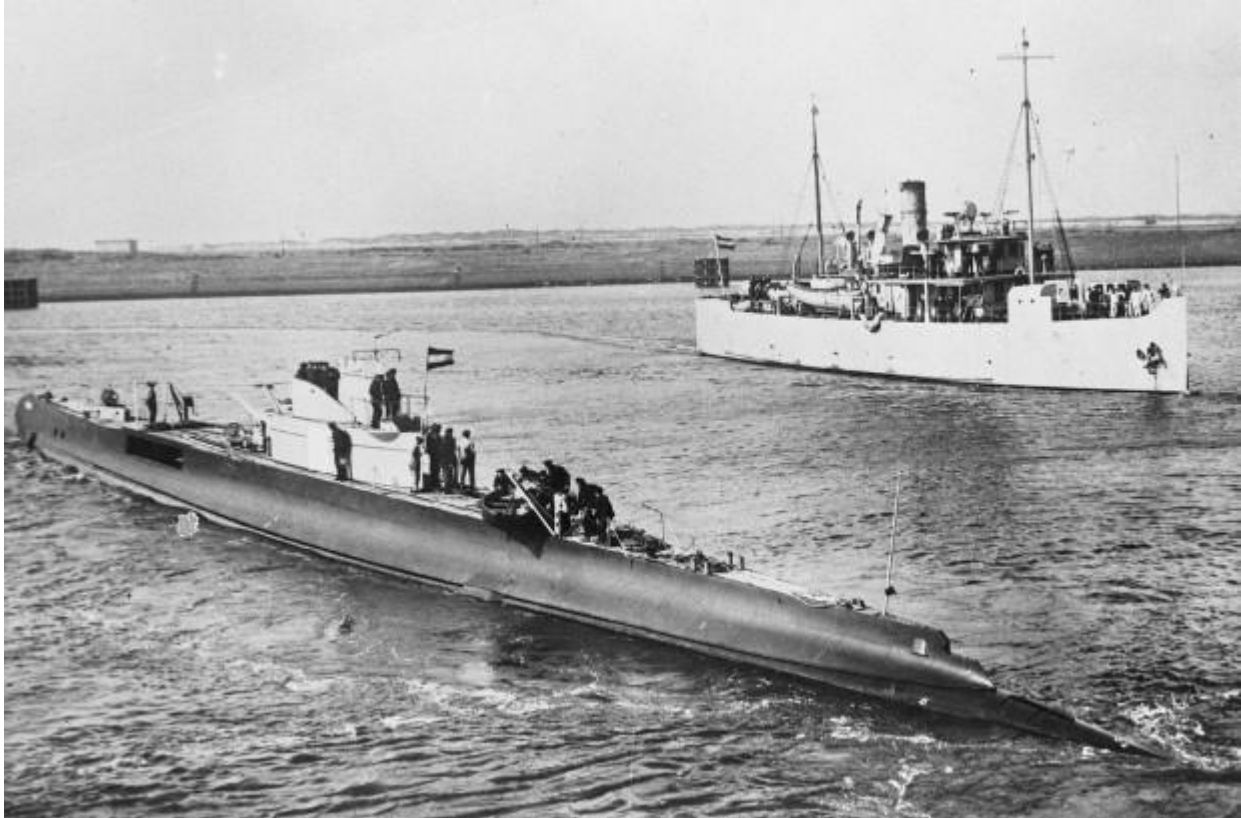


Shipwrecks of WWII submarines mysteriously vanish

By Sean Keach, The Sun

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HNLMS K XVII (in the foreground)

Two submarines wrecked off the coast of Malaysia during World War II have mysteriously disappeared.

The pair of Dutch vessels have lain largely undisturbed for nearly 80 years – but vanished late last week.

All that now remains of the submarines are broken scraps and their outlines in the sand.

The ships were part of the Dutch war effort, and were sunk during operations in the South China Sea.

Both the K XVII and the O 16 submarines sailed right into a Japanese line of mines, killing almost all crew members on board.

The boats were left as ocean graves, and contained the remains of the 77 crewmen – all of which are now missing.

Researchers have now verified that the submarines have vanished, and suspect their remains were salvaged by looters.

Jet Bussemaker, the granddaughter of Anton Bussemaker who commanded and died on the O 16 ship aged 41, described the news as “very sad.”

“It is shocking to all the relatives, but at the same time it does not surprise me at all,” said Bussemaker, who also previously served as a minister for veterans. As a minister, I had to report to the chamber that three other warships had disappeared from Indonesian waters,” she said.

“There were already indications at that time that the O 16 had been tampered with.”

She added that she felt frustration that “where we have found graves, often after the great efforts of those involved, we are unable to save these places as war graves”.

Bussemaker went on: “I am now also just a surviving relative.

“This is very bad. It gives no rest this way. That boat was the grave.”



Old ships might sound worthless, but looting WW2 vessels can be big business.

A special report by The Guardian published in 2017 revealed that “even poor quality steel can bring in about \$1,249,575 a ship”.

That’s not to mention other valuable types of metal available from wrecks, including copper cables and phosphor bronze propellers.

The seafloor around Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore is littered with more than 100 shipwrecks from World War 2.

That makes it a prime spot for salvagers hoping to make quick cash off long-forgotten vessels.

But salvagers aren’t interested in the bodies on board – making the looting operation more tragic.

Reports suggest that the remains of sailors who died aboard British and Dutch warships in the Java Sea have been dumped in anonymous mass graves.

Salvagers reportedly uncovered skulls, jawbones, feet, ribs, hands and hips among looted materials from wrecked ships.