

U.S. sub docks after fatality

From CNN.com, 10 Jan 05

A damaged U.S. nuclear submarine that ran aground three days ago in a deadly accident has docked at a U.S. naval base in Guam, a spokesman with the U.S. Pacific Fleet (USPF) said.

According to Lt. j.g. Adam Clampitt, the USS San Francisco was escorted to port by a variety of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard vessels.

The submarine did "suffer some external damage," he said.

"The injured sailors are being treated at a U.S. military medical facility on Guam and will be transferred to other facilities -- possibly Pearl Harbor in Hawaii or Okinawa in Japan -- as necessary," Clampitt said.

According to a military statement, the injuries included "broken bones, lacerations, bruises and a back injury."

Twenty-four soldiers were injured in Friday's accident when the sub ran aground underwater about 350 miles (560 km) south of Guam -- the nearest land mass -- while it was conducting submerged operations, USPF said.

There were 137 crew on board at the time of the accident.

"Machinist Mate 2nd Class Joseph Allen Ashley, 24, of Akron, Ohio, died Sunday from injuries suffered during the accident," Clampitt said.

"The Navy continues to offer its sincerest condolences and prayers to the family and friends of Petty Officer Ashley."

Navy sources said the submarine was en route to Brisbane, Australia for a port visit at the time of the accident.

There was no damage to the sub's nuclear reactor, according to Clampitt.

The accident happened Friday and a Navy medical team was immediately dispatched to the remote location.

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Local man dies after sub accident

Manchester native hit head on vessel's pump

By Craig Webb, Akron Beacon Journal, 10 Jan 05

A Manchester man serving in the Navy has died of injuries suffered when the attack submarine USS San Francisco ran aground Friday about 350 miles from its home port in Guam.

Dan Ashley said he and his wife received the news around 2 a.m. Sunday when two uniformed Navy personnel came to their home to tell them their 24-year-old son, Joseph Ashley, died aboard the nuclear submarine while medics worked to prepare him for transport to a military hospital.

Dan Ashley said he was told that his son hit his head on a pump when the nuclear submarine ran aground and never regained consciousness. Nineteen other sailors were hurt in the mishap.

Joseph Ashley, a machinist's mate second class, had been in the Navy four years of a five-year stint and had recently decided to re-enlist for another four years.

Dan Ashley, who also once served in the Navy, said his son died doing what he loved. "This is what he wanted to do," he said.

Joseph Ashley joined the Navy shortly after graduating from Manchester High School in 1999. During high school he was a drummer in the marching band and was active in the Boy Scouts.

He had been assigned to the USS San Francisco for two years when it ran aground on Friday as the 360-foot submarine attempted to make its way back to its home port in Guam.

Dan Ashley said his son's body is expected to be returned to Ohio by military escort on Wednesday. The family is making plans for a memorial service to be held later this week in Canal Fulton.

The family plans to bury Joseph Ashley near Spencer, W.Va., Dan Ashley explained, because they own a cabin there and his son ``always loved being there."

The family's grief is great, Dan Ashley said, but they are being comforted by their friends and relatives.

``We're just anxious now to get him home," he said.

U.S.S. San Francisco returns, Navy releases late sailor's identity

by Ken Wetmore, KUAM News Monday, January 10, 2005

The U.S.S. San Francisco is back home after a deadly crash at sea. The nuclear submarine ran aground Saturday afternoon about 350 miles to the south of Guam. The San Francisco limped into Apra Harbor under her own power at about 3 this afternoon.

While the damage from Saturday's grounding is not immediately evident, there did appear to be a forward list as she sailed past the breakwater. The true damages though are the ones that you couldn't see.

Below decks 23 sailors have injuries ranging from broken bones to lacerations to whiplash, and a number of the rest of the crew have scrapes and bruises. And most tragically, 24-year-old Machinist Mate 2nd Class Joseph Allen Ashley lost his life.

Pacific Submarine Support Force spokesperson Lt. Commander Jeff Davis says the petty officer, whose hometown is listed as Akron, Ohio, was standing watch in an engineering compartment when the accident happened and sustained significant trauma to the head, resulting in his death on Sunday. The Navy spokesperson says the accident has impacted the submarine community.

"This is felt in submarines all over the world, and not just our Navy but a lot of the foreign navy's we work with are grieving over; it was a terrible tragedy and it was a terrible accident and we're going to do everything we can to make sure it never happens again," he told KUAM News.

While Machinist Mate 2nd Class Ashley has no relatives on Guam, a number of the other crew members do and their families lined the Sierra Dock at Apra Harbor to see their loved ones arrive. Lt. Commander Davis says the families have been kept up to speed with how their loved ones are doing and says the Navy will not just tend those who were physically injured. Said Lt. Commander Davis, "Anytime you have a tragedy of this nature aboard a submarine we want to do everything we can to take care of our family, our Navy family aboard and we have chaplains, we have people who are trained counselors who will be taken aboard and be given a chance to meet with the crew and help them through this grieving process."

Details on how the accident occurred are still sketchy. While Commander Davis says the accident occurred about 350 miles south of Guam in the Caroline Ridge, he would not release the speed the submarine was traveling at, or its depth. And Commander Davis wouldn't speculate on how an accident like this could happen. He was emphatic however, when speaking of what the sub hit.

When asked if there was any indication that it might have been another submarine or another vessel, Commander Davis said, "No...there's absolutely no reason to believe that it was anything other than a geographical feature under water."

This afternoon Lt. Commander Davis said the Navy plans to conduct a thorough investigation so that "a tragedy like this never happens again." The Caroline Ridge is east of Palau and Yap, intersecting the Yap Trench from the east, and consisting of a chain of seamounts.