



Article published Aug 18, 2014

Sub base bidding farewell to possibly its last admiral

By MICHAEL MELIA Associated Press

Perry retiring amid Navy administrative reorganization

Groton — The top officer at the Naval Submarine Base, an admiral whose ties to Groton date back to his birth, may become the last flag officer to serve here as his submarine group is eliminated in a Navy streamlining.

Rear Adm. Kenneth Perry, a career submarine officer with responsibility for all 23 U.S. attack submarines on the East Coast, is retiring Friday at the same ceremony where his Submarine Group 2 will be formally disestablished.

The nuclear-powered submarines assigned to Groton are staying put at the base, along with the Navy's submarine school and medical research laboratory, but it remains unknown whether an admiral will again reside in a city that bills itself as the submarine capital of the world.

Perry, 53, said in an interview that various submarine squadrons are taking over the command-and-control responsibilities from the group. But he said individual submarine commanders will carry a heavier burden under the streamlining, which is cutting the support staff for attack submarines based in Connecticut and Virginia by about 50 percent.

"What that means is that it's essential that every submarine be very diligently focused on the readiness of their crew and ship," Perry said. "We're getting leaner. Every person counts. Every boat counts."

Perry's father was a young officer on the Groton-based USS Hardhead, a diesel submarine, when he met Perry's mother, then a student at Connecticut College in New London. Perry was born in New London and, like other submariners, passed through Groton for training as he climbed the ranks.

Navy service is a tradition for his family. His three brothers each joined, including a submarine squadron commander and another who served in two submarines. One son of Perry's is assigned to a submarine based in Hawaii, and another is a Navy helicopter pilot in San Diego.

Any change in standing is closely watched at the base in Groton, a huge driver of the local economy that came close to being shut down in 2005 under a Pentagon base realignment process. But officials say the admiral's departure doesn't diminish the importance of the base to the submarine force.

"Recent events strengthen the fact that we're the closest to Europe and the North Atlantic. Frankly, we're the closest to North Korea if you go under the ice," U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney said. He said Perry's retirement from the Navy is "a real loss to the country."

Under the streamlining, the 45 people assigned to Submarine Group 2 are being reassigned, according to Lt. Timothy Hawkins, a Navy spokesman. The submarines will report to an admiral overseeing the Atlantic sub force from Virginia. Hawkins said the

change will bring attack submarines on the East Coast in line with the way the command is structured on the West Coast.

In retirement, Perry said, he plans to spend more time his family but has not announced future plans. One order of business is changing the license plate on his silver Porsche, which says: "SUBGRU2."
