



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) ✓
FLEET POST OFFICE
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98799

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From: Commanding Officer, USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728)(BLUE)
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09BH), Washington Navy Yard,
Washington, DC 20374

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY FOR 1984

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12C

Encl: (1) Command History for 1984

1. Enclosure (1) is forwarded in accordance with reference (a).

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "D. M. Lachata".

D. M. LACHATA

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COMMAND HISTORY FOR 1984

1 January 1984 found the USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) and her BLUE crew in the ship's namesake state moored at Port Canaveral. The Post Shakedown Availability period at Electric Boat in Groton, Connecticut had been completed successfully on 19 December 1983, after which the ship underwent a brief sea trial period and moored at the Naval Underwater Systems Center in New London, Connecticut. On the day after Christmas, under the command of Captain William L. Powell, USN, she got underway for Florida arriving on 30 December 1983.

The crew enjoyed a few days of rest and relaxation in Cape Canaveral before taking the ship to sea again on 6 January 1984 enroute to the torpedo test range. The time in transit was employed in rehearsing for USS FLORIDA's first Torpedo Certification Proficiency examination. After completing the examination successfully, the ship returned to Port Canaveral, Florida arriving on 12 January 1984. The GOLD crew arrived from Bangor, Washington that same day, and the following day the two crews commenced turnover. Exchange of Command took place on the morning of 15 January 1984.

After a thirty day period of standdown and reunion with their families, the BLUE crew reassembled on 15 February 1984 at the Off-Crew Administration Building at Naval Submarine Base, Bangor and commenced an intensive period of training and preparation for the upcoming strategic missile load, refit, and first deterrent patrol.

The GOLD crew brought the ship to Bangor, Washington on 25 March 1984 having completed a TCP of their own, followed by a transit through the Panama Canal and a change of operational control to Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet. The loadout of torpedoes and strategic missiles at the submarine base weapons handling facility began two days later and was conducted jointly by both crews.

Turnover procedures began on 16 April 1984. Exchange of command occurred on 19 April 1984 with the ship moored at the Delta Pier, and Captain Powell and the BLUE crew resumed command and responsibility for the ship.

The first refit period was a busy, hectic period, reminiscent though on a smaller scale of new construction days and the Post Shakedown Availability. The BLUE crew assisted by elements of the GOLD crew provided outstanding support to the Trident Refit Facility, Bangor as indicated by that command's official observation that FLORIDA "stood head and shoulders over the other crews" who had undergone similar refits previously. The refit was completed on schedule with final preparations for getting underway occupying the last days. A fast cruise for training was conducted, followed by two days of Dabob Bay Trials returning to the Delta Pier each evening. These trials carried visiting riders from Submarine Group NINE, Submarine Squadron SEVENTEEN, Trident Training Facility, Bangor, and several Midshipmen as well as prospective Trident commanding, executive, and department head officers.

On 10 May 1984, FLORIDA embarked Rear Admiral A. B. Scott, Jr., Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, and members of his staff, and departed on her first strategic deterrent patrol. Four days of modified-alert status, training, and drills ensued. The visitors disembarked off Port Angeles, Washington on 13 May 1984 and the BLUE crew departed for their operating area accompanied by eight midshipmen aboard for their summer training cruise.

On Alert status most of the time in the following few weeks, the crew filled the long days with training, engineering drills, administrative work, and of course, recreation.

On 25 June 1984 the ship returned to Bangor, Washington for a three day mid-patrol break. The crew enjoyed maximum liberty during this time and took advantage of the opportunity to load supplies, particularly fresh fruit, vegetables, and milk, and to embark newly reported personnel and disembark others. Work on the ship itself was kept to a minimum, yet still a few jobs were done by the Trident Refit Facility, Bangor and ship's force. On 28 June 1984, FLORIDA returned to sea and alert patrol.

After returning from the first deterrent patrol, the FLORIDA embarked the CINCPAC Nuclear Power Examination Board for an Operational Reactor Safeguards Examination of the BLUE crew. The BLUE crew received a satisfactory evaluation overall by the inspectors before returning to Bangor, Washington where she was enthusiastically greeted by friends and relatives of the crewmembers onboard.

Subsequent to turnover of the ship to the GOLD crew and four days of rest and relaxation, the BLUE crew assisted the GOLD crew during Refit 2 onboard the ship and both crews received praise from the Trident Refit Facility for the outstanding support provided during refit.

As the GOLD crew commenced their first deterrent patrol at the end of August, the BLUE crew began a 2 week leave period whereby crewmembers caught up with events and changes back home.

On 28 August 1984, a Change of Command Ceremony was held for the BLUE crew in which Captain William L. Powell was relieved by Captain Donald M. Lachata. Captain Powell had taken command of the Trident Refit Facility several weeks previously. In recognition of his outstanding leadership and guidance while commanding the USS FLORIDA (BLUE) Captain Powell was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal.

After the change of command ceremony the BLUE crew began their training period in preparation for the second deterrent patrol and Refit 3.

On 4 November 1984 the GOLD crew returned to Bangor and following turnover an Exchange of Command Ceremony was held onboard, the BLUE crew once again resumed on-ship status for Refit 3.

Upon completion of Refit 3, the ship conducted a 36 hour Fast Cruise followed by two days of Dabob Bay Trials. On 29 November 1984 the FLORIDA proceeded to sea on Mod-Alert for 5 days of at-sea training.

After disembarking riders at Port Angeles, Washington in early December, FLORIDA participated in several extensive submarine exercises, which were completed successfully in mid-December. Upon completion of these exercises FLORIDA (BLUE) prepared for her initial Christmas and New Years underway.

Although at sea for the holidays, the members of the crew prepared for the season in earnest with decorations abounding and enthusiasm running rampant. A Christmas Eve message sent by the wives of the BLUE crew as well as over one hundred very special Christmas Family Grams helped ease the difficulty of separation during this period.



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From: Commanding Officer, USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728)
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09BH)

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12C

Encl: (1) USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) (GOLD) Command History

1. Enclosure (1) is submitted as the command history for USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) (GOLD) per reference (a).

ROBERT W. BOYCE

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COMSUBGRU NINE
COMSUBRON SEVENTEEN

USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) (GOLD) COMMAND HISTORY

On 18 June 1983, USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) was commissioned, and Captain George R. Sterner, USN, assumed command of the Gold crew. While the Blue crew embarked on shakedown trials, the Gold crew moved with their families to Bangor, Washington, FLORIDA's new homeport. While at Bangor, the Gold crew underwent a vigorous training period in anticipation of a highly compressed schedule during which the crew would undergo all of the major inspections and testing which would normally be conducted over the period of an entire year.

On 26 August 1983, the Gold crew flew from Bangor to meet the ship at Port Canaveral, FL. Two days later, Captain Sterner assumed command of FLORIDA and the Gold crew began its shakedown period. The first exchange of command was a festive occasion. Ceremonies and celebrations were sponsored by well wishers and supporters from the State of Florida, FLORIDA's name-sake.

The long hours of training during the off-crew period were in evidence as the ship and crew performed superbly, including the flawless launch of a Trident C-4 missile, an outstanding Nuclear Weapons Acceptance Inspection (Nwai), and an above average Operational Reactor Safeguards Examination (ORSE). Interspersed with all the operational testing and demonstrations, were visits from many dignitaries. Most notable was a congressional indoctrination cruise about which the Force Commander remarked, "...impressed them indelibly with the professionalism of our people..." Among the many dignitaries to tour FLORIDA during this period were the Honorable Charles E. Bennett, Chairman, House Seapower Subcommittee, Governor Bob Graham, State of Florida, and Admiral Kinnaird McKee, USN, Director, Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program.

At the completion of shakedown trials, FLORIDA returned to Groton, Ct. where she would undergo her post shakedown availability period. On 31 October 1983, Captain William L. Powell, USN, assumed command of FLORIDA once again. The Gold crew returned to Bangor for another off-crew training period to finish out the year.

In January 1984, the Gold crew once again flew to Port Canaveral, Florida to complete shakedown trials and to make the voyage to Bangor, Wa., USS FLORIDA's home port.

Once again the gold crew responded to the challenge. Upon completion of a successful MK-48 torpedo certification, USS FLORIDA participated in several significant Trident security program exercises conducted in both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. These demanding operations required the finest judgement in seamanship and shiphandling and honed the crew to peak operational readiness.

Highlights of the voyage home included transit through the Panama Canal on February 18th and an excursion south of the equator on February 20th. A thrilling Shellback ceremony was conducted for the 125 polywogs and was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

After crossing the equator USS FLORIDA began its long awaited journey home, all the while keeping busy participating in numerous exercises.

On March 25, 1984 USS FLORIDA quietly slipped into Bangor, Wa. where she received a warm welcome from the families and dependents of the crew. Particularly noticeable was the lack of demonstrators which had met the previous two Trident submarines.

Immediately upon arrival in Bangor, the weapons department began the FLORIDA's initial strategic loadout. This important evolution was accomplished in record time without incident and culminated with a Navy Technical Proficiency Inspection (NTPI) in which USS FLORIDA was rated outstanding in every area examined with zero deficiencies noted. FLORIDA Gold was subsequently selected as "nuclear unit of the year" by Nuclear Training Weapons Group, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Shortly thereafter, the Gold Crew was relieved by Captain William L. Powell and his Blue crew. The gold and blue crews worked together during the ship's initial refit on Bangor, Wa. to prepare FLORIDA for her first strategic deterrent patrol.

On 21 May 1984 Captain George R. Sterner, USN, relinquished command of the USS FLORIDA gold crew to Captain Robert W. Boyce, USN whose previous tour was Commanding Officer, USS SEA DEVIL (SSN 664).

While the Blue crew was making FLORIDA's first deterrent patrol, the Gold crew vigorously prepared for it's first patrol.

On 19 August 1984, FLORIDA Gold with Captain Robert W. Boyce in command, departed on it's first strategic deterrent patrol. The ensuing months were busy ones for the Gold crew as FLORIDA was tasked to perform operations not characteristic of a strategic deterrent patrol. Among the highlights of patrol was the highly successful open ocean firing of MK-48 torpedoes against surface targets for command qualification. The patrol drew to a successful conclusion with an above average Operational Reactor Safeguards Examination (ORSE). The FLORIDA Gold's first strategic deterrent patrol was a resounding success in every respect.

On 7 November 1984, the Gold crew was relieved by the Blue crew and their new Commanding Officer, Captain D. M. Lachata.

Upon return to port the Gold crew was honored by receiving the Commander, Submarine Group NINE's Silver Anchor Award as well as the Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet NEY Award nomination. The Gold crew enjoyed a wonderful Christmas holiday season at home and a very snowy winter off-crew. Studying hard they prepared for the upcoming Navy Technical Proficiency Inspection (NTPI) and Tactical Readiness Examination (TRE).

On St. Valentines Day, 14 February 1985, the Gold crew with Captain Boyce in command one again relieved the Blue crew onboard FLORIDA, to assume a heavy workload during refit four in preparation for the fourth strategic deterrent patrol.