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Glomar Sets Test Cruise

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The Hughes Glomar Explorer, the CIA vessel which conducted a cloak and dagger mission to dredge up a sunken Soviet submarine last summer, will take to the sea again soon after a four-month layoff.

Corbett U. Allen, Jr., vice president for corporate planning at Global Marine, Inc., the Los Angeles firm that built Glomar, said today the giant ship would return to the Pacific for four weeks at the end of this month "to test modifications made since last December."

Allen refused to say what modifications were made during the ship's stay at a Long Beach dock since mid-December.

The Glomar Explorer was contracted for four years ago by Howard Hughes' Summa Corp. in a secret agreement with the Central Intelligence Agency to try to find and raise the sunken sub several hundred miles off the Hawaii coast and learn Soviet military secrets. Part of the sub was raised last July.

The Hughes-CIA arrangement was revealed last month, despite personal pleas by CIA Director William Colby that the press hold the story. Since then, it has been reported that the Glomar would return to the site of the sunken sub sometime this summer.

The Los Angeles Times said Monday that the vessel would seek to retrieve nuclear missiles aboard the remainder of the submarine and obtain information that could break a Soviet code. The Times also said a redesigned claw—to replace the huge grabbling hook that was affixed to the vessel's barge and used to scoop up a portion of the sub last July—was being completed.

Allen would not comment on these reports, except to say that "almost all, if not all, of the Los Angeles Times story is not accurate."

He added: "This ship is a prototype piece of equipment, and came in for modifications associated with a prototype piece of equipment. The whole project is a sensitive project and there are a lot of things we can't say about it."

Meanwhile, it also was learned today that the Securities and Exchange Commission, which has jurisdiction over Global's financial doings as a publicly held corporation, has investigated Global's involvement in the Glomar mission.

In a release dated 10 days ago, the SEC concluded that "no information has been developed which is inconsistent with the financial figures contained" in Global's annual report to the SEC.

"However," the report added, "certain textual disclosures in Global Marine's filings with respect . . . to the projects are, in the opinion of the commission staff, inaccurate and incomplete due to classified aspects."

The SEC revealed that Global's contract to maintain and service the vessel expires in October. "The company has represented that there is no assurance that this involvement will continue" after that date, the SEC said.

Global earned 17 per cent of its 1974 income and 15 per cent of its operating profits from the Glomar project, the SEC said. The largest earnings came in 1971 and 1972, during construction, and, the SEC said, "such contributions have been diminishing since that time."

It added: "The company expects such contributions to decline in 1975," raising the provocative inference that Glomar's mission might be coming to an end.