

USS DRUM – Full History

USS DRUM (SS-228) Submarine was launched May 12, 1941, by Portsmouth Navy Yard, New Hampshire, and sponsored by Mrs. Thomas Holcomb. She was commissioned November 1, 1941, with CDR R. H. Rice in command.

USS DRUM arrived at Pearl Harbor from the East Coast on April 1, 1942. After a voyage to Midway, she cleared Pearl Harbor on April 14, 1942, action bound on her first war patrol. Cruising off the coast of Japan, she sank the seaplane Tender MIZUHO and three cargo ships in the month of May, returning to Pearl Harbor on June 12 to refit.

The DRUM's second war patrol, which she made in the waters between Truk and Kavieng from July 10 to September 2, found her efforts frustrated by poor torpedo performance, but she damaged one freighter before returning to Midway to refit.

The submarine sailed from Midway on September 23, 1942 on her third war patrol, bound for the eastern coast of Kyushu. On October 8 she contacted a convoy of four freighters, and defied the air cover guarding the ships, sinking one of the cargo ships before bombs forced her to dive deep. The next day she underwent a severe depth charging from several escorts after she attacked a cargo ship. Later in the patrol, she sank one of three air-escorted cargo ships and damaged at least two more ships, before completing her patrol at Pearl Harbor on November 8.

On her fourth patrol, between November 29 and January 24, 1943, the DRUM carried out the demanding task of planting mines in heavily traveled Bungo Suido. On December 12 she contacted an aircraft carrier, RYUHO, with a full deck load of planes. Although taking water in her forward due to faulty valves, the DRUM launched torpedoes at this choice target, scoring two hits and causing the carrier to list so far that her flight deck became completely visible. Also visible was a destroyer bearing down and splashes that indicated the DRUM's periscope was under fire. As the submarine dove, she lost depth control and her port shaft stopped turning. As she made emergency repairs, she underwent two waves of depth charging. When she surfaced several hours later to see what had become of her prey, an airplane forced her down again. During this patrol, the DRUM damaged a large tanker, another choice target.

After a thorough overhaul at Pearl Harbor, the DRUM made her fifth war patrol between March 24 and May 13, 1943, searching the waters south of Truk after she had made a photographic reconnaissance of Nauru. She sank two freighters in April, then refitted at Brisbane, Australia.

Her sixth war patrol, between June 7 and July 26, found her north of the Bismarck Archipelago, sinking a cargo-passenger ship on June 17, 1943. Again, she put into Brisbane to replenish.

On August 16 she sailed on her seventh war patrol. Adding to her already impressive list of sinkings, she sent a cargo ship to the bottom on August 31 and patrolled off New Georgia during the landings there. She put into Tulagi from September 29 to October 2 to repair her gyro compass and then sailed on to Brisbane.

The DRUM sailed November 2, 1943 for her eighth war patrol, coordinated with the landings at Cape Torokina. Patrolling between the Carolines and New Ireland, she sank a cargo ship on November 17 and on November 22 she attacked a convoy of four freighters. The convoy's escorts delivered three depth charge attacks. The DRUM was damaged heavily and was ordered to Pearl Harbor. The DRUM returned to the area on December 5. After inspection showed the conning tower needed to be replaced, she sailed to the West Coast for repairs.

Returning to Pearl Harbor on March 29, 1944, the DRUM sailed 11 days later on her ninth war patrol, during which she patrolled the waters around Iwo Jima and other islands in the Bonins. No worthy targets were contacted, but a reconnaissance of Chichi Jima gained valuable intelligence for bombardment of the island later by surface ships.

The submarine refitted at Majuro between May 31 and June 24, then sailed on her tenth war patrol to give lifeguard service for raids on Yap and Palau. She sank a 125-ton sampan on July 29, capturing two prisoners with whom she arrived with at Pearl Harbor on August 14.

She sailed for Surigao Strait September 9 on her 11th war patrol, and after two weeks in the Strait with no contact, was ordered north to the South China Sea. Here she patrolled during the Leyte landings and the decisive Battle for Leyte Gulf, sinking three cargo ships bound to reinforce Japanese troops fighting to keep the Philippines. While bound for Majuro for refit, the DRUM searched east of Luzon Strait for downed aviators.

The DRUM replenished and made repairs at Majuro between November 8 and December 7, 1944 and then sailed on her 12th war patrol for the Nansei Shoto. Only one contact was made during this patrol, from which she returned to Guam on January 17, 1945.

During her 13th war patrol, from February 11 to April 2, 1944 the DRUM played a part in the assaults on both Iwo Jima and Okinawa. She provided lifeguard service for air strikes on the Nansei Shoto and the Japanese home islands, as bases were neutralized before both invasions. Returning to Pearl Harbor, the DRUM sailed on to the West Coast for an overhaul.

After training at Pearl Harbor, she cleared Midway on August 9 on what would have been her 14th war patrol. She proceeded to Sai Pan at the end of hostilities, and from there sailed for Pearl Harbor, the Canal Zone, and Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

The USS DRUM was decommissioned on February 16, 1946. On March 18, 1947 she began service at Washington, D.C., to members of the Naval Reserve in the Potomac River Naval Command. The USS DRUM continued her service through 1967. She was in the inactive fleet at Norfolk, Virginia, from 1967 to 1969.

Of the DRUM's 13 war patrols, all save the second, ninth, and last two, were designated "successful". She received a total of 12 battle stars for World War II service. She is credited with sinking 15 ships, a total of 80,580 tons of enemy shipping, the eighth highest of all U.S. submarines in total Japanese tonnage sunk.

The USS DRUM was donated to the USS ALABAMA Battleship Commission on April 14, 1969. She was towed to Mobile arriving May 18, 1969. The DRUM was dedicated and opened to the public on July 4, 1969.

In 2001, DRUM was moved onto land for permanent display, the project winning several engineering awards.

USS DRUM (SS-228) is the oldest American submarine on display in the world.

