



USS Casimir Pulaski (SSBN-633)

The USS Casimir Pulaski was one of the “41 For Freedom”—a series of U.S. Navy Fleet Ballistic Missile Submarines (SSBNs) named for historical male figures who were recognized as proponents of freedom in America’s quest for independence. Named in honor of Count Casimir Pulaski (1748-1779), a Polish noble who served as a military commander in the American Revolution, the USS Pulaski was crafted by fitters and shipbuilders of Polish-American descent and holds the record for the fastest built warship in U.S. Navy history with a time period of 18 months from design to launch. The submarine’s motto “Per Tridentem Libertas”—peace through seapower—embodied its mission which was to function as a vessel of deterrence against the threat of nuclear war as it performed continuous patrols in the world’s oceans for 30 years.

Construction:

Equipped with 16 missile tubes and four torpedo tubes, the USS Pulaski employed a crew numbering 150 of the U.S. Navy Submarine Force’s top level men divided into two crews, Blue and Gold, as was commonplace with SSBNs. The Pulaski was ordered on July 20, 1961 and was laid down on January 12, 1963 by the Electric Boat Division of General Dynamics Corporation in Groton, Connecticut. Mrs. John Grounoski, the Postmaster General’s wife, christened the vessel for her launch on February 1, 1964 and she was commissioned shortly thereafter on August 14, 1964. Capable of speeds in excess of 20 knots, the Pulaski measured 425 feet in length and displaced 7,250 tons (surfaced) and 8,250 tons (submerged).

Naval History:

In commission from 1964-1994, the USS Pulaski was the 12th Lafayette Class ballistic missile submarine—the third class to comprise the “41 For Freedom”. Built according to high standards of craftsmanship, the Pulaski was recognized for its quality among other ships in its class and earned a reputation as one of the most reliable SSBNs in the Navy.

Outfitted with 16 Polaris A-3 submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), Pulaski’s first patrol was initiated from Rota, Spain in March of 1965. She would conduct an additional 20 patrols prior to returning to Groton, Connecticut for an overhaul which included refueling and a weapons upgrade to Poseidon C-3 missiles. At the time, Pulaski was only one of five submarines to be equipped with Poseidon SLBMs.

October 1971 marked the return of Pulaski to the fleet and resumption of patrols, most of which were based out of Holy Loch, Scotland.

After having completed a total of 52 patrols by early 1980, the Pulaski was sent to Newport News, Virginia for a period of three years for another weapons conversion and refueling. At this time, Trident

1 C-4 SLBMs were installed. Upon completion of the overhaul, Pulaski moved on to King's Bay, Georgia in June 1983.

Several operational tests and exercises were conducted over the course of the remainder of the decade. These included:

- Follow On Operational Test (June 1985): Four Trident SLBMs were successfully fired in an approved testing range in the Atlantic
- Concept of Operation Exercise (LANTCOOPEX 1-89) (May 1989): The first of its kind not held at an SSBN refit port, but rather at a remote site, this exercise consisted of both crews completely resupplying the ship, performing major maintenance and repairs, and conducting a torpedo reload all within a 54-hour time period and while under continual simulated attacks performed by special forces. The successful completion of this drill further supported the reputation that Pulaski and her crews had become famous for: reliability and efficiency.

The summer of 1989 was momentous for the Pulaski as she joined an elite group of SSBNs when she crossed the Equator, followed by a celebration in August of the 25th anniversary of her commissioning in Charleston, South Carolina.

Pulaski was decommissioned on March 7, 1994. After 30 years of service dedicated to a series of strategic patrols aimed at maintaining a balance of peace, Pulaski was completely disposed of by October 21, 1994 via the submarine recycling program located at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, Washington.