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# MYSTERY OF THE MISSING SUBMARINES

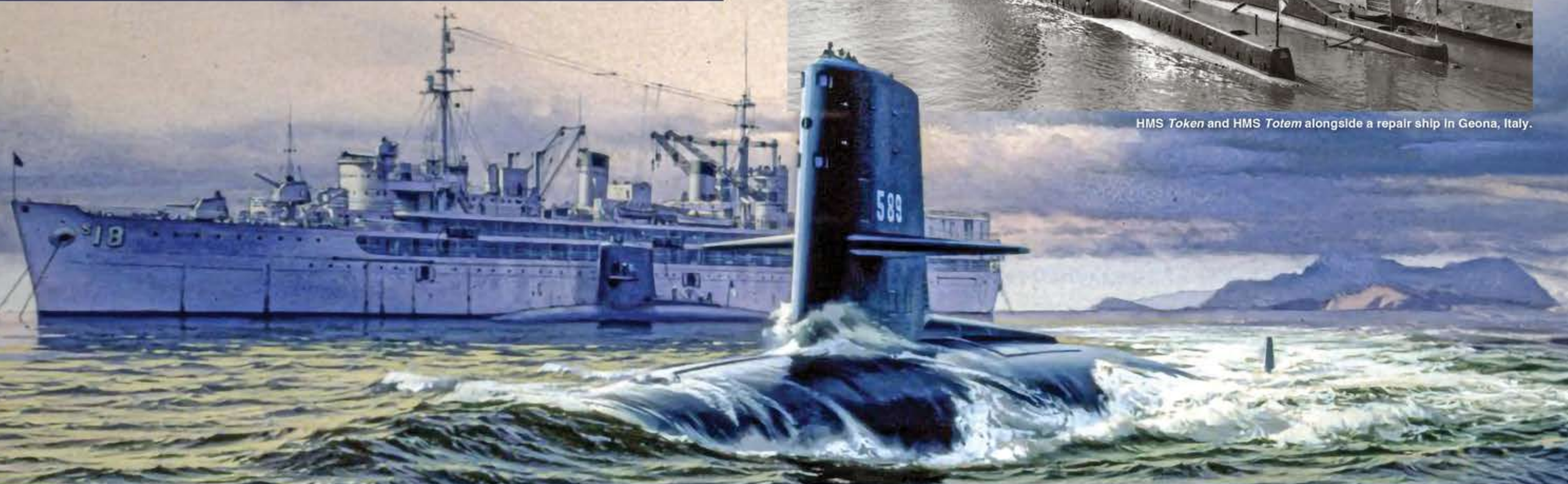
DURING 1968, FOUR SUBMARINES WERE LOST — ONE EACH FROM FRANCE, ISRAEL, THE SOVIET UNION, AND THE UNITED STATES. WHAT WERE THE CIRCUMSTANCES BEHIND THESE NAUTICAL DISASTERS?

BY LESLIE GRAYSON

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HMS *Token* and HMS *Totem* alongside a repair ship in Genoa, Italy.



The year 1968 saw the world in turmoil. The war in Vietnam was raging and American losses were becoming unacceptable. The nation's political system was coming apart at the seams while protests and riots took over our major cities. The Soviet Union was becoming more overtly hostile and military forces across the globe were on full alert. There was a global unease

over what was coming next and into this confused mixture came the loss of four submarines — all for different reasons. The following article examines these submersibles and attempts to find the facts leading to their destruction.

#### INS DAKAR — ISRAEL'S NEW SUB

The Royal Navy's HMS *Totem* entered service during the last months

of the Second World War. A T-class Group 3 submarine, the *Totem* was of welded rather than the riveted construction of the earlier Group 1 and Group 2 subs and it was also fitted with snorkel masts. The Royal Navy was dramatically down-graded with the end of the war and became a mere shadow of its former self but it was decided that British submarines would take on a more

offensive role by attacking Soviet subs off the northern Russian coast and mining the waters of that area if push came to shove. *Totem* was one of eight subs extensively modified to become Super T-class conversions. The modifications gave them higher speeds and quieter operation underwater. Five further T-class submarines were given much less extensive streamlining improvements. With these modifications, *Totem* operated effectively within the Royal Navy until 1965.

During 1965, *Totem* was purchased by Israel along with two other T-class subs — *Trancheon* and *Turpin*. Before leaving Britain, further upgrades were carried out to the diesel-electric sub and this included an airlock to allow for underwater debarkation of naval commandos. She was commissioned into the Israeli Sea Corps (the naval arm of the Israeli Defense Force) on 10 November 1967 as the INS *Dakar* (English, Grouper but some sources also stated *Swordfish*) and was under the

command of L/Commander Ya'acov Ra'anani.

On 9 January 1968, *Dakar* departed from Portsmouth for Haifa. As a point of interest, she was overloaded with 69 aboard rather than the normal crew of 60. On the morning of 15 January, the sub put into Gibraltar and then departed at midnight and submerged, heading across the Mediterranean Sea underwater and utilizing her snorkel mast. At 0610 on 24 January, she radioed a position report indicating she was east of the island of Crete. This was followed

Painting of the USS *Scorpien* at sea. The sub had picked up the name of "Scrapiron" because of the numerous problems that plagued the vessel. The loss of *Scorpien* and its 99 sailors would cause massive changes in the US Navy's submarine fleet.