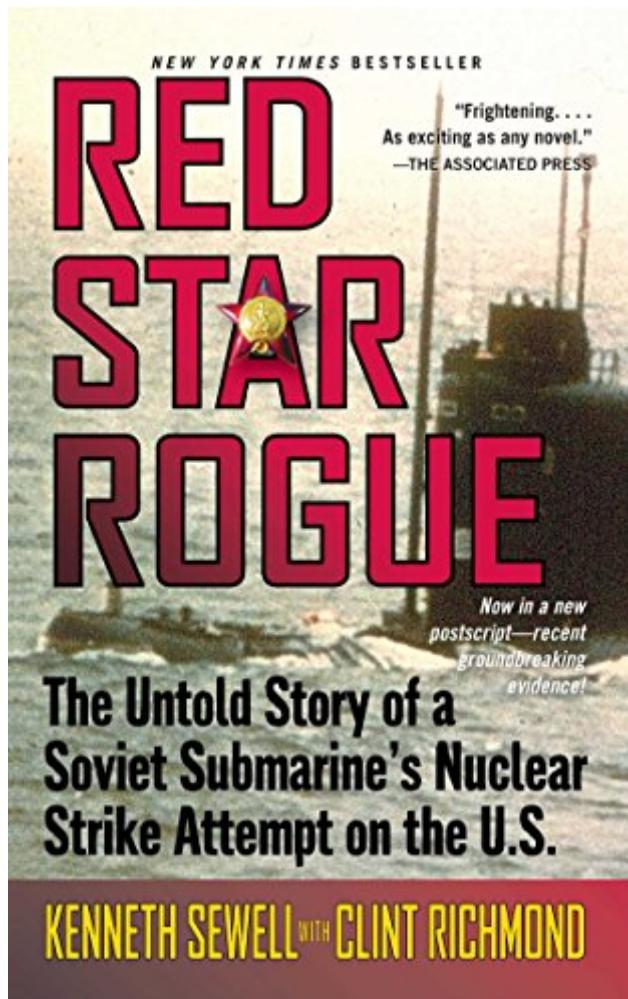


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Red Star Rogue: The Untold Story Of A Soviet Submarine's Nuclear Strike Attempt On The U.S.



Synopsis

One of the great secrets of the Cold War, hidden for decades, is revealed at last. Early in 1968 a nuclear-armed Soviet submarine sank in the waters off Hawaii, hundreds of miles closer to American shores than it should have been. Compelling evidence, assembled here for the first time, strongly suggests that the sub, K-129, sank while attempting to fire a nuclear missile, most likely at the naval base at Pearl Harbor. We now know that the Soviets had lost track of the sub; it had become a rogue. While the Soviets searched in vain for the boat, U.S. intelligence was able to pinpoint the site of the disaster. The new Nixon administration launched a clandestine, half-billion-dollar project to recover the sunken K-129. Contrary to years of deliberately misleading reports, the recovery operation was a great success. With the recovery of the sub, it became clear that the rogue was attempting to mimic a Chinese submarine, almost certainly with the intention of provoking a war between the U.S. and China. This was a carefully planned operation that, had it succeeded, would have had devastating consequences. During the successful recovery effort, the U.S. forged new relationships with the USSR and China. Could the information gleaned from the sunken sub have been a decisive factor shaping the new policies of détente between the Americans and the Soviets, and opening China to the West? And who in the USSR could have planned such a bold and potentially catastrophic operation? Red Star Rogue reads like something straight out of a Tom Clancy novel, but it is all true. Today our greatest fear is that terrorists may someday acquire a nuclear weapon and use it against us. In fact, they have already tried.

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Customer Reviews

"Red Star Rogue", written by Kenneth Sewell and Clint Richmond, examines one of the most intriguing incidents of the Cold War. This was the loss of the Soviet Golf II class ballistic missile submarine (SSB) K-129, and the subsequent examination and recovery of the wreck by the United States. Previous books that have examined this incident include Clyde Burleson's 1977 "The Jennifer Project", and the CIA sanctioned story of the recovery in the 1978 "A Matter of Risk" by Roy Varner and Wayne Collier. Additional information can be gleaned from chapters in the books "Blind Man's Bluff" (Sontag & Drews), Dr. Roger Dunham's "Spy Sub", and John P. Craven's "The Silent War". In this new book, Sewell and Richmond take advantage of the opportunity to conduct research within the former Soviet Union, and to interview those involved or affected on both sides of the story. However, they end up with a sensationalist scenario to explain the intense interest the American government took in an obsolete, sunken diesel powered ballistic missile submarine. Sewell claims to have uncovered previously unknown facts about the rapid resupply and hasty departure of the K-129 from its base on the Kamchatka Peninsula, and "extra" last minute crew additions. The basic thesis of this book is that the submarine was part of a secret plot by an inner "cabal" within the highest levels of Soviet Government (centered around Mikhail Suslov and Yuri Andropov), hidden from Premier Leonid Brezhnev. The plot was to have K-129 emulate a Chinese Golf I submarine (an earlier transfer from the USSR before the split with China) and launch a one megaton nuclear missile toward Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Sewell has compiled an interesting set of half-truths, conjecture and outright fabrications interspersed with some Soviet operational procedures and human-interest details to advance a frightening scenario that a rogue Soviet submarine attempted to launch a nuclear missile at Pearl Harbor. Mr. Sewell has taken advantage of the recent spate of books about cold war submarine activities to publish his version of a specific event, no doubt to his financial benefit. One sentence from John Craven's book "The Silent War" i.e. "there existed a possibility, small though it might be, that the skipper of this rogue submarine was attempting to launch or had actually launched a ballistic missile with a live warhead in the direction of Hawaii." is the basis of his doomsday premise.

He takes this conditional conjecture, throws in a cabal of high level KGB conspirators, and hatches an almost 300 page book of fiction. The central thesis behind his assertion of a rogue launch is his claim that the sub went down at 163° W Lon, 24° N Lat. This is critical since the K-129 was armed with three SS-N-5 Serb missiles with a range of approximately 760 nautical miles. Since the sub actually sank at 180° Lon, 40° N Lat, which is more than 1500 nautical miles distant from Pearl Harbor, it would be more than 800 nautical miles short of the presumed target. At Sewell's claimed site, which is totally false, Pearl Harbor would be within range of the missiles. As a senior staff engineer, now retired, with the Ocean System Division of Lockheed Missiles and Space Co., I was the responsible engineer for the Digital Data Link (DDL) which provided commands to, and telemetry from, the "claw", which we designated the Capture Vehicle (CV), and the control van on the Hughes Glomar Explorer (HGE).

First, I want to say that I really, really wanted to like this book. I really did. But there were so many factual problems with it, that I can't take it seriously. First and foremost, the author mentions on several pages that the explosion aboard K-129 was monitored by a US early warning satellite. The problem with this is that according to "Guardians, Strategic Reconnaissance Satellites" by Curtis Peebles (Presidio Press, 1987. ISBN 0-89141-284-0), a comprehensive work on intelligence satellites from the beginning until 1985, there were no early warning satellites in operation in March 1968, when K-129 went down. The low orbit MIDAS follow-up program was cancelled in 1966 (due to problems with coverage and false alarms), and Project 949, its geosynchronous replacement, wasn't launched until August of 1968. So, it couldn't have been monitored, because we didn't have the capability at the time K-129 sank. Also, Sewell claims that the sailing was timed to prevent it from being detected by photoreconnaissance satellites, but again we run into an issue: At the time, *ALL* US photorecon satellites were 'film return' types. In other words, they imaged what they saw directly on to film, and when they were done they returned that film back to Earth to be developed and interpreted. After they ejected the film, they were essentially useless. Referring back to "Guardians" again, we find that the Russians didn't have to try very hard to evade them: Launch 1968-5 was on January 18th, and had a lifetime of 17 days. That put the return back on February 5th. K-129 sailed on February 24th. The next US launch wasn't until March 13th, almost a week after K-129 sank.

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