

Office of Naval Records and History
Ships' Histories Section
Navy Department

HISTORY OF USS BLUEFISH (SS 222)

Nine war patrols in enemy waters, each aggressively and successfully conducted, earned for the submarine USS BLUEFISH nine Submarine Combat Insignia. Her war patrols included everything from sinking enemy ships and sinking enemy mines to rescuing aviators and reconnaissance duties. These activities commenced with her first war patrol on 9 September 1943, to completion of her last war patrol on 29 July 1945.

BLUEFISH was built by the Electric Boat Company at Groton, Connecticut, where her keel was laid on 5 June 1942. The ship was launched on 21 February 1943, with Mrs. George E. Porter serving as sponsor for the submarine. When the ship was commissioned on 24 May 1943, Commander George E. Porter, USN, became the first Commanding Officer of USS BLUEFISH.

After a six-week training period, BLUEFISH departed from New London bound for the Panama Canal Zone, arriving at Coco Solo on 25 July 1943. Transitting the canal on 25 July, BLUEFISH reported for duty to Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet, and on 21 August, arrived at Brisbane, Australia. A minor refit was accomplished by USS FULTON and BLUEFISH departed from Brisbane and reported ready for duty at Darwin, Australia.

On 9 September 1943, BLUEFISH got underway from Darwin, Australia and headed out toward her first war patrol, conducted in the Southern Celebes and Java area. On 11 September, the sub took some photographs of the harbor and town of Dilli, Timor Island. On 18 September, while BLUEFISH was steaming east of Salciier Strait, she fired more than her cameras as she surfaced for her first battle action upon sighting a 500-ton tramp steamer. In spite of the 4-inch gun jamming on the second round, the sub scored 3 hits out of five and left the ship in a sinking condition and ablaze from stem to stern. It was "first blood" for BLUEFISH.

Smoke from a ship was sighted in Wowoni Strait at 1350 on 21 September. BLUEFISH approached the source of the smoke and identified the target as a large troop transport. A good firing position was gained and four torpedoes were sent on their way. Shortly after firing, one of the torpedoes exploded prematurely. This explosion alerted the target and she changed course away from the explosion and escaped without damage. A perfect approach and perfect firing were spoiled and a heartbreaking escape of a large enemy troop transport resulted from one traitor torpedo.

The luck of BLUEFISH changed for the better on 25 September, when an early-morning radar contact developed into a large enemy transport of the TAKATIHO MARU Type. A spread of four torpedoes

raced toward this fat target, scoring one hit. The escort ships responded with depth charges that were not too close and BLUEFISH came up to periscope depth to take a look. The one hit appeared to be sufficient. Three Jap escort ships were milling around between the sub and the transport, dropping depth charges. At this time the transport carried a starboard list and was circling to the right at slow speed.

While the escort vessels were busily engaged in their depth charge demonstration, BLUEFISH closed the target again. A spread of six torpedoes reached out toward the transport from the sub's forward torpedo tubes. Two hits were scored and the depth charges rained down with renewed vigor, making up in numbers what they liked in proximity.

Continuous minor explosions were heard through the water from the stricken transport and she appeared very low in the water. A Jap Zeke arriving on the scene forced the sub to dive and a short while later, six tremendous explosions that seemed to come from the center of the earth vibrated through the sub. Upon surfacing again there was nothing in sight but an escort vessel. It was all over for the transport.

While searching to the southward of Batu Ata Island on the night of 26 September, BLUEFISH encountered a large cargo ship similar to the HIROKAWA MARU. Trailing 500 yards astern was an OTORI-class torpedo boat. A spread of three torpedoes went after the torpedo boat and the skipper of the sub shifted his attention to a similar treatment for the cargo ship. Three torpedoes from the bow tubes raced toward the ship and as the sub was swinging around to bring her stern tubes to bear, two of the torpedoes blew up prematurely and it looked as though the perfect planning was again going to be ruined by traitorous torpedoes. However, ten seconds later, two torpedoes hit the torpedo boat, setting off the ship's magazines and, in the ensuing explosion, she completely disintegrated.

Two torpedoes from the stern tubes of BLUEFISH scored a hit on the cargo ship. The MARU was turning in a tight circle by this time as the sub readied more torpedoes to administer the "coup de grace." As the Jap ship commenced to make a run for Pomalaa, BLUEFISH chased her until she drew up abeam at 4,000 yards. At this inopportune moment, a Jap plane dropped a brilliant flare over the sub and forced her to make the fastest dive she had made to date. Believing that the plane had made a lucky stab in the dark with her first flare, BLUEFISH surfaced again and took up the hot pursuit. The plane was only one mile away coming toward the sub and another quick dive was in order as a second brilliant flare dropped right overhead. That was the last chance BLUEFISH had to finish the crippled cargo ship.

The sub was 30 miles north of Ombai Strait on 28 September, when she sighted smoke on the horizon. The bearing of the smoke was observed to be changing to the right. Also observed was a plane contact on the radar scope. BLUEFISH submerged and proceeded in the best estimated approach course. The ship was identified as a large cargo ship almost identical to the one damaged on the previous night. This big target was escorted by no less than seven escort vessels; five in a "V" formation ahead and one on each quarter. In the flat, glassy sea, the closest range obtainable was 7,000 yards. The sub continued to track the target until dark when she could close in on the surface under cover of darkness. The last two torpedoes were fired from the stern tubes, both aimed at the middle of the ship. Both hit! The explosion produced a brilliant green flame followed by a great explosion on the target which lit up the ocean. The radar pip made by the target completely disappeared.

With all torpedoes gone, the only problem remaining was for BLUEFISH to escape the wrath which she had stirred up among the escorts. One of them turned on his searchlight and apparently headed down the torpedo track, another trained his searchlight vertically to attract Jap aircraft. BLUEFISH didn't wait to see whether the aircraft responded to the signal, she set course for Fremantle, Australia. Her highly successful first war patrol was completed.

BUELFISH pulled into Fremantle on 4 October 1943, with all torpedoes expended. She was given a refit by the submarine repair unit which was completed by 17 October 1943. The sub spent the period from 20 to 25 October in training.

On 26 October, BLUEFISH departed Fremantle and headed out to sea for her second war patrol in the South China Sea. Her first big opportunity appeared in the form of a large Japanese convoy on the night of 7 November. The ships were moving fast in a column of two's. BLUEFISH gained a position ahead and waited for the moon to set at 0231 the next morning.

Everything was shaping up perfectly for the attack when a ship was sighted broad on the port bow of the sub. The ship was apparently a Japanese destroyer and the situation looked grim when she commenced signalling to BLUEFISH. However, BLUEFISH took her cue to disappear and work her way over to the other bow of the convoy.

When the sub made her next approach, the captain of BLUEFISH saw what he considered a submarine captain's dream. Six ships were lined up in column, forming an almost continuous target with no escorts visible. BLUEFISH fired two torpedoes at the first ship, one at the second, one at the third and two at the fourth. This emptied the bow torpedo tubes and the sub swung around to bring the stern tubes to bear. Two torpedoes were

fired at the fifth ship and two more at the sixth. The fifth torpedo fired exploded prematurely very close aboard, sending up a column of water which wet down the bridge. The other nine torpedoes fired were seen, heard and felt when they hit their respective targets.

The first ship fired at, a tanker, blew up and sank. Two pips on the radar scope disappeared, and BLUEFISH opened up her range on the other ships to commence reloading her torpedo tubes. One of the four remaining pips disappeared in place.

After finishing her reload, BLUEFISH could still see three pips on the radar scope and sight two ships visually. As BLUEFISH closed the range for another blast at the Jap ships, two of the radar pips became smaller and disappeared. The sub proceeded to close the only remaining target.

A spread of four torpedoes rushed out toward the tanker which was dead in the water. One torpedo ran erratically, one hit and two missed. The hit did not seem to effect the target and BLUEFISH closed in to finish the job. Numerous pips in the water at two to four miles gave the submariners some anxious moments at this point since they could have been anti-submarine patrol boats. They fortunately turned out to be lifeboats picking up survivors from the water.

Two torpedoes from the stern tubes were the last that BLUEFISH could fire before being forced to leave the scene. The first torpedo rocked the tanker hard and the second started the most beautiful fire the skipper had ever seen. Smoke rose up and formed a cloud about 4,000 feet while the submariners took moving and still pictures.

A destroyer came charging over the horizon at this point with a bone in his teeth and the moving picture set was no longer considered healthful for the "movie producers." BLUEFISH cleared the area in the opposite direction, submerged, and all hands not needed to man the watch turned into their bunks for a well-earned rest after a "night on the town at Jap's expense." Far behind, the destroyer could be heard pinging and dropping enough depth charges to make "face saving" noises.

At 1500 that day, BLUEFISH surface and set course to the south toward Dangerous Ground. This course took her through the scene of the attack. Numerous oil slicks were seen, one of which covered an area 4 miles square.

On 9 November, BLUEFISH received orders to change her patrol area to the Celebes Sea-Makassar Strait area. On 11 November, while the sub was churning through the Sulu Sea toward Sibutu Passage, she sighted a motor sampan manned by about a dozen Japs.

After permitting them to clear the sampan into two life boats and pull clear, BLUEFISH sank the sampan with four rounds of four-inch ammunition.

Another Japanese convoy was sighted on 16 November, composed of six cargo ships with one destroyer escort. At 1943, BLUEFISH had closed the range on the convoy and when she came within 3,500 yards, a destroyer was sighted headed for the submarine on the beam. The sub felt very much exposed when the Jap destroyer turned on her searchlight, pointing a finger of light directly at BLUEFISH.

The sub went deep and three fairly close depth charges rocked the sub. The business at hand was that of escape and BLUEFISH successfully completed this business before commencing pursuit. Before the sub could pursue the convoy, her plans were changed by dispatch orders and she headed for Pata Island in the Sulu Archipelago. While lying to off Pata Island, BLUEFISH spent some time working on the radar gear, faulty performance of which was responsible for her detection by the Jap destroyer on the 16th.

A big tanker with a destroyer escort was sighted on 18 November, and BLUEFISH commenced tracking from ahead. After solving the zig-zag pattern, the captain gained a position to fire three torpedoes at the destroyer and one at the tanker. Three hits on the Jap destroyer blew her completely out of the water. One hit on the tanker seemed to lift the ship out of the water. This hit stopped the tanker and the two torpedoes fired from the stern tubes passed ahead of the ship. The tanker stopped and commenced firing shells in all directions over the ocean. She was down by the bow and low in the water. BLUEFISH manned her deck guns and approached through the darkness to try to finish the tanker off from her bow. Unfortunately, BLUEFISH was sighted in the moonlight and the Jap ship opened up with her guns in rapid fire. The shells were coming uncomfortably close. The captain of the sub calculated that whatever damage could now be inflicted on the tanker was not worth risking the submarine against superior fire-power.

Out of torpedoes, BLUEFISH set course for Fremantle, via Molukka Passage and Ombai Strait, sending a message concerning the tanker dead in the water. Her second highly successful war patrol ended, BLUEFISH pulled into Fremantle on 26 November 1944.

USS PELIAS completed a thorough refit job by 10 December, and BLUEFISH conducted training exercises from 13 to 19 December. Underway from Fremantle on 20 December 1943, BLUEFISH proceeded to Exmouth Gulf, Western Australia, where she topped off her fuel bunkers alongside a Dutch tanker before heading for her third war patrol area in the South China Sea and approaches to the Gulf of Siam.

When BLUEFISH was about 3 miles south of Lombok Strait she sighted a sampan. Upon investigation, Japanese flags were discovered on the sides of the superstructure. This vessel was not destroyed because there were two women and several children on board.

In the early morning of 27 December, BLUEFISH sighted a Japanese mine sweeper and vice versa. The mine sweeper started after the submarine, forcing her to dive and rig for depth charge attack. A pattern of depth charges shook the water not too close and the mine sweeper hovered over the sub for a few hours. BLUEFISH had been following the submarine RASHER and presumably ran into trouble stirred up by RASHER.

While coming through Karimata Strait, on 30 December, BLUEFISH sighted a heavily loaded tanker and gave chase, hoping to conduct an attack after darkness set in. It was intended to fire six torpedoes at this target to insure destruction. However, the first two torpedoes fired set the tanker on fire from stem to stern, and the submarine saved the sixth torpedo for a Jap ship that "needed it" more. All five torpedoes hit and it is unlikely that anyone knew what hit them.

One of the torpedoes ripped a hole in the ship's side and flaming fuel poured out of the tanker over the sea in the direction of BLUEFISH. By applying full right rudder, BLUEFISH passed about 100 yards from the inferno. The ship continued to burn for about three hours while the submariners took pictures with the aid of light furnished by the gasoline flames.

As the new year rolled around, BLUEFISH had passed through the strait and headed for Pulo Tenggol Island. On 4 January, while patrolling between Singapore and the Japanese Empire, a ship was sighted in the haze. When BLUEFISH submerged, the other vessel submerged and when it turned out to be USS RASHER, the two submarine captains surfaced and decided to form a scouting line.

At 1720 that day, RASHER reported sighting two ships and BLUEFISH closed toward the Jap ships. RASHER started in toward the target ships and at 1902 an explosion was heard and the ships changed course. Tracer fire was noticed in the vicinity of RASHER. At 2005, BLUEFISH commenced closing the ships, a tanker and a freighter.

Four torpedoes were sent after the tanker and two more reached out after the freighter. Two torpedoes hit the tanker stopping her dead in the water. The first torpedo fired at the freighter exploded prematurely and she showed her stern and headed south. The machine gun fire from both ships was hot and heavy.

Devoting full time to the tanker, BLUEFISH closed in again at 2039. The tanker was now able to make slight headway. Two torpedoes were fired at her bow. The first torpedo exploded prematurely and rocked the submarine hard. The second torpedo hit the tanker under the foremast and set her on fire instantaneously from stem to stern.

BLUEFISH surfaced in hot pursuit of the freighter at 2051, and soon received a message from RASHER that she had sunk a tanker on her first attack and was chasing a target south. As BLUEFISH approached, RASHER scored a hit on another tanker which imparted a 30 degree list which the ship rapidly corrected. The freighter was steaming with this tanker and BLUEFISH let go five torpedoes at the freighter, all of which inexplicably missed.

Determined to sink this freighter, the skipper of BLUEFISH tracked the freighter into the night. The moon had set by 0110 and it was a very dark night. The submarine came into a close range before firing her last three torpedoes at this freighter with the charmed life. Her charmed life continued unabated. All three torpedoes broached continuously and ran all over the ocean. One torpedo circled and exploded 150 yards from the starboard beam of BLUEFISH. Ten torpedoes had reached out for this one freighter, resulting in ten heart-breaking, hat-smashing misses.

BLUEFISH was fresh out of torpedoes at this point and sent a message to RASHER giving the position, course and speed of the freighter. Returning to the scene of the burning tanker, BLUEFISH sighted two lifeboats, one with fifty survivors and the other with 20 survivors. One prisoner from each boat was picked up for interrogation. The two sunken tankers were identified as the HAKKO MARU and the KIYO MARU. The two prisoners seemed to be glad to be aboard. They played cards with the crew and Japanese language lessons were in session every afternoon.

On 6 January 1944, BLUEFISH sighted two ships, a tanker and a freighter. She tracked these ships and relayed information about them to at least two other submarines before continuing on toward Balabac Strait. Her war patrol ended, BLUEFISH arrived at Fremantle on 17 January.

A refit was accomplished by Submarine Division 121 and USS ORION. On 31 January, Lieutenant Commander Charles M. Henderson, USN, relieved Commander George E. Porter, USN, as commanding officer of the submarine.

BLUEFISH left Fremantle on 13 February for her fourth war patrol. After fueling at Exmouth Gulf on 16 February, the sub proceeded to her patrol area in the South China Sea.

In the early morning of 3 March, a convoy was sighted consisting of five ships with two escorts. Since both escorts were

on the side from which BLUEFISH approached, the sub shifted to the other side of the convoy and fired three torpedoes each at the first two ships. As the sub shifted her attack to the third ship, one of the escorts closed the submarine and started to signal with a searchlight. BLUEFISH managed to get four torpedoes off at the third target before taking evasive action.

Any further attacks on the convoy had to be postponed until the following morning when BLUEFISH again caught up with the convoy. The two escorts were very aggressive and did an excellent job of protecting the flanks of the convoy. BLUEFISH managed to get three torpedoes off at a tanker similar to the SYOYO MARU. The periscope was trained on the CHIDORI class escort nearest the sub at the time of the hit. When the skipper trained the periscope on the target ship, about 2 seconds later, her back was broken and she was a blazing inferno. Flames completely covered the topside and rose to a height of about 300 feet. The second and third torpedoes were also heard to hit at the proper time intervals.

BUELFISH was now the target as the two busy escort destroyers closed in for a possible submarine kill. The sub dove and rigged for depth charging at 0636. A total of 26 depth charges erupted in the water around BLUEFISH for about a half hour. The escorts stayed with the submarine until 1030.

Radar contact was picked up on a Jap ship on 28 March on a dark but clear night with a flat, calm sea. It was after midnight when BLUEFISH fired four torpedoes from her bow tubes. The target either saw the sub or heard the torpedoes and turned toward BLUEFISH. The ship turned out to be a OKINOSHIMA-class minelayer. She dropped four depth charges and turned on her searchlights. Another torpedo sent after the ship missed and as the minelayer swept the black ocean with his searchlight, BLUEFISH opened the distance.

Arrival at Fremantle on 12 April 1944, ended the war patrol and BLUEFISH underwent a refit until 26 April. Training and loading was completed on 6 May, and BLUEFISH departed for her fifth war patrol on the following day. This patrol was conducted in Badoeng Strait, Bali Strait, Makassar Strait and the Celbes Sea.

On 25 May, BLUEFISH conducted an offensive reconnaissance of Tawi Tawi Bay, reporting numerous heavy combatant units and auxiliaries of the Jap Fleet. Several cruisers and the battleship FUSO were sighted but their speed precluded any approach for attack on the part of BLUEFISH. On 12 June, an approach was made on a Jap minelayer, three torpedoes missed him and detection of the submarine caused the SHIMUSHU class minelayer to turn toward BLUEFISH in pursuit, consequently causing the last three torpedoes to miss.

On 15 June, BLUEFISH sighted a large transport with two escorts, and commenced an approach through a sea that was flat calm and very phosphorescent. Skillfully attaining an attack position, the sub fired five torpedoes at the transport. Before the torpedoes could hit, the ship changed course and the far escort came around the stern of the target ship. The transport fired a red flare after several minutes, indicating that the element of surprise was no longer with BLUEFISH. The ensuing chase went in favor of the transport, aided and abetted by rain squalls and the alert escorts.

While patrolling submerged to the east of Pandjang Island, on 16 June, BLUEFISH sighted smoke on the horizon and the pursuit was on again. Working into a close firing position, BLUEFISH fired a three-torpedo salvo from the bow tubes. In 31 seconds, the first torpedo ripped into the after part of the freighter. The after half of the freighter was obscured in smoke and the ship took on a starborad list as pieces of the maru went flying through the air in all directions to a height of 200 feet.

The escort turned toward BLUEFISH and she submerged and rigged for depth charging. This preparation was hardly an idle routine. One minute later the most bone-rattling explosion the sub had experienced yet rocked the nearby water. It was much louder than a depth charge and it apparently came from the torpedoed freighter. For several minutes, minor explosions, crackling noises and breaking-up sounds were heard through the hull of the submarine. Depth charges followed and the screws of the escorting ship could be heard milling around overhead for some time before departing.

BLUEFISH was searching for more "game" in the Makassar-Khota Baru traffic lanes on 20 June, when the tops of ships were seen over the horizon. A fine looking large freighter with escort was finally picked up through the periscope. BLUEFISH gained a firing position on the freighter and fired her last two bow torpedoes. Both torpedoes ran erratically to the left and fortunately the submarine was not detected by the Japs. Three torpedoes were finally fired from the stern tubes and missed apparently due to an inopportune zig by the target.

The last three torpedoes alerted the freighter and she commenced to make radical zig-zags. Frequent rain squalls made the visibility spotty and it was well after midnight before BLUEFISH could get her next firing opportunity. Two hits were seen on the freighter by the officer of the deck and bridge personnel. The target disappeared from the radar scope and it is presumed to have sunk.

BLUEFISH had difficulty threading her way through escort vessels on her way back to Fremantle but arrived safely with

only one personnel casualty. One broken-leg case was transferred at Exmouth on 25 June and BLUEFISH pulled into Fremantle on 28 June 1944, ending her fifth war patrol.

Refit was completed by Submarine Division 162 and USS ORION on 12 July. After several days of independent exercises and convoy training, BLUEFISH departed from Fremantle on 22 July in company with USS RASHER. Parting company two days later, BLUEFISH arrived at Darwin, Australia on 29 July. With her fuel bunkers topped off and minor repairs completed, BLUEFISH departed in company with USS COD on 31 July. Parting company with USS COD on 4 August, BLUEFISH proceeded to her assigned patrol area west of Luzon Island, Philippine Islands. This patrol was a coordinated patrol with USS RASHER.

Three small sea trucks were identified on the morning of 17 August. They were escorted by a NASAMI class mine layer, all of them rounding Cape Calavite. No attack was made due to the shallow draft of the targets. That same evening, BLUEFISH sighted a tanker which had been grounded on Mindoro Island as a result of an attack by the submarine USS PUFFER. In a submerged periscope attack, BLUEFISH fired another torpedo at the ship and damaged the ship beyond any hope of salvage.

Radar contact was made with two large unescorted ships from a convoy which had been scattered by RASHER earlier on 19 August. Four torpedoes were fired in a night surface attack in low visibility. One torpedo was fired at the second ship and three torpedoes were fired at the large tanker in the lead. Two hits ripped into the tanker and one torpedo blasted the second ship. The tanker stopped and the other ship continued steaming at 11 knots.

A fire enveloped the after one third of the ship in huge flames for about 30 seconds and she commenced to settle aft. The ship did not appear to be sinking very fast and another hit was scored forward on the ship. As BLUEFISH left the tanker, the after part of the ship was gone, the bow and bridge were high out of the water, and the amidships section was almost awash.

Heading for the other damaged ship at full speed, BLUEFISH caught up with her at 0546. The ship was down at the stern and stopped. It was the largest enemy merchant vessel the skipper had seen. Three torpedoes were good for three hits; one under the bridge, one amidships and one under the stack. At the time of firing, flames several feet high were observed at the water-line all along the ship, identified as a large converted seaplane tender of the TONAN or NISSIN MARU type.

As BLUEFISH started to dive, an aerial bomb shook the sub considerably followed by another bomb a few minutes later. Minor

explosions from the target continued for the next 15 minutes. The sub cleared the area submerged. No other contacts of enemy ships worthy of torpedoes were found and BLUEFISH retired from her patrol area on 31 August.

BUELFISH proceeded to Pearl Harbor via Midway, arriving at Pearl Harbor on 14 September 1944. She then proceeded to San Francisco, California, where a Navy yard overhaul was commenced on 22 September at the yards of the Bethlehem Steel Company. Overhaul and post-overhaul trials were completed on 31 December 1944, and BLUEFISH was ready to start the New Year in first class condition.

Retracing her course, BLUEFISH steamed to Midway via Pearl Harbor, arriving at Midway on 15 January 1945. Voyage repairs and training were completed at Midway and the sub arrived at Guam on 9 February to top off fuel and proceed to her seventh war patrol area southeast of Amami O Shima in the Nansei Shotō.

BUELFISH had by now acquired a long and illustrious combat record. However, in spite of an aggressively conducted war patrol, the sub had but one opportunity of engaging the enemy. This attack occurred on 19 March in a gun duel in which BLUEFISH damaged a Japanese picket boat, leaving the ship smoking from a hit aft.

On 1 March, BLUEFISH took up lifeguard duty in her assigned station off Okinawa Shima. A destroyer was seen charging toward the sub and after a few anxious moments, an exchange of signals clarified the situation and the destroyer was identified as USS GATLING.

At 1510 that day, word was received that a plane in distress was heading toward the position of BLUEFISH. The sub's position was sent to the fighter planes escorting the disabled plane and three minutes later the plane was sighted. The first crewman bailed out at 1601 and BLUEFISH headed for him at flank speed. He was picked up in 13 minutes and the second crewman bailed out at 1615. He was picked up in three minutes, having landed closer to the submarine.

The pilot then put his plane in a vertical dive and bailed out. The plane plunged down and sank almost immediately. The pilot landed in the water nearby and was being dragged along rapidly by his parachute. In less than six minutes, the pilot was recovered from the water. His heart had already stopped and he had suffered from a six-inch shrapnel wound in his left thigh and another shrapnel wound in his right leg. Artificial resuscitation was commenced right on deck and adrenalin was administered. All efforts to revive the Pilot, Lieutenant Jacob M. Reisert, USNR, had failed and he was taken below decks.

Lieutenant Reisert was awarded the Navy Cross posthumously for his admirable qualities in handling his dive-bomber. He had launched an attack on enemy surface forces off the coast of Ishigaki Shima, plunging through anti-aircraft fire sent up by the powerful batteries of the warships, scoring a direct hit on a Japanese destroyer. While pulling out of a dive, the plane was seriously damaged and the pilot wounded. Fighting against unconsciousness for over an hour, Lieutenant Reisert circled in the air until his two crewmen had parachuted to safety before attempting to reach safety himself. He was unable to release the parachute upon striking the water and succumbed to wounds, shock and drowning. The officers and men on board BLUEFISH found his fortitude, courage and unselfishness most inspiring. Services for the pilot were held that evening before a pensive crew as his body was committed to the deep.

The period from 11 to 19 March was spent on lifeguard station south of the Tokyo area during B-29 strikes. No rescues were made during this period. BLUEFISH then departed from the patrol area and returned to Guam.

A refit period at Guam was completed by Submarine Division 281 and USS APOLLO by 7 April. On 10 April Commander Charles M. Henderson, USN, was relieved by Lieutenant Commander George W. Forbes, Jr., USN, as commanding officer of BLUEFISH.

Following an extensive training period from 10 to 22 April 1945, BLUEFISH departed Apra Harbor, Guam on 23 April, for her eighth war patrol, this time on lifeguard station off the Sakishima Gunto in the Ryukyu Islands.

Only seven hours after arriving on station, BLUEFISH made one of the quickest rescues on record. A torpedo bomber made a forced water landing near the sub and four minutes after hitting "the drink," the pilot and his two crewmen were safely on board BLUEFISH.

Another torpedo bomber, this one from a British carrier, crashed and pilot and crew were impressed by the alert rescue service offered by the submarine in pulling three more men out of the water. Again on 16 May, another British pilot "reported aboard" from a point only 3,000 yards off Miyako Island.

BUEFISH did not confine her eighth war patrol entirely to acts of mercy. In addition to destroying several floating mines, the sub conducted two bombardments of enemy airfields. On the night of 6 May, 21 rounds of 5-inch ammunition were fired at the Miyara Airfield on Ishigaki Shima. Another night bombardment took place on 24 May on the Ishigaki Airfield, in which 29 rounds of 5-inch ammunition were fired.

On 29 May, BLUEFISH departed from her patrol area and arrived at Subic Bay, Philippine Islands, for a refit. She arrived at

Subic Bay on 1 June 1945 and the refit was accomplished by Submarine Division 221 and USS HOWARD W. GILMORE. The refit was completed by 16 June and the post-repair training, and loading lasted until 25 June.

The ninth war patrol of BLUEFISH was conducted in the South China Sea areas. From 29 June to 12 July, the sub coordinated her patrol with the commanding officer of USS BLOWER as area coordinator. From 13 to 16 July, BLUEFISH was a member of a wolf pack of which the commanding officer of USS CHARR was the officer in tactical command. The patrol started with the departure of BLUEFISH from Subic Bay on 25 June 1945.

A contact report was received from USS BLOWER on 8 July, giving the position of two escort vessels. BLUEFISH closed the position and commenced tracking. Four torpedoes fired shortly before midnight missed the mark and the sub followed up with four more after midnight. Two hits on the larger escort disintegrated the ship and a chase after the other ship ensued. The Jap escort headed for shore and since it was too dark for a coordinated gun attack and, not wanting to waste anymore torpedoes, the skipper reluctantly let her get away.

BLUEFISH received an early-morning contact report from BLOWER on 15 July, and commenced closing at full power. BLOWER in the meantime had made an attack on a Jap ship and reported "results doubtful." BLUEFISH closed the target and identified her as a Jap submarine. Four torpedoes were fired at the Jap submarine and BLUEFISH swung around to bring her stern tubes to bear. Before anymore torpedoes were fired, the first and second torpedoes hit. The Jap submarine caught fire and broke in two. Flames shot high into the air and the submarine sank stern first, submerging for its last time. The sub had apparently been loaded with gasoline as there was a large slick on the surface smelling heavily of gasoline. As BLUEFISH approached the scene of the sinking to search for survivors, fire broke out in the gasoline slick about 500 yards off the port beam. Hauling clear, BLUEFISH took more movies, this time of the flaming sea. The flames had apparently bubbled up from the wreck and more fuel continued to rise from the sunken sub, causing a smoky, orange fire which rose 50 feet off the sea. At this point, the submarine USS CHARR came by to investigate briefly.

Three hours later, the fire was still burning and BLUEFISH continued her search for survivors. Entering the large fuel slick again, three Jap survivors were seen near the flaming slick. Three husky survivors were brought on board but none of them spoke English. Two of them were put in the empty skids forward and one in the after torpedo room.

A large junk was sighted on 19 July off Lingga Island. Several shots across her bow stopped her and two Jap flags were noticed flying from her mizzenmast. BLUEFISH broke her colors

and the Jap struck hers and commenced abandoning ship in a small boat. A couple of bursts of machine gun fire speeded up the proceedings and 12 to 15 men scrambled off the junk. A boarding party found a cargo of ore, charts, a Jap-English dictionary and various other articles. Five-inch hits sank the 125 foot junk just as a lookout reported a plane approaching. The submarine took a dive to avoid any trouble from the plane, and continued up coast to patrol off Singapore Strait.

Using the Jap-English dictionary taken from the junk, the Jap prisoners on board indicated that their submarine was the I-351. This was not considered a positive identification however.

On 22 July, BLUEFISH left her patrol area and arrived at Fremantle on the 29th. A refit was completed by Submarine Division 301 and USS CLYTIE on 12 August. During the post-refit tests, the war was officially ended and BLUEFISH could look back on nine successful war patrols for each of which she earned the Submarine Combat Insignia.

BLUEFISH, in company with USS COD and USS CABRILLA, left Fremantle on 31 August 1945, enroute Balboa, Canal Zone via Auckland, New Zealand. The submarines arrived at Balboa on 30 September, and reported to the Commander Submarines, Atlantic Fleet for duty. BLUEFISH was subsequently inactivated at New London, Connecticut, and placed out of commission in reserve in January 1947, as part of the Atlantic Reserve Fleet.

* * * * *

STATISTICS

OVERALL LENGTH	312 feet
BEAM	27 feet
DISPLACEMENT (STANDARD)	1,525 tons
SURFACE SPEED	20 knots.

* * * * *

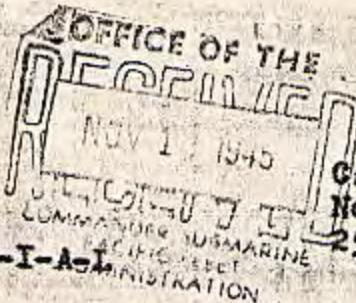
38
MUR
5021

In reply refer to:

SS222/A12

Serial: 020

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L



U. S. S. BLUEFISH

Care of Fleet Post Office,
New York, New York,
25 October, 1945.

From: Commanding Officer.

To: The Secretary of the Navy.

Subject: Ship's History - submission of.

Reference: (a) ComSubsPacAd ltr FF12-10(A)/A12/(3199) of
24 September, 1945.
(b) ComSubsLant ltr A12(4417) of 25 September,
1945.

Enclosure: (A) Subject history.

1. In accordance with references (a) and (b) subject
history is forwarded herewith.

G. W. FORBES, jr.

CC: CinePac
ComSubLant
ComSubsPacAd

1. PRE-COMMISSIONING AND COMMISSIONING DATA.

The keel of the U.S.S. BLUEFISH, which was built by the Electric Boat Company at Groton, Connecticut, was laid on 5 June, 1942. The launching of this ship took place 21 February, 1943. The Bluefish was sponsored by Mrs. George E. Porter. The Bluefish was commissioned 24 May, 1943 at the Submarine Base, New London, Connecticut under Comdr. George E. Porter, U.S. Navy, as Commanding Officer.

2. PRE-WAR PERIOD.

After a six weeks training period, the Bluefish departed New London to arrive at N.O.B., Coco Solo, C.Z. on 21 July. On 25 July passed through the Panama Canal and reported to CincPac for duty with Submarines, Southwest Pacific. On 21 August, 1943 arrived at Brisbane, Australia, and reported to CTF-72. A minor refit was accomplished by the U.S.S. Fulton. On 2 September departed Brisbane. Arrived at Darwin, Australia, and reported to representative of CTF-71 for duty.

3. WAR NARRATIVE.

On 9 September, 1943 Bluefish departed Darwin for first war patrol in the Southern Celebes and Java area. On 18 September a 500 ton inter-island steamer was sunk by gunfire. In a submerged torpedo attack on a transport on 21 September, a premature explosion alerted the target, and no damage resulted. A Takatiho Maru type transport was sunk in a submerged torpedo attack on 25 September. On the night of 26 September a surface torpedo attack on a large Hirokawa Maru type AK escorted by an Otori class torpedo boat resulted in sinking the torpedo boat and damaging the AK. Another night surface attack on 28 September resulted in the sinking of a Hirakawa Maru type AK. The Bluefish then departed the area for Fremantle, West Australia, with all torpedoes expended.

Bluefish arrived at Fremantle on 4 October, and refit was started by the Submarines Repair Unit. Refit was completed on 17 October, 1943. The period from 20 to 25 October was spent training.

On 26 October Bluefish departed Fremantle for the second war patrol in the South China Sea. Fueled to capacity at Exmouth Gulf, Australia, on 29 October. The morning of 8 November a night surface torpedo attack on a six ship convoy resulted in sinking a tanker, the Kyokuei Maru; and damaging the other five. In three more attacks one of the ships, the Amatsu Maru (tanker) was sunk. The other damaged ships were three freighter-transports (the Kaga Maru, Anami Maru, and the Hokuriku Maru), and one freighter, the Anyasu Maru.

Orders were received to shift the patrol area to the Celebes Sea-Makassar Straits area on 9 November. On 11 November a powered sampan was sunk by gunfire. One Japanese prisoner, who was badly burned, was taken. The prisoner died two days later. A convoy sighted on 16 November was tracked that night, but the Bluefish was driven off by an escorting destroyer, and no attack could be made. In another night surface attack on 18 November, a Sanae class destroyer was sunk and the Ondo Maru, a tanker, was damaged. Bluefish departed from the area the next day, with all torpedoes expended.

The commanding officer was awarded the Navy Cross for damage inflicted on the enemy during this patrol.

Bluefish arrived at Fremantle on 26 November, and was refitted by the U.S.S. Pelias. Refit was completed on 10 December. The training period lasted from 13 December to 19 December.

The patrol area for the third war patrol was the South China Sea and approaches to the Gulf of Siam. Bluefish left Fremantle on 20 December and fueled at Exmouth Gulf on 23 December. While patrolling submerged on 30 December a large naval tanker, the Sata, was sighted transiting Karimata Strait.

This ship was sunk in a surface torpedo attack that night. On the night of 2 January, 1944, a mine field was laid north of Pulo Tenggel Island in the mouth of the Siam Gulf.

The morning of 4 January the Bluefish joined the U.S.S. Rasher for a coordinated patrol. During the day the Rasher sighted two tankers, one of which she sank. That night the Bluefish sank the other tanker, the Hakko Maru, in a surface torpedo attack. Later that night the Bluefish attacked an AK, but no damage resulted. One torpedo circled and exploded prematurely 150 yards off the starboard beam. The next day two Japanese prisoners were taken from lifeboats. Bluefish left the area with no torpedoes.

17 January, 1944 the Bluefish arrived at Fremantle. Refit was done by Submarine Division 121 and the U.S.S. Orion. On 31 January, Lt. Comdr. Charles M. Henderson, U.S. Navy, relieved Comdr. George E. Porter, U.S. Navy, as commanding officer. The refit was completed on 1 February. The period from 3 to 12 February was spent with post refit tests, loading, and training.

Bluefish left Fremantle on 13 February for her fourth war patrol. After fueling at Exmouth Gulf on 16 February, Bluefish proceeded to the patrol area in the South China Sea. On the night of 2 March a surface torpedo attack was made on a convoy, with no hits resulting. A ship in this convoy, the Omnesan Maru (a tanker) was sunk in a submerged attack on the morning of 4 March. An unsuccessful surface torpedo attack was made on a minelayer on the night of 29 March.

On 12 April the Bluefish arrived at Fremantle, and a refit was begun by Submarine Division 162 and the U.S.S. Orion. Refit was completed on 26 April. Deep dive tests and independent exercises were conducted on 29 and 30 April. During this period a hot run was experienced in No. 5 torpedo tube, damaging the outer door. This damage was repaired during the next two days.

Bluefish departed Fremantle for her fifth war patrol on 7 May, 1944, and fueled at Exmouth Gulf on 10 May. 13 May the Bluefish arrived on station at the south end of Badung Strait to cover that strait during carrier strikes on Surabaya. Station was shifted to the south end of Bali Strait on 16 May. On 25 May the Bluefish arrived off Tawi Tawi Bay for offensive reconnaissance patrol. A Japanese task force of battleships and cruisers left the Tawi Tawi anchorage on 30 May, but could not be closed for attack. Report was made to CTF-71. An unsuccessful submerged attack was made on a minelayer on 12 June. A medium-sized AK was sunk on 16 June in a submerged attack. On the night of 20 June another medium AK was sunk in a surface torpedo attack. On 24 June one of the crew suffered a broken leg while shifting torpedo skids in the after room. This man was transferred at Exmouth Gulf the next day.

Bluefish arrived at Fremantle on 28 June, 1944. Refit was accomplished by Submarine Division 162 and the U.S.S. Orion, and was completed on 12 July. After several days of independent exercises and convoy training, departed from Fremantle on 22 July in company with U.S.S. Rasher. Bluefish parted company with the Rasher on 24 July, and arrived at Darwin, Australia on 29 July. After fueling to capacity and making several repairs, departed in company with the U.S.S. Cod on 31 July.

On 4 August Bluefish parted company with Cod and proceeded to assigned patrol area west of Luzon Island, P.I. This was a coordinated patrol with the U.S.S. Rasher. On 17 August, in a submerged attack in Galavite Passage, Bluefish damaged a grounded tanker, which had previously been damaged by the Puffer, sufficiently to prevent salvage. On 18 August, received contact report on convoy from the Rasher. Rasher had attacked, sinking several ships and scattering rest of the convoy. About midnight Bluefish contacted two ships from this convoy. These were both hit in a surface torpedo attack by the Bluefish. One was stopped and the other slowed down. The latter ship was sunk in two more surface attacks, and was identified as a large tanker. The first ship was then sunk in a submerged attack at dawn, and was identified as a large converted seaplane tender of the Tonan or Nissin Maru type.

The commanding officer was awarded the Navy Cross for damage inflicted on the enemy during this patrol. On 31 August Bluefish departed the patrol area.

Bluefish proceeded to Pearl Harbor via Midway, arriving at Midway on 10 September and at Pearl Harbor on 14 September. She then proceeded to San Francisco, California where a navy yard overhaul was started on 22 September at the Bethlehem Steel yard. Overhaul and post-overhaul trials were completed on 31 December, 1944.

Bluefish proceeded to Midway via Pearl Harbor arriving at Pearl Harbor on 10 January, 1945 and at Midway on 15 January. Voyage repairs and training were conducted at Midway. Bluefish then proceeded to Guam, arriving there on 9 February, and departing for the seventh war patrol on 10 February. Arrived at the patrol area, southeast of Amami O Shima in the Nansei Shoto, on 15 February.

On 1 March the Bluefish moved to assigned lifeguard station off Okinawa Shima. That afternoon the crew of a dive bomber, who parachuted from their disable plane, were recovered. The two crewmen were recovered safely; but the pilot, Lt. Jacob Matthew REISERT, U.S. Naval Reserve, who had been wounded by shrapnel, was dead on recovery. Lt. Reisert was later awarded the Navy Cross posthumously for flying his crewmen to safety.

On 3 March Bluefish returned to the original area east of Amami O Shima. The period from 11 March to 19 March was spent on lifeguard station south of Tokyo area during B-29 strikes. No rescues were made in this area. On 19 March a 200 ton picket boat was damaged by gunfire. The Bluefish then departed the area and proceeded to Guam for refit.

Refit at Guam, by Submarine Division 281, and the U.S.S. Apollo, was begun on 25 March, 1944 and completed on 7 April. On 10 April, Comdr. Charles M. Henderson, U.S. Navy, was relieved by Lt. Comdr. George W. Forbes, Jr., U.S. Navy, as commanding officer. The period from 10 to 22 April was spent in extensive training exercises.

The Bluefish departed Apra Harbor, Guam, on 23 April, 1945, for the eighth war patrol on assigned lifeguard station off the Sakishima Gunto in the Ryukyu Islands. On 30 April, the first day in the assigned area, the three crew members of a U.S. Navy Avenger aircraft were safely taken aboard after the airplane was ditched immediately ahead of the Bluefish. On 12 May the three crew members of a British Avenger plane were rescued. A British fighter pilot was rescued on 16 May.

While on station during this patrol two night bombardments of enemy airfields were conducted. The night of 6 May 21 rounds of 5 inch ammunition were fired at the Miyera Airfield on Ishigaki Shima. The night of 24 May the Ishigaki Airfield was bombarded with 39 rounds of 5 inch. The Bluefish departed the patrol area on 29 May, enroute Subic Bay, P.I. for refit.

The Bluefish arrived at Subic Bay on 1 June, 1945, and the refit was started by Submarine Division 221 and the U.S.S. Howard W. Gilmore. The refit was completed on 16 June; and the post repair, training, and loading period lasted until 25 June.

The Bluefish departed Subic Bay, P.I. on 25 June, 1945 for the ninth war patrol off the east coast of the Malay Peninsula. While on coordinated patrol with the U.S.S. Blower, the Bluefish, in a night surface torpedo attack, sank a 200 ton PG boat. On the morning of 15 July, while on coordinated patrol with the Charr, Blower, and Hammerhead, the Bluefish sank a Japanese I-353 class submarine in a night surface attack. That day three survivors from this submarine were taken prisoner. On 19 July, a 200 ton junk which was flying the Japanese flag, and was loaded with Bauxite ore, was sunk by gunfire. Several Malayan and Indonesian sailboats were inspected during this patrol. On 22 July the Bluefish left the patrol area enroute to Fremantle, West Australia.

The Bluefish arrived at Fremantle on 29 July, 1945, where the refit was begun by Submarine Division 301 and the U.S.S. Clytie. The refit was completed on 12 August. During the post refit tests the war was officially ended.

U. S. S. BLUEFISH

All the war patrols of the Bluefish have been successful
for the purpose of award of combat insignia.

The Bluefish, in company with the Cod and the Cabrilla,
left Fremantle on 31 August, 1945, enroute Balboa, C.Z. via
Auckland, New Zealand. This group arrived at Balboa on 30
September, and reported to Commander Submarines, Atlantic
Fleet, for duty.

5. SUMMARY OF PATROL RESULTS.

U.S.S. BLUEFISH

Number of Patrol	Number and Type of Ships Sunk	Total Ton- nage of Ships Sunk	Number and Type of Ships Damaged	Total Ton- nage of Ships Damaged	Total No. Avia- tors Re- scued.
1.	BLUEFISH S.I AP (Takatiho Maru (Type) 8,154 S.I AK (Hirokawa Maru (Type) 6,860 1 Torpedo Boat (Otori Class) 595 1 AK (Inter-Island Steamer--by gunfire)	16,109	1 AK (Hirokawa Maru Type) 6,860	6,860	
2.	1 AO (Kyokuei Maru) 12,000 1 AO (Amatsu Maru) 10,000 1 DD (Sanae) 820	22,820	1 AO (Ondo Maru) 14,050 1 AP-AK (Kaga Maru) 6,807 1 AP-AK (Anami Maru) 6,950 1 AK (Anyasu Maru) 7,634 1 AP-AK (Hokuriku Maru) 8,400	43,841	
3.	1 AO (Naval Tanker Sata) 14,050 1 AO (Hakko Maru) 6,035	20,085			
4.	1 AO (Omimesan Maru) 7,500	7,500			
5.	1 AK (EU) 3,000 1 AK (Medium EU) 4,000	7,000			