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Congressman Roe breaks through Arctic ice aboard nuclear submarine

U.S. Congressman says nuclear power must be part of America's energy and global warming solution

(Washington, DC) – Tennessee U.S. Congressman Phil Roe worked hard to make his connection for a trip aboard a nuclear attack submarine at the Arctic Circle recently. But his biggest connection was the fact that the manufacturer of the submarine's fuel is inside his district.

"The fact Nuclear Fuel Services (NFS) is in my district is why I got the invitation for this once-in-a-lifetime experience and I wasn't going to miss it," explained the freshman First District Congressman from Johnson City.

The airline flight from Tri-City Airport to Washington, DC on a Thursday evening was overbooked so Roe got in his car and drove to Washington. "I got to Washington at two o'clock in the morning," said Roe. Catching a few hours sleep, he awoke to find the subway wasn't running outside his residence the next morning so he walked 13 blocks to catch his ride. Roe joined eight other dignitaries in a van to make the trip to Andrews Air Force Base from where departed to Deadhorse, Alaska.

Roe joined other Congressmen, newly appointed U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Steven Chu and Admiral Kirkland Donald, Deputy Administrator for the Office of Naval Reactors for the 3,800-mile journey to rendezvous with the Los Angeles-class attack submarine *USS Annapolis* roughly 300 miles North of Deadhorse, the last vestige of civilization near Prudhoe Bay before thousands of miles of frozen wilderness called the Arctic.

"We landed in Deadhorse to pick up our winter gear, then hopped a smaller plane to an Arctic outpost. From there we went aboard a helicopter for the last few miles before we joined the submarine and its crew," Roe explained.

The *Annapolis* was in the midst of conducting polar torpedo tests along with a sister nuclear submarine, the *Helena*. The two subs represent a \$4 billion dollar investment in military technology and quarter more than 250 sailors who trust their lives to the reliability of their subs. Crews atop the polar ice monitored the performance of torpedoes in the frigid waters below the ice cap. Later, the ground crew recovered the torpedoes by cutting holes in the ice, then dredging them up for use elsewhere.

Commissioned in 1992, the *Annapolis* is 360 feet long and can fire Tomahawk cruise missiles, Harpoon anti-ship missiles and MK-48 torpedoes. With one nuclear reactor and a single propeller, the submarine can attain underwater speeds of greater than 25 knots. The nuclear reactor aboard the vessel powers everything aboard, including water desalination, air conditioning, drive train and electrical systems. Nuclear submarines are true submersibles, needing to surface only for food for its crew. The *Annapolis'*

homeport is Groton, CT, just across the river from where it was born at General Dynamics' Electric Boat Division. NFS plays a role in all nuclear powered naval vessels for the U.S. by producing highly enriched uranium fuel materials for submarines and aircraft carriers.

Aboard the nuclear submarine Roe and his fellow visitors met the captain and his crew and settled in for a night under the polar ice cap. "The first thing you notice is just how powerful, yet quiet, the submarine is under the sea," Roe said. The Congressman also noted just how young the crewmen who were tasked with operating the submarine seemed. "With the exception of the captain and some of the non-commissioned officers aboard, none of the crew appeared to be over 40 years of age."

Roe and fellow passengers dined with the captain before experiencing a simulated encounter with an enemy submarine during the night. The group slept in a berthing compartment aboard the ship that Roe said was about the size of some closets he has seen in Johnson City. "There are 134 crewmen aboard one of these submarines that are the size of a typical American three-bedroom house."

The next morning Roe met three Tennesseans serving aboard the submarine for a breakfast of omelets before making his second day aboard the attack submarine his most memorable. The *Annapolis* is specially rigged for ice cap breakthroughs as its conning tower is reinforced to break the thick Arctic ice. "We could watch the breakthrough via a remote camera in the conning tower. The sub broke through with no problem and crewmen had to cut through blocks of ice atop the submarine before we could climb up and out onto the ice field. The air temperature was a balmy -50 degrees Fahrenheit," Roe explained.

"The entire experience proved to me just how important the role of every NFS employee is in the defense of our country. Admiral Donald told me about his visit to the Erwin plant and how the Navy's nuclear propulsion program is a key factor in America's dominance as a world military power. It also reminded me of the important role nuclear power must

play in making sure America has enough electrical energy to maintain the nation's economic growth without negatively impacting the global climate, Roe said. "I'm committed to NFS and to nuclear power for America's future."

The group departed the Arctic in time for Roe to return to his Washington, DC condominium for a visit to Walter Reed Army Hospital on Monday. Roe is a member of the U.S. House of Representative's Veteran's Affairs Committee. "I served as an Army surgeon in Korea and know the sacrifices our veterans make in the line of duty. My experience aboard the *Annapolis* a few weeks ago only strengthened my resolve to protect and defend our veteran's rights.