

ML.68.Watching the Submarines

Recent (March 2023) news indicates the Russians are at it again, bolstering their nuclear submarine presence off our shores. Every such move re-jiggers our strategic configuration, and our application of 55th Wing resources. Some comments from those who have been there since the Cuban missile crisis:

Reg Urschler to Joe Kuhn:

Sound familiar? Were they Russian "Echoes" or "Foxtrots" – or both – who patrolled the East Coast, changing the daily status of our SAC Alert Birds response timing as a result. We watched closely in the SAC Underground Command Post circa seventies. I'm curious to what extent SOSUS has been upgraded: is it capable of locating the "quiet nuclear attack subs," or has a new system been required to counter the coming threat?

Joe Kuhn to Reg Urschler:

It sure does sound familiar! I spent the better part of 30 years in the ASW business as you know. It really hit home as a young S2F driver back in the Cuban Missile Crisis in 62. I tracked a Foxtrot most of a dark night and got him to surface after three hours of tracking. I took it in stride as important but routine until 1995 when the CO of that Foxtrot wrote his life story and confessed that he was desperately requesting permission to launch his tactical nuke torpedo at a Navy aircraft carrier before the ASW aircraft that was dropping depth charges would sink him!

I'm out of touch now but fear we have let the ASW mission drop off the "critical" role it played for so many decades. Like you, I hope that SOSUS is still in its successful role and that the P-8 can fulfill the air mission ... but I don't believe we have the quantity needed in aircraft or surface ASW ships.

[Reg Urschler Brig Gen, Ret; Joe Kuhn Capt, USN, Ret]