

U.S.S. George Washington

USS George Washington (SSBN-598), the world's first fleet ballistic missile submarine, was the second ship of the United States Navy to be named for George Washington, first President of the United States. She was launched on 9 June 1959 and commissioned on 30 December 1959 with Commander James B. Osborn in command of the Blue crew and Commander John L. From, Jr. in command of the Gold crew.

George Washington was originally named *USS Scorpion* (SSN-589). During construction, she was lengthened by the insertion of a 130-foot-long missile section and renamed (another hull under construction at the time received both the older name and hull number and became the ill-fated *USS Scorpion*), but inside the forward escape hatch remained a plaque bearing the name *USS Scorpion*. On 30 July 1960, she launched two missiles while submerged during her shakedown cruise. She then loaded her full complement of 16 Polaris missiles. She was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation, and embarked on her first deterrent patrol. Four years after her initial departure from Groton she put in to refuel, having cruised some 100,000 miles.

The *USS George Washington* was shifted to the Pacific Fleet and was home-ported at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. On 9 April 1981, the submarine surfaced underneath the *Nissho Maru* in the East China Sea about 110 miles south-southwest of Sasebo, Japan. The 2350-ton Japanese freighter sank in about 15 minutes. Two Japanese crewmen were lost; thirteen were rescued. The submarine suffered minor damage to her sail. The accident strained U.S. - Japanese relations a month before a meeting between the Japanese Prime Minister and President Ronald Reagan. Japan criticized the United States for taking over 24 hours to notify Japanese authorities, and demanded to know what the boat was doing surfacing only about twenty miles outside Japan's territorial waters. Neither the submarine nor a P-3 Orion circling overhead made any attempt to rescue the Japanese crew. A preliminary report released a few days later stated that the crews had detected a ship nearby, but neither the submarine nor the aircraft realized that the ship was in distress. As is its standard policy, the U.S. Government refused to reveal what the submarine was doing close to Japan, or whether it was armed with nuclear missiles. (The standard response all modern American submariners are taught to give to such questions is "I can neither confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons aboard this vessel.") The Navy accepted responsibility for the incident, and relieved and reprimanded the *George Washington's* commanding officer and officer of the deck. On 31 August the Navy released its final report, concluding that the accident resulted from a set of coincidences, compounded by errors on the part of some members of the submarine crew.

In 1983 her missiles were unloaded at Bangor, Washington, and then she left Pearl Harbor for the last time and transited the Panama Canal back to the Atlantic and to New London. She was decommissioned on 24 January 1985, was struck from the Naval Vessel Registry on 30 April 1986, and was scheduled for disposal through the Ship-Submarine recycling program at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. Her sail was removed prior to disposal and now resides at the Submarine Force Library and Museum, New London, Connecticut. The "Georgefish" made 55 deterrent patrols in both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans in her 25-year career. [<http://en.wikipedia.org>]

