseline level of knowledge which they are now building upon as the work towards qualifying to support our first major propulsion plant milestone known as Initial Fill. Their intensive training and qualification program is very challenging and time-consuming, but the entire team is dedicated and focused on gaining the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully execute our new construction testing program. They are a consummate group of professional warriors and I couldn't be more proud of them.

The crew's hard work does not go unnoticed, and every quarter we provide special recognition to those top performers through our Sailor of the Quarter and Bluejacket of the Quarter program. Our recipients for the first quarter of FY16 (October-December 2015) were: Yeoman Petty Officer First Class Submarines Qualified (YN1(SS)) James Millard of Canton Ohio, YN2(SS) Valentay Williams of Twin City Georgia, and YN3 Connor Stevenson of Manchester Connecticut. These men were recognized for their exceptional performance related to command stand-up and crew support. Command stand-up refers to the establishment of all procedures, policies, and processes that must be in place for an organization to function properly; especially critical to ensuring the crew functions efficiently and properly.

Our recipients for the second quarter of FY16 were: Electricians Mate Nuclear First Class (EMN1(SS)) Jacob Gallagher of Pembroke New Hampshire, Machinist Mate Auxiliary Petty Officer Second Class (MMA2(SS)) Kenneth Kidd of Fairless Hills Pennsylvania, and YN3 Connor Stevenson.

In February, the COB and I, along with three crewmembers – Ensign Ben Wallace of Rockville Center New York, Electronics Technician Nuclear Petty Officer First Class (ETN1(SS)) Isaiah Tuohey of O'Fallon Illinois, and YN3 Stevenson - were extremely honored to participate in our inaugural visit to the beautiful State of South Dakota. This visit, sponsored and coordinated by the Commissioning Committee, proved extremely successful in educating the citizens of South Dakota about the submarine SOUTH DAKOTA and her crew, as well as kicking off the statewide contest to design the ship's crest. We greatly enjoyed our visit to the Battleship SOUTH DAKOTA Memorial Museum, and we were greatly humbled and honored to meet with state and local leaders including Governor Dugaard, Lt Gov Michels, Congresswoman Noem, and Mayor Toomey of Mitchell, to name but a few. It was also a great honor for me to address both Houses of the state legislature, as well as several veterans groups. Finally, we had the incredible opportunity to attend the 2016 South Dakota National Guard Dining Out. With the Submarine Diving Klaxon on loan from the Scorpion Base SUBVETS of Sioux Falls, we were able to make our presence known while enjoying in boisterous camaraderie with prior Navy man Lt Gov Michels! This entire visit, which served to establish a foundation upon which to build a strong relationship between our crew and the people South Dakota, would not have been possible without the incredible efforts of the Commissioning Committee. Bravo Zulu to Chairwoman Deb Bodenstedt (CAPT, USN (ret) for her leadership, Education/Promotions/Logistics Director Michael Samp for ensuring we stayed on time and

task throughout our visit, and everyone else on the committee for their hard work in making our visit possible

We are looking forward to many more visits to the state of South Dakota, especially our upcoming visit to Sioux Falls in July where we will participate in the 2016 Navy Week, as well as our visit to Sturgis in August to participate in Military Appreciation Day.

That is all for now – *Hoka Hey! Let's Roll!*

Sincerely,

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