

# The Day (New London) Military News:

## Connecticut celebrates its namesake submarine

Published December 22, 2020 4:46PM | Updated December 22, 2020 6:04PM

By [Julia Bergman](#) Day staff writer

The state on Tuesday celebrated its namesake boat, the USS Connecticut, which, despite being commissioned 22 years ago, remains one of most advanced and lethal attack submarines operated by the Navy.

Gov. Ned Lamont, in a proclamation, declared Tuesday “USS Connecticut Day,” honoring the 22nd birthday of the submarine, which bears the hull number SSN-22.

The submarine was commissioned Dec. 11, 1998, but recognizing the significance of its 22nd birthday and the fact that it bears the hull number SSN-22, Lamont decided to issue the proclamation on Dec. 22.

“The patriotic citizens of the State of Connecticut are incredibly proud of 'Our Ship' and hope and pray for the safety of the officers and crew as they patrol the waters of the world protecting freedom and democracy, while fostering the spirit of friendship of the people of the state of Connecticut,” Lamont said in issuing the proclamation.

The Connecticut, built by Electric Boat, is a Seawolf-class nuclear powered fast attack submarine. Only three of this class of submarines were ultimately built. They were designed as a faster, better-armed replacement for the Los Angeles-class attack submarines, and many of the capabilities were incorporated on the newer Virginia-class attack submarines.

The submarine is based in Bremerton, Wash., but its commanding officer, Cmdr. Cameron Aljilani, said he wants to rekindle the relationship between the boat and its namesake state, which “has been lacking for several years.”

Each Navy ship has a sponsor, oftentimes the wife of a political figure, who participates in all or some of the milestones in the life of the ship. USS Connecticut’s sponsor is Patty Rowland, wife of former Gov. John G. Rowland.

Aljilani, in a phone interview, said he planned to read the proclamation over the submarine’s general announcement system Tuesday, as it highlights the accomplishments of the highly decorated ship, which has deployed across the globe to the North Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Pacific Ocean, and Arctic Circle.

“We have a sustained excellence over the last 22 years, and they need to be aware of that history so they recognize they’re a part of it,” Aljilani said.

The crew, comprised of 20 officers and 150 enlisted sailors, celebrated the submarine’s birthday on Dec. 11 with a swim call, he said, and, of course, by singing “Happy Birthday.”

A sailor from Colchester, Zachary M. Barnett, an information system technician, is the only current member of the crew who hails from Connecticut.

As for memorabilia from the Nutmeg State, Aljilani said a basketball signed by the University of Connecticut women’s basketball team is in a display case in the submarine’s ward room.

Both Aljilani and Master Chief Cory Rodgers, the chief of the boat, were previously stationed in Groton on the USS North Dakota and said they were grateful for the outpouring of support they received from the southeastern Connecticut community during their time here.

“The support was unlike any other duty station I’ve been at,” Rodgers said.

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