



News Story

Commander Submarine Force
U.S. Pacific Fleet
Public Affairs Office
1430 Morton St., Bldg. 619, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii 96860-4664
Office: (808) 473-0911 Fax: (808) 423-2732
web: www.csp.navy.mil

RELEASE #06-026

June 16, 2006

Sunken sub appears to be USS Lagarto

From Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet

(PEARL HARBOR, HI) -- Navy divers completed six days of diving operations June 16 on wreckage in the Gulf of Thailand believed to be that of the lost World War II submarine USS Lagarto.

Divers will send photographs and video of the submarine to the Naval Historical Center in Washington for further analysis.

The divers' observations appear to confirm the discovery made in May 2005 by British wreck diver Jamie MacLeod.

"Without a doubt it's a U.S. submarine, a Balao-class," said Seventh Fleet Diving Officer Cmdr. Tony San Jose.

San Jose and his fellow divers reported identifying twin 5-inch gun mounts both forward and aft, a feature believed to be unique to Lagarto. They also reported finding serial numbers and the word "Manitowoc" engraved on the submarine's propeller. USS Lagarto was one of 28 submarines built in Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

The operations were conducted from the rescue and salvage ship USS Salvor (ARS-52) with embarked divers from Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit One, or MDSU-1, based in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

The Japan-based mine countermeasures ship USS Patriot (MCM-7) assisted by first pinpointing the location of the wreckage with its SQQ-32 sonar and remotely-operated Mine Neutralization Vehicle.

The mission to positively identify USS Lagarto was carried out as part of the Thailand phase of the exercise Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training, or CARAT. A Royal Thai Navy liaison officer was embarked onboard USS Salvor to assist during the mission.

-MORE-

LAGARTO 2-2-2

San Jose said that the diving operations were very challenging because of short bottom times, strong currents and limited visibility. Due to the depths involved, the dives had to be conducted with mixed gas.

“We are deeply grateful to the divers of MDSU-1 and USS Salvor for their efforts to confirm this discovery and bring closure to the families of Lagarto’s crew,” said Pacific Submarine Force commander Rear Adm. Jeffrey Cassias.

For 60 years, crewmembers' families did not know the exact circumstances surrounding the 86 submariners who perished. Lagarto was last heard from on May 3, 1945, as it was preparing to attack a Japanese convoy under heavy escorts. Japanese war records later revealed that the minelayer Hatsutaka reported sinking a U.S. submarine at roughly the same time and location.

Cassias met May 6 with Lagarto family members at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum in Manitowoc, where a memorial service was held to honor the lost crew. Last year, Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle signed a proclamation making May 3, the day the craft was presumed sunk, as USS Lagarto Remembrance Day in perpetuity.

“We owe a great debt to these men, and to all of the World War II submariners,” said Cassias. “In the world's darkest hour, they faced the greatest risks, and demonstrated the most noble courage to preserve the freedom of our nation.”

Lagarto was one of 52 submarines lost on patrol during World War II.

-USN-