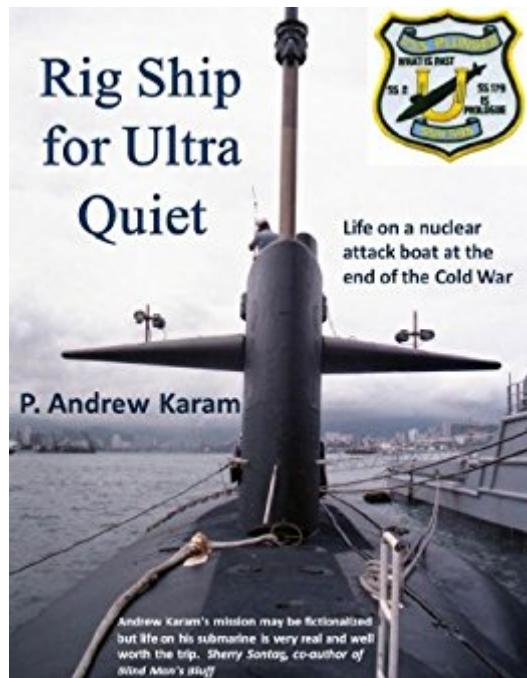


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# Rig Ship For Ultra Quiet



## **Synopsis**

There are a lot of books about submarines - not many have been written by submariners. Join veteran submariner Andrew Karam and the crew of the USS Plunger (SSN 595) as it goes up against the best of the Soviet Navy on an extended "special operation" in the waning days of the Cold War and find out what life at sea is really like. What makes Karam's book unique is the authenticity that comes from an author who is a decorated veteran of the submarine service, coupled with the viewpoint of a fairly senior enlisted man who, with no particular ax to grind, simply calls it like he saw it. This is a book about living and working on a submarine - if you want to hear about submarine operations, tactics, and the sort of routine intelligence-gathering that every attack boat conducted every year then this is the book for you. And if you want to know what happens before and after the intelligence is gathered - what the meals are like, how submariners personalize their own minute corner of the boat, how a reactor is started up, and how to flush a submarine toilet - this is still the book for you! Rig Ship for Ultra Quiet is set on the USS Plunger, an aging attack submarine that, even on its final mission, was among the best boats in the fleet. But even the best boat starts having problems when it gets old enough and Plunger was no exception. Balky atmospheric control equipment, a shipmate with appendicitis, electrical problems, the occasional fire, and a never-ending supply of sleeplessness, bad food, and horrible coffee are only some of the problems the crew of the Plunger faces - there's also the pesky Soviet Navy and the brass who scheduled them to be at sea over Christmas, New Year's Day, and (worst of all), Super Bowl Sunday. And their reward after two months of hard work? A grueling inspection by the dreaded "ORSE Board." *About the author:* Karam himself is a not only a decorated veteran of the US submarine service but also went on to earn recognition as a scientist and as a leader in his profession of radiation safety - he credits his Naval experience as helping make both of these accomplishments possible. Since leaving the Navy he has visited over 40 countries, including professional trips to Paraguay and Kosovo (as a professor); to Kuwait, Dubai, and Panama (as a consultant); to Lithuania, Cyprus, Uruguay, and Cambodia (for professional assistance to these nations' governments); and most recently to Japan in the aftermath of the earthquake, tsunami, and reactor accidents in Fukushima. He currently works in matters related to radiological and nuclear emergency preparedness and response.

## **Book Information**

File Size: 2186 KB

Print Length: 313 pages

Publication Date: June 27, 2012

Language: English

ASIN: B008FHJADI

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #98,814 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #19 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Marine Engineering #69 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Military > Naval #194 in Books > History > Military > Naval

## Customer Reviews

This really opened up the life on a nuclear submarine to me. I mean I thought for some reason the nuclear reactor worked like a household boiler almost. Pull the control rods and go as worry free as an appliance or as steady as power from the electric company. Also had no idea of the really long hours and constant lack of sleep. The stench aboard seems to be a bit of controversy depending on the ship. I worked with a former Navy welder who said you could smell a submariner from a mile away but also know a guy who served on a Skate class that said there was no such thing. Very interesting and really cool are the intel recounts told by the author. Cruising right under a Russian sub and photographing the bottom of the hull. Cold War high stakes sneak and peak at it's best. The irony of how such info became classified was well told as well. All in all invaluable to my understanding of life on board a nuke and a great deal of respect for those that volunteered and worked so hard for that life and duty which was the front lines below the sea.

The author certainly knows his technology and doesn't spare the jargon (which I really enjoy). He also offers his impressions freely (which is of course the whole point of the book for the reader). The only aspect that I found lacking, was the storytelling. For me, the book had too little dramatic content and so I didn't find myself caring too much about what happened next. In autobiography, even though it's not fiction, there is a storytelling aspect to the work. Perhaps a little less detail and more personal feelings and conversation, and it would have come together better, for me anyway. Even so, it was definitely worth the time and I enjoyed it.

When I read the reviews I was warned that experienced submarine sailors would not like this book & that is true. Even thou I am an ex-sub sailor I read the book as I served on board the Plunger about 20 years prior to the author. During my Plunger days I made a WestPac & 3 spec ops as aQMC(SS) so very aware of that routine. I could & any sub sailor could nit-pick many facts in the book, but give the author credit, he wrote it & we did not. Plunger was my last boat of four as I move up to Warrant & the LDO ranks, I take great acceptation to his thoughts on USNA Officers, he certainly missed the mark there. I think the book would be a hard read for the average personal as he goes into a lot of technical jargon.

Very readable book, which gives a valuable, if slightly sanitised view of life on board the underwater spaceships that comprise the US nuclear submarine naval fleet. The author's writing style is approachable and easily digested, and the necessarily fictionalised final voyage of the USS Plunger is worth the time and investment to read. It is long enough to be a good solid read and the narrative is tight, cohesive and well thought out. All in all a good, informative and interesting read, and one to enjoy on long commutes, or sunning at the beach.

This book is exactly as advertised. While interesting and informative, it reads like a manual used to qualify for some naval rating. There is absolutely no drama whatsoever in the story, even when they are confronting the Soviet navy off the coast of Kamchatka. It has all the aspects of a training manual. The excessive use of acronyms to delineate the jobs/areas of work was especially irritating, and tended to muddy up the story, along with the occasional typo. The maps and pictures peculiar to a specific area were very good, and well dispersed throughout the plot. While not being a page turner, the book is a goldmine of information on what makes a nuclear sub tick.

The description of this man's duty day, day after day, makes you wonder what kind of fools run the Navy, apparently thinking that sailors operating on little sleep are somehow effective. Come on you Admirals. There's got to be a better way. If duty training and drills cannot get done without exhausting the troops, you're doing something wrong . . . And have need for a century.

I, too, was a nuke aboard the Plunger. However, my tour was almost 20 years before Mr Karam had his last tour. I was an RO, and during my time we had the dreaded ORSE board, the interminable weekly ops, and one WESTPAC, for which we also got the Navy Unit Commendation. What was

interesting to me was the fact that my captain was Nils Thunman, mentioned in the beginning of the book. If you want a good example of what life was aboard a sub, this book hits the nail on the head (and I don't mean the toilet room). Well worth the time!

Excellent book. I thought I knew a fair bit about submarines and their operations, both WWII-era and nukes, but I was wrong. The author was a long-term sailor on a nuclear submarine, and not only added a good bit of knowledge to my store of sub setup and equipment, but also provided an enlisted man's perspective to my knowledge of subs and the Navy. An excellent writer, the story flows along at a good rate. If you enjoy military or naval literature, I would highly recommend this book.

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