

# Body Found In A-Sub Blast

By BIRCH STORM



Sargo Skipper Nicholson watching salvage work progress.

The body of a sailor was taken out of the fire-gutted stern torpedo room of the submarine Sargo yesterday, and the Navy said a board of investigators will probe the reasons for the fire and explosion aboard the \$40 million nuclear-powered ship.

The unidentified victim was in the compartment at 5:30 p.m. yesterday when an explosion and fire ripped the sub while it was pumping breathing oxygen aboard from a tank truck on the deck.

THE NAVY said a board of investigators from Pearl Harbor submarine base will begin a study of the fire and explosion and the damages it caused. The Navy mini-

mized the possibility of sabotage.

Named to the investigative board by Rear Adm. Roy Benson, Pacific submarines commander, were Capt. F. H. Clarke, Cmdr. E. Pridonoff and Cmdr. N. E. Aubrey Jr. Counsel for the board is Cmdr. G. T. Roland, and his assistant is Lt. Cmdr. J. T. Rigsbee.

ADM. BENSON said, "The purpose of the board and its investigation is to consider all the circumstances, connected with the mishap on the USS Sargo in order to determine the exact cause of the explosion and fire which occurred in the stern room of the submarine. Determining the cause may assist in corrective measures which would provide increased safety in the future."

The Navy's 125-ton crane lifted the fire-damaged stern out of the water at 1 a.m. yesterday after a night-long salvage operation.

The crane and divers were directed by David J. McCafferty, chief boatwain of the submarine rescue vessel USS Greenlet.

WHEN THE Sargo's after torpedo room was above water, divers and Sargo crew-

men wrested open the heat-warped hatch.

A Pearl Harbor fire truck pumped out the compartment. The water was a fluorescent green from dye markers in the room.

At about 3 a.m., Lt. Allen Kennedy, leader of the Navy's Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit, climbed down into the sub.

HE POPPED out a few moments later, covered with black grime, and ran to Sargo skipper, Lt. Cmdr. John Nicholson.

Shortly afterwards, Nicholson ordered the compartment flooded.

A Navy spokesman said torpedoes in the compartment that were damaged in the fire were still smoking and dangerous. Some explosives, he said, were in a molten condition and were still "very dangerous."

ALTHOUGH Nicholson ordered the compartment flooded for 12 hours, divers yesterday morning found it cool enough to pump out and recover the dead sailor's body.

Pacific submarine commander Rear Adm. Roy Benson, who stayed with the stricken Sargo until midnight

Tuesday, described the fire and explosion as "an industrial accident."

He said the Sargo, just out of drydock, was taking aboard oxygen just as she takes aboard food and other supplies after getting out of drydock.

A NAVY spokesman said the oxygen was being pumped aboard under high pressure when one of the lines ruptured and lashed off the blast.

He said the lines did not contain liquified oxygen, although the tank truck supplying the Sargo did.

The Sargo will return to a Pearl Harbor drydock which the Navy said "is waiting for her." She had come out of drydock only a day before the mishap.

THE NAVY said it could not determine yet how long the Sargo would be out of service. A spokesman said the entire submarine must be carefully examined before it could again sail.

Although damages seem to be confined to the after torpedo room, the spokesman said, the damage inspection will cover all of the sub.

THE VICTIM of the blast



Checking for radiation at the Sargo's dock.

was apparently in the closed compartment when the explosion ripped through the room.

The investigation report the Navy said will be made public, but spokesmen declined to estimate how long it would be finished.

AN EYEWITNESS to the fire and explosion said he had just stepped out of a Pearl Harbor building at 5:30 when he heard a muffled blast.

He said he turned toward the Sargo and saw a column of smoke towering several hundred feet.

THE NAVY did not announce how many Sargo crewmen were aboard at the time of the explosion. Many Sargo crewmen were called from their homes to the sub base after the blast.