



Caiman (SS-323), originally *Blanquillo*, was renamed 24 September 1942 and launched 30 March 1944 by Electric Boat Co., Groton, Conn.; sponsored by Mrs. R. C. Bonjour; commissioned 17 July 1944, Commander J. B. Azer in command; and reported to the Pacific Fleet.

Caiman sailed from Pearl Harbor on her first war patrol 13 November 1944. Pausing at Saipan to put ashore her severely ill commanding officer and embark his relief, the submarine pushed on to the South China Sea, where she combined offensive patrol with lifeguard duty to rescue aviators downed in air strikes on enemy-held territory. Aggressive American submarine and naval air attack had already greatly reduced the Japanese merchant fleet; hence *Caiman* made no contacts on this patrol, from which she returned to Fremantle, Australia, on 22 January 1945 to refit. Her second patrol, performed in the South China Sea and off the Gulf of Siam, from 18 February to 6 April, also yielded no contacts, but on her third, which began at Subic Bay in the Philippines on 28 April, she sank two small schooners. Their use illustrated graphically the almost complete loss of modern merchant ships which the Japanese had suffered largely at the hands of the U.S. Navy.

Returning to Fremantle 27 June from her patrol area off southern Indo-China and western Borneo, the submarine refitted for her fourth war patrol, during which she performed three dangerous special missions, landing and later evacuating agents from the coast of Java. On this patrol, which took place from 22 July to the end of hostilities, she sank another Japanese schooner. She returned to Subic Bay 19 August, then sailed for the west coast.

Caiman operated out of San Diego, Guam, and Pearl Harbor in 1946. In 1947 she made an Arctic familiarization cruise out of Seattle. Thereafter, based on Seattle, she

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served as reserve training ship until 23 April 1951, when she began a snorkel conversion at Mare Island Naval Shipyard. Since then based at Pearl Harbor and San Diego, *Caiman* has alternated local operations and fleet exercises with tours of duty in the Far East at 18-month intervals. On her 1957 cruise, Brisbane, Australia, was added to her more usual itinerary of Japanese and Philippine ports.

Of *Caiman's* four war patrols, the last was designated "successful." She received two battle stars for service in World War II.