

**RECOGNIZING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CROSSING
OF THE NORTH POLE BY THE USS "NAUTILUS"**
United States House of Representatives
July 14, 2008

CONGRESSMAN JOE COURTNEY (CT-2): Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1067) recognizing the 50th anniversary of the crossing of the North Pole by the USS *Nautilus* (SSN 571) and its significance in the history of both our Nation and the world.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. Res. 1067

Whereas the USS *Nautilus* (SSN 571), built and launched at Electric Boat in Groton, Connecticut, on January 21, 1954, was the first vessel in the world to be powered by nuclear power;

Whereas the USS *Nautilus* overcame extreme difficulties of navigation and maneuverability while submerged under the polar ice, and became the first vessel to cross the geographic North Pole on August 3, 1958;

Whereas the USS *Nautilus* continued on her voyage and became the first vessel to successfully navigate a course across the top of the world;

Whereas the USS *Nautilus*, having claimed this historic milestone and returned home to Naval Submarine Base New London, continued to establish a series of naval records in her distinguished 25-year career, including being the first submarine to journey "20,000 leagues under the sea";

Whereas the USS *Nautilus* completed these significant and laudable achievements during a critical phase of the Cold War, providing a source of inspiration for Americans and raising the hopes of the Free World;

Whereas the USS *Nautilus* was the first naval vessel in peacetime to receive the Presidential Unit Citation for its meritorious efforts in crossing the North Pole;

Whereas Commander William R. Anderson of the United States Navy was awarded the Legion of Merit for his role in commanding the USS *Nautilus* during its historic voyage;

Whereas the USS *Nautilus* and its contribution to world history was praised by a range of American Presidents, including President Harry Truman, President Dwight

D. Eisenhower, President Lyndon B. Johnson, President Jimmy Carter, and President Bill Clinton; and

Whereas President Eisenhower described the voyage to the North Pole as a ``magnificent achievement" from which ``the entire free world would benefit": Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the historic significance of the journey to the North Pole undertaken by the USS *Nautilus*;

(2) commends the officers and crew of the USS *Nautilus* on the 50th anniversary of their magnificent achievement;

(3) recognizes the importance of the USS *Nautilus*' journey to the North Pole as not only a military and scientific accomplishment, but also in confirming America's longstanding interest in this vital region of the world;

(4) commends the role of the USS *Nautilus* and the United States Submarine Force in protecting the interests of the free world during the Cold War; and

(5) supports the continuing role of the United States Submarine Force in defending our Nation in the 21st century.

THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE: Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. *Courtney*) and the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. *Rogers*) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut.

COURTNEY: Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the resolution under consideration.

THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE: Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Connecticut?

There was no objection.

COURTNEY: Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, as the author of House Resolution 1067, I rise today in strong support, which honors an important anniversary not only to my district but to our Navy and our country.

In June 1958, the USS *Nautilus* (SSN 571), the world's first nuclear-powered submarine, departed Seattle as part of a top secret operation called Operation Sunshine. Unknown to many at the time, the *Nautilus* was embarking on a historic mission that took it on a course north to the arctic ice cap. At 11:15 p.m. on August 3, 1958, the boat became the first vessel to cross the geographic North Pole when Commander William Anderson, *Nautilus'* commanding officer, announced to his crew: “For the world, our country, and the Navy--the North Pole.”

This historic crossing of 90 North took place at a critical time in our Nation's history: the Cold War was heating up; the Soviet Union had seemingly laid claim to space with the launch of Sputnik; and many Americans and many around the world were looking for something to rally around, a sign that we were not ceding big ideas and notable achievements to others. *Nautilus'* sonar man, Al Charette, one of my constituents, described their journey as an effort to “out-Sputnik the Russians” – and they did it.

Few on board the *Nautilus* realized the scope of their achievement. They were simply sailors doing their job and doing it well. However, on reaching the North Pole, the *Nautilus* clearly demonstrated our undersea superiority and opened the region to decades of scientific research and exploration.

The crossing of the North Pole was praised by numerous world leaders at the time, being described by President Eisenhower as a magnificent achievement from which the entire free world would benefit. A ticker tape parade was held in honor of the crew in New York City. The *Nautilus* became the first naval vessel in peacetime to receive the Presidential Unit Citation for its meritorious efforts in crossing the North Pole, and Commander William R. Anderson was awarded the Legion of Merit.

In the 50 years since, the United States Navy and Coast Guard have repeatedly followed in the footsteps of this historic voyage. Dozens of U.S. submarines, in addition to specially fitted vessels and general aircraft of the United States Coast Guard, have journeyed to the top of the world in service to their country and to reinforce our Arctic presence. These submarines and their intrepid crews have broken through the surface, charted new courses, and expanded our knowledge of the Arctic.

I myself have had the unique opportunity to see this work firsthand when I traveled aboard the USS *Alexandria*, a Groton-based submarine, to observe the 2007 Ice Exercises in the Arctic Circle. While the technology and capabilities of our submarines has changed in the 50 years since the *Nautilus'* journey, the unmatched skill, the dedication and the talent of our submariners continues to allow our Nation to retain an important presence in this critical part of the world.

I just want to add, Mr. Speaker, having the opportunity again to be onboard a submarine under the ice just reinforces to me anyway the incredible accomplishment of the *Nautilus*. At the time, scientific opinion believed that it was physically impossible for a submarine to pass under the North Pole because of blockages by the ice and the shifting movements of the ice under the North Pole. This was a vessel which was completely and utterly alone

at the time. If there was any accident, if there was any problem, basically they were completely on their own and had no means of any type of rescue or support.

Built and launched at Electric Boat in Groton, Connecticut, on January 21, 1954, the *Nautilus* was the first vessel in the world to be powered by nuclear power. After claiming their historic milestone at 90 North and returning home to Naval Base New London, the *Nautilus* continued to establish a series of naval records in her distinguished 25-year career, including being the first submarine to journey 20,000 leagues under the sea.

The history and legacy of the *Nautilus* is not the only meaningful story to my congressional district but to the entire submarine force and to our Nation. Today, the *Nautilus* proudly serves as a museum where visitors from around the world come to learn about both her history-making service to our country and the role of the submarine force in securing our Nation. The *Nautilus* truly helped set the tone as the standard bearer for the submarine force, and achievements like the crossing of 90 North both proved the capabilities of our Nation at a critical time in our history and raised the bar for all who came after her.

Too often the critical achievements of our submarine force, our “silent service,” go unnoticed. The resolution today rightfully honors not only the officers and crew of the *Nautilus* but all those who played a part in her success, from the highest levels of our government, to the countless support ships and personnel who helped her along the way, and finally, the talented workforce at Electric Boat who gave us the first and finest submarine in our history.

I would like to enter two articles from the New London Day into the *Record*, one highlighting the opening of the new exhibit at the Submarine Force Museum in Groton and an editorial praising the achievements of the *Nautilus* and her crew.

I will also enter into the *Record* at a later date a list of the crew who journeyed to 90 North so that their names will be tied to the historic achievements in today's resolution.

I want to thank the Commander of the naval submarine base in New London, Captain Mark Ginda, who first planted the idea for this resolution in my staff's mind. And in addition, since I introduced H. Res. 1067, my office has received nearly 50 e-mails from individuals all across the country who served or whose loved ones served aboard the *Nautilus'* journey to 90 North. I want to thank them for their comments and their strong support.

In particular, I want to thank Captain Anderson's widow, who I met at the Farragut Square anniversary service for the submarine force earlier this year, who was just an incredibly gracious, wonderful person who has done everything that she can to make sure that the memory of this incredible achievement is brought forth to young people all across the country and is a strong supporter of our Navy.

And most especially, I want to recognize the veterans of the *Nautilus*' journey to 90 North that I am privileged to represent here in Congress. We are all proud of them and the legacy they have established for our submarine force and our Nation.

H. Res. 1067 is a much-deserved recognition of the important role the submarine force plays in the security of our Nation, and I urge its passage.

[From the New London Day, June 30, 2008]

50 Years Later, ``Nautilus'' Crew Still Feels It Could Repeat Polar Feat

By Jennifer Grogan

GROTON.--Former USS *Nautilus* crew members say it does not seem like 50 years have passed since they made their historic crossing of the North Pole under the ice cap, and that if the Navy would kindly give them another nuclear power plant, they could man their ship and head back out to sea.

``When you first join the Navy and look forward to 20 years and retirement, you say, `That's forever.' I put 28 in and it seems like it all happened just yesterday," said Al Charette, a sonarman on board for the North Pole trip. ``Every time we have a reunion, the crew thinks we should go out and get that ship underway. We're ready. We're still a crew."

``We remember each little feature of rigging it for dive. We feel very confident we could do that again," said Jack Kurrus, an engineman also on the trip. ``Wouldn't it be nice to go to sea one more time?"

Nautilus (SSN 571) left Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on July 23, 1958, under top-secret orders to conduct Operation Sunshine, the first crossing of the North Pole by a ship. About 10 months earlier, the Soviet Union had launched the first artificial satellite into space.

``We wanted to out-Sputnik the Russians," Charette said.

The crew of 116 men reached the North Pole at 11:15 p.m. on Aug. 3, 1958. They received the Presidential Unit Citation, the first ever issued in peacetime.

Charette, Kurrus and another former crew member, Joe Degnan, were at the U.S. Navy Submarine Force Museum Friday for the unveiling of a new exhibit that commemorates the 50th anniversary of their voyage. The exhibit, which includes artifacts and previously unpublished color images, runs through March 2009.

The successful 1958 trip was not the *Nautilus*' first attempt to cross from the Pacific to the Atlantic over the top of the world.

The crew was in the Arctic a year earlier to see how the submarine would operate under the ice. When the ship lost power to its gyrocompasses, Cmdr. William R. Anderson gave the order to turn back because there was no way to fix the ship's position.

“We spent 72 hours trying to find our way out and that was really, really scary,” Kurrus said.

Nautilus visited the Pacific in 1958, under the cover of teaching those in the Pacific Fleet about nuclear submarines. The submarine headed to the North Pole but encountered heavy ice and shallow water on the way. At one point, the 320-foot submarine had just a few feet of water over its sail and about 20 feet below the keel.

The crew returned to Pearl Harbor and waited a month for the ice to break up and melt before making another attempt to go to Portland, England, by way of the North Pole.

Kenneth Carr, who was then a lieutenant and later retired as a vice admiral, said it was “pretty routine on board” as they neared 90 degrees North on Aug. 3, 1958.

Carr said he asked the scientist on the trip, “how will we know we crossed the pole?” Dr. Waldo K. Lyon pointed to a machine with a green dot going around in a circle.

“He said the dot would stop and go in the other direction, and it did,” Carr said. “It wasn't anything dramatic.”

Once the *Nautilus* surfaced, Anderson sent a message to the Navy--“*Nautilus* 90 North.”

“I'm not sure we really appreciated the depth of what had just happened, and I think it was a long time before any of us realized it,” Charette said. “All we knew was when we ended up in England, everyone and their brother wanted an autograph.”

Those on board nicknamed themselves PANOPOs, an acronym from the phrase from the Pacific to the Atlantic via the North Pole. A “Welcome Home PANOPOs” banner is one of the artifacts on display in the new exhibit. Sarah Martin, who works at the Naval Submarine Base, was the graphic designer for the exhibit.

Several events are planned at the museum leading up to the anniversary, including a book signing and lecture by Alfred McLaren about the USS *Queenfish* on July 12 and by Don Keith about the *Nautilus* on Aug. 2, and a ceremony on the *Nautilus* Aug. 3.

The *Nautilus* Alumni Association is planning a reunion Sept. 25-28 at the Groton Inn and Suites.

[From the New London Day, July 9, 2008]

Wonder of ``Nautilus''

Even after 50 years, the feat of the men and their boat, USS *Nautilus*, is astounding. Crossing the North Pole under the polar ice cap in a nuclear-powered submarine constituted much more than the single event itself. The voyage unlocked the tremendous potential of submersibles powered in a way that they could travel indefinitely on a mission. And imaginations soared.

There has followed one generation after another of nuclear submarines, each more capable than its predecessors, but the pioneering brilliance of *Nautilus* remains a marker for naval historians. So, too, does the relentless pursuit of excellence that characterized Adm. Hyman G. Rickover's direction of the Navy's nuclear power program.

As reporter Jennifer Grogan's feature story June 30 revealed, the voyage also created an impenetrable bond among the crew and officers of *Nautilus*. At the time of the trip, few in civilian life quite understood the magnitude of the *Nautilus'* accomplishment. But succeeding classes of submarines have made clear the almost limitless capabilities of these boats.

The self-confidence and optimism displayed by the veterans in Ms. Grogan's story is a modern expression of the morale of the crew that ventured north in 1958. Those men and the imagination that conceptualized their voyage are a credit to the Navy's versatility and technical skills.

That is why it is especially fitting that the *Nautilus*, open to the public, resides here next to the Submarine Base, an interesting naval laboratory for all to see. If you haven't yet taken the time to pay a visit, we urge you to do so.

COURTNEY: Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

CONGRESSMAN MIKE ROGERS (AL-3): Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 1067, recognizing the 50th anniversary of the crossing of the North Pole by the USS *Nautilus* and its significance in the history of both our Nation and the world.

I want to commend my colleague on the House Armed Services Committee, Representative **JOE COURTNEY** of Connecticut, for sponsoring this important resolution, as well as the 20 other cosponsors, including Representative **ROSCOE BARTLETT**, the ranking member of the Seapower and Expeditionary Forces Subcommittee.

Submarines have been a central component of our Nation's naval forces for over a century. Congress authorized the construction of the *Nautilus* in July 1951. After merely 26 months of construction, unheard of by today's standards, the first nuclear-powered submarine--indeed, the first nuclear-powered vessel in the world--was commissioned into the United States Navy. Shortly thereafter, on the morning of January 17, 1955, *Nautilus'* first Commanding Officer, Commander Eugene P. Wilkinson, ordered the boat away from the pier and signaled the historic message, ``Underway on Nuclear Power." From that day forward, *Nautilus* continued to break all submerged speed and distance records. This included the historic mission to the North Pole on August 3, 1958.

In honoring the USS *Nautilus*, I note that now, just as 50 years ago, both quality and quantity matter with respect to our naval fleet. Although our current military conflicts have caused us to rightly focus on the health of our ground forces, it is again time for the Nation to have a strategic outlook on the future role of our naval forces. We should do our level best to maintain our maritime dominance and forward presence around the globe.

I will conclude by noting that the USS *Nautilus'* journey from the North Pole is historically significant and a magnificent scientific and military achievement. I am proud that the United States Navy has set an international standard of excellence.

So, Mr. Speaker, I call upon all Americans to pause and honor the service and sacrifice of not only those brave Americans who crossed the North Pole 50 years ago, but all those who have served and continue to serve in the defense of our Nation and its values.

I urge my colleagues to support this most worthy resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

COURTNEY: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for his strong support for this measure, and just for the record indicate that on August 3 the Nautilus Museum will be holding a formal event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of this, again, incredible scientific and historic achievement by the U.S. Navy. Again, I just want to salute the efforts of all those people involved and urge passage of the resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE: The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. *Courtney*) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1067.

The question was taken.

THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE: In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

COURTNEY: Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE: Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.