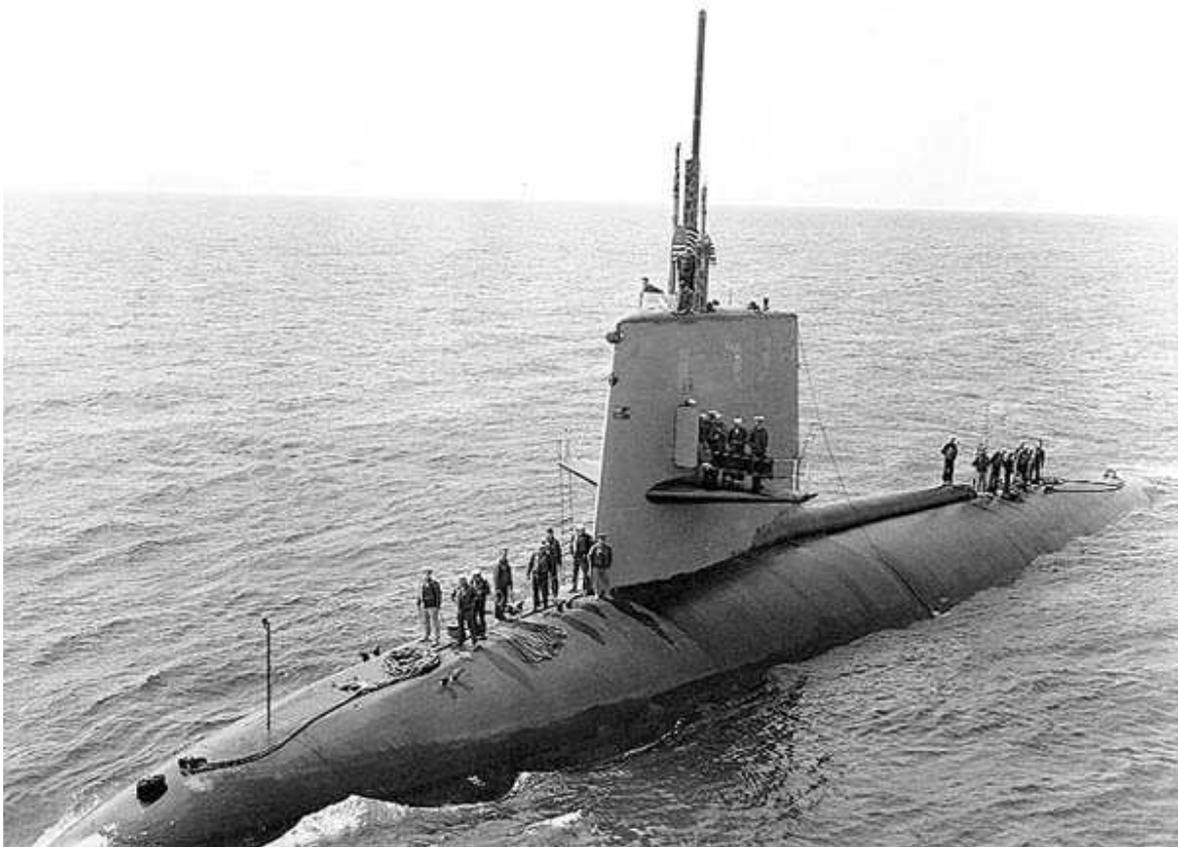


# Buried At Sea

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History of Civilization II

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This was a great article covering the disappearance of the USS Scorpion (SSN 598). The USS Scorpion (SSN-589) was a Skipjack-class nuclear submarine of the United States Navy, and the sixth ship of the U.S. Navy to carry that name. It is also one of only two nuclear submarines the U.S. Navy has ever lost.

May 17, 1968 was the last time anyone saw or heard from the Scorpion. The submarine sank five days later. Shortly before midnight, the Scorpion was given a top secret message to change course and head for the Canary Islands, where a collection of Soviet ships caught the Navy's attention. A half-hour later, she surfaced in Rota, Spain to put off two of her crew, for medical and personal reasons, to a tug that would take them to the US submarine base.

The USS Scorpion sank for unknown reasons, with 99 aboard on May 22, 1968 and an immediate search was initiated unofficially 24 hours after she went missing. But for some reason, the official declaration of her absence was not made until 4 days later. Even major officials in the Pentagon were unaware of her loss until 5 days passed. Unfortunately, the families of those lost were not told of their loved ones' deaths until after Scorpion failed to show up. They all gathered at her berth, in the cold rain eagerly awaiting her

arrival that would not happen. By June 5, 1968, the Scorpion and her crew were presumed lost.

The search continued and at the end of October of 1968, the US Navy's oceanographic research ship Mizar located large pieces of Scorpion's hull in over 10,000 feet of water, about 400 miles west of the Azores. The Navy immediately dispatched other vessels, including the submersible Trieste, to collect photographs of the wreckage. Photographs of the wreck were of a poor quality and not very helpful in determining the source of the sinking.

The wreckage consisted of three main pieces, the forward hull; the sail, and the engineering-hull. There are many theories surrounding the sinking of the Scorpion. At only ten years old, she was not considered old by naval standards and her age was never considered a factor in her sinking.

The Navy convened a formal Court of Inquiry to investigate the loss. Although the court produced three possible scenarios for the sinking, it concluded that the most likely cause was that a runaway Mark 37 torpedo accidentally became armed and struck the submarine. In 1970, a different Navy panel disavowed the Court of Inquiry findings, but because of underwater recordings of the event, some Navy officials still believe the court's findings are accurate.