

Virginia-Class SSN South Dakota to be Commissioned Feb. 2

NORFOLK, Va. – The Navy's newest fast-attack submarine, USS South Dakota (SSN 790), will be commissioned at Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, Connecticut, Feb. 2 as the 17th Virginia-class submarine to join the fleet, commander, Submarine Forces Public Affairs, said in a Jan. 2 release.

Deanie Dempsey, wife of retired Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, who served as the 18th chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is the ship's sponsor. After spending several decades of service in support of just the Army, Deanie became a champion for all of the services in her role as the chairman's spouse. She remains actively engaged in countless activities in support of military families and participates in dozens of private and charitable organizations in support of military spouses and their families.

Designed to operate in both coastal and deep-ocean environments, South Dakota will present leadership with a broad and unique range of capabilities, including anti-submarine warfare; anti-surface ship warfare; strike warfare; special operation forces (SOF) support; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; irregular warfare; and mine warfare missions. South Dakota is a part of the Virginia-class Block III contract, in which the Navy redesigned approximately 20 percent of the ship to reduce acquisition costs.

South Dakota features a redesigned bow, which replaces 12 individual Vertical Launch System (VLS) tubes with two large-diameter Virginia Payload Tubes (VPTs) capable of launching six Tomahawk cruise missiles each.

South Dakota has special features to support S0F, including a reconfigurable torpedo room which can accommodate a large number of S0F and all their equipment for prolonged deployments and future off-board payloads. Also, in Virginia-class SSNs, traditional periscopes have been replaced by two photonics masts that host visible and infrared digital cameras atop telescoping arms. Through the extensive use of modular construction, open architecture, and commercial off-the-shelf components, the Virginia class is designed to remain at the cutting edge for its entire operational life through the rapid introduction of new systems and payloads.