



September 18, 2020

For Those Who Serve



Arthur Watson | *Merchant Mariner*

If you were ever forced to read *The Odyssey* in high school, you might be able to relate to the epic voyage of Arthur Watson. Stranded at sea for 17 days after their ship was sunk, surviving off of meager rations, maintaining morale and mental stability, all of this and more would be in the cards for

young Arthur as he embarked on a brief but memorable career in the Merchant Marine. Not only will this story speak to his bravery, but to the tremendous mistake our nation made in not properly recognizing these courageous men who provided such vital support to our war effort.

Starting in Panama he sailed out to Aruba to pick up aviation fuel and bring it to Dakar, Senegal. The ship would never reach its destination. A German submarine fired one torpedo which hit midship and blew a giant hole into its side. There wasn't much time before the vessel would join the *Arizona* and so many others at the bottom of the sea.

Arthur was on deck at the time of the attack. The explosion threw him to the ground and the heat blistered his face. Luckily, he had been wearing a rain jacket at the time and that protected most of his body from burns. He jumped up and saw the entire aft of the ship was in flames. He knew he needed to get out of there. He grabbed a life jacket and scrambled for the boats. Of the 72 men aboard the ship, only 22 would make it off alive. They had rations. A lozenge in the morning, a cracker for lunch, and two teaspoons of citrus in the evening. This was their nourishment.

The Captain kept track of their movements. According to his calculations they were set to arrive at an island and might even be intercepted by some deep-sea fishermen before that. Arthur kept watch and as dusk settled in, he did see the island in the distance. The Captain did not want to approach in the dark for fear that an unseen obstacle might sink the boat. They waited, but the next morning the wind had blown them far off course. They journeyed on.

They ended up off the coast of Trinidad, but the wind sheering off the high mountains of Trinidad caught their boat and blew them away. On the 17th day they came up on the shore of South America. The Captain checked his map and informed the men that they were 75 miles away from any civilized area. It would be wiser to stay in the boat and sail on. They voted and agreed to stay in the boat. On the 18th day a sea plane flew past them. It flew around 3 or 4 times but then left. Another plane did the same later in the day. It seemed that no one would rescue them until they came into the path of another ship. This vessel picked them up and the next morning they were back in Aruba.

Even after this harrowing experience, the work of young Arthur Watson was not done. He would sail out again, bringing supplies to the forces across Europe before eventually leaving the Merchant Marine and starting a career as a carpenter. He remembers how the Merchant Marine played a critical role in the war effort and hopes that Americans remember as well

A Few Thoughts From Our Team: Coast Guard Pay Parity Is Still Critical!

So, Congress might not reach a deal. "A deal on what?", you might ask. Well, everything. It is possible that the Senate will leave Washington in the coming weeks in order to return to the campaign trail without passing a new COVID relief package. It is also possible that Congress could fail to pass a Continuing Resolution to keep the government funded resulting in another government shutdown, though both sides of the aisle seem eager to avoid this right before the election.

While it is likely that Congress will pass the CR in time to prevent a government shutdown, this uncertainty highlights the plight of our brave men and women in the Coast Guard who are still forced to conduct their mission without pay in the event of a government shutdown. Even as they serve as the tip of the spear in the fight against transnational drug traffickers and human smugglers, their vulnerability to the caprices of Congress belie the fact that they do not receive the level of support that they deserve.

It is long past time to change this. The Coast Guard deserves the same level of certainty and security as the other branches of the Armed Services. It is time for the Coast Guard to receive pay parity.

As we transition to our new Voice to Congress advocacy platform, this week's newsletter will not be hosted online yet, but we look forward to moving them to a new platform soon!

Washington happenings

The Navy League was honored to participate in a fascinating panel discussion centered on the maiden voyage of the Mayflower, an autonomous ship which will traverse the oceans gathering environmental data. The panelists included Ray Spicer, Vice President for Defense and Intelligence with IBM, Brett Phaneuf, Founder and Chief Executive for Submergence Group LLC, and our very own Executive Director Mike Stevens!

For a video of the event, please click [here](#)

For more information on the Mayflower, please click [here](#)

Don't forget to share your stories with us!

Your stories are important and they matter to your representatives. Please connect with us here at the Navy League so that we can relay your stories to the representatives that can affect real change in support of our Sea Services.

[Tell your story here!](#)

Navy League Advocacy Updates

Navy League Legislation Affairs Committee Members can view our updated [Legislative Affairs Committee Page](#) with all kinds of resources to support your grassroots advocacy!

Demand Congress Pass a Continuing Resolution Before October!

The Navy League is calling on Congress to avoid another government shutdown beginning on October 1st and pass a continuing resolution to fund the government. We are also asking Congress to help prevent serious delays in the Columbia-class ballistic submarine program, [which would be unable to make progress during a CR without changes](#). We ask every member of Congress to consider the effects the last government shutdown had on our most immediate maritime defense forces, the Coast Guard. Last year during the 35-day government shutdown--the longest in history--

the men and women of the Coast Guard were forced to continue their vital and strenuous mission without pay. Such added stress to these brave servicemembers and their families is an unnecessary hindrance and a terrible burden.



Sea Service Updates

Big news [from the Pentagon](#) as Secretary of Defense Mark Esper reveals the Navy's much awaited 355 ship plan, breaking down areas of focus and identifying how the Navy will reach 355 ships over the next several decades. The plan [covers diverse topics](#) from overhauling shipyards to investing in unmanned technologies, while paying close attention to threats from China.

Highlights (Courtesy of USNI News):

Submarines-

The 30-year plan states that the FY 2020 budget includes a third SSN in FY 2020 compared to the previously planned two-a-year sustained rate, but it notes that, "because it was added to the shipbuilding plan this year, advanced procurement was not programmed for the third FY2020 SSN. This will result in delivering it over a timeframe similar to a ship procured in FY2023. Per Congressional direction, the next SSN multi-year procurement contract will include options for a third submarine in FY2022 and FY2023, the years when not procuring an SSBN."

Unmanned Systems-

The Navy's FY 2020 budget request shows a new and significant focus on developing and fielding unmanned vehicles – particularly unmanned surface vehicles, investment for which has lagged behind unmanned underwater and aerial vehicles. The Navy wants to buy a medium and a large USV as part of its Future Surface Combatant family of ships that will also include a frigate, or small surface combatant, and a large surface combatant.

Aircraft Carriers-

The Navy in December signed a contract to buy two Ford-class aircraft carriers together, but despite the massive amount of money involved in the contract, the Navy will actually spend less per year than previously planned, according to the long-range ship plan. Under the current plan, the Navy will spend \$2.35 billion in 2020, \$2.65 billion in 2021, \$2.32 billion in 2022, \$1.93 billion in 2023 and \$1.72 billion in 2024 to pay for activities related to the two carriers' construction at Newport News Shipbuilding.

Surface Ships-

The Navy would buy Flight III Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers through FY 2025 – three years and eight hulls beyond the end of the current multiyear buy – and then switch over to buying the first two Large Surface Combatants in 2025. Though the LSC is now planned for a 2025 start, compared to a previously stated date of 2023, the plan adds that "industry engagement over the next year will determine the feasibility of accelerating the effort in accordance with the imperatives of the CNO's Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority 2.0."

Mine Countermeasure Ships-

"The Navy is focused on both future MCM capability and near-term improvement of operational availability (Ao) of the aging Avenger-class MCMs, with priority on the forward deployed naval force (FDNF). Accordingly, the homeland threat environment supports retiring the three remaining

continental United States based MCM ships in FY2020 and harvesting parts that are no longer manufactured in order to improve FDNF Ao,” according to the report. Three MCMs are stationed in San Diego, with the remainder of the fleet in Bahrain and Japan.

Auxiliary Ships-

"The Navy has funded CHAMPs development and has approved top-level requirements (TLRs) as the basis for industry studies. The request for proposal for these studies was released 2nd quarter of FY2019 and both Capability Development Documents (CDD) and Concepts of Operations (CONOP) reviews are in progress. Although early in the process, upfront collaboration with industry on CHAMP options has indicated two hull designs may be needed to meet both RO/RO and non-RO/RO requirements, in lieu of significant compromise and increased cost across the five mission areas.



PACIFIC OCEAN (Sept. 17, 2020) Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper delivers remarks to Sailors in the hangar bay of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70). Esper toured the ship's composite warfare commander spaces, receiving in-depth briefings on carrier strike group interoperability and naval power defense. Vinson is currently underway conducting flight deck certification and carrier air traffic control center certification. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Aaron T. Smith)

Sea Service News

The State of the Sea Services

[Navy to Protect Columbia Program at All Costs – National Defense / Sept 17](#)

The Navy may face budgetary constraints and other shipbuilding challenges in 2021 and beyond. But the service will do whatever it takes to keep its Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine program on track, officials say.

[Navy Mulling Extending Service Lives of Nimitz-class Carriers – USNI News / Sept 17](#)

The Navy is considering an extension of the service lives of the first few aircraft carriers in the Nimitz-class, the head of the service's carrier program said on Thursday.

[The US Navy is short almost 100 fighter pilots – Defense News / Sept 17](#)

A rash of technical and safety problems has left the U.S. Navy's fleet short by about 90 fighter pilots. Fixing the issue is an uphill battle, a top aviator said last week.

Great Power Competition

[U.S. Admiral Talks 3rd Chinese Aircraft Carrier: 'Go Ahead and Build that Big Ship' - USNI News / Sept 17](#)

China's pursuit of more aircraft carriers validates the U.S. Navy's commitment to building more American aircraft carriers in the future, the U.S. admiral in charge of providing forces to the fleet said on Thursday.

[China starts military drill as US diplomat arrives in Taiwan – South China Morning Post / Sept 18](#)

China started a military exercise near the Taiwan Strait on Friday, in a new warning to the United States and pro-independence forces in Taiwan to coincide with a visit to the self-ruled island of a senior US diplomat.

[Ukraine-U.S. military exercises begin as Russia holds drills in Belarus – Reuters / Sept 17](#)

Ukraine and the United States launched joint military exercises on Thursday, two days after Russia began joint military drills with forces in neighboring Belarus.

[NATO stands up Joint Force Command Norfolk to boost readiness in the Atlantic – Navy Times / Sept 17](#)

After reaching initial operational capability, Joint Force Command Norfolk was stood up on Thursday — becoming the only operational NATO command on the North American continent.

[US Navy build-up plans 'may cement China's resolve to modernise' - South China Morning Post / Sept 18](#)

China will be even more resolute in its military modernisation plan after the United States called for a bigger and more lethal naval fleet, increasing an already high risk of confrontation between the two states, military experts said.

[How The US Is Preparing To Hunt New Chinese, Russian Subs - Breaking Defense / Sept 17](#)

The Navy's newest fleet and submarine commands teamed up this week for an intensive anti-submarine drill off the East Coast, waters Navy commanders say are now open game for Russian submarines.

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