

WWII US submarine wreck discovered 75 years after it sank

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The wreck of World War II submarine USS Grayback has been discovered off Japan 75 years after its sinking by a Japanese bomber.

The submarine was found on June 5, by the Lost 52 Project, which locates lost U.S. World War II submarines. In a statement translated from Japanese, the Lost 52 Project explained that the USS Grayback (SS-208) is the first U.S. submarine discovered off the coast of Japan.

Japanese records indicate that the sub was sunk by a 500-pound bomb dropped by a naval bomber in February 1944. The bomb hit aft of the Grayback's conning tower and the sub sank with the loss of her 80-strong crew.

The exploration team used an undersea drone to locate the Tambor-class sub, which lies at a depth of 1,427 feet, 50 nautical miles south of Okinawa. The sub's deck gun was located 384 feet away.



The plaque on the USS Grayback wreck. (Ocean Outreach/Lost 52 Project/YouTube)

In the statement, Lost 52 Project founder Tim Taylor described the discovery as “absolutely amazing.” The sub is ranked the 20th most successful U.S. submarine of World War II, according to the Lost 52 Project.

The USS Grayback was launched on Jan. 31, 1941, according to the Naval History and Heritage Command and quickly earned a fearsome reputation in the Pacific Theater. During 10 war patrols, it sank 14 enemy vessels, including Japanese submarines, totaling 63,835 tons of shipping. In January 1943, the sub’s crew also rescued six downed U.S. aviators from Munda in the Solomon Islands, for which her commanding officer was awarded the Navy Cross.



The wreck of the USS Grayback was found 50 nautical miles south of Okinawa. (Ocean Outreach/Lost 52 Project/YouTube)

In the statement, Lost 52 Project founder Tim Taylor described the discovery as “absolutely amazing.” The research team, he explained, was analyzing some of the final pieces of the sonar data that they had collected when they spotted what proved to be the USS Grayback lying on the ocean floor.

Taylor is also the CEO of Tiburon Subsea, which provides underwater technology equipment and is also the founder of exploration organization, Ocean Outreach.

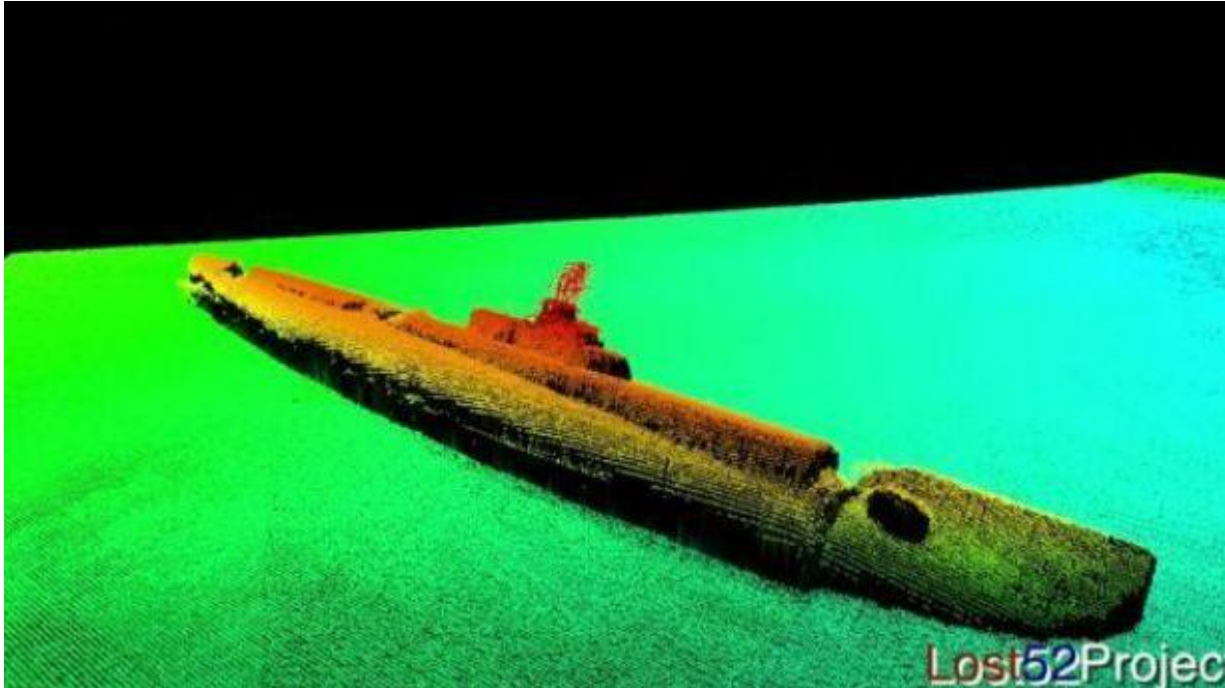
A video posted to YouTube by Ocean Outreach on Nov. 10 shows Grayback's damaged hull, as well as a plaque bearing the sub's name, details about its construction in Groton, Conn., and its launch.



The wreck is lying at a depth of 1,427 feet. (Ocean Outreach/Lost 52 Project/YouTube)

Japanese historian Hiroshi Iwasaki also played a crucial role in the discovery. The expert retranslated a primary record of the Grayback's sinking and found that the longitude differed from a record created in 1946. Armed with the new coordinates, the Lost 52 Project was able to target the area where the wreck was subsequently found.

The discovery provides closure for the families of the USS Grayback's crew. "[Seventy-five] year old mystery solved and families of 80 Sailors have closure: USS Grayback has been found," tweeted the Naval History and Heritage Command on Sunday.



The USS Grayback sank with the loss of her 80-strong crew. (Ocean Outreach/Lost 52 Project/YouTube)

The USS Grayback is the fifth sub discovered by the Lost 52 Project. Earlier this year, the team located the bow of World War II submarine USS Grunion 77 years after the sub went missing off the remote Aleutian Islands in Alaska on her first war patrol.



The USS Grayback photographed in 1941. (Naval History and Heritage Command. Catalog#: NH 53771)

In a separate project, the deepest sunken shipwreck ever discovered, a U.S. World War II destroyer, was recently found in the Philippine Sea.

The wreck was found resting at a depth of 20,406 feet by experts on the Research Vessel Petrel. Explorers used an undersea drone to locate the mysterious ship, believed to be the USS Johnston, a Fletcher-class destroyer sunk during the Battle off Samar, a key action in the Battle of Leyte Gulf in 1944.

Eerie footage captured by the drone shows the mangled wreckage of the ship lying on the seabed.