

## **NATO SUBRON 23 “Abyssal”**

The records are there, if you know just where to look in the right Department of Defense archives. They're neither outrageously classified nor creatively misfiled, but they are quite sparse, and somewhat technical. SUBRON Abyssal started out as an American program, but later took on 'official' status as a NATO operation, with Israeli assets added in the 1960s. The squadron today consists of the following submarines:

- HMS Affray (UK)
- INS Dakar (Israeli)
- Minerve (France)
- USS Scorpion
- USS Thresher

All five submarines have apparently been in service for far longer than their expected operational lifespan, and there are few indications if any that they require much in the way of extra maintenance. Their crew rosters are likewise filled with people who are officially dead (although their official ranks are typically lower than the ones listed in the rosters). All of this would suggest that there's a disinformation campaign going on, but the list of

operations (including combat operations) and actions match up with a lot of unexplained activities on the open seas. Whatever is going on is not innocuous, in other words. The jargon of the reports makes it impossible to determine what SUBRON 23 is fighting unless you already know; but whatever it is, it's pretty formidable. And the enemy's definitely not Russian: the records indicate that SUBRON 23 does regular joint exercises with the Red Banner Caspian Fleet. Whatever *that* is.

Fair warning before you peruse these documents too deeply, though. They're not impossible to find at least partially because the defense community is of the opinion that anybody this interested in the subject probably *wants* to join the fleet. So: follow the thread too carefully, and you'll never come back. Realizing this causes some people to hastily retreat -- and more than a few to redouble their research efforts, instead.

After all, whatever it is that SUBRON 23 does, it's probably not *dull*.

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