A Date with Destiny â€“ Part V

Description

Drifting slowing from the pier at the Naval Station, the crewâ€™s attention is focused on the many tasks at hand. The first priority is to get safely away from the pier and â€œheaded fairâ€• in the channel for the outbound transit of Charleston Harbor.

The trip to the sea buoy takes about 1.5 hours, which is not the longest or shortest Sea and Anchor details for the East Coast, but itâ€™s the one every knows you have to keep your head in the game, for the channel is narrow, the landmarks for navigation are mostly man made and there is little forgiveness in this channel. The Conning Officer will keep his eyes on the series of ranges that populate the shores of the Cooper river and the harbor itself to guide the ship safely.

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Once clear of the sea buoy, the Sea and Anchor detail will be secured and the deck crew will secure the anchor for sea, wiring the bale on the pelican hook shut and attaching a second turnbuckle as well, after winching the anchor all the way into the hawse pipe.

The general rule of thumb for transits to the Jacksonville Operations Areas (JAXOA) was to leave both LM-2500 gas turbine main engines on line and sprint south, providing a rendezvous time of late afternoon with helos from NAS Mayport, or, in this case, also with the USS JOHN F KENNEDY (CV-67).

Most likely the USS CARR (FFG-52) arrived on station and radioed the KENNEDY to report ready for duty. The KENNEDY would send the message back, assuming tactical command, and a message as to stationing as the anti-submarine warfare (ASW) escort would be next to be heard. The ASW â€œModuleâ€• on the KENNEDY probably, under the direction of the Shipâ€™s Tactical Action Officer (TAO) would direct CARR as to the planned mission specifics, passing info as the last known position of the diesel submarine contact, and detailed tasking on how to best keep the threat at bay. Search plans would be developed to maximize the efforts of the KENNEDYâ€™s air wing HS-3 Sea King helicopters, equipped with dipping active sonars, and the CARRâ€™s embarked SH-60B Sea Hawk.

Diesel submarine hunting is a tough business and a large part of the Soviet Navyâ€™s submarine force were powered that way. So were just about every other sub in the world that was not operated by the US, the Soviets, the Brits or the French. Even the Chinese didnâ€™t have a nuclear sub force at the time. Practice in finding this type of threat was essential to allow our forces to be able to operate near the hostile shoes of an enemy, as a large number of diesel â€œboatsâ€• would be used for coastal defense duties, specifically well suited to the confined and shallow areas near land.

The duty of playing the role of the diesel submarine fell to the USS BONEFISH (SS-582), which was about our last diesel boat in the inventory, as the nuclear powered submarine force held sway with all design and building considerations. the BONEFISH and her crew were the surrogate Soviets, like the Armyâ€™s OPFOR at Ft. Irwin. Studied in the manner in which we could expect the Soviet boat skippers to maneuver, the BONEFISH was to provide the expected â€œprofileâ€• for our forces to become acclimated to for time of war.

The last of the day of the 22nd, the night and the day of the 23rd of April would be time for the KENNEDY and CARRâ€™s crews to employ our best technology against a threat as old as the first world war, in order that in a real shooting match, we would return victorious.

Come the next day, the mission had to be re-focused.

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Author
admin

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