

Columbia SSBN Hull Shows Potential for SSGN, Admiral Says



An artist's rendering of the future Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines. U.S. Navy illustration

ARLINGTON, Va. – The hull form of the U.S. Navy's Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarine (SSBN) has characteristics that may lend themselves to be ideal for a future guided-missile submarine (SSGN), the Columbia's program executive officer said.

"The light we learned from the Ohio SSGNs – certainly having the larger-diameter hull is a perfect fit for a follow-on SSGN design," said Rear Adm. Scott Pappano, program executive officer for the Columbia SSBN, speaking Nov. 17 in a webinar for the annual symposium of the Naval Submarine League.

The Navy converted the four oldest Ohio-class SSBNs – Ohio, Florida, Michigan and Georgia – to SSGNs which returned to service between 2006 and 2008. They are armed with up to 154 Tomahawk missiles and can carry special operations forces for covert insertion and extraction in hostile territory. Each SSGN has Blue and Gold crews that typically swap out while the submarine is deployed for yearlong periods. Florida became the first of its class to participate in combat operations when it launched more than 90 Tomahawk missiles against targets in Libya during Operation Odyssey Dawn in March 2011.

"Without making any decisions for the Navy right now, certainly the Columbia hull form would make a very good model to build upon for a future SSGN." Pappano said. "My guess is that if we determine that is a need in the future, the Columbia would be the frame that we would go build that ship on."

“Nothing will happen before the end of the Columbia SSBN program,” he emphasized.