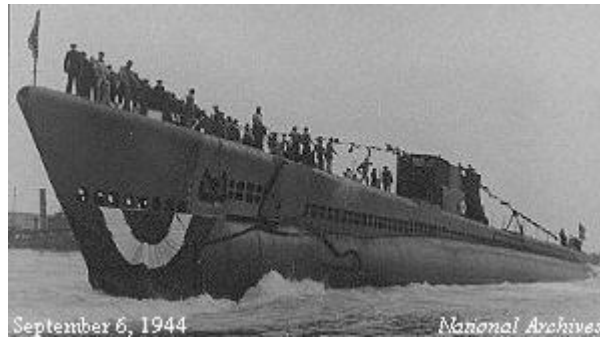


History of USS *Torsk* (SS-423)

For many years it was customary to name U.S. submarines for fish, although this custom no longer exists. World War II submarines were named for everything that swam, from *Albacore* to *Whale*. The *Torsk* got its name from a gadoid fish, allied to the codfish, which is found in the North Atlantic. The name *Torsk* is Norwegian in origin.

Building and Commissioning

USS *Torsk* (SS-423) was built at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The keel was laid on 7 June 1944. The submarine was launched on 6 September 1944, sponsored by Mrs. Allen B. Reed. *Torsk* was placed in commission on 16 December 1944 with Commander Bafford E. Lewellen, U.S. Navy, as her first commanding officer.



Launching of USS Torsk 6 September 1944

On 31 December 1944 she put to sea for the first time. After training off the East Coast, she sailed to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Next she proceeded to Panama and from there to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii where she arrived on 23 March 1945. She sailed for the Pacific war zone on her first war patrol on 15 April 1945.

War Patrol No. 1 15 April 1945 to 16 June 1945

Torsk's primary assignment on this, her first, patrol was to serve as lifeguard for B-29s making raids on the Japanese empire. During this patrol, the *Torsk*

took station off Kii Suido, and later off Honshu. Part of this time she operated with submarines *Sandlance*, *Cero*, and *Guardfish*. By that time, naval operations against the Japanese merchant marine had sunk so many ships that submarines found very few targets. Only two small ships were contacted, but were not attacked.

War Patrol No. 2 17 July 1945 to 15 August 1945

After clearing Hawaii, *Torsk* sailed to Guam for a short stop. Then she went on to the Sea of Japan. On 11 August she rescued seven Japanese seamen whose ship had been sunk by a U.S. plane. On 12 August she had her first combat action when she fired two torpedoes at a small freighter. The ship appeared to be damaged, but postwar investigation failed to show that she sank.

The next day *Torsk* torpedoed and sank a small cargo ship, the *Kaiho Maru*. The following day, 14 August, she completed her wartime career by sinking two more small ships, *Coast Defense Vessel No. 13* and *Coast Defense Vessel No. 47*. This action earned *Torsk* the distinction of firing the last torpedo and sinking the last Japanese combatant ships of World War II as the "Cease fire" order went out to all U.S. forces on 15 August. The combined tonnage of the three ships sunk on her second patrol was 2,473 tons.

Postwar Operations 1945-1954

After patrolling off Japan for a few days, *Torsk* headed east on 9 September 1945. She made brief stops in Guam and Hawaii, and on 20 September cleared the Panama Canal en route to New London, Connecticut, where she arrived on 15 October 1945. For the next ten years *Torsk* was assigned to the Submarine Squadron 8 at the Submarine School in New London, where she trained officers and enlisted men for submarine duty. This assignment earned her the title of the "divingest" submarine in the U.S. Navy as she made dives several times a day in the course of her training activities.

In the course of her training duties, *Torsk* operated along the entire Atlantic coast of the United States and Canada, as well as the Caribbean. She operated in the Mediterranean briefly from 9 September to 14 November 1950, and again from 26 August to 27 November 1952. During these periods, she

participated in joint training exercises with the British, Italian, French, and Turkish navies.

Fleet Snorkel Conversion

On 6 November 1951 *Torsk* returned to the Portsmouth Navy Yard for conversion to a Fleet Snorkel submarine. The snorkel, developed by the German Navy, is a long tube that can be extended above the submarine allowing her to take in fresh air for the diesel engines. This means she can run submerged on diesel power making greater speed than if she used the batteries to run her electric motors. She can also charge her batteries while submerged, thus extending her time below the surface from approximately 24 hours to several days. As part of the conversion, she received a streamlined “sail” that contains the snorkel intake and exhaust masts, as well as the periscopes and various radar and radio antennae.



Torsk after Fleet Snorkel Conversion

1955-1968 Operations

On 1 July 1955 *Torsk* joined Submarine Squadron Six based at Norfolk, Virginia where she continued her training activities by providing services to anti-submarine forces developing new ASW techniques.

In the mid 1950's, the Regulus Missile system was under development. Regulus was a jet powered, radio controlled pilotless aircraft that could carry a conventional or nuclear warhead. It could be carried on surface ships such as cruisers, and in specially designed hangers aboard submarines. The submarines would surface to launch the missile from rails on their main deck. In addition to several submarines outfitted as launch boats, additional units of the Atlantic

and Pacific fleet were selected as guidance boats for the Regulus system. These boats would be positioned along the flight path of the Regulus missile, and would control the missile's flight while it was in their designated area.

Torsk was one of the Atlantic submarines assigned to this duty, and entered the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard in late 1955 for modifications and equipment upgrades to allow her to control the missiles. She participated in various training exercises over the next few years, until the Regulus system was discontinued in the early 1960's.

Beginning on 19 August 1957 *Torsk* took part in NATO exercises operating with submarines of the Royal Navy. In 1959 she took part in the ceremonies marking the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway during which time she made an inland cruise through the Great Lakes to Milwaukee, Chicago, and Buffalo. More than a hundred thousand visitors had their first look at the submarine during the trip as they trooped through *Torsk's* cramped compartments.

She was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for operations during the 1960 Lebanon Crisis, operating as a unit of the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean Sea. She took part in the 1962 naval blockade of Cuba established by the United States during the Russian missile crisis. During the operation, *Torsk* sent boarding parties to inspect some Soviet merchant ships. For this action she won the Navy Commendation Medal.

During the mid 1960's, *Torsk* continued to provide Anti-Submarine training services to the surface fleet. She also made several cruises to places such as Ireland in 1965, and the Mediterranean in 1966.

On 4 March 1968 *Torsk*, at the ripe old age of 24, was decommissioned at the Boston Navy Yard and assigned to the U.S. Naval Reserve as a pierside training submarine at the Navy Yard in Washington, DC. By that time she had made 11,884 dives, a very high number by today's standards.. Modern submarines stay down for as long as 60 days when they dive whereas *Torsk* has very limited underwater endurance, and as a training submarine she customarily made several dives in a day.

On September 26, 1972 she was transferred to the State of Maryland, and on May 1, 1973 *Torsk* was established as the Maryland Submarine Memorial, and berthed in Baltimore. Today, she is moored in the Inner Harbor along with the Coast Guard Cutter Taney, and the lightship Chesapeake.

Torsk is one of two surviving Tench class Fleet Submarines in the United States. The other is [USS Requin \(SS-481\)](#) in Pittsburgh, PA. Several other submarines of the class were sold to foreign countries, and may (though not likely) still be in service.

