



Nautilus (SS-168) The third *Nautilus*, originally named V-6 and designated SF-9, was redesignated SC-2, 11 February 1925; laid down 10 May 1927 by the Navy Yard, Mare Island, Vallejo, Calif.; launched 15 March 1930; sponsored by Miss Joan Keesling; commissioned 1 July 1930, Lt. Comdr. Thomas J. Doyle, Jr., in command; renamed *Nautilus* 19 February 1931; and re-designated SS-168 on 1 July 1931.

V-6 operated out of New London, conducting special submergence tests, until March of 1931. Then, with the name *Nautilus*, she proceeded to Pearl Harbor where she became Flagship of SubDiv 12. Reassigned to SubDiv 13 at San Diego, 1935-1938, then re-home-ported at Pearl Harbor, she maintained a regular schedule of training activities and fleet exercises and problems throughout the decade. In July 1941 she entered the Mare Island Naval Shipyard for modernization — radio equipment, engines, and air conditioning — and remained until the following spring. She departed San Francisco 21 April 1942, reaching Pearl Harbor on the 28th. On 24 May, *Nautilus* got underway for her first war patrol, destination Midway; mission, to help repel the expected attack by the Japanese Fleet.

At 0755, 4 June, while approaching the northern boundary of her patrol area near Midway, she sighted masts on the horizon. Japanese planes sighted the submarine at the same time and began strafing. After diving to 100 feet, she continued observation. At 0800, a formation of four enemy ships was sighted: 1 battleship and 3 cruisers. Within minutes the submarine was again sighted from the air and bombs began to fall. Two of the cruisers attempted to close for a kill and nine depth charges were dropped at a distance of about 1000 yards.

When the attack ceased, *Nautilus* planed up to periscope depth. Ships surrounded her. Sighting on the battleship, she fired #2 tube, #1 misfiring. One of the cruisers immediately headed for the boat, which dove to 150 feet to wait out the depth charge attack (0830). At 0846, periscope depth was again ordered. The battleship and two of the

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cruisers were now out of range; but, echo ranging by the third appeared to be too accurate for comfort. At 0900, the periscope was raised again and an aircraft carrier was sighted. *Nautilus* changed course to close for an attack. The enemy cruiser followed suit and at 0918 attacked with 6 depth charges.

By 0955 echo ranging ceased and *Nautilus* raised her periscope. The carrier, her escorts and the attacking cruiser had disappeared. At 1253, damaged carrier *Kaga* (initially misidentified as *Soryu*) with two escorts was sighted. An hour later SS-168 had moved into attack position. Between 1359 and 1405 she fired 3 torpedoes at the carrier, then less than 3000 yards away. Flames appeared along the length of the ship as the first "fish" hit – later evidence suggests the hit failed to explode – and the skeleton fire-fighting crew which had been on board the carrier began going over the side. *Nautilus* went to 300 feet as a prolonged depth charge attack commenced. At 1610, the submarine rose to periscope depth. The carrier, afire her entire length, had been abandoned. At 1941, *Nautilus* resumed her patrol pattern, having expended five torpedoes and survived 42 depth charges.

Between 7 and 9 June, *Nautilus* replenished at Midway and then resumed her patrol to the west. By the 20th she was operating off Honshu at the northern end of the Tokyo-Marshalls supply route. On the 22nd she damaged a destroyer guarding the entrance to the Sagami Sea off 6 Shima. Three days later she sank destroyer *Yamakaze* and damaged an oil tanker. On the 27th she sent a sampan to the bottom and on the 28th, after damaging a merchantman, underwent her severest depth charging, delivered by a cruiser, which forced her back to Pearl Harbor for repairs, 11 July to 7 August.

Nautilus departed Hawaiian waters for her second war patrol, a special troop transport mission of three weeks duration, 8 August. Sailing with *Argonaut* (*SM-1*) and carrying marines of the 2nd Raider Battalion under Lt. Col. Carlson, she arrived off Makin, 16 August, to stage an attack to divert Japanese attention from the Solomons. Early the following morning, she sent the Raiders ashore on Little Makin in rubber boats rigged with outboard motors. At 0703 she provided gunfire support against enemy positions on Ukiangong Point and then shelled enemy ships in the lagoon, sinking two, a troop barge and a patrol boat. At 1039 an enemy plane appeared and *Nautilus* dove. Two aerial attacks followed at 1130 and at 1255. The latter flight was made up of 12 planes, 2 of which landed in the lagoon to discharge troops. About 35 of the reinforcements made it to shore to fire on the Americans.

The marines began to withdraw at 1700. At 1900 they launched their boats. Many were unable to clear the breakers without the aid of their damaged outboards. Only seven boats and less than 100 men made it to the submarine that night. The remainder, less 9 who were later captured and executed, discovering there were no Japanese left to fight, crossed to the lagoon side, whence they headed for the submarine after nightfall on the 18th. Thinking all surviving marines were on board, *Nautilus* and *Argonaut* set courses for Hawaii, arriving at Pearl Harbor on the 25th.

On her third war patrol, 15 September–5 November, *Nautilus* returned to Japanese waters to join the submarine blockade chain stretched from the Kuriles to the Nansei Shoto. Despite heavy seas, which precluded periscope depth operations and torpedo firing during much of the patrol, and mechanical breakdowns, which impeded approaches to targets, she torpedoed and sank 3 marus arid, in surface action, destroyed 3 sampans to add over 12,000 tons to her scorecard. On 12 October, however, the patrol became one of her more perilous missions. On that day she took a heavy depth charging. On the 14th, the crew noticed a slight oil slick in her wake.

The hindering seas now protected by breaking up the trace. By the 19th, the oil leak had enlarged considerably and on the 20th, the first relatively calm day since the depth charging, air leaks were discovered. *Nautilus* was leaving a trail for Japanese defense patrols. Moving to a quieter area, with less aerial activity, she continued her patrol until the 24th when she sank her third maru of the patrol, then headed for home. Luck followed. No enemy planes were sighted. She reached Midway 31 October, performed temporary repairs, and continued on to Pearl Harbor.

During her fourth patrol, conducted in the Solomons 13 December 1942–4 February 1943, *Nautilus* rescued 26 adults and 3 children from Toep Harbor (31 December–1 January), then added the cargo ship *Yosinogawa Maru* to her kills and damaged a tanker, a freighter and a destroyer. On 4 February she arrived at Brisbane, disembarked her passengers, and sailed for Pearl Harbor. Arriving 15 April, she departed 5 days later, heading north. On the 27th she put into Dutch Harbor, Alaska, and commenced instructing 7th Army Scouts in amphibious landings. She then embarked 109 Scouts and on 1 May, headed for Attu. There, on the 11th, she landed her “passengers” five hours before the main assault.

Overhaul at Mare Island occupied most of the summer and on 16 September *Nautilus* slipped out of Pearl Harbor to spend her sixth war patrol conducting photo-reconnaissance of the Gilberts, concentrating on Tarawa, Kuma, Butaritari, Abemama and Xlakiri; all of which had been reinforced, particularly Tarawa, since the sub's 1942 excursion into those waters. The information, including continuous panoramic pictures of the coastlines and chart corrections, which she brought back to Pearl Harbor on 17 October proved to be among the most useful intelligence gathered of the area.

She returned to Tarawa 18 November to obtain last minute information on weather and surf conditions, landing hazards and the results of recent bombardments. At 2159, 19 November, mistaking her as an enemy, *Ringgold* fired at *Nautilus*, sending a five inch shell through the conning tower damaging the main induction drain. Diving as soon as the topography permitted, the boat was rigged for depth charges and the damage control party went to work. Within two hours repairs were sufficient to allow *Nautilus* to continue with her primary mission: landing a 78 man scouting party, composed of 5th Amphibious Reconnaissance Co. marines and an Australian scout, on Abemama.

At midnight, 20–21 November, *Nautilus* lay to 3000 yards off Kenna to discharge her passengers. By 1500 all were safely ashore. On the afternoon of the 22nd *Nautilus* was

called on for, and provided, gunfire support against the minute, 25 man, but game enemy garrison. Rather than sacrifice marines in bringing the Japanese out of their bunkers, naval gunfire had been requested. The gunfire proved accurate, killing 14; the remainder committed suicide. Thus, by the time the main assault force arrived on the 26th, Abemama had been secured and preparations to turn it into an air base for the Marshalls' campaign had begun.

Nautilus returned to Pearl Harbor 4 December to prepare for her eighth war patrol. Conducted north of Palau and west of the Marianas, 27 January–21 March 1944, the patrol netted 1 cargo ship, 6,070 ton *America Maru*, sunk, with damage inflicted on 3 others. On 26 April *Nautilus* sailed for Brisbane, whence she departed 29 May to begin a series of special missions in support of guerilla and reconnaissance activities in the Philippines.

On her ninth patrol (29 May–11 June) she carried ammunition, oil and dry stores to Col. R. V. Bowler on Mindanao. Between 12 June and 27 June she transported a similar cargo to Negros and embarked evacuees, including 1 German POW, there for Darwin. During her 11th patrol (30 June–27 July) she landed a reconnaissance party and 12 tons of stores on North Pandan Island, then delivered supplies to Col. Kangleon on Leyte and to Col. Abcede on Mindanao. Her 12th, 13th and 14th patrols, she returned to the central Philippines, landed personnel and supplies at various points on Mindanao and Luzon, and carried evacuees to Australia. On 2.5 September, during the first of these three patrols, she grounded on Iuisan Shoal. Forced to lighten her load, her evacuees, mail, captured documents, and cargo were sent ashore. All secret materials were burned. Her reserve fuel tanks were blown dry, variable ballast was blown overboard and 6-inch ammunition jettisoned. With the blowing of her main ballast tanks she was finally able to get off the reef within 3½ hours, despite the receding tide, and clear the area by dawn. *Nautilus* completed her 14th, and last, patrol at Darwin, 30 January 1945.

From Australia, she was routed on to Philadelphia, where she arrived 25 May for inactivation. Decommissioned with a bottle of champagne over the forward 6-inch gun, 30 June, she was struck from the Navy List 25 July, and sold 16 November, to the North American Smelting Co., Philadelphia, Pa., for scrapping.

Nautilus earned the Presidential Unit Citation for her aggressive war patrols in enemy controlled waters as well as 14 battle stars for her service during World War II.