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Press Release

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World War II SUBVETS Memorial Service Held

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NORFOLK, Va. – The annual Submarine Veterans of World War II Memorial Service was conducted today at the Submarine Learning Facility (SUBLRNFAC), Naval Station Norfolk. Hosted by SUBLRNFAC, the event is held each year prior to Memorial Day.

The service honored the 52 submarines and the gallant Sailors lost during World War II, and the losses of the USS Thresher (SSN 593), April 10, 1963, and the USS Scorpion (SSN 589), May 22, 1968.

Cmdr. Albert Onley, SUBLRNFAC commanding officer, welcomed the more than 100 veterans, active duty Sailors, spouses, and visitors.

“My favorite stanza in the Sailor’s Creed says ‘I represent the fighting spirit of the Navy and those who have gone before me to defend freedom and democracy around the world’,” said Onley. “The veterans here today and their families have personified that fighting spirit. You have shared your stories to help us, the submariners who follow in your footsteps, to understand the sacrifices required to defend freedom and democracy, and to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation. We can not thank you enough for your service and your continued contribution to our nation.”

The guest speaker was Master Chief Torpedoman’s Mate (Submarines) Rich Corey, U.S. Navy (retired). In 1972, he was the first Sailor selected as the Commander, Submarine Force, Atlantic and Atlantic Fleet Sailor of the Year in 1972. Corey is also a former crew member of the USS George Washington (SSBN 598), which was chosen to be inducted into the Submarine Hall of Fame after the ceremony.

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“This year marks the 110th anniversary of our submarine force, so it’s a great honor and pleasure to stand before you today and pay tribute to all submarine veterans of the United States both past and present,” said Corey. “This ceremony shows all of them how we feel about the contributions they have made to this great country, and that they will always be remembered as part of the greatest generation of Americans to serve.”

Fire Control Technician (Submarines) Justin McElwee, coordinator of the 2010 event, echoed Corey’s sentiments.

“It is a great honor and a privilege to be the coordinator for the Submarine Veterans of World War II memorial ceremony this year. Honoring those who have gone before us is extremely important so that we never forget the ultimate sacrifice made by the brave submariners who died defending our freedom. From talking to some of the Submarine Veterans, this ceremony holds great meaning not only to them but also to the families of our fallen brethren.”

Following the ceremony, George Washington became the 12th submarine to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. Selection is merited by the submarine’s contribution to national security, and selection is conducted by the Hampton Roads Chapter of the U.S. Submarine Veterans organization.

“George Washington was commissioned December 30, 1959, as the world’s first nuclear-powered Fleet Ballistic Missile submarine,” said Corey. “Arguably, it can be considered the submarine that had the greatest influence on world events in the 20th Century. With its entry into service, the United States instantly gained the most powerful deterrent force imaginable – a stealth platform with enormous nuclear firepower.”

The ship was decommissioned on January 24, 1985, but prior to disposal the ship’s sail was removed and is currently memorialized in New London, Conn.

Distinguished visitors included Vice Adm. John J. Donnelly, Commander, Submarine Forces, and John Panneton, Military Liaison for Congressman Glenn Nye (D-VA-2nd) and former national president of the Navy League of the United States

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NORFOLK, Va. (May 27, 2010) – Vice Adm. Jay Donnelly, Commander, Submarine Forces, greets Pete Sococo prior to the start of the World War II Submarine Veterans Memorial Service. Sococo is a 31-year submarine service veteran who conducted 16 different submarine patrols during World War II and is currently the oldest qualified submariner in the Hampton Roads area. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Todd A. Schaffer / Released)

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NORFOLK, Va. (May 27, 2010) – Submarine veterans salute as the colors are paraded during the World War II Submarine Veterans Memorial Service held at the Submarine Learning Facility on Naval Station Norfolk. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Todd A. Schaffer / Released)

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NORFOLK, Va. (May 27, 2010) – More than 100 submarine veterans, active duty Sailors, spouses, and visitors attended the World War II Submarine Veterans Memorial Service held at the Submarine Learning Facility on Naval Station Norfolk. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Todd A. Schaffer / Released)