



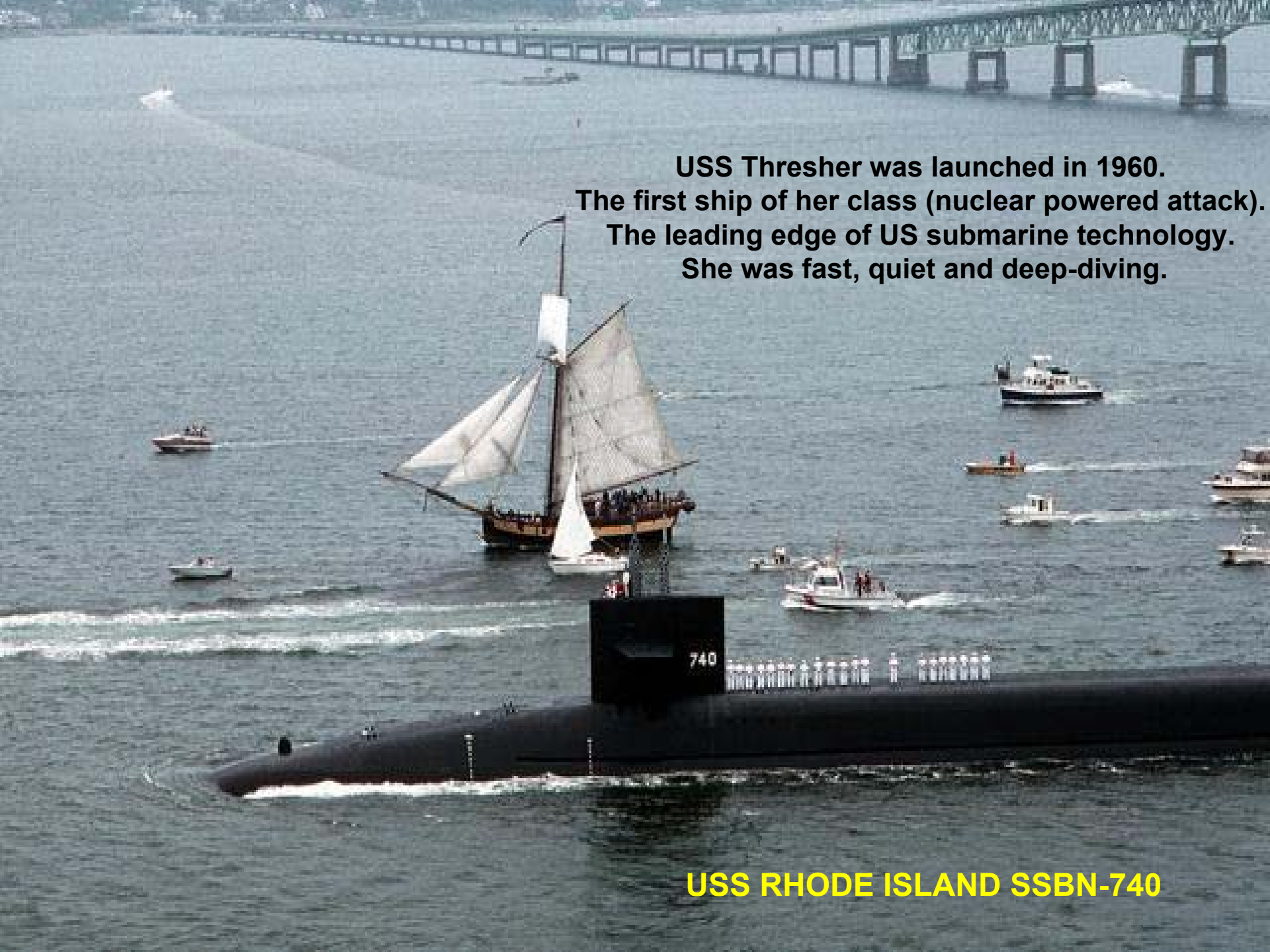
SUBSAFE –



USS Thresher, SSN 593, Lesson Learned

Leadership ViTS Meeting
June 5, 2006

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An aerial photograph of the USS Rhode Island SSBN-740, a nuclear-powered attack submarine, sailing on the water. The submarine is black with the number 740 on its conning tower. A line of crew members is visible on the deck. In the background, a large three-masted sailing ship with white sails is also on the water. A long bridge spans the horizon. Several other smaller boats are scattered around.

**USS Thresher was launched in 1960.
The first ship of her class (nuclear powered attack).
The leading edge of US submarine technology.
She was fast, quiet and deep-diving.**

USS RHODE ISLAND SSBN-740

On April 10, 1963:

***While engaged in a deep test dive
220 miles east of Cape Cod, MA,***

***The USS Thresher, SSN 593, was lost at sea
settling at a depth of 8400 feet with all aboard***

***The crew of 112 Naval Officers
and Enlisted personnel and
17 civilians
died***

Proximate Cause and Ensuing Chain of Events

(Postulated)

Ruptured Piping System (brazed) Joint

Engine room flooding

Seawater spray on switchboards
causing loss of propulsion power

Unable to secure flooding

Unable to blow ballast tanks

Unable to drive to surface

Unable to Surface

Investigation Conclusions

- Deficient **Design**
(Ballast tank blow failure)
- Deficient **Fabrication Practices**
(Insufficient brazed joint bonding)
- Deficient **Quality Assurance**
(Inadequate ultrasonic inspections)
- Deficient **Operational Procedure**
(Difficult access to vital and damage susceptibility of equipment under emergency conditions)

SUBSAFE Certification Program

- SUBSAFE Certification performed for material, work and testing within the SUBSAFE Boundary

SSCB \equiv *structure.critical* + *systems.critical* + *components.critical*

- SSCB \equiv structure, systems, and components that are critical to the watertight integrity and recovery capability of the submarine
 - Defined in the SUBSAFE Manual
 - Depicted in SUBSAFE Certification Boundary (SSCB) Books

Establishing and Maintaining SUBSAFE Certification

- *Maximum reasonable assurance* achieved through establishing the initial certification near the end of 5 year construction cycle
 - built upon a solid base of well-documented SUBSAFE Technical Requirements
- And, then, by maintaining it through the life of the submarine using a triad of tools for maintaining certification:
 - Audits
 - Re-Entry Control
 - URO/MRC Program [added in 1969]
(URO MRC ≡ Unrestricted Operations Maintenance Requirement Card Program)



The bitterness of poor quality
lingers long after the sweetness
of meeting a schedule is
forgotten

USS TENNESSEE SSBN 734

SUBSAFE Program Success

1915 – 1963

16 submarines lost to non-combat causes

1915: USS F-4 (SS-23)
1917: USS F-4 (SS-20)
1920: USS H-1 (SS-28)
USS S-5 (SS-110)
1923: USS O-5 (SS-66)
1926: USS S-51 (SS-162)
1927: USS S-4 (SS-109)
1939: USS SQUALUS (SS-192)
1941: USS O-9 (SS-70)
1942: USS S-26 (SS-131)
USS R-19 (SS-96)
1943: USS R-12 (SS-89)
1944: USS S-28 (SS-133)
1949: USS COCHINO (SS-345)
1958: USS STICKLEBACK (SS-415)
1963: **USS THRESHER** (SSN-593)

SUBSAFE Program inception
after THRESHER sunk

1963 - Present

1 submarine lost to non-combat causes

1968: USS SCORPION (SSN-598)

- SCORPION was **not** SUBSAFE certified
- Loss would not have been prevented by the SUBSAFE Program

**NO SUBSAFE-CERTIFIED SUBMARINE
HAS EVER BEEN LOST**

Some Submarine & Space Vehicle Similarities

- Extreme environments.
- High energy systems.
- Critical systems whose failure or lack of proper function can have catastrophic consequences.
- Integration of complex subsystems in highly complex vehicles.
- Must maintain conformance with critical requirements (safety & reliability) over extended periods of operating time and away from maintenance facilities.
- Design, testing, operation, and maintenance of the craft require firm technical basis, followed by rigid process for compliance verification.

Back-Up & Additional Resource:

NASA/Navy Benchmarking Exchange (NNBE) Program Profile

The Audit Program

- Verification is part of the work process:
 - Functional Audits; (processes, procedures, & practices)
 - Specific for an Organization
 - Functional Areas Reviewed:
 - Management
 - Technical
 - In-Process Work
 - Re-Entry Control
 - Quality Assurance
 - Material Control
 - Certification Audits; (accomplished work)
 - Ship-specific
- The audit as a Constructive Experience
 - Assembling the Audit Team
 - Peer review during SUBSAFE Functional Audits
 - Teaming effort - **Synergistic**
 - Auditor and audited **attitude**
 - Deficiency documentation & adjudication
 - Contentious issues sometimes arise
 - Certification findings
 - X-pollination & process improvements shared across submarine fleet

Re-Entry Control (REC)

- Control of work & testing performed within the SUBSAFE boundary. Heightened attention to:
 - Technical authorization.
 - Configuration management.
 - Documentation.
 - Quality assurance.
- REC is a tool that helps:
 - Maintain work discipline
 - Establish personal accountability
 - Establish and verify Objective Quality Evidence

URO MRC Program

URO MRC ≡ Unrestricted Operations Maintenance Requirement Card

- The URO MRC Program originated in 1969 with a request to extend the USS Queenfish's SSN 651 Operating Cycle for an additional 1 year prior to overhaul
 - Testing & inspection results were surprisingly poor, indicating SUBSAFE controls were not sufficiently robust and the URO MRC program was added
- The URO MRC Program provides the technical basis for continued SUBSAFE Certification for unrestricted operations at sea.