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Sentry of the Seas

USS BANG (SS-385)

Balao Class: 6 officers - 60 enlisted

Keel laid 30 April 1943, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Portsmouth, NH.

Launched 30 August 1943.

Sponsored by Mrs. Robert W. Neblett.

Commissioned 4 December 1943, Lcdr. Antone R. Gallaher in command.

Decommissioned, loaned to Spain and recommissioned Cosme García 28 September 1972. Stricken from Spanish navy 30 September 1982 and scrapped.

War operations of USS BANG (SS-385) span the period from 29 March 1944 until 18 May 1945, during which time she completed six war patrols. She is officially credited with sinking eight Japanese merchant ships totaling 20,177 tons while operating in the South China and Philippine Seas. BANG received six battle stars for her World War II patrols.

Post War: BANG arrived at Portsmouth Navy Yard 22 June 1945 and after repairs proceeded to New London where she went into reserve 12 February 1947. BANG was converted to a Guppy type submarine and brought back into active service 4 October 1952. Until August 1953 she conducted training off the east coast and in the Caribbean. During August-24 September 1953 she operated east of Iceland and off Scotland.

In January 1954 she sailed to the Mediterranean for a cruise with the 6th Fleet which terminated 11 March 1954 at New London, Conn. Between March 1954 and December 1956 BANG operated out of New London on various exercises, conducted two training cruises in the Caribbean, one cruise to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and one trip to Quebec, Canada. In addition she made another cruise to the Med in 1970.

BANG was decommissioned 1 October 1972. She was loaned to Spain in 1973, returned, struck 18 November 1974 and sold to Spain where she was renamed the Cosme García.

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USS Bang - History

Bang is a dark blue or black fish of the herring family found in U. S. Atlantic coastal waters north of North Carolina that migrates to the rivers for spawning. The fish is one of the most abundant East Coast food fishes and is of great economic importance in the eastern United States.

BANG (SS-385) was laid down on 30 April 1943 at Kittery, Maine, by the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard; launched on 30 August; sponsored by Mrs. Robert W. Neblett, mother of an Army Air Force private captured by the Japanese at Corregidor; and commissioned on 4 December 1943, Lt. Comdr. Antone R. Gallaher in command.

On 8 February 1944, following four weeks of shakedown training off New England, the submarine departed New London Submarine Base and headed for the Pacific. After transiting the Panama Canal, BANG steamed to Pearl Harbor, where she intensified her training in torpedo approaches, evasive maneuvers, and simulated warfare. As March came to an end, the submarine was fully provisioned and ready for battle. On 29 March, BANG departed Pearl Harbor in company; with PARCHE (SS-384) and TINOSA (SS-283) on her first war patrol. After a one day fueling stop at Midway, the subs continued to the patrol area in the Luzon Straits and the waters southwest of Formosa.

The three subs coordinated contact information and attack plans throughout the patrol. On 29 April, BANG sighted a 12 ship convoy southbound in the traffic lanes. After maneuvering into a favorable position, BANG fired her torpedoes into the convoy, sinking a cargo ship, the Takeqawa Maru. The submarine continued to hound the convoy during the night, and in the morning of the 30th, succeeded in sinking another freighter, Nittatsu Maru. The enemy depth charges rained on BANG, but her training in evasive maneuvers helped her to escape damage.

TINOSA sighted a northbound convoy on 3 May, and BANG moved in to pursue the 10 Japanese ships. Her first attempt to attack during daylight was foiled by enemy plane and surface escorts who forced her to dive. After dark, BANG and the other two subs coordinated a surface attack in which BANG sank a large cargo ship; the Kinrei Maru, and claimed the destruction of a destroyer which postwar records do not credit the sub. Since all of her torpedoes were expended, BANG departed the area on 6 May and arrived at Midway on the 14th for refit alongside Proteus (AS-19).

BANG put to sea for her second war patrol on 6 June. She was initially assigned to an open sea area to the westward of the Marianas Islands and to intercept any reinforcing Japanese units steaming eastward. While enroute to her station, the sub encountered a lone northbound tanker on 14 June. Although hampered by heavy rain squalls and turbulent seas, BANG loosed a spread of three torpedoes, one of which hit the target causing some damage but not sinking her. The sub was unable to finish off her target because she was ordered to proceed to her assigned station as soon as possible.

BANG spent an uneventful week on station, then moved to her patrol area on 22 June, where she rendezvoused with GROWLER (SS-215) and SEAHORSE (SS-304) off Formosa and formed a wolfpack. GROWLER was detached just one day prior to the pack's run-in with a southbound convoy of over 15 ships. BANG made a periscope attack and fired ten torpedoes at three overlapping targets, all of which the submarine claims to have sunk, although the postwar records do not confirm this claim. The enemy escorts turned and pursued BANG, dropping 125 depth charges over the sub as it went deep to avoid destruction. When the sub finally surfaced, the convoy was moving over the horizon.

On 4 July, BANG sighted a small Hong Kong bound convoy consisting of one cargo ship and four destroyer escorts. The sub approached the convoy on the surface, but before she could maneuver into the best position for firing, an alert escort began

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to search for the attacker. BANG fired three torpedoes without making adequate attack solutions, and all three missed their targets. The sub was forced to dive and maneuver to avoid the depth charges dropped by the escort, and was unable to mount another attack on the convoy.

BANG's patrol was terminated and on 17 July, she headed back to Pearl Harbor for refit, which was completed during the last week of August.

She left Pearl Harbor again on her third war patrol 27 August, refueled at Midway on 31 August, and continued to her patrol area northeast of Formosa off the Nansei Shoto.

While passing northwest of the Bonin Islands to take up her station, BANG encountered an enemy convoy on 9 September. Diving to make a periscope attack, BANG fired a salvo at two loaded freighters, both of which -- the Tokiwasan Maru and Shoryu Maru -- disintegrated due to internal explosions triggered by the hits. The escorts evidently sighted BANG's periscope and torpedo wakes, because as she dove deep, the depth charges accurately drove her down beyond her test depth to 580 feet where depth control was almost lost. A pattern of 16 charges exploded directly over the boat, but BANG out-waited her enemy. The escorts departed to report the sub-kill, but BANG was able to surface and continue to trouble enemy shipping. Only minor damage was incurred and easily repaired by the crew. Three days later, the sub arrived on station.

Early on 19 September, BANG made radar contact on another enemy convoy. The submarine submerged and fired on two cargo transports. The Tosei Maru No. 2 sank while the other ship suffered substantial damage. Three enemy escorts working as a team systematically depth bombed the sub but again BANG successfully out-maneuvered her pursuers and surfaced after dark.

The submarine contacted an eastbound convoy while submerged on the afternoon of 20 September and shadowed it until the cover of darkness allowed her the best advantage for attack. She surfaced and fired her remaining ten torpedoes and claims to have sunk a large tanker and a medium freighter as well as damaging another. The next day, she departed the area for refit at Midway.

Repaired, refueled, and replenished, BANG departed Midway on 25 October and returned to the same patrol area, but with SHAD (SS-235) and REDFISH (SS-395) as the other subs in the wolfpack. Typhoon weather hampered effective patrol during the early part of the fourth war patrol. Improved weather conditions on 22 November gave BANG the opportunity to attack a convoy initially reported by REDFISH. Between midnight and 0300 on the 23rd, all three subs conducted coordinated attacks on the convoy. BANG fired all 24 of her torpedoes in a series of seven surface attacks, sinking two cargo ships -- Sakae Maru and Amakusa Maru -- and unofficially sinking a minelayer escort and another freighter. Between the three submarines, the convoy was totally destroyed. BANG departed the area on 23 November and arrived at Pearl Harbor on 5 December for refit.

Following refit and a restful holiday period, the submarine departed Pearl on 2 January 1945 for Saipan. There, on 15 January, she joined with SPADEFISH (SS-411), ATULE (SS-403), and POMPON (SS-267) and headed for her fifth war patrol in the East China and Yellow Seas. Bad weather and a lack of targets created few opportunities for BANG to attack any enemy shipping. On 19 February, she departed the area without any kills. She arrived at Guam on the 24th and underwent refit alongside Proteus.

BANG's sixth and last patrol began on 25 March when she departed Guam for Luzon Straits. After ten days of patrol, she was ordered to take lifeguard station northeast of Formosa during strikes on northern Formosa and the southern Ryukyus in support of the Okinawa operation. On 21 April, BANG rescued a Navy pilot who had ditched his plane due to flak damage received in a strafing run.

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On 3 May, BANG departed the area on orders from the Force Commander. She refueled at Saipan and continued on to Pearl Harbor where she arrived on 18 May. After ten days of recreation and inspection of the boat, BANG was ordered to return to the United States and proceed to the Portsmouth Navy Yard for overhaul. She stopped at Hunter's Point, Calif., then continued through the Panama Canal and up the Atlantic Coast to Portsmouth, where she arrived on 22 June. The submarine was still in overhaul when the cessation of hostilities was announced.

Postwar records officially credited BANG with eight kills for 20,181 tons of shipping. Her own war patrol reports claim 15 ships sunk for 94,000 tons. Regardless of the numbers, BANG contributed substantially to the allied efforts to restrict Japanese shipping. Following completion of the overhaul, BANG operated out of New London in the early postwar period. She was placed out of commission on 12 February 1947 and remained in the reserve fleet.

On 1 February 1951, BANG was recommissioned, but she only spent 15 months on active duty with the Atlantic Fleet before being decommissioned on 15 May 1952 for conversion and modernization.

Following work at the Portsmouth Navy Yard, BANG was recommissioned on 4 October 1952 as a Guppy IIA submarine, the first of her type to be utilized by the U.S. Navy. Although her outward appearance remained the same, BANG's internal arrangements were improved and incorporated impressive advances in ordnance and electronic gear. The hull was streamlined and additional power added to the engineering plant to provide increased underwater speed.

After operating with the fleet in the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea for two years, BANG entered the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard for a routine overhaul in August 1954. Upon completion of the overhaul in December, BANG rejoined the Fleet with added modern equipment. She operated primarily in normal peacetime submarine patrols to train other submarines and surface antisubmarine units.

She left her homeport of New London in July 1957 to begin another overhaul in Portsmouth. When she came out in January 1958, she resumed peacetime operations, including a Midshipmen Training Cruise during the summer of 1958 to Spain and Denmark, a four-month deployment to the Mediterranean and Northern Europe in 1962, and participation in Operation "Springboard" in the Caribbean in 1966. Between these cruises and major yard work in 1961, 1962, 1966, 1967, and 1970, BANG provided training services to Basic Submarine School in New London as well as to units of the Atlantic Fleet.

Early in 1972, BANG was designated for transfer to the Spanish Navy on loan for five years. Following upkeep to lengthen her safe submerged operations limit, BANG returned to New London to train Spanish sailors prior to the transfer. On 1 October 1972, BANG was officially decommissioned, loaned to the Spanish government, and recommissioned as COSME GARCÍA S34. On 1 November 1974, BANG was stricken from the US Navy list and sold to the Spanish government where she served in their Navy until being decommissioned by Spain on September 30, 1982. BANG was sold for scrap in 1983.

BANG received six battle stars for her World War II service.