

Project Jennifer was the codename applied to the CIA project that salvaged part of a sunken Soviet submarine in 1974. The Soviet "Golf"-class ballistic missile submarine (SSB) K-129 sank off Hawaii on 11 April 1968, probably due to a missile malfunction. The "Golf" class submarines were diesel-electric ballistic missile subs, a modified version of the "Foxtrot" class submarines. They carried 3 SS-N-5 SLBMs in an elongated sail structure.

The sunken submarine was located in 16,500 feet of water. Mizar (AGOR 11) took part in the search, as did the specialized "research" submarine USS Halibut (SSN 587).

The CIA ran an operation to recover the sunken submarine. The recovery effort centered on Hughes Glomar Explorer, a 63,000 ton deep-sea salvage vessel built for the project. The ship was built under the "cover story" that she was a deep-sea mining ship, intended to recover "manganese nodules" from the ocean floor. The ship was supposedly being built for the Summa Corporation at the direction of Howard Hughes for use by his Global Marine Development Inc. At the same time the "Hughes Mining Barge" was built. The barge, commonly known as HMB-1, was a submersible barge intended to carry the "claw" to be used in the recovery effort.

Hughes Glomar Explorer was equipped with a massive hoisting mechanism amidships, and a "moon pool" - a large internal underwater hangar to provide access to the ocean. The submarine was to be hoisted into the moon pool by a massive claw, which was stored in HMB-1. After *Hughes Glomar Explorer* and HMB-1 left port, the barge submerged, maneuvered under Glomar Explorer, and the claw was hoisted into the moon pool in preparation for the salvage lift.

Glomar Explorer arrived on the recovery site 4 July 1974 and conducted salvage operations for the next month. During the salvage effort (according to the story released to the public), only the forward 38 feet of the submarine was recovered. The section included two nuclear-tipped torpedoes, various cipher/code equipment and 8 dead crewmen. The recovered section was brought into the ship's moon pool, where it was analysed and dismantled. The dead Soviet sailors were buried at sea.

There is continued speculation about what was really recovered, but the real answers are, of course, highly classified. It is clear, however, that the intact submarine would have been much longer than Glomar's "moon pool", so it would not have been possible to bring the entire submarine aboard. It is also clear that the CIA knew the condition of the submarine, leading to speculation that the submarine was broken in two (or more) pieces, with the moon pool built to accommodate the largest pieces. It is also possible that the submarine was intact, and the CIA planned to cut off the bow and stern prior to bringing the sub into the moon pool.

After the recovery, Hughes Glomar Explorer was transferred to the Navy on 3 Sept 1976 and designated AG 193. The vessel is not officially assigned a name, but is commonly referred to Glomar Explorer. She was transferred to the Maritime Administration on 17 Jan 1977 and laid up at Suisun Bay, CA. The Navy attempted to sell the ship, but failed. In June, 1978 she was leased to Global Marine Development Inc. for commercial use. That lease was terminated in 1980. In 1979 it was proposed that the ship be transferred to the National Science Foundation for use as a deep-sea drilling ship, but that effort was not funded. The ship was returned to Navy custody on 25 April 1980 and transferred to the Maritime Administration on the same day for continued layup at Suisun Bay. She remained in layup for

the next 16 years. During August, 1996 it was announced that Global Marine had leased Glomar Explorer from the Navy for 30 years. The ship left the mothball fleet 5 November 1996 to be totally reconditioned and converted to a drill ship. She now operates in the Gulf of Mexico, drilling test oil wells. During the conversion some 11,000 tons of steel, including virtually all equipment and facilities related to her salvage role, were removed.

HMB-1 was laid up after the recovery, but was transferred to the Environmental Protection Agency at some point. She was returned by the EPA in 1982, officially to be laid up in reserve. It now seems likely that it was then employed as the "mother ship" for the stealth ship Sea Shadow, a purpose for which it was employed during the 1990's. At some point HMB-1 was converted from an submersible barge (with access via a top hatch) into a covered floating drydock (with an end door).