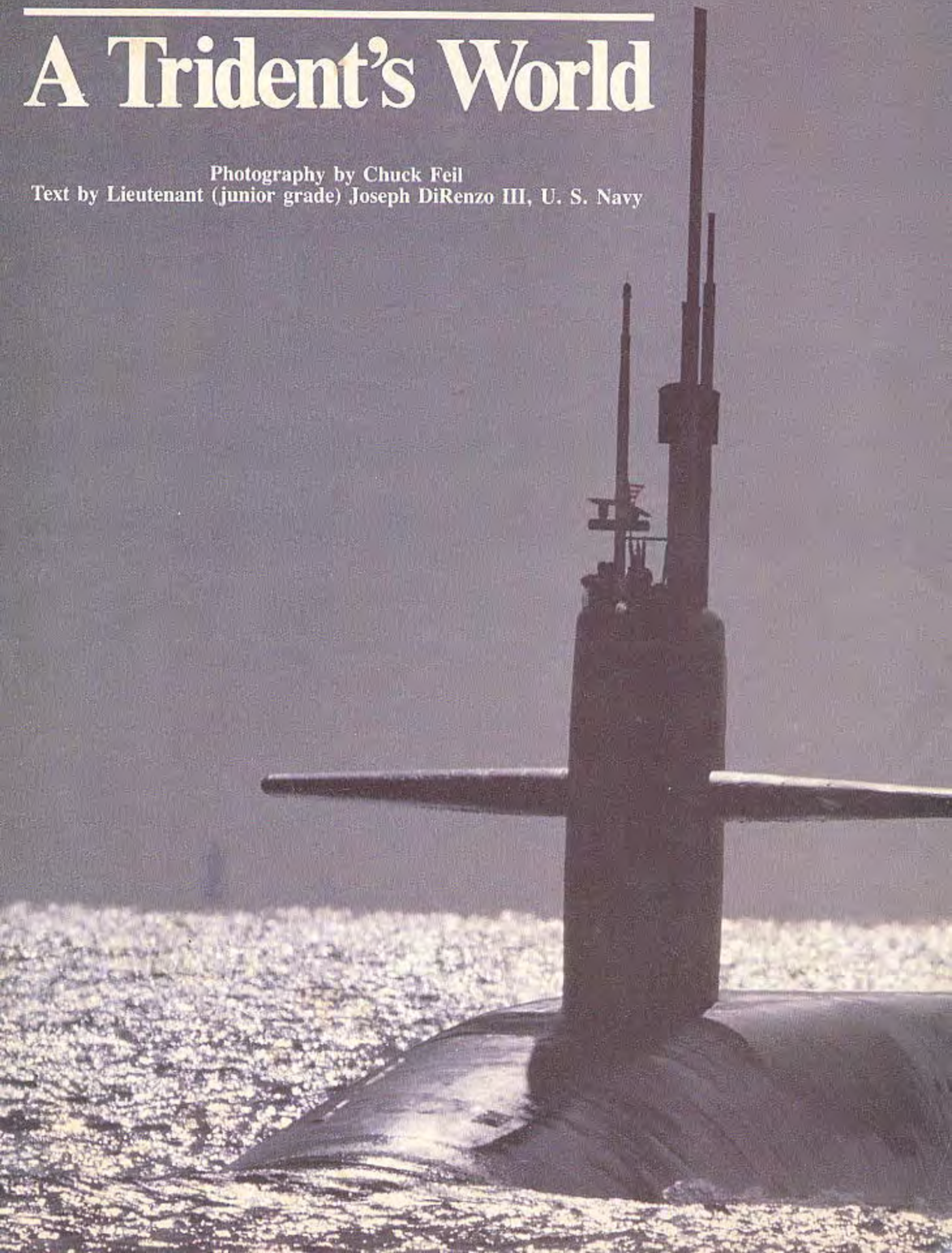


---

# A Trident's World

Photography by Chuck Feil

Text by Lieutenant (junior grade) Joseph DiRenzo III, U. S. Navy





At 0600, dawn is breaking at Port Canaveral Beach. In the quiet Florida morning, there is little movement anywhere except on board two tugs and a long, cigar-shaped object half-submerged in the water: the USS *Georgia* (SSBN-729), fourth ship of the U. S. Navy's newest class of ballistic missile submarines that carry the Trident strategic missile. Lights on board the submarine jab through the morning haze as three topside parties work at various tasks. As the morning light grows stronger, the distinct shapes of men can be seen on deck, working lines and shouting orders. The two tugs, having nudged the 18,000-ton submarine away from her berth and into the harbor, break off and the *Georgia* gets under way on her own nuclear power.

On the bridge, the skipper of the Gold Crew peers over the shoulder of his officer of the deck. A civilian harbor pilot is also embarked; he relays navigational information to the submarine's tactical systems officer. Together, they guide the 560-foot-long ship into the channel. Below, the maneuvering watch helmsman—a 20-year-old sailor—takes his orders from the officer of the deck and executes them flawlessly; the ship responds precisely to his slightest touch of the wheel. As the *Georgia* glides slowly down the river, she provides a strange contrast to the quiet campgrounds and unspoiled beaches on either side of her. On deck, two junior officers work furiously with several chiefs and enlisted men to de-rig the topside. Cleats are slid back into place, and the missile deck is smooth once again. With both the forward and after line teams working, the topside is rigged for a dive in about 45 minutes.

With all this activity going on above him, the Trident submarine's navigator works with a team of quartermasters and navigation electronic technicians below to keep the ship on track and out of trouble. One of the chiefs "takes a round" on the periscope and passes the "fix" to the bridge.

The ship heads out to sea and, inside the *Georgia*'s hull, the mood is peaceful. On the mess decks, the cooks are putting the finishing touches on lunch, fea-

turing delectable Monte Cristo sandwiches. They will be served in one of the most spacious underwater dining facilities to be found in the fleets of the world. The state-of-the-art design technology that the Trident submarines have taken advantage of benefits not only the propulsion, weaponry, and other systems on board, but also the crew. For example, the wardroom pantry in the *Georgia* is as big as the entire galley in an older diesel submarine, which also could only carry about 20 days' worth of supplies. In a Trident boat, the ship's stores can be stocked to support a cruise of up to 120 days.

Now, the sleek nuclear-powered boat has reached her dive point, and the ship's strategic weapons officer takes the conn. The sail has been rigged, and the lower hatch shut. Inside the control room, the diving officer prepares his planesmen. He is chief of the boat and shoulders great responsibility for the Trident sub's operation. His objective is to maintain a crew that works together without any hitches, and his job is made easier by the fact that the Navy tends to select only the highest quality of sailors to man its Trident boats.

Now, with all the checks completed and each compartment rigged for a dive, two blasts are heard on the ship's diving alarm and the *Georgia*'s angle slants downward as she becomes surrounded by the sea.

In the ship, the crew's feeling of anticipation before the dive gradually dissolves, giving way to shipboard routine. Some of the 16 officers and 137 men "turn to" and carry out their assigned duties, while others head for their "racks." In a submarine, a crewman's rack is his home. Some are decorated with photos of wives and children, or girlfriends. A rack not only serves as a place to sleep, but it is also one of the few places on board ship where an individual can be alone. Perhaps he will write a letter, or read a book. Or perhaps he may choose to listen to the ship's channeled entertainment music system—including headphones—which offers music from rock to Bach, and from punk to funk.

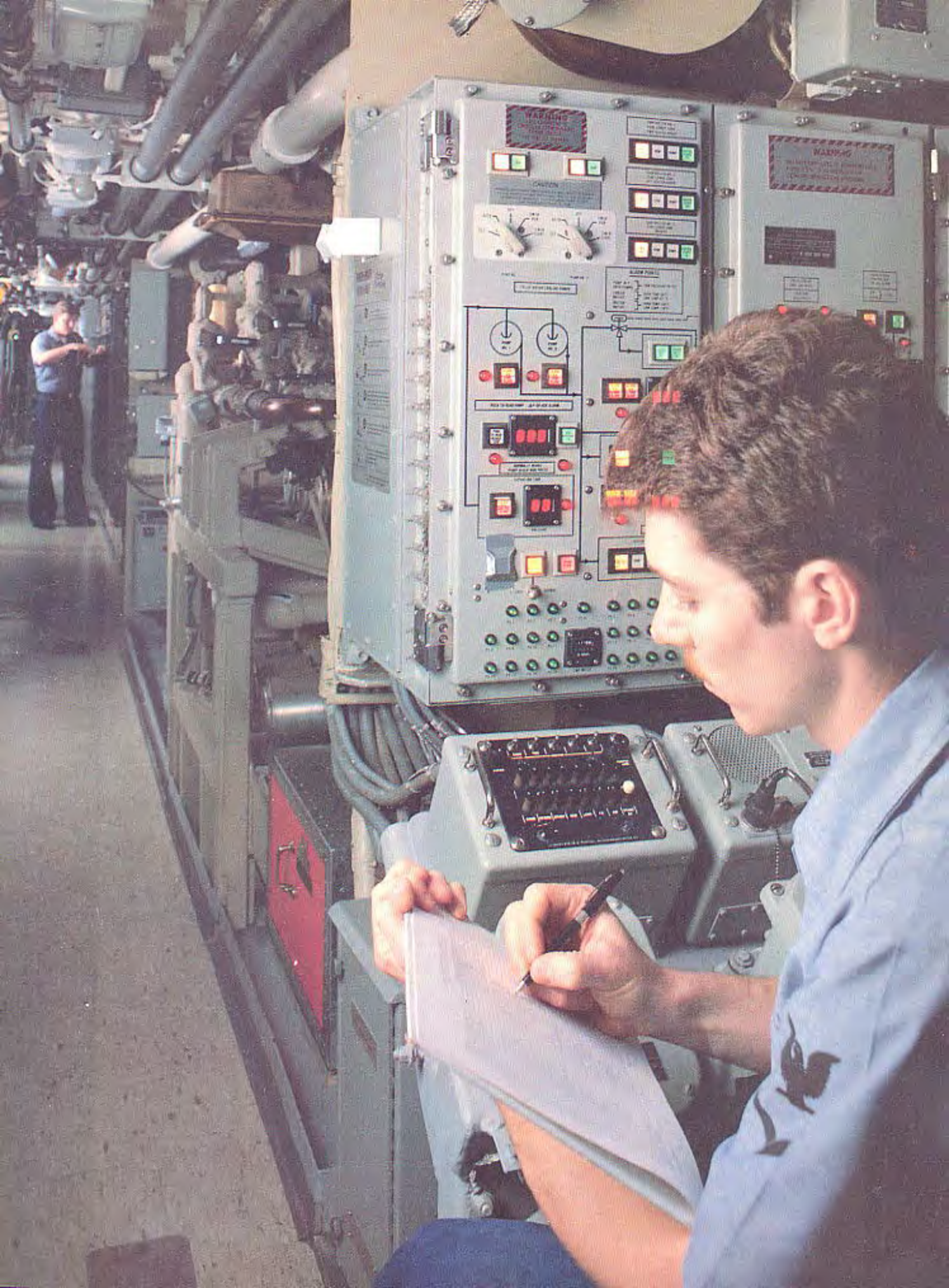
Unlike other Navy submarines, the Tridents offer















The *Georgia's* spacious enlisted dining facility and one of its 14 nine-man bunkrooms reflect the Navy's "habitability" concerns. When a career noted for its "ups and downs" momentarily overwhelms, crewmen can retreat to the solitude of curtained "racks." But, there's nothing that can turn a black artificial night into a sunny artificial day like the fun of being your own generous soda jerk.

Escape," one of many movies that can be played on the *Georgia's* videotape player.

The submarine continues her descent; she is capable of submerging to a depth greater than 300 feet. The forward and after ballast tanks have been vented, which always causes huge geysers of air to shoot upward. The commanding and executive officers monitor the dive closely from the control room, but neither speaks. The only communication necessary is being done by the officer of the deck and the chief of the boat, who calls out the depth every two feet.

As the *Georgia* comes to her cruising depth, the "six hours on and 12 hours off" watchstanding cycle has already been well established; it will regulate the lives of the Gold Crew until their cruise is ended.

Now that the *Georgia* has settled into her track, the many different worlds encompassed by the submarine's hull go into full operation. One of these worlds is the











Like remora clinging to a shark, a pair of tugs muscled the enormous *Georgia* away from her pier. On board is the Gold Crew. How young they are. How immense their responsibilities. Two junior officers "take a round" on the periscope but, in the control room, above, there is no youthful chitchat. The only words passed are between the officer of the deck and the diving officer (standing) calling out the depth every two feet.

spacious living quarters to even the most junior crew members—spacious for submariners, that is. Besides the officers' and chiefs' quarters, each Trident boat has 14 nine-man bunkrooms, which are the crew's main berthing spaces. Each rack area includes space for personal belongings and clothes. As the *Georgia* continues her dive, the lights in the berthing areas shift from white to red as tired sailors fall asleep and get a good rest before assuming the next day's—or night's watch.

For those who are not quite ready for rest, Trident submarines offer alternatives. In the lower-level missile compartment, several crew members work out with weights and pulleys—even a bicycle is included among the exercise equipment. Other crew members relax in front of the television, watching Steve McQueen racing across Nazi Germany on a motorcycle in "The Great





Workday—six hours on, 12 hours off—goes on. In the missile tube room, facing page, one man checks the status of the missiles on the monitoring panel. Another replaces a circuit board on one of the Trident missile tubes, and, above, a missile technician mans the fire launch console as the weapons officer holds the trigger.



missile room, where a 15-year Navy veteran shows a newly reporting seaman that the Trident ballistic missile system on board the Trident boat is really everything that it has been cracked up to be. Like a successful entrepreneur handing part of his business over to a son, the veteran wants to make sure that his younger charge knows everything about the system that he will be responsible for—his own life depends on it, as well as those of countless others.

Far above the submerged submarine, the Florida sun goes down and day becomes night. But in the *Georgia*, the stars never come out. For many days, these men who wear dolphin devices on their chests—the proud mark of the submariner—will not see the sun, feel the breeze, or smell the saltiness of the air. They will serve their country unseen and undetected, which is the most comfortable of all worlds for a Trident missile submarine.