

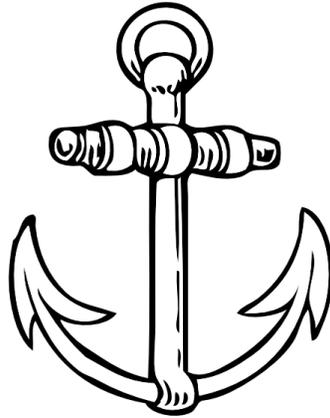
Water Exploration Activity Booklet by the Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum



Water Exploration activities are designed to be included into educators' geography lesson plans. These activities can be used by educators throughout the continental United States.

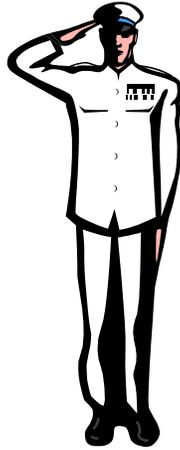
Kindergarten through Second Grade.....	2
Third through Fifth Grade.....	4
Sixth through Eighth Grade.....	5
Ninth through Twelfth Grade.....	7

Kindergarten through Second Grade



Kindergarten: Display your state map. *First Grade:* Display a United States map. *Second Grade:* Display a world map. Have the students locate their town (state and country). Then students should identify the difference between land and water. What is the closest water source to your town? What rivers are in your state? Some rivers are used to trade goods and raw materials. Use the United States Waterways Map to find out if your state's river(s) are used for this purpose. These rivers that are used for trade eventually connect to the ocean. Find a river closest to your town and follow it to the ocean. What ocean does your river go to? Locate Arkansas on the United States Waterways Map and explain to students that a United State Naval submarine is on display in Arkansas for people to visit. Have students figure out how the submarine got to North Little Rock, Arkansas. During the map discussion use new terminology with your students such as the cardinal directions (north, south, east, and west) when explaining a location.

Third through Fifth Grade



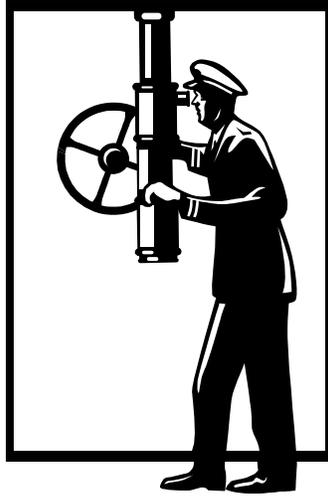
Display a United States map and give students a blank map. Write the following locations on the board:

Baltimore, Maryland
Buffalo, New York
Charleston, South Carolina
Chicago, Illinois
Cleveland, Ohio
Fall River, Massachusetts
Galveston, Texas
Groton, Connecticut
Hackensack, New Jersey
Honolulu, Hawaii
Long Beach, California
Manitowoc, Wisconsin
Mobile, Alabama

Muskegon, Michigan
Muskogee, Oklahoma
New York, New York
North Little Rock, Arkansas
Omaha, Nebraska
Patterson, New Jersey
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Portland, Oregon
Portsmouth, New Hampshire
San Diego, California
San Francisco, California
Sea Girt, New Jersey

It would be best if students work in small groups so that one student can locate the city on the United States map on display, one student can label the states, and the other student can fill in the cities. Explain to the students that the cities they found are locations where submarines are on display for people to visit and tour. How many states have submarines on display? **Answer: 20 states.** How many cities have submarines on display? **Answer: 26 cities.** If there are 28 Naval submarines on display in the United States and no city had three submarines on display, how many cities have multiple submarines on display? **Answer: 2 cities.** These cities are Charleston, South Carolina, and San Diego, California. If there are 24 United States Naval submarines on display, what could the other four submarines be? **Answer: Confederate, German, and two Russian (USSR).**

Sixth through Eighth Grade



Display a United States map and give students a blank map. Write the following locations on the board:

Baltimore, Maryland
Buffalo, New York
Charleston, South Carolina
Chicago, Illinois
Cleveland, Ohio
Fall River, Massachusetts
Galveston, Texas
Groton, Connecticut
Hackensack, New Jersey
Honolulu, Hawaii
Long Beach, California
Manitowoc, Wisconsin
Mobile, Alabama

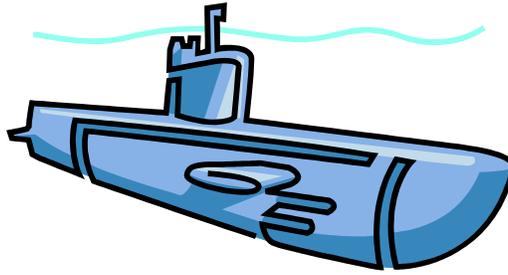
Muskegon, Michigan
Muskogee, Oklahoma
New York, New York
North Little Rock, Arkansas
Omaha, Nebraska
Patterson, New Jersey
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Portland, Oregon
Portsmouth, New Hampshire
San Diego, California
San Francisco, California
Sea Girt, New Jersey

It would be best if students work in small groups so that one student can locate the city on the United States map on display, one student can label the states, and the other student can fill in the cities. Explain to the students that the cities they found are locations where submarines are on display for people to visit and tour. How many states have submarines on display? **Answer: 20 states.** How many cities have submarines on display? **Answer: 26 cities.** If there are 28 Naval submarines on display in the United States and no city had three submarines on display, how many cities have multiple submarines on display? **Answer: 2 cities.** These cities are Charleston, South Carolina, and San Diego, California. If there are 24 United States Naval submarines on

display, what could the other four submarines be? **Answer: Confederate, German, and two Russian.**

For homework allow students to look up the different submarines on display around the United States. Have the students create a road trip where they would visit four of the submarines. During their planning students need to figure out how many miles they will drive, how many days their trip will take, and create a driving itinerary. Students can only drive 70 miles an hour on interstates and 55 miles on highways. Students can only drive/visit submarines for 15 hours a day. Students have to spend at least one hour at each submarine on display. The driving itinerary should state their starting location, the route to get to each location including highways and interstates that will be used, how many miles they will be on each road, and their ending location (which should be the same as their starting location). When students change roads students must use cardinal directions. Students should write a short paragraph of why they chose the submarines they chose to visit.

Ninth through Twelfth Grade



Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12

Grades 9-10 students:

- 1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- 2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- 5. Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.
- 6. Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.
- 8. Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.
- 9. Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

Grades 11-12 students:

- 1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
- 2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
- 3. Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- 6. Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.
- 8. Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.
- 9. Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Contemporary United States History for Arkansas Frameworks Revised 2006

Strand: Cold War, Content Standard 4: Students shall analyze the events of the Cold War.

CW.4.CH.1: Research sources of conflict and confrontation during the Cold War (atomic/hydrogen bomb, espionage).

Give students different sources about USS *Scorpion* which details the facts and theories of the sinking of the last United States nuclear submarine. Have students write what they think happened to the submarine based on the information that they read.

“USS Scorpion Sources”

The following resources tell the history of the sinking of USS Scorpion. USS Scorpion was the last United States submarine lost in 1968. These sources also detail the different theories of how the submarine was lost. The sinking of the submarine does have an Arkansas tie, due to a Parkview graduate from 1965 was aboard when the submarine went down. A memorial to this sailor is located at the Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum.

- [History of USS Scorpion \(SSN-589\)](#)
- [Experts Out to Solve Deep-sea Mystery of the USS Scorpion](#)
- [The USS Scorpion Buried at Sea](#)

History of USS Scorpion (SSN-589)

Written by Naval History and Heritage

30 July 2001

The sixth Scorpion (SSN-589) was laid down on 20 August 1958 by the Electric Boat Division, General Dynamics Corp., Groton, Conn.; launched on 19 December 1959; sponsored by Mrs. Elizabeth S. Morrison; and commissioned on 29 July 1960, Comdr. Norman B. Bessac in command.

Assigned to Submarine Squadron 6, Division 62, Scorpion departed New London, Conn., on 24 August for a two-month deployment in European waters. During that period, she participated in exercises with units of the 6th Fleet and of other NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] navies. After returning to New England in late October, she trained along the eastern seaboard until May 1961, then crossed the Atlantic again for operations which took her into the summer. On 9 August, she returned to New London and, a month later, shifted to Norfolk, Va.

With Norfolk her home port for the remainder of her career, Scorpion specialized in the development of nuclear submarine warfare tactics. Varying her role from hunter to hunted, she participated in exercises which ranged along the Atlantic coast and in the Bermuda and Puerto Rican operating areas; then, from June 1963 to May 1964, she interrupted her operations for an overhaul at Charleston, S.C. Resuming duty off the eastern seaboard in late spring, she again interrupted that duty from 4 August to 8 October to make a transatlantic patrol. In the spring of 1965, she conducted a similar patrol in European waters.

During the late winter and early spring of 1966, and again in the fall, she was deployed for special operations. Following the completion of those assignments, her commanding officer received the Navy Commendation Medal for outstanding leadership, foresight, and professional skill. Other Scorpion officers and men were cited for meritorious achievement.

On 1 February 1967, Scorpion entered the Norfolk Naval Shipyard for another extended overhaul. In late October, she commenced refresher training and weapons system acceptance tests. Following type training out of Norfolk, she got underway on 15 February 1968 for a Mediterranean deployment. She operated with the 6th Fleet, into May, and then headed west for home. On 21 May, she indicated her position to be about 50 miles south of the Azores. Six days later, she was reported overdue at Norfolk.

A search was initiated, but, on 5 June, Scorpion and her crew were declared "presumed lost." Her name was struck from the Navy list on 30 June.

The search continued, however; and, at the end of October, the Navy's oceanographic research ship, Mizar (T-AGOR-11) located sections of Scorpion's hull in more than 10,000 feet of water about 400 miles southwest of the Azores. Subsequently, the Court of Inquiry was reconvened and other vessels, including the submersible Trieste were dispatched to the scene and collected a myriad of pictures and other data.

Although the cause of her loss is still not ascertainable, the most probable event was the inadvertent activation of the battery of a Mark 37 torpedo during a torpedo inspection. The torpedo, in a fully ready condition and without a propeller guard, then began a live "hot run" within the tube. Released from the tube, the torpedo became fully armed and successfully engaged its nearest target, Scorpion. Alternatively, the torpedo may have exploded in the tube owing to an uncontrollable fire in the torpedo room.

The explosion--recorded elsewhere as a very loud acoustic event--broke the boat into two major pieces, with the forward hull section, including the torpedo room and most of the operations compartment, creating one impact trench while the aft section, including the reactor compartment and engine room, created a second impact trench. The sail is detached and lies nearby in a large debris field.

Owing to the pressurized-water nuclear reactor in the engine room, deep ocean radiological monitoring operations were conducted in August and September 1986. The site had been previously monitored in 1968 and 1979 and none of the samples obtained showed any evidence of release of radioactivity.

Experts Out to Solve Deep-sea Mystery of the USS Scorpion

Written by Dan Verano from USA Today

The sub has been inspected by undersea recovery teams, including a visit in 1985 by oceanographer Robert Ballard before his team's discovery of the Titanic shipwreck.

The cause of the sub's loss remains hotly disputed. A Navy Court of Inquiry found "the cause of the loss cannot be definitively ascertained."

Evidence for a more mundane explanation comes from the sub's propeller shaft, Boyne says. Undersea photographs show it rests about 20 yards outside the wreck on the seafloor, about 11,220 feet underwater. Boyne suggests that rubber bearings holding the propeller shaft failed, putting stress on the coupling connecting it to the engine. The coupling's bolts failed catastrophically during a deep test dive, the theory goes, spilling water into the sub too rapidly to allow ballast maneuvers to raise the ship to the surface.

"What happened to the Scorpion isn't so much a mystery, as a secret," says Ed Offley, author of *Scorpion Down: Sunk by the Soviets, Buried by the Pentagon*, which argues for the covert Soviet sub attack explanation.

Investigators who start from technical documents related to the ship's loss, typically differ with his interpretation, he says, which was based on interviews with Navy personnel.

"It couldn't hurt to have a documented expedition to Scorpion," says Offley, who is not a member of the proposed expedition team.

The USS Scorpion Buried at Sea

Written by Ed Offley from the MHQ magazine

August 26, 2009

The crisis exploded without warning across the sprawling U.S. Navy community in Norfolk, Virginia: A nuclear submarine and its crew had vanished in the Atlantic. On May 27, 1968, USS Scorpion (SSN 598) failed to return as scheduled to its home port at the destroyer-submarine pier complex at the southern end of the waterfront.

Within hours the sub's failure to arrive escalated into a major military crisis that spread to the Pentagon E-Ring and White House. From Atlantic Fleet headquarters to dozens of homes and apartments across Hampton Roads, a day of anticipation and celebration had suddenly turned into an open-ended vigil of fear and uncertainty.

Scorpion and its 99-man crew had left Norfolk on February 15 for a three-month Mediterranean deployment. The crew participated in several naval exercises with the U.S. Sixth Fleet and NATO, conducted ongoing reconnaissance of Soviet naval units in the Med, and paused to enjoy liberty at ports in Italy and Sicily before reentering the Atlantic for the homeward voyage on May 17. Scorpion's skipper, Commander Francis A. Slattery, had radioed Atlantic Submarine Force headquarters early on May 22 that the sub would arrive in Norfolk at 1 p.m. the following Monday, Memorial Day. Officials had released the arrival date 72 hours earlier and, despite a spring nor'easter that had swept the navy base with high winds and heavy rain, family members and Submarine Squadron 6 officials anticipated seeing the low silhouette of the Skipjack-class submarine coming into view on time.

The 1 p.m. arrival time came and went with no sign of Scorpion. Unknown to the families of the crew, the submarine's failure to break radio silence by late morning had already sparked concern that by early afternoon was swelling into near panic throughout the Atlantic Submarine Force headquarters staff. At 3:15 p.m. the navy made it official, transmitting a flash message over the Fleet Broadcast System to naval bases from Brunswick, Maine, to Jacksonville, Florida, and out to Bermuda, the Azores, and the Mediterranean. Its terse technical phrases meant only one thing: Scorpion was missing:

Executed Event SUBMISS at 271915Z for USS Scorpion ETA NORVA 271700Z....All submarine units surface or remain surfaced until this message cancelled. Units in port prepare to get underway on one hour's notice....

The curtain opened on what a navy admiral involved in the Scorpion incident would later describe as "one of the greatest unsolved sea mysteries of our era." The 251-foot-long submarine and its crew had inexplicably disappeared somewhere in the trackless Atlantic Ocean. For four decades, the navy and U.S. intelligence communities have

revealed little about the facts of the Scorpion sinking, citing the need to protect military secrets. The full account of its loss has continued to elude and frustrate researchers, journalists, and family members of the 99 sailors who died aboard the sub. But a careful reexamination of the public record—as well as interviews with former U.S. and Soviet military officials, men involved in the search for the sub, and sailors stationed on Polaris missile submarines on patrol in 1968—suggests the sinking may not have been an accident. Instead, it may have been the outcome of a deadly Cold War confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union that both sides chose to bury at the bottom of the sea.

As documented in press accounts, U.S. Navy situation reports, and the official court of inquiry convened to probe the incident, by nightfall on that Memorial Day, Atlantic Fleet commander Admiral Ephraim P. Holmes had ordered what would become the largest U.S. naval operation since the Cuban Missile Crisis six years earlier. Officials announced that Vice Admiral Arnold F. Schade, the Atlantic Submarine Force commander, was out at sea in the Atlantic in the Connecticut-based nuclear attack submarine USS Pargo (SSN 650), and had directed it to head south at full speed for the Virginia Capes to organize a search of the shallow waters off the East Coast.

Meanwhile, the first members of what would become a task force of nearly sixty ships and submarines and dozens of land-based patrol aircraft raced into the Atlantic that Monday night to search for the missing sub. For nine days the searchers scoured the ocean from the continental shelf to the Azores, looking for any sign of Scorpion. They failed to find a single clue. Nine days later, on June 5, Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, chief of naval operations, declared that both submarine and crew were "presumed lost."

Throughout June and July 1968, two Scorpion investigations proceeded on parallel paths. A small group of scientific research and support ships headed by the oceanographic research vessel USNS Mizar (T-AGOR 11) scoured an "area of special interest" southwest of the Azores that scientists had identified by examining underwater signals that they believed came from the submarine's sinking at 1844Z (GMT) on Wednesday, May 22.

In Norfolk a seven-member court of inquiry convened on June 5 to probe Scorpion's disappearance. In his message appointing retired Vice Admiral Bernard L. Austin president of the Scorpion investigation, Admiral Holmes set out the inquest's mission: "The Court is directed to inquire into all the facts and circumstances connected with the disappearance of the Scorpion; death of, or injuries to personnel aboard...and to fix responsibility for the incident. After deliberation, the Court shall submit its findings of fact, opinions and recommendations."

The seven-member panel had legal powers equivalent to those of a civilian grand jury, and the authority to review classified information up to the level of top secret. Its mandate did not include determining criminal guilt or innocence. The court's chief function was to determine the facts. During eleven weeks of hearings—most of them closed to the press and public due to the classified information under examination—the court took sworn testimony from ninety witnesses and reviewed 232 separate exhibits.

By mid-August, the court had scoured the submarine's operational and administrative history, reviewed detailed records of its two shipyard overhaul periods since joining the fleet in 1960, examined what records were available on the Mediterranean deployment, and received updates on Mizar's ongoing "technical" search in the eastern Atlantic. After huddling for two weeks, the panel completed an initial report of over eighteen hundred pages—classified top secret at the time—that Admiral Austin submitted to the navy's uniformed leadership for review.

Two months later came stunning news: On October 30, 1968, the navy announced that Mizar had found the wreckage of Scorpion. A towed sled gliding fifteen feet above the ocean floor at the end of a three-mile cable had photographed the sub's broken hull. Several thousand images of the site were rushed back to the United States, where the hastily reconvened court of inquiry met with navy photo analysts to see if the new evidence might lead them to a firm conclusion as to what had caused Scorpion's destruction.

On January 31, 1969, the navy tersely announced an unclassified summary of the court's findings. In effect, Admiral Austin and his fellow panelists had thrown up their hands. Their conclusion: "The certain cause of the loss of Scorpion cannot be ascertained by any evidence now available." For the Scorpion families and many navy personnel, the court's findings were a major disappointment. The court did rule out foul play, an underwater collision with an undersea mountain, and a reactor malfunction, and expressed confidence in the crew's training, the submarine's overall material condition, and the safety of its torpedoes. By implication, the court let stand an unstated premise that some unconfirmed mechanical malfunction had sent the submarine plunging to the Atlantic abyssal plain two miles down.

For fifteen years afterward, that was the extent of what the navy, submarine service, Scorpion families, and the public knew about what had happened to the sub and its crew. Citing the operational requirements of the nuclear submarine force and the sensitivity of all information on the Skipjack-class submarine's capabilities, the navy kept the Scorpion archive locked away in a top-secret vault.

However, when I talked with Admiral Schade, the retired Atlantic Submarine Force commander, fifteen years after Scorpion's mysterious demise, he lifted a corner of the

navy's opaque security cloak that had long concealed most details of the incident. In an interview for a fifteenth-anniversary retrospective article on the tragedy, Schade offered up details of events in May 1968 that contradicted the official account of the sub's disappearance.

Despite the many unknowns that still kept the Scorpion narrative incomplete, on one key point U.S. Navy officials, reporters, ordinary sailors, and family members had all agreed: The crisis had flared up suddenly—on that May 27, after Scorpion's 1 p.m. arrival time passed with no sign of the submarine. Slattery had announced the arrival date and time in an encrypted message to Atlantic Submarine Force headquarters composed late on May 21.

Officials briefing reporters in the hectic first days of the Scorpion search had related the sub's last known position as 29:19 north 27:37 west, about 400 miles southwest of the Azores. The message, officials said, also included Slattery's homeward course track. Admiral Schade and other staff officers who appeared before the court of inquiry said the same thing: The crisis had begun on May 27.

Captain Wallace A. Greene, who as Submarine Division 62 commander in 1968 was responsible for Scorpion and three other nuclear attack boats, remained adamant on that point many years later: "There was no reason for us to have been the slightest concerned for her safety." Schade himself had flown to Connecticut earlier that Monday morning for the ride on Pargo.

A second premise on which all officials agreed was that Scorpion had been operating under radio silence following the transmission of the May 21 message, a common practice for submarines at sea. This explained why there was no concern in Schade's headquarters in Norfolk over the lack of messages from the submarine during the five-day period between the actual sinking on May 22 and its scheduled arrival on Memorial Day. In his own testimony to the court of inquiry on June 5, Schade mini-mized the significance of his command's lack of awareness that anything had happened to Scorpion: "Polaris subs go on 60-day patrol and never broadcast," he explained to the court.

But when he talked with me in April 1983, Schade revealed that Scorpion's radio silence had in fact been a cause for concern. He disclosed that the Atlantic Fleet had actually launched a highly classified search for Scorpion sometime shortly after May 22. When pressed, he said the submarine's failure to respond to a message from his headquarters prompted the alert. "We got that position report," Schade said of the May 21 Scorpion message. "That was the basis for our initial search operation. But that was really all we had and we didn't consider that too significant, other than just as the last known position that we actually had. They were due to report in to us shortly thereafter. It was at that

time we got a little suspicious, because they did not report, they did not check in, and then, when we got to the time limit of their 'check-in,' they were first reported as overdue."

Pressed on this point, Schade elaborated: "As far as we were concerned, all was clear and she should have kept coming and then within about 24 hours after that she should have given us a rather long, windy resume of her operations and what she would need upon her return to port...you know, transition from one command to another, homeward-bound voyage. We have absolute confidence in our communications, both in the reception and the response and when they did not respond, almost immediately that's when we first became suspicious, that's when we followed up with other messages, and really, it was just a matter of hours that we became somewhat concerned."

Realizing that no one's memory is perfect, it was not unreasonable to surmise that fifteen years after the event, Schade's recollections might have been incomplete or inaccurate. But then the old submariner made another surprising revelation: "I happened to be out at sea in the Ray [SSN 653], which was the..."

Q: (Referring to press reports that Schade had been aboard the Groton-based Pargo on the morning of May 27): "Was this off Connecticut?"

A: "No, I was out at sea off Norfolk in the Ray, which was the flagship of the [Atlantic] Submarine Force, and when we first got the report and it looked like we needed to do something in the way of a search operation, I got Admiral Holmes on the radio and said, 'Would you place the facilities of CINCLANTFLT [commander in chief, Atlantic Fleet] at my disposal for the next day or two until we can organize a search operation?'"

Q: "Was this before May 27?"

A: "I can't remember the dates. As soon as we were concerned that she had not checked in."

Q: "SUBMISS was declared several hours after the Scorpion's arrival time on 27 May. Was this before..."

A: "No—well before her scheduled arrival because we worked back from Norfolk all the way to her last reported position, which was in the neighborhood of the Azores."

Q: "Prior to the day she was supposed to get back you had already asked CINCLANTFLT if he could put some resources at your disposal?"

A: "Well in advance of that. And in fact, he had placed them all at our disposal and this was quite an amazing set of operational circumstances because we controlled the entire

resources of the Atlantic Fleet from a submarine at sea. Working through CINCLANTFLT headquarters and their communications, but we organized a search from both ends—both by air and surface ships and other submarines."

Q: "The [newspaper] clips don't tell all of the story. You're saying that you were looking for Scorpion before the 27th of May?"

A: "All I know is that long before she was actually due in Norfolk we had organized a search effort. We had two squadrons of destroyers, a lot of long-range antisubmarine search planes operating out of the Azores, Norfolk, and other areas, and we had several ships that were in the Atlantic that were in transit between the Med and the U.S. Some [were] diverted [and] some of them were just told to come over to the track which we presupposed the Scorpion would be on. They searched up and down that. This went on for quite some time, until it was quite obvious that she was long overdue arriving in Norfolk."

Q: "But you kept this on a classified basis?"

A: "Well, it was classified more because we didn't know where she was or what had happened and we were just trying to find out. It was no sense making a big brouhaha over something we really couldn't explain."

The admiral's revelations suggested that there was a lot more to the story of what had happened to Scorpion than the navy had publicly revealed. Moreover, it became apparent that winnowing out the actual Scorpion story from the official account would take more than a recitation of known facts and newly released details.

To begin with, a veil of secrecy surrounded Scorpion's final operational assignment before it sank on May 22. Shortly after reentering the Atlantic, Schade diverted Scorpion nearly twelve hundred miles south of its homeward track to conduct surveillance on a group of Soviet warships—including at least one nuclear submarine—operating near the Canary Islands off the northwest coast of Africa. The court of inquiry noted the presence of the Soviet ships but was silent on whether or not Scorpion had conducted any surveillance against them, noting only that the evidence it had reviewed showed no indication of hostile Soviet acts. Schade in 1983 told me he had indeed dispatched Commander Slattery to spy on the Soviets, but backpedaled on whether or not the mission had actually occurred. Navy officials and declassified documents paint contradictory conclusions, with some asserting that the mission took place and others denying it.

Nevertheless, the pre-May 27 search revealed by Schade remained a key for penetrating the navy's security cloak on the Scorpion incident. Two other senior admirals serving in 1968—Thomas A. Moorer and Philip A. Beshany—confirmed during

on-the-record interviews that the secret search had indeed taken place. Moreover, sailors on several Atlantic Fleet ships that participated in that classified hunt later provided compelling details of a sudden scramble to sea four days before May 27, so abrupt that in at least two instances it resulted in large numbers of the ships' crews being left behind.

The significance of the secret Scorpion search was pivotal to uncovering the details of what had really happened to the sub. Schade and Admiral Moorer, the chief of naval operations at the time, had both explained that the secret search effort was a precautionary step ordered after their concern had grown over the submarine's failure to respond to messages. They explained the navy's failure to subsequently reveal the existence of that search—even when Scorpion's disappearance could no longer be concealed after May 27—as an effort not to further upset the grief-stricken families.

That rationalization, however, failed to explain why Schade and others did not reveal the secret search to the court of inquiry charged with determining what had happened to Scorpion. To this day, the official navy line is that such a search never took place.

Troubling mysteries also surround the five-month span between the time the navy declared the submarine presumed lost on June 5 and the announced discovery of the wreckage two miles down in the eastern Atlantic on October 30. Responding to acoustic evidence, the "focused operations" search involving Mizar initially plotted an area about twelve miles by twelve miles wide in what was believed to be Scorpion's final resting spot, several hundred miles southwest of the Azores.

As the weeks turned into months, the ship doggedly dragged a sled mounted with strobe lights, cameras, magnetometers, and sonar transducers across the seabed in the search area. It was, one official later recalled, "like looking through a soda straw to find a lost contact lens in the front yard, at midnight in the rain." With little sign of progress, the tragedy eventually faded from the newspaper pages and public interest waned. Then, on October 30, came the stunning news: The navy announced that the searchers had located the lost sub's hull. Thousands of images of the torn hull photographed by Mizar's towed sled provided the navy with new evidence in its search for a cause of the sinking.

In retrospect, it appears that this dramatic five-month technical search for Scorpion was an elaborate charade. During a span of fourteen years (1993-2007), several dozen participants in the classified pre-May 27 search, the highly publicized open-ocean search-and-rescue mission, and the Mizar search have admitted that the navy actually knew where the Scorpion wreckage lay on the Atlantic seabed from the outset.

Numerous participants in the Scorpion search mission confirm that the navy actually located and photographed the submarine's wreckage nearly five months before Mizar's

"official" discovery on October 28. "We found that submarine...in the early part of June," said Bill Sebold, a crewman aboard Compass Island, a ship with advanced sonar capabilities that used multibeamed sounding instruments to create detailed contour maps of the deep-ocean floor. His account is echoed by several other crewmen on the ship, including Bill D'Emilio, who said unequivocally, "I was on board the Compass Island when we found the Scorpion."

Why did the navy not merely announce the discovery of the submarine when it actually occurred in early June 1968? One possibility is that the five-month Mizar search was carried out to make it appear that the submarine's loss was an accident and the searchers had no specific idea where it had gone down. That five-month timeline conformed to the known limitations in naval deep-ocean search technology at the time. With the same technology, it had taken the navy fourteen months to find the debris of the nuclear submarine USS Thresher (SSN 593) after it sank in April 1963—even though a submarine rescue ship was in voice contact with Thresher immediately before it sank and had a precise navigational fix on the location of that 1963 mishap.

With the Scorpion wreckage now officially found, the court of inquiry wrapped up its investigation, issuing a final report on January 31, 1969, concluding that even with the photographic evidence, the "certain cause" for the loss remained unknown. The court privately elaborated on that conclusion—in a secret section of its findings that would not be declassified and released for twenty-five years—that the most likely cause of the sinking was a runaway Mark 37 torpedo that was accidentally launched by Scorpion itself and turned on the submarine, homing in and striking it.

Skeptics offer an alternative explanation. They speculate that the sub had in fact been attacked and destroyed by a Soviet submarine in revenge, because Soviet officials believed that the U.S. Navy had been complicit in the sinking of the Golf II-class missile submarine K-129 in the Pacific on March 7, 1968. That was the sub that the CIA-financed ship Glomar Explorer attempted to lift off the Pacific seabed in the mid-1970s.

Support for this theory comes from the accounts of sailors at shore stations, on surface ships, and even aboard submerged missile submarines on patrol who have broken the official silence about the incident in recent years. They have disclosed that Scorpion had radioed Norfolk that it was being followed by a Soviet submarine and could not evade it—right before communications suddenly ended.

In face-to-face interviews, telephone calls, e-mails, and correspondence since 1998, dozens of former naval officers and enlisted men have provided new information about Scorpion's final days. Taken together, their testimonials depict a steadily growing crisis over Scorpion that began when the Norfolk-based sub reentered the Atlantic on May 17,

1968, and culminated in a confrontation five days later that left it at the bottom of the ocean.

Rear Admiral Philip A. Beshany, who was serving as director of submarine warfare on Moorer's staff when Scorpion suddenly disappeared, provided a critical piece of the puzzle that neither Admirals Schade nor Moorer had ever revealed: In all likelihood, the Scorpion surveillance mission against the Soviet warships off the Canary Islands had been blown.

"There was a lot of classified material relating to the Soviet group [circulating in the Pentagon at the time]," Beshany explained. "In fact, there was some concern that the Scorpion might have been trailed and sunk by them, that they had tracked our submarine and decided [it] had seen things they didn't want divulged....They had been alerted to the presence of Scorpion. They [U.S. intelligence and navy officials] had reason to believe at that time...that they might have detected her, trailed her and decided they would just eliminate her." Beshany said the information was at a level of classification so high that he and his colleagues would sometimes jest that it was a "burn before you read category."

Moreover, dozens of individuals who had been drawn into the Scorpion search at sea the week of May 20, 1968, provided explicit and repeated confirmation of Beshany's disclosure. When, at Schade's request, Admiral Holmes ordered surface ships and submarines to hunt for Scorpion during the week of May 20, his alert message included specific reference to the fact that the Soviets were trailing Scorpion. The message also said that the American sub had sent a message to Norfolk saying it was unable to elude its shadower. On surface ships, in subs, and in squadron ready rooms, sailors of all ranks and duties were aware of the ongoing encounter between Scorpion and the Soviet sub. Indeed, word that Scorpion had reported its inability to shake the Soviet submarine was so hot that it rocketed over the Navy Fleet Broadcast System to Polaris submarines on patrol. Two Polaris sub crewmen provided me with examples of the details of the ongoing Scorpion confrontation that they had learned as the crisis grew.

Ron Rule was a storekeeper on USS Nathanael Greene (SSBN 636), patrolling the North Atlantic during the week of May 20, when his commanding officer made an announcement over the ship's 1MC loudspeaker. "What I remember about the incident is the announcement over the 1MC that the Scorpion was missing. Obviously, this was a very sobering announcement, and it had an immediate effect on all of us," Rule recalled. "A very somber mood immediately came over all of us."

He remembered that the information the commanding officer relayed to Nathanael Greene's crew was explicit and detailed: "The announcement continued that what was known about Scorpion was that she was in transit back to the United States after her

mission, and that she thought she was being tailed and asked for instructions as to what to do, e.g., go check it out or simply continue in transit. We were told that that was the last that was heard from her. I remember thinking and talking about the possible scenarios, 'Russian submarine' being foremost on most, if not all, of our minds."

Another Nathanael Greene crewman confirmed Rule's account. Frank Greene said he learned of Scorpion even before the formal announcement. "I was a quartermaster, and all information generally flowed through us pertaining to navigation. Word spreads quickly among a crew of 130," he said. Nathanael Greene was returning to its home port in Charleston, South Carolina, from a seventy-day patrol when the message about Scorpion came in, Greene recalled. "We were nearing Bermuda," he said, "when we received orders from Subflot 6 to plot new courses in order to assist in the search for USS Scorpion." Greene concluded that the sub had been sunk by a Soviet torpedo. "The U.S. Navy has listening devices all over the floor of the ocean and taped everything."

Despite official denials, several informed sources allege the top-secret Sound Surveillance System (SOSUS) had indeed recorded an underwater duel between Scorpion and a Soviet submarine that ended when the Soviet launched a torpedo that struck and sank the American submarine. One former SOSUS operator, Vince Collier, came forward decades later to tell in chilling detail how he and other sailors in SOSUS School were shown a bootleg copy of the tape that graphically depicted the death of Scorpion.

The instructor who played the tape, Ocean Systems Technician Analyst First Class Richard Falck, confirmed the details in an on-the-record interview. Former SOSUS officials revealed that within hours of the sinking, the navy raided SOSUS facilities worldwide to seize all evidence—hydro-acoustic tapes, "lofargram" printouts, and documents—that pointed to the Soviet attack on Scorpion.

If the Soviets did in fact sink the Scorpion, navy officials at the time surely would have been mystified at how the Soviets could have overcome the clear technological superiority of an American nuclear submarine. They would not learn for nearly two decades a critical "unknown unknown"—in former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's now-famous phrase—that the only operational U.S. nuclear submarine to be lost at sea may have been caught up in a massive Soviet intelligence operation. By early 1968 that operation had led to the seizure of the electronic reconnaissance ship USS Pueblo and produced the infamous Walker Spy Ring, which ripped open the navy's top-secret coded communications channels to Soviet intelligence, until the conspirators were identified and arrested in 1985.

Captain Peter Huchthausen, a former U.S. naval attaché to the Soviet Union during the early 1980s, revealed during a series of interviews with me that he was convinced the U.S. and Soviet navies had quickly reached a highly classified accord soon after the Scorpion sinking.

Conversations with top Russian officials, including Vice Admiral Ivan M. Komarov, led him to conclude that the U.S. and the Soviet Union had agreed to suppress evidence about the demise of Scorpion, as well as the sinking of the Soviet sub K-129 a few weeks earlier, in order to forestall a politico-military crisis that could easily have flared into a general war between the two countries. Huchthausen had a subsequent conversation, after his retirement from active service, with retired Admiral Viktor A. Dyaglo, who in 1968 had commanded the Soviet submarine division to which K-129 had been attached. Huchthausen claimed Dyaglo told him there "was an unofficial agreement by senior submariners on both sides" that would prevent anyone from ever learning the full account of what had caused the two submarine sinkings.

The Scorpion incident did not occur in a vacuum. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, scores of top-secret U.S. reconnaissance aircraft were attacked and some were shot down while attempting to spy on Soviet military capabilities. The U.S. Navy conducted aggressive tactics using submarines to spy on their Soviet counterparts. The Soviets in turn used spies and their military allies to wage limited war against America, as new information about the seizure of Pueblo shows.

A popular historical theory of the Cold War is that fear of nuclear war deterred the United States and the Soviet Union from engaging in a direct military confrontation. What the Scorpion incident suggests is that rather than preventing such confrontations, it merely drove them into the shadows.