United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

received

date entered

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic USS Torsk (SS-423)

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Pier IV Pratt Street ___ not for publication

city, town Baltimore ___ vicinity of

state Maryland code 24 county Independent City code 510

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	X public	X occupied	___ agriculture	X museum
___ building(s)	___ private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	___ religious
X object	___ in process	X yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Baltimore Maritime Museum

street & number Pier IV Pratt Street

city, town Baltimore ___ vicinity of state Maryland

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Department of the Navy

street & number Naval Sea Systems Command

city, town Washington state DC 20362

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ___ no

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	N/A original site
X good	___ ruins	X altered	___ moved date _____
___ fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

USS Torsk (SS-423) was built by the U.S. Navy at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. She was launched on September 6, 1944, and was placed in commission on December 16, 1944.

USS Torsk is a fleet-type submarine of the Tench class. The Tench class were virtual copies of the Gato and Balao classes; however, they were more strongly built than the Gato/Balao classes and had a better internal layout, which increased their displacement by about 35-40 tons. The deck of the boat is made of teakwood, and the exterior is painted black.

Specific ship data concerning USS Torsk is:

Length: 311 feet Displacement: 1,800 tons surface / 2,500 tons submerged

Beam: 27 feet Draft: 17 feet

Speed: 20 knots surface / 9 knots submerged

Design Depth: 400 feet Crew: 8 Officers 74 Enlisted

Armament: Ten torpedo tubes, 6 forward and 4 aft, with 14 reloads, total 24 torpedos, various combinations of antiaircraft guns

USS Torsk was a pre-snorkel submarine operating underwater on batteries, and powered by a diesel electric system. In 1951 USS Torsk was converted to a snorkel-equipped Guppy submarine that allowed the boat to operate her diesel engines underwater. During this conversion all the boat's exterior guns were removed and the conning tower was enclosed by a new sail casing designed to reduce underwater water resistence.

USS Torsk is in good condition, and aside from the addition of the snorkel and the exterior changes, retains much of her World War II integrity.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below				
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	___ architecture	___ education	X military	___ social/
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	humanitarian
___ 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
X 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

Specific dates 1944-1945 **Builder Architect** Portsmouth Naval Shipyard

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

In the conflict against Japan in World War II, the role and importance of the submarine forces of the United States cannot be overestimated. American submarines sank more than 600,000 tons of enemy warships and more than 5,000,000 tons of merchant shipping, thus destroying much of Japan's ocean commerce. This was accomplished by a force that never numbered more than two percent of naval personnel engaged in the war. The American submarine war against Japan created a blockade that denied her the oil, iron ore, food, and other raw materials she needed to continue to fight. By 1945 this submarine war made it all but impossible for Japanese ships to sail the ocean. Without this commerce and the raw materials it supplied to her war effort, Japan found it impossible to continue the war outside of the homeland.[1]

USS Torsk represents U.S. Submarine forces that fought against Japan in World War II for the following reasons:

1. USS Torsk is a World War II Tench class submarine. The Tench class was a late World War II submarine design that represented the continued attempt by the U.S. Navy to improve on the previously successful Gato/Balao classes. Only ten Tench class submarines, including USS Torsk, were commissioned in time to see service in the Pacific during World War II.

2. USS Torsk conducted two war patrols and sank 3 Japanese ships totaling 2,473 tons. USS Torsk was awarded two battle stars for her World War II service.

3. USS Torsk is credited with firing the last torpedoes and sinking the last Japanese combatant ships of World War II, when on August 14, 1945, she sank the Japanese Coast Defense Vessel No. 13 and Coast Defense Vessel No. 47. With the sinking of these two vessels the U.S. Navy completed its mission, begun on December 7, 1941, to sweep the oceans of Japanese merchant shipping and warships.

4. USS Torsk is in good condition and, although altered as a Guppy submarine, retains much of her World War II integrity.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Drew Middleton, Submarine--The Ultimate Navy Weapon-Its Past, Present, and Future (Chicago, Illinois: Playboy Press, 1976), pp. 109-12.

Edwin P. Hoyt, Submarine at War--The History of the American Silent Service (New York: Stein and Day, 1983), pp. 297-98.

Richard H. O'Kane, Clear the Bridge (New York: Bzantam Books, 1981), pp. 465-67.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alden, John A. The Fleet Submarine in the U.S. Navy--A Design and Construction History. Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1979.

Blair, Clay, Jr. Silent Victory--The U.S. Submarine War Against Japan. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1975.

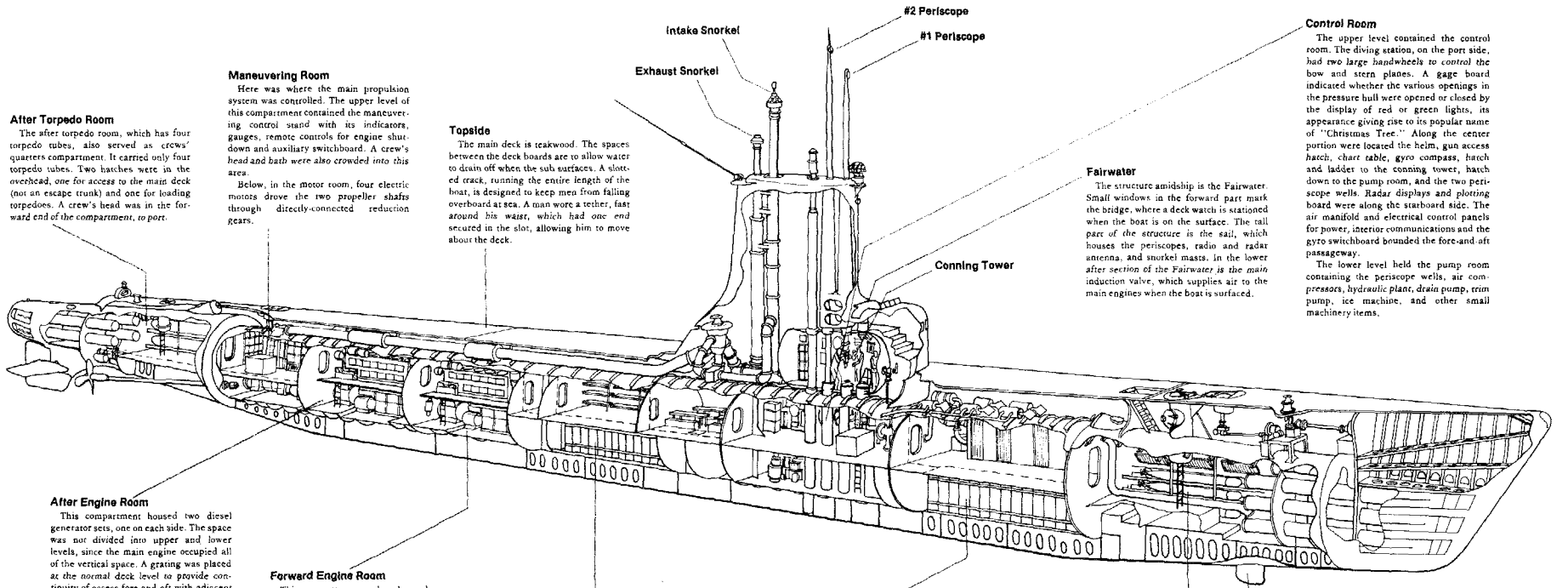
Hoyt, Edwin P. Submarine at War--The History of the American Silent Service. New York: Stein and Day, 1983.

Middleton, Drew. Submarine--The Ultimate Naval Weapon--Its Past, Present, and Future. Chicago, Illinois: Playboy Press, 1976.

O'Kane, Richard. Clear the Bridge. New York: Bantam Books, 1981.

Roscoe, Theodore. United States Submarine Operations in World War II. Annapolis, Maryland: United States Naval Institute, 1965.

Tench Class Fleet Submarine—USS TORSK (SS423)



After Torpedo Room

The after torpedo room, which has four torpedo tubes, also served as crews' quarters compartment. It carried only four torpedo tubes. Two hatches were in the overhead, one for access to the main deck (not an escape trunk) and one for loading torpedoes. A crew's head was in the forward end of the compartment, to port.

Maneuvering Room

Here was where the main propulsion system was controlled. The upper level of this compartment contained the maneuvering control stand with its indicators, gauges, remote controls for engine shutdown and auxiliary switchboard. A crew's head and bath were also crowded into this area.

Below, in the motor room, four electric motors drove the two propeller shafts through directly-connected reduction gears.

Topside

The main deck is teakwood. The spaces between the deck boards are to allow water to drain off when the sub surfaces. A slotted crack, running the entire length of the boat, is designed to keep men from falling overboard at sea. A man wore a tether, fast around his waist, which had one end secured in the slot, allowing him to move about the deck.

Control Room

The upper level contained the control room. The diving station, on the port side, had two large handwheels to control the bow and stern planes. A gage board indicated whether the various openings in the pressure hull were opened or closed by the display of red or green lights, its appearance giving rise to its popular name of "Christmas Tree." Along the center portion were located the helm, gun access hatch, chart table, gyro compass, hatch and ladder to the conning tower, hatch down to the pump room, and the two periscope wells. Radar displays and plotting board were along the starboard side. The air manifold and electrical control panels for power, interior communications and the gyro switchboard bounded the fore-and-aft passageway.

The lower level held the pump room containing the periscope wells, air compressors, hydraulic plant, drain pump, trim pump, ice machine, and other small machinery items.

Fairwater

The structure amidship is the Fairwater. Small windows in the forward part mark the bridge, where a deck watch is stationed when the boat is on the surface. The tall part of the structure is the sail, which houses the periscopes, radio and radar antenna, and snorkel masts. In the lower after section of the Fairwater is the main induction valve, which supplies air to the main engines when the boat is surfaced.

After Engine Room

This compartment housed two diesel generator sets, one on each side. The space was not divided into upper and lower levels, since the main engine occupied all of the vertical space. A grating was placed at the normal deck level to provide continuity of access fore-and-aft with adjacent spaces. An access hatch to the main deck was located in the after engine room.

In addition, the after engine room contained the auxiliary diesel generator, fuel oil and lub oil purifiers, and an engine air inboard induction hull valve.

Forward Engine Room

This compartment also housed two diesel generator sets, one on each side. The space was not divided into upper and lower levels, since the main engine occupied all of the vertical space.

The forward engine room also housed the vapor compressor distillers, the stand-by fuel oil and lub oil pumps, an engine air inboard induction hull valve, and various starting and stopping controls for the main engines.

After Battery Compartment

The upper level contained the galley, crew's mess and scullery accommodations for thirty-six of the crew, a laundry, head and washroom facilities. A ladder at the aft end of the crew's mess provided access to the main deck just aft of the fairwater.

In the forward portion of the lower level were three storerooms, two of them refrigerated, a magazine for the deck guns and small arms, and the ordnance storeroom. The after part of this compartment contained the after battery room, housing 126 cells. Behind the cells against the after bulkhead, a sanitary tank served the crew's facilities above.

Forward Battery Compartment

A deck divided this compartment (and the two following) in half. The upper level consisted of accommodations for officers and CPOs aft, on the starboard side was a shower, a stateroom for four officers, one for the commanding officer and the boat's office. The officers pantry was on the port side, and aft of that, the wardroom. Underneath is the forward battery well which also held 126 battery cells.

Forward Torpedo Room

This compartment takes up all of the forward single-hulled portion. The breech end of the six bow torpedo tubes project eight feet into the room through the forward bulkhead. The space aft of the tubes was used to store reload torpedoes, which were in racks where they could be inspected and maintained. Crew bunks and lockers surrounded the reloads and a small cubicle in the after starboard corner contained the officer's head. The forward access or escape trunk, and the torpedo loading hatch are located in the overhead. The chain locker and forward trim tank were around the tubes, outside the pressure hull.

Sonar Dome

DRAWN BY ALAN B. CHESLEY—1980

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property N/A

Quadrangle name Baltimore East Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	361220	4349400	B			
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

N/A

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Harry A. Butowsky		
organization	National Park Service	date	May 1985
street & number	Division of History	telephone	(202) 343-8168
city or town	Washington	state	DC 20013-7127

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national ___ state ___ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

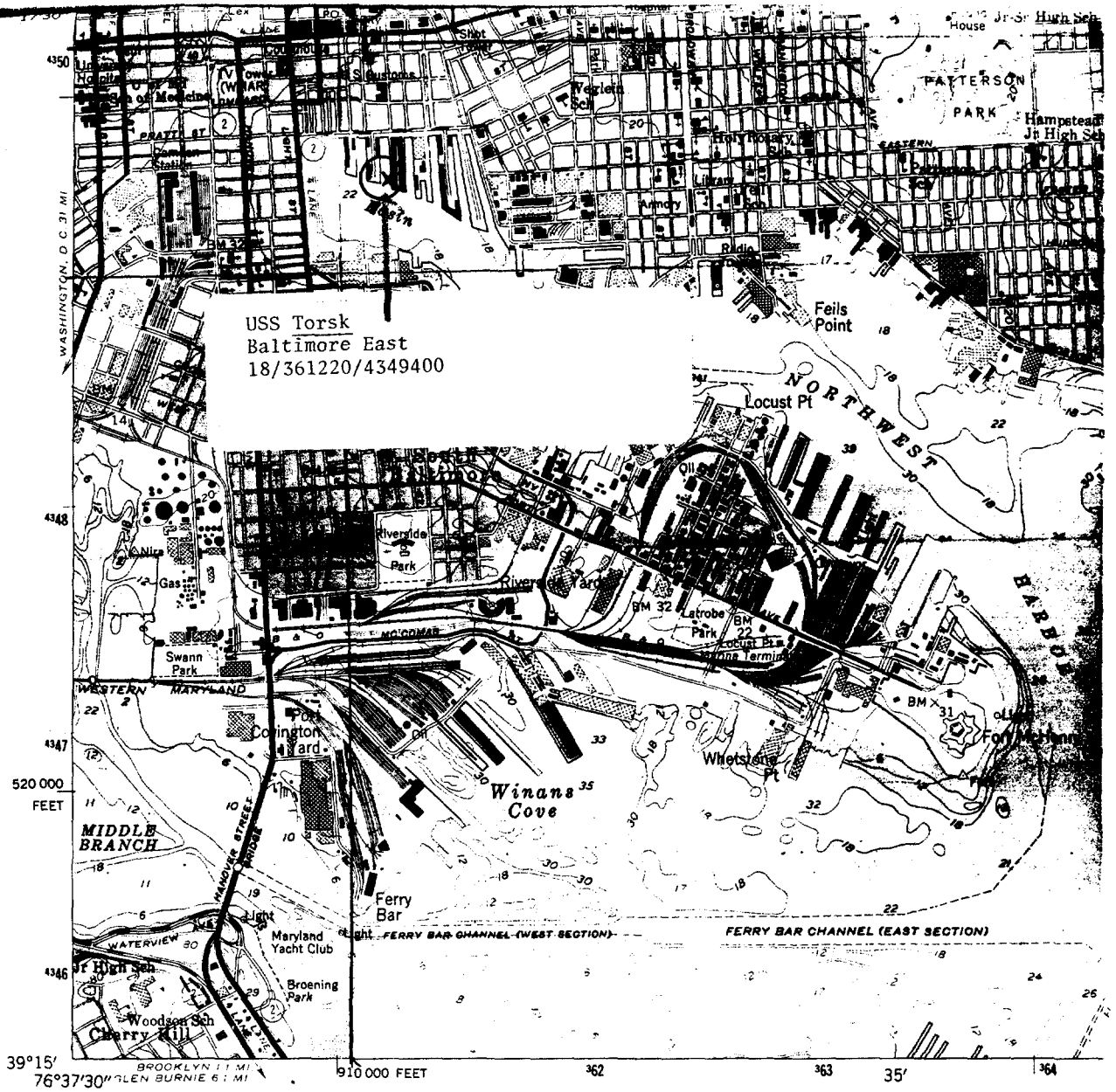
date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

GPO 894-788



Mapped by the Army Map Service
Edited and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS, USC&GS, USCE, and City of Baltimore

Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods. Aerial photographs taken 1943. Field checked 1944
Culture revised by the Geological Survey 1953

Hydrography compiled from USC&GS Chart 545 (1951)

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Maryland coordinate system
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 18, shown in blue

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

Revisions shown in purple compiled by Geological Survey from aerial photographs taken 1966. This information not field checked

Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

MN GN
8° 267 MILS
0°59' 18 MILS

UTM GRID AND 1966 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

1000

DEPTH C
SHOI

THIS
FOR SAL
A FOLDER DESC

(RELAY)
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