

# USS Washington (SSN 787) Awarded Presidential Unit Citation



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The Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Washington (SSN 787) prepares to moor pierside during the boat's homecoming at Naval Station Norfolk, Dec. 15, 2023. Washington returns following a deployment that supported national security interests and maritime security operations at sea. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Cameron Stoner)

NORFOLK, Va. – The Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Washington (SSN 787) was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation (PUC) for “outstanding performance in action while conducting operations within U.S. SIXTH Fleet” during their recent six-month deployment.

Capt. Timothy Poe presented the award to Washington's crew on behalf of the President during the submarine's change of command ceremony July 19 at Naval Station Norfolk.

“The award of the Presidential Unit Citation to the USS Washington is a profound honor, signifying the crew's exceptional dedication and strategic impact,” said Vice Adm. Rob Gaucher, commander, Submarine Forces. “Their work in challenging, high risk environments completing vital national level missions demonstrates the key role our submarines play in ensuring maritime security and global stability.”

The PUC is awarded to any U.S. military unit that has distinguished itself by outstanding performance and heroism in action against enemy forces and is the highest unit award in the Department of the Defense.

During Washington's deployment, the submarine, also known as the Blackfish, completed three demanding missions vital to national security that resulted in obtaining sensitive and unique intelligence information, where it executed the Chief of Naval Operations' maritime strategy by supporting national security interests and maritime security operations.

"The men and women onboard BLACKFISH are justifiably proud of this award and of joining the distinguished list of previous recipients," said Cmdr. Keith Turnbull, Washington's commanding officer. "It goes without saying that the crew could not have accomplished what they did without the immense efforts of our support staffs ashore, including the training staff in Norfolk and several other organizations."

The crew's superb planning, discipline, and material management ensured the submarine remained on task through long periods without readily accessible support.

"The crew spent countless hours on training, maintenance, and certification to ensure BLACKFISH was ready to execute all tasking," said Senior Chief Machinist's Mate (Auxiliary) Austin Gilbert, Washington's chief of the boat. "While deployed, their resiliency was crucial to their success and the shipmates fully embody the meaning of true undersea warriors. Fear the BLACKFISH!"

Additionally, Washington garnered more days on station than any east coast deployment on record, had the first chief Intelligence Specialist to earn the submarine warfare qualification, known as 'dolphins', and had the most women ever deployed on a fast-attack submarine, including one chief

petty officer.

Washington steamed more than 37,000 nautical miles with the crew supporting diplomatic relationships by conducting port visits in Faslane, Scotland, and Grottsund, Norway. In recognition of the Blackfish's exceptional service and dedication during operations in the strategic Arctic region, the Washington was awarded the newly announced Arctic Service Medal.

Forty-four enlisted Sailors and five officers earned their submarine warfare qualification, and 10 officers promoted to their next rank.

Fast-attack submarines are multi-mission platforms enabling five of the six Navy maritime strategy core capabilities – sea control, power projection, forward presence, maritime security, and deterrence. They are designed to excel in anti-submarine warfare, anti-ship warfare, strike warfare, special operations, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, irregular warfare and mine warfare. Fast-attack submarines project power ashore with special operations forces and Tomahawk cruise missiles in the prevention or preparation of regional crises.

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The Virginia-class submarine is 377 feet long and 34 feet wide, and weighs about 7,900 tons when submerged. Underwater, it can reach speeds in excess of 25 knots.