

Fleet Divers Salvage Russian Submarine

Vessel Emerges After Months in the Providence River

AS DUSK APPROACHED on 25 July 2008, the Juliett 484, a 2,400-ton former Soviet guided missile submarine, smelly and covered with sea growth, broke free from the muddy bottom and resurfaced after 15 months beneath the Providence River. After endeavoring for almost two months to refloat the sub, the salvage team, led by Mobile Diving Salvage Unit (MDSU) TWO and supported by the Office of the Supervisor of Salvage (SUPSALV), Army, Navy Reserve and British personnel, looked on with satisfaction and knew that the project's end was near.

Then in 2002, the Stratoga Museum Foundation, Inc. purchased the vessel, opening it to the public as a museum at Collier Point Park in Providence, RI.

A nor'easter on 17 April 2007, served as the catalyst for the sub's sinking. At the storm's height, the pressure hull—the sub's internal hull—began taking on water, which led to progressive flooding as water cascaded to the other internal spaces. After approximately 30 hours, the vessel sank. Later, surveys would show that she came to rest at about a 45 degree port list, with half of her hull buried into the river's muddy bottom. The

most valuable training possible. The Providence community would benefit in that they would regain access to a valuable waterfront asset. The IRT Program agreed to sponsor and fund the salvage effort.

MDSU TWO agreed to lead the project. To assist, the Little Creek-based salvors assembled a team that included SUPSALV, the Army's 569th Dive Company, Navy Reserve, and a Landing Craft Utility (LCU) and crew from the Expeditionary Support Unit. Even the British pitched in, sending two salvors for technical support.

The diesel-powered Juliett 484 (J-484), known to the Soviets as K-77, led a colorful life.

The diesel-powered Juliett 484 (J-484), known to the Soviets as K-77, led a colorful life. After her cold war service and the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian government sold the vessel to a Finnish businessman who turned J-484 into a bar and restaurant. The businessman later listed her for auction on E-bay, with a starting price of \$1 million. Without serious bidders, Juliett 484 was then leased for the movie *K-19: The Widowmaker* starring Harrison Ford and Liam Neeson where she "played" the ill-fated K-19 submarine.

pressure hull was fully flooded with over 600,000 gallons of water.

When the museum requested Department of Defense assistance, the Secretary of Defense's Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) Program viewed the chance to refloat J-484 as an ideal training opportunity. IRT funds civil-military projects geared to improve unit level training while concurrently benefiting U.S. communities. For the Navy's salvage community, a chance to refloat a sunken submarine is among the rarest and

Refloating and stabilizing the sub proved to be a formidable undertaking. The greatest challenge was the complete lack of technical documentation available on the submarine given that the Russian Federation still considered such information to be classified. Further, the museum had not adequately tracked the vessel's condition prior to the sinking. The most essential pre-sinking information such as the vessel's displacement (mass), and other technical data was unknown. Any plan to raise the submarine had to be robust enough