



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
COMMANDER, U.S. SEVENTH FLEET
UNIT 200225 BOX 1
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5830
N013/101
29 Nov 21

FIRST ENDORSEMENT on Rear Admiral Christopher J. Cavanuagh, USN, ltr 5830 of
29 Oct 21 w/encl

From: Commander, U.S. SEVENTH Fleet
To: Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Via: Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Subj: **COMMAND INVESTIGATION OF THE APPARENT STRIKING OF A
SUBMERGED OBJECT BY USS CONNECTICUT (SSN 22) WHILE UNDERWAY IN
THE U.S. SEVENTH FLEET AREA OF OPERATIONS ON 2 OCTOBER 2021**

- Encl: (122) COMSEVENTHFLT ltr 5812 Ser N013/094J of 10 Nov 21
- (123) COMSEVENTHFLT ltr 5812 Ser N013/095J of 10 Nov 21
- (124) COMSEVENTHFLT ltr 5812 Ser N013/096J of 10 Nov 21
- (125) COMSEVENTHFLT ltr 5812 Ser N013/093J of 10 Nov 21
- (126) COMSEVENTHFLT ltr 5812 Ser N013/097J of 11 Nov 21
- (127) VADM Karl O. Thomas memo of 29 Nov 21

1. (U) On 2 October 2021, USS CONNECTICUT (SSN 22) grounded on an uncharted seamount in international waters while conducting operations in the Indo-Pacific region. The grounding damaged the submarine, removed it from operational tasking for a significant period of time, and resulted in 11 injuries.

2. (U) The command investigation concluded that the grounding was preventable and resulted from an accumulation of errors in navigation planning, watch team execution, and risk management that fell far below U.S. Navy standards.

3. [REDACTED] (b) (1) (A)
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

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(b) (1) (A)

4. (U) In addition to examining USS CONNECTICUT's navigation planning, watch team execution, and risk management, the command investigation also reviewed the ship's pre-deployment training and certification cycle. While no factors beyond the ship's control directly caused the grounding, USS CONNECTICUT's grounding provides an opportunity to critically assess our pre-deployment processes and implement lessons learned to ensure this never happens again.

a. (b) (1) (A)

b. (b) (1) (A)

5. (b) (1) (A)

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(b) (1) (A)

6. (U) Administrative Actions.

a. (U) Add enclosures (122) through (126). Enclosures (122) - (126) are punitive letters of reprimand in the cases of CDR Cameron Aljilani, USN; LCDR Patrick Cashin, USN; (b) (6)

b. (U) Add enclosure (127), which is a memorandum for the record summarizing statements made at nonjudicial punishment (NJP) by (b) (6)

7. (U) Accountability Actions.

a. (U) The CO is charged with the absolute responsibility for the safety and well-being of the ship and crew, and the safe navigation of the vessel. CDR Cameron M. Aljilani, the CO of USS CONNECTICUT at the time of the grounding, failed to fulfill these duties. Accordingly, I convened Admiral's Mast on 4 November 2021. I found CDR Aljilani violated the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), Article 92 (dereliction of duty through neglect) and Article 110 (improper hazarding of vessel - negligence), and awarded him a punitive letter of reprimand. I also relieved him of command.

b. (U) As the XO, LCDR Patrick C. Cashin was responsible for supervising the work of the crew and the command's performance of duty. As the Command Duty Officer in the hours prior to the grounding, LCDR Cashin was also responsible for keeping informed of the tactical situation and of factors affecting the safe navigation of the ship. Though asleep at the time of the grounding, LCDR Cashin was derelict in the performance of his duties; accordingly, I convened Admiral's Mast on 4 November 2021. I found LCDR Cashin violated UCMJ, Article 92 (dereliction of duty through neglect), and awarded him a punitive letter of reprimand. I also relieved him of his XO duties.

c. (U) The COB is the enlisted advisor to the CO and the command on all matters pertaining to warfighting readiness, including utilization and training of Sailors in order to maintain the highest levels of professional excellence and compliance with standards. After reviewing the command investigation, I lost confidence in Master Chief Sonar Technician Cory Rodgers' ability to perform the duties of COB onboard USS CONNECTICUT. Accordingly, I relieved him of his COB duties.

d. (U) I also convened Admiral's Mast for (b) (6), the Navigator (NAV) at the time of the grounding; (b) (6), the Engineer and OOD at the time of the grounding; and Chief Electronics Technician, Submarine, Navigation (b) (6), the Assistant Navigator (ANAV) at the time of the grounding. I found each member violated the UCMJ and awarded each a punitive letter of reprimand. I also relieved them of their duties onboard USS CONNECTICUT.

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8. (U) Findings, Opinions, and Recommendations: I concur with the findings, opinions, and recommendations of the Investigating Officer, with the following modifications and additions:

a. [REDACTED] (b) (1) (A)

b. (U) Modify Finding of Fact 77 to add the following sentence: CSDS-5 recalls discussions about the possibility of detaching the NAV for cause based on his documented weaknesses in operational planning, but USS CONNECTICUT's CO never made this recommendation or request and the former Commodore decided that assigning the additional Operations Officer would mitigate the NAV's weaknesses. [Encl. (7)]

c. (U) Modify Finding of Fact 91 to read as follows: CSDS-5 endorsed the command investigation into the pier allision on 20 May 2021, which was the day prior to his change of command and one week prior to USS CONNECTICUT's deployment. CSDS-5 determined "while this investigation revealed degraded standards in navigation, planning, poor seamanship, and ineffective command and control, it represented an anomalous performance and not systemic failure." CSDS-5 added, "I observed a safe landing from the bridge of USS CONNECTICUT on 13 May 2021, indicating appropriate reflection and training of the crew . . . [w]ith completion of POMEVAL on 14 May 2021, I certified the safe navigation of the ship through all phases of submarine operations." [Encl. (64)]

d. [REDACTED] (b) (1) (A)

e. [REDACTED] (b) (1) (A)

f. (U) Modify Finding of Fact 193 to read as follows: At 0424Z, the ANAV directed the QMOW to remove the red "stay out" area from the Voyage Management System (VMS). The QMOW does not recall ANAV's reason for removing the red "stay out" area, but ANAV recalls that he directed removal because the QMOW placed the "stay out" area in the wrong layer within VMS. However, the ANAV did not follow-up to ensure the QMOW properly entered the "stay

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out" area in the correct layer, nor did the ANAV alert the CO or the NAV of the hazard. [Encls. (14), (127)]

g. (b) (1) (A)

[REDACTED]

h. (U) Add Finding of Fact 318 as follows: The XO was mostly involved in task accomplishment, engineering audit and surveillance programs, and day-to-day administration. The XO did not see himself as the supervisor of the department heads. Multiple crew members commented that the XO was absent and spent little time interacting with officers onboard. [Encls. (2), (4), (5), (17), (19), (22), (24), (31)]

i. (U) Modify Opinion 40 to read as follows: USS CONNECTICUT's modified FRTP did not directly cause or substantially affect the grounding, but it did result in a high operational and personnel tempo that negatively impacted crew morale. [FF 50, 51, 56, 62, 64, 67]

j. (b) (1) (A)

[REDACTED]

k. (U) Modify Recommendation 9 to add the following sentence: Immediately review for accuracy all guidance messages on charted bathymetry in U.S. SEVENTH Fleet submarine operating areas. Report completion of this action within 30 days of this endorsement.

l. (b) (1) (A)

[REDACTED]

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(b) (1) (A)

m. (b) (1) (A)

n. (b) (1) (A)

o. (U) Add a Recommendation for Submarine TYCOMs as follows: Review the FRTP for SEAWOLF-class submarines and mid-FRTP surge deployments, and incorporate lessons learned from this investigation regarding pre-deployment training and operational tempo. Consider whether SEAWOLF-class submarines have sufficient pre-deployment training opportunities in the Pacific Northwest (USS CONNECTICUT's homeport region) and how relocation of pre-deployment training to the Southern California operating area (away from homeport) impacts crew readiness, proficiency, and morale as compared to Guam, San Diego, and Hawaii based crews.

p. (U) Add a Recommendation for Submarine TYCOMs as follows: Conduct a critical assessment of the pre-deployment training cycle and certification process to ensure the evaluation process is sufficiently rigorous and effective in identifying deficiencies and tracking corrective actions. Incorporate lessons learned from this investigation. Ensure there are sufficient mechanisms in place to balance the operational demand to deploy a unit as-scheduled against a unit's readiness to deploy. Review USS CONNECTICUT's pre-deployment cycle to determine if it complied with applicable TYCOM requirements and whether squadron-directed pre-deployment corrective actions were appropriate under the circumstances.

q. (U) Add a Recommendation for U.S. SEVENTH Fleet Task Force Commanders as follows: Prior to gaining operational or tactical control of a unit deploying into the U.S. SEVENTH Fleet area of operations, review all pre-deployment training and certification evaluations in order to identify documented strengths and weaknesses. For any known deficiencies, develop and implement a mitigation plan and report progress to Commander, U.S. SEVENTH Fleet.

9. (U) By copy of this letter, Recommendations 6 and 7 are forwarded to Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet for appropriate action.

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10. (U) I extend my gratitude to RDML Christopher Cavanaugh and his team of 13 uniformed personnel for a thorough, reasoned, and timely report while deconflicting with a safety investigation.

11. (U) There is no more important responsibility to our national security than the safety and security of our Sailors and our Fleet. Together these precious national resources provide a credible fighting force to uphold the stable and open international system that has been a pillar of global security and well-being for nearly a century. Our Navy's advantage depends on Sailors at every level committing themselves to professional excellence and tactical proficiency in everything they do, and on leaders ensuring that Sailors have the direction and support they need to achieve best-ever performance. USS CONNECTICUT's grounding should remind each of us of the inherent challenges and risks of at-sea operations, and our individual collective duties to mitigate those risks through diligent and focused performance. We must learn at all levels from this unfortunate event to prevent a recurrence that could risk our precious resources. We owe it to ourselves and the nation that entrusts us with this great responsibility.



K. O. THOMAS

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Commander, Naval Safety Center