

**MINUTES OF THE USSVI NORTHERN VIRGINIA BASE  
MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY, 9 APRIL, 2016**

The Base CDR, Chuck Martin, called the meeting to order at 1110 on 9 April, 2016 at American Legion Post 162, Lorton, VA and welcomed all members and guests. Sam Harris was recognized as a new member.

**MEMBERS AND GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE**

Cathy Chatham, Howard Chatham, Delbert Ennis, Linda Ennis, Ed Ettner, Mary Ettner, Bob Glover, Arthur Glover, Brian Haller, Samuel Harris, Steve Jaeger, Marybeth Laforge, Chuck Martin, Paul Nelson, Michael Niblack, Willie Petruy, Mark Riethmeier, George Wallace, Penny Wallace, Woody Woodworth. (20 attendees)

■ Holland Club Member

■ Associate Member

■ Guest

The Secretary and the COB are at the USS Virginia Base meeting in Midlothian, VA presenting the Kap(ss) 4 Kid(SS) program and the Eagle Scout Recognition program.

The VCDR, George Wallace, led all hands in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Chaplain, Steve Jaeger, delivered the Invocation.

The list of boats lost in the month of April and a historical moment were not read due to the nature of today's Tolling of the Boats ceremony honoring all lost boats.

**MEETING MINUTES**

The minutes of the March meeting were distributed by e-mail. No discussion.

**TREASURER'S REPORT**

The Base Treasurer reported:

Starting balance: \$ 5,215.59

Ending balance: \$ 6,492.28

**MEMBERSHIP REPORT:**

With the addition of new member Samuel Harris today, the current membership stands at 81. This includes:

- 36 Holland Club Members, including two World War II members,
- 36 regular members, and
- 9 Associate members.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**The Base CDR** noted that the main topics of discussion at the most recent Executive Board Meeting were the preparations for today's Tolling of the Boats ceremony, committee reports, discussion of meeting-related items, old business, new business, and meeting/event planning.

**VCDR:** George Wallace reported that all preparations for the Holland Club Recognition Luncheon have been completed. The honorees this year will be CAPT Charles Michael “Mickey” Garverick and TMC(SS) Antonio “Tony” Poblete. An anonymous donor has contributed handsomely, such that there are 20 free Holland Club tickets available to the first NOVA Base Holland Club members and their spouses who RSVP for the luncheon. Otherwise tickets are \$35 per person, (tax & tip included, cash bar) payable at the door, with the four menu choices: Grilled Lemon Chicken, Broiled Salmon w/honey dijon glaze, Petit Filet Mignon, and Prime Rib. All are served with side salad, two vegetables, coffee or tea. A vegetarian pasta plate is available upon request.

The location and time are PJ Skidoos Restaurant at 9908 Fairfax Boulevard, Fairfax (route 50) **from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM on Saturday, 14 May. RSVP with your menu choices** to George and Penny Wallace at (703) 354-4647, or [vcdcr@ussvinova.org](mailto:vcdcr@ussvinova.org) by May 2.

**COB:** Nothing to report – he and the Secretary are attending the USS Virginia Base’s monthly meeting in Midlothian, VA for the K4K and Scouting Recognition programs.

**Public Relations by the CDR for the COB:** Mike Varone has reached out to the Prince William County Supervisor to initiate a project for naming a bridge or road after the United States submarine force. The CDR recommends we all talk to our elected representatives to gain support for such an effort in our areas.

**Kap(ss) 4 Kid(ss) by the CDR for Steve Bishop:** In the last month our coffers have swelled to a total of \$1625.00 in Community Grant monies from the Walmart Corporation for the execution of our K4K program. We have purchased 100 K4K Challenge Coins and a Polaroid- type Fuji digital camera for use bedside with each child. On March 17<sup>th</sup> we visited eight children at InovaFairfax Hospital with Famous Dave’s BBQ Wilbur the Pig (aka John Belt one of our newest members). On April 7<sup>th</sup> we presented Chantilly’s Walmart store manager Al Oglesby a certificate designating his store as a USSVI NOVA Base K4K sponsor and thanked his staff for their support. See the following pictures of the Inova visit and Walmart presentations. The three tall ones in the last picture are Chuck Martin, Mike Naughton, and Al Oglesby.





**SCOUTING RECOGNITION:** The Base CDR reported that the Eagle Scout Court of Honor (COH) for Will Meadows will be held April 10<sup>th</sup> in Midlothian, VA; the COH for Jacob Snellings will be on May 14<sup>th</sup> in Waldorf, MD, and the COH for Phillip Clabough will be at a date and place TBD.

**NSL:** Tim Oliver and Brad Kratovil were absent, so the Base CDR reported that the next Capitol Luncheon will be on April 21<sup>st</sup> with RDML Charles Richards as guest speaker; the DC Area Submarine Birthday Ball was held on April 8<sup>th</sup>, the Submarine Technology Symposium will be May 3-5; the Sea Air and Space Event will be May 16-18 and the NSL is seeking volunteers to man their booth; and the Annual Fall Symposium will be October 26-27.

**North East Regional Director (NERD) :** Mike Naughton and Ron Olson were absent, so the Base CDR reported that the NERD is attending the midyear USSVI Board of Directors meeting in Orlando, FL this weekend (scoping out possibilities for the next convention after Reno, NV); the Capitol Base will conduct their annual Tolling of the Boats ceremony on May 21 at the F-4 gravesite in Arlington National Cemetery; the Capitol Base is requesting that a bell ringer volunteer from NOVA base support them in this ceremony.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

The USSVI National Election Nominees for 2016 are:

|                                |                   |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| National Commander:            | John Markiewicz   |
| National Senior Vice Commander | Wayne Standerfer  |
| National Junior Vice Commander | Bill Andrea       |
| National Treasurer             | Paul Hiser        |
| National Secretary             | Ray Wewers        |
| Southeast Regional Director    | Steve Bell        |
| Northeast Regional Director    | Michael Naughton  |
| Northeast Regional Director    | Leslie Altschuler |
| Central Regional Director      | David Farran      |
| Western Regional Director      | Bob Bissonette    |

Western Regional Director

Jim Denzien

The USS Sam Houston will be holding its SSBN/SSN 609 reunion 15-17 September in Reston, VA.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Famous Dave's of Arlington has invited us (and other bases) to join them in the Washington DC Memorial Day parade again this year. Post Meeting Note: due to unforeseen circumstances, Famous Dave's will not be able to participate in the parade this year – maybe next year.

### **Fleet News Headlines:** (detailed news articles as an attachment)

- US tests Trident Missiles
- USN begins testing of SPQ-9B radar with periscope detection upgrade
- Missile Support Facility groundbreaking is scheduled at NSWC Dahlgren Division
- USS Nevada's blue crew conducts a Change of Command
- Keel laying held in Rhode Island for new Navy submarine
- Submarine Veterans (Australia) calls for a recognition of the link between fuel and blood cancers
- USS City of Corpus Christi to be decommissioned at Pearl Harbor

### **The Binnacle List** currently includes:

Howard Chatham. Richard Lowry, Steve and Darlene Jaeger for Darlene's mom, and Delbert Ennis.

**In Memoriam:** RADM Paul Tomb, USN, Ret.; CDR Richard Westfahl, USN, Ret.; CAPT Thomas Parry, Jr., USN, Ret.

**For the Good of the Order**, the CDR read the list of birthdays for April: Ed Ettner (95<sup>th</sup>), Robert Frick, Dick Laulor, Paul Nelson, Tim Oliver, Pat Petersen, Willie Petruy, and the U.S. Submarine Service.

**The 50/50 raffle** was won by Woody Woodworth and donated \$27 to the Base.

The solemn Tolling of the Boats ceremony was conducted using the Base presentation with candles being extinguished at tables by the attendees after each boat's name was read. The CDR rang the ship's bell for each boat, the VCDR read the script, and the Treasurer operated the computer / projector.



Bob Glover, Paul Nelson, and Samuel Harris shown during the Tolling of the Boats ceremony.  
(photo by Mark Riethmeier)

After the ceremony, a toast to the U.S Submarine Service was conducted.

The next meeting will be at 1100 on 14 May for the 2016 Holland Club induction and luncheon at PJ Skidoos Restaurant in Fairfax, VA.

The Benediction was delivered by the Chaplain.

The CDR adjourned the meeting at 1215.

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Meeting Minutes Respectfully Submitted by  
Stephen C Bishop  
Secretary, USSVI Northern Virginia Base



<http://www.subforce.navy.mil/>



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## U.S. Undersea Warfare News

### Nevada's Blue Crew Conducts a Change of Command Ceremony

MC2 Amanda R. Gray, Commander, Submarine Group Nine Public Affairs, Mar 14

**KEYPORT, WASH. (NNS)** -- The Blue Crew of the Ohio-class ballistic-missile submarine USS Nevada (SSBN 733) conducted a change of command ceremony at the Naval Undersea Museum, March 11.

Cmdr. Ryan Heilman, from Aurora, Colorado, relieved Cmdr. James McIver, from Boston, and assumed the duties and responsibilities of commanding officer for the Nevada Blue Crew.

"I am particularly proud to salute the spectacular leadership of the USS Nevada Blue, and the impact Cmdr. McIver's crew and him have had on national security," said Adm. Cecil Haney, commander, U.S. Strategic Command, the guest speaker for the event. "Cmdr. McIver, you have been part of something big, and I know that it couldn't have been done without the Sailors that support you and, of course, their families. Their professionalism and their hard work is evident in the recent announcement of the USS Nevada's selection as [the winner of] the 2015 Trident Outstanding Performance Award."

McIver assumed command of Nevada's Blue Crew on June 24, 2013. During his leadership, the crew conducted four strategic deterrent patrols with a total of 11 months at sea, two dry dock refits, and multiple inspections. Also, 162 officer and enlisted Sailors received their submarine warfare insignia, also known as "dolphins".

Nevada's Blue Crew was awarded the 2014 and 2015 Red Damage Control Awards; the 2015 Commander, Submarine Squadron 17 Battle Efficiency "E" Award; and the 2015 Trident Submarine Outstanding Performance Award under McIver's command.

"This is a bittersweet moment for me as I come to the end of my tour as commanding officer of Nevada," said McIver. "Time really does fly when you are having fun. Command at sea has its many challenges and comes with awesome responsibility. However, throughout all of those challenges, I can look back fondly on my command tour and not only say that I enjoyed it, but also had fun in the

process."

As his final act as commanding officer, an awards ceremony was held where McIver awarded Sonar Technician 1st Class Wesley Lewison an end of tour Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, and presented dolphins to Machinist's Mate (Nuclear) 2nd Class Jordan Larson and Machinist's Mate (Nuclear) 2nd Class William Haverkamp.

McIver's next duty station is the United States Naval Academy, where he will serve as a battalion officer.

"The crew of the Nevada is the epitome of what it means to work together as a team through adversity, and be successful," said McIver. "This crew has faced all challenges, combined it with my command vision, and solved those challenges such that we always executed the mission. The ultimate mission of a ballistic-missile submarine, of course, is strategic deterrence. However, it takes the successful execution of several small missions in order to meet that ultimate goal."

Heilman comes to Nevada's Blue Crew from Commander, Submarine Squadron (SUBRON) 17, where he served as the deputy commander for readiness.

"Commander McIver, thank you for a fantastic turnover and, especially, for turning over an aging warship in immaculate condition," said Heilman. "More importantly, thank you for turning over a high-performing crew who excels in their profession. I am humbled to continue this, the most important mission in the U.S. Department of Defense, as the commanding officer of the USS Nevada Blue."

Nevada will be celebrating 30 years since its commissioning, August 16. The submarine is one of eight Ohio-class ballistic-missile submarines homeported at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor.

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### Missile Support Facility Ground Breaking Scheduled at NSWC Dahlgren Division

Staff, Seapower Magazine, Mar 14

**DAHLGREN, Va.** — The Navy will break ground on its new Missile Support Facility at Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division (NSWCDD) March 18, a Naval Sea Systems Command spokesman announced in a March 14 media invitation.

Once completed, the facility will house Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) program offices and laboratories at NSWCDD.

The facility will feature office space for about 320 scientists, engineers, and support staff who develop, test and maintain the SLBM fire-control and mission-planning software at the command's Strategic and Computing Systems Department. The building and renovation will also include space for laboratories that contain SLBM shipboard systems equipment.

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va.,

and Vice Adm. Terry Benedict, director of the Navy's Strategic Systems Programs, are scheduled to speak at the event. NSWCCD leadership — including Commanding Officer Capt. Brian Durant and NSWCCD Technical Director Dennis McLaughlin — are scheduled to be in attendance.

The SLBM systems have provided a reliable, secure strategic deterrent for the nation since 1960. NSWCCD has been a key member of the SLBM team from the beginning, and will continue throughout the next generation of submarine — the new Ohio-Replacement Program.

The Missile Support Facility Replacement is a replacement of the Computation and Analysis Laboratory Facility. The contract was awarded to Mortenson Construction, headquartered in Minneapolis, in September. The \$22.75 million contract includes the 57,646-square-foot Missile Support Facility in addition to renovation of approximately 5,600 square feet in the existing building, and the demolition of another building.

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## **[U.S. Tests Trident Missiles](#)**

**[Michael Fabey, AEROSPACE DAILY & DEFENSE REPORT, Mar 21](#)**

An Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine assigned to Submarine Group 10 completed a test earlier this month that included the launch of three unarmed Trident II D5 missiles, U.S. Navy officials say.

The so-called Follow-on Commander's Evaluation Test (FCET-52) spanned a three-day period and marked the 158th, 159th, and 160th successful test flights of the Trident II D5 missile, the Navy says. At no time did the missiles fly over land.

Strategic weapons tests, exercises and operations such as FCET-52 demonstrate the readiness of the submarine-launched Trident II missile, the Navy says.

“With weapons onboard that allow us to strike from almost anywhere in the world, the stealth design of our submarines makes finding an SSBN an almost impossible task,” says Rear Adm. Charles Richard, director of the Undersea Warfare Division. “Our regular and routine missile flight tests provide reassurance to our allies and warning to our potential adversaries that our weapons will do their job if ever called to do so.”

The Navy has performed this mission with 14

Ohio-class SSBNs, and the planned Ohio replacement SSBN will meet the same mission requirements with only 12 submarines, he says.

“The point is we can do the job with 12 Ohio replacement SSBNs – but no less,” Richard says.

But the Navy needs to keep the current fleet afloat and on patrol. “We have prioritized the funding needed to maintain our SSBNs for the rest of their extended service life,” he says. “Last year, the Navy added \$2.2 billion to the budget to build margin into our force.

Additional workers have been hired to match shipyard workforce size to actual workload. There were focused efforts to sustain and recapitalize the shipyards and strategic weapons facilities as well as improving the capacity of our Trident training facilities to keep crew's proficient.”

<http://aviationweek.com/aerospace-daily-defense-report>

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## **[USN Begins Testing of SPQ-9B Radar With Periscope Detection Upgrade](#)**

**[Richard Scott, London - IHS Jane's Navy International, Mar 20](#)**

The US Navy (US Navy) has completed the first shipborne 'light-off' test of an AN/SPQ-9B horizon search radar upgraded with a Periscope Detection and Discrimination (PDD) capability, the US Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) revealed on 18 March.

The 12 March 'light off' was conducted on board

the CG 47 Ticonderoga-class cruiser USS Lake Champlain (CG 57) during live-fire testing off the Californian coast.

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## **[Keel Laying Held In Rhode Island For New Navy Submarine](#)**

**[Jennifer McDermott, ASSOCIATED PRESS, Apr 4](#)**

The keel has been laid for the future USS South Dakota, the nation's 17th Virginia-class attack submarine.

The milestone was marked in a ceremony Monday

at the Rhode Island manufacturing plant for General Dynamics' Electric Boat. The submarine's sponsor is Deanie Dempsey, wife of former Joint Chiefs of Staff

chairman and retired U.S. Army Gen. Martin Dempsey. She is an advocate for military families and volunteers with military support organizations.

"I am beyond honored and thrilled to be here and to start this relationship with all of you," she said.

In a Navy tradition, Dempsey wrote her initials on a metal plate, which were made permanent by a welder and will later be mounted on the submarine. The nuclear submarine doesn't have a traditional keel running the length of the ship and is being built in modules.

It is said that the sponsor's spirit and presence guides the ship throughout its life. Dempsey said she takes the responsibility seriously.

Martin Dempsey, who was in the audience, said he loved the tradition of the ceremony and the "heartfelt passion" for building submarines that it showcased.

"The merging of men and machines is really remarkable," he said.

Groton, Connecticut-based Electric Boat and Newport News Shipbuilding in Virginia build two Virginia-class attack submarines annually under a teaming agreement.

The South Dakota features improvements designed to increase stealth, including quieter machinery, said Rear

Adm. Michael Jabaley, the Navy's program executive officer for submarines.

Construction began in March 2013, and the submarine is now 65 percent complete. Its contracted delivery date is August 2018.

"With the undersea environment constantly changing and becoming more crowded with capable threats, the Navy has decided to use South Dakota as a prototype ship that will include significant investments in stealth beyond anything seen to date," Jabaley said.

The submarine is expected to cost about \$2.5 billion, according to the Navy. The stern section served as the backdrop for the ceremony.

Members of Congress from Rhode Island, Connecticut and South Dakota spoke at the ceremony about the nation's need for submarines. They, along with Rhode Island Gov. Gina Raimondo, a Democrat, thanked the shipbuilders and service members in attendance.

U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, a South Dakota Republican, said "a new symbolic link" is now formed between South Dakota and the Navy.

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## **[Once-Controversial Submarine To Be Decommissioned At Pearl Harbor](#)** **[The Associated Press, Honolulu Star Adviser, Apr 5](#)**

Even though forecasters predicted a strong chance of thunderstorms on March 16, 1983, people showed up in droves to Corpus Christi's ship channel hoping to see the submarine named after their city. Some brought cameras. Others brought binoculars. Some even hiked up the Harbor Bridge to see the vessel surface from a bird's-eye view. All of them, it seemed, felt proud.

After 33 years of serving the nation, the USS City of Corpus Christi is set to be decommissioned May 30 in Pearl Harbor. But long before the submarine was ever commissioned, it made headlines around the country.

In the late 1970s, the Navy began constructing 44 Los Angeles-class fast attack nuclear submarines. At the request of Texas Sen. John Tower, Navy officials named one of the submarines "USS Corpus Christi" to honor the city's relationship with the military branch.

While the move was supported by a number of Corpus Christi residents, it also faced opposition locally and nationally, according to Caller-Times articles in 1981. Catholics led the charge to change the name, claiming that naming a warship a Latin phrase that means "body of Christ" was blasphemous.

A man who lived in Washington, D.C., even fasted as a form of protest, according to a 1982 Caller-Times article. Mitch Snyder lived off only water for 63 days until the name changed.

"Everybody went berserk," said Ram Chavez, director of the Veterans Band of Corpus Christi.

Later that year, President Ronald Reagan issued a decree changing the name of the sub to "USS City of

Corpus Christi," putting the issue to rest.

"I loved the compromise," said Dan Carranza, who worked at the Corpus Christi Army Depot at the time. "It actually embellishes the name to talk about our city."

The submarine's first visit lasted four days. In a show of Texas hospitality, the vessel's commander was gifted with cowboy boots while the crew received cowboy hats during a welcome ceremony. Residents treated the crew to dinners and parties throughout their stay.

Because the sub's visit was so popular, the chamber of commerce issued 4,000 tickets to residents interested in touring the vessel in a lottery.

"The lines were unbelievable," Chavez said.

The submarine visited the city three more times, according to Caller-Times archives – in 1986, 1989 and most recently in 1999. Nueces County Judge Loyd Neal was mayor during the submarine's last visit and remembered taking a tour.

"I was honored ... to meet the captain and crew and spend some time on it," Neal said.

Now, the veterans band plans to travel to Pearl Harbor to perform at the decommissioning ceremony.

"The band being there is going to be another way to tell the story of the city of Corpus Christi to everyone," Neal said.

The veterans band, first established in 1986, has played in ceremonies around the country, including at the inauguration of President George H.W. Bush.

"This invitation is right up there with Washington," Carranza said.

Chavez said the band has already raised more than \$20,000 since they announced plans to attend the ceremony. Regardless of the event, band members said they're always ready to put on a show.

"Whether it's three people, or 100,000 people, we

perform with the same enthusiasm," Chavez said.

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## **[The US Government Just Launched A Self-Driving Submarine To Counter Russian And Chinese Ships](#)**

**[Mike Murphy, Quartz, Apr 8](#)**

The future of naval warfare may well not involve any seamen. Today, April 7, the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and the Office of Naval Research unveiled Sea Hunter, a prototype autonomous submarine that could one day be used to counter advancements in the Russian and Chinese Navies, according to Reuters.

The diesel-powered vessel can explore the ocean on its own for weeks, or months at a time, with a top speed of 27 knots (about 31 mph). It can be controlled remotely, but Sea Hunter can maneuver around obstacles on its own, obeying international maritime law, much like a 132-foot-long, underwater, version of Google's self-driving cars.

This machine however is meant to track other submarines, especially the newer, quieter diesel-powered subs—which the Russians and Chinese have recently started deploying—that are difficult to spot using traditional tracking methods. The robot ship is expected to cost the US government about \$20 million, with a daily operating cost between \$15,000-20,000, which, according to Reuters, is far cheaper than the average operating cost for a US military vessel.

"We're not working on anti-submarine (technology) just because we think it's cool," author Peter Singer, a security expert at the New America Foundation think tank, told Reuters. "We're working on it because we're deeply concerned about the advancements that China and Russia are making in this space."

Sea Hunter was christened in Portland, Oregon, and will be shipped to San Diego, California, where

DARPA engineers will spend the next two years testing its autonomous abilities, according to IEEE Spectrum. While the ship is not the first robot vessel—the US government already uses remote-controlled underwater bots in a range of different activities—it's the first one that can scour the world's oceans on its own, thousands of miles from those monitoring it.

"You really don't want that to be a remote-controlled vessel," Sea Hunter's program manager at DARPA, Scott Littlefield, told IEEE Spectrum. "You want it to be fairly autonomous so that it can do things like obstacle avoidance on its own without being joysticked around by a person."

In maritime lore, ships without crew are usually referred to, as DefenseOne reminds us, as "ghost ships." They were often ships adrift at sea that the crew had abandoned, and are always creepy.

This robot ship, although it will may eventually spend its days soullessly roaming the seas on the behalf of the US, is not meant to invoke fear in those worried about the increasing automation of the militaries around the world, something the UN has expressed. Any decisions on whether the ship would engage another vessel with "lethal force," deputy defense secretary Robert Work told Reuters, would remain with humans.

"There's no reason to be afraid of a ship like this," Work said.

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## **[International Undersea Warfare News](#)**

### **[Submarine Veterans Call For Recognition Of 'Link' Between Fuel And Blood Cancers](#)**

**[Dan Oakes, National Reporting Team, Australia, Apr 5](#)**

Veterans who served on Australia's submarines are pushing for acknowledgement that exposure to fuel in their line of work can be linked to a range of potentially fatal blood cancers.

The request by the Submarines Association Australia (SAA) is another demonstration of how widespread the exposure to toxic fuels has been within the Australian Defence Force (ADF) over the decades.

The ADF said it simply did not know how many servicemen and women had been exposed to fuel.

The ABC has reported over the last 12 months that many veterans and current ADF personnel have begged the ADF and the Department of Veterans Affairs to fully investigate the possibility that exposure to fuels has caused serious and long-term health problems, including fatal cancers.

The chief of the ADF, Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin, recently wrote to a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) veteran, saying he agreed with the need for a full investigation, and, if necessary, for consideration of compensation for those affected.

Some Defence personnel who worked on the infamous F-111 deseal/reseal project received small ex gratia payments for the "conditions" in which they worked, after it was revealed they were exposed to a toxic mixture of chemicals, such as solvents and other cleaners.

Others successfully fought for compensation in the courts. However, the possibility is now being considered that it was the fuel itself that caused the damage.

A spin-off study from the de-seal/re-seal investigation found that jet fuel did damage the body's cells, that the damage could be spread around the body, and that the long-term impacts of exposure were unknown.

The range of ADF occupations that led to prolonged exposure to fuel is extremely wide — from soldiers who used it to clean their weapons and navy personnel who maintained aircraft, to RAAF fuel tanker truck drivers.

Benzene — a component of many fuels, including jet fuel and diesel — is a known carcinogen and has been linked to a range of blood cancers, such as myeloma, acute myeloid leukaemia and non-Hodgkins lymphoma.

Now, in a submission to the Repatriation Medical Authority (RMA) — the little-known body that sets the medical guidelines by which compensation claims are accepted or rejected — obtained by the ABC, the SAA has called for official recognition that exposure to diesel fuel on submarines has potentially caused blood cancers in submariners.

The RMA's medical guidelines, known as Statement of Principle (SOPs), have been divided into two categories, relating to veterans who served overseas or in an "operational" environment, and those who served in Australia.

### *Veterans say they are treated as second-class citizens*

The burden of proof is lower for those who served overseas, who only need to show it is a "reasonable hypothesis" that their medical condition was caused by their service, whereas the other larger group, who served only in Australia, need to meet a "balance of probabilities" test.

The RMA said this was because it showed a "particular generosity" to those veterans who served overseas.

But the disparity has angered many other veterans, who say they have been treated as second-class citizens because they did not leave Australia.

The division also means the number of veterans who can successfully claim their medical condition is linked to their service is considerably smaller.

The RMA recently altered a number of the "reasonable hypothesis" SOPs for a number of blood cancers, slashing the amount of benzene in a liquid necessary for a veteran to have been "exposed" to the carcinogen from 5 per cent of the total volume to 1 per cent.

But it has refused to even include benzene in the

matching "balance of probabilities" SOPs, leading to the puzzling situation where the authority acknowledges that benzene is potentially dangerous at lower levels than previously thought, but that it is somehow not dangerous if the veteran was exposed to it in Australia.

### *Evidence linking benzene, blood cancers 'limited': RMA*

Ray Kemp, the SAA's pension and welfare coordinator, has asked the RMA to include benzene exposure as a potential cause of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, chronic lymphocytic leukaemia, myeloma and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in former submariners, even among those who do not qualify as having served in an operational environment.

"Oberon class submarines had external fuel tanks that [had] to be vented inboard to equalise the pressure in the fuel tanks when the submarine dives ... the vents for fuel tanks were located in all compartments and accommodation messes," Mr. Kemp wrote.

"The result of the venting was diesel fumes being throughout the submarine. These fumes settled on clothing, bodies, plates, cooking equipment etc.

"In fact, when having a cup of water, coffee or tea it always had a film of diesel on the top. The smell and taste of diesel was everywhere.

"Another method of exposure to benzene is in the use of 'white spirits'. White spirits were and still are used for scrubbing through the submarine.

"The submarine was scrubbed though at least two times a day if not more. White spirit was used as it was the most effective method of cleaning."

A spokesman for the RMA told the ABC recently that the scientific evidence linking benzene and blood cancers was "limited, and generally of poor quality", but went on to say where benzene was accepted as having a causal effect, that it was "likely to be at a lower level than previously specified".

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