Locating USS Pompano

Summary: We are requesting permission from the Government of Japan to physically confirm that a missing U.S. submarine sank in a specific location in the Tsugaru Straits during WWII.

We Enable the Fleet
Locating USS Pompano

• The U.S. Navy reported the ship lost at sea on 29 August 1943, possibly due to enemy mines off the coast of Japan.

• Several Japanese entities detail an action against a suspected submarine, reporting it had sunk in the entrance of the Tsugaru Straits between Honshu and Hokkaido.

• A USN minesweeper recently conducted a side-scan sonar search while transiting the area and imaged a wreck with highly similar dimensions.
Requests for Support

U.S. Embassy, Tokyo

- U.S. Embassy contact Government of Japan to request permission to conduct sonar scans, underwater photography, and a survey dive for positive identification

SECNAV via CPF/PACOM (info to C7F, SUBPAC and CTF-73)

- Concurrent request via Country Team to SECSTATE

Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force counterparts

- Concurrent request to Maritime Staff Office (info copy to the Commandant, Ominato District, JMSDF and Commander JMSDF Submarine Flotilla)
Proposed Follow-on Actions

• Conduct investigation of wreck
  ➢ Additional sonar scans and underwater photography/video
  ➢ Survey dive for positive identification
  ➢ Documentation/verification

• SMEs/historians evaluate data

• If positively identified as Pompano
  ➢ Arrange and conduct appropriate Memorial Service
  ➢ Declare the site a War Grave

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Background

- One of 52 U.S. submarines lost in WWII
- Pompano would be easily identifiable
- Noted SMEs willing to assist
- Considerable press interest anticipated
- Provides closure for families
- Beneficial training opportunity
Identification

- An early design “Fleet boat” with four tubes forward and two aft. All other F-boats with “four forward tubes” have been located.
SME Interest

- Two renowned underwater archeologists have expressed interest in providing planning assistance
  - Dr. Robert Neyland
  - CAPT Don Walsh (USN ret.)
Potential Media Interest

• Television
  - Discovery
  - History
  - National Geographic

• Magazines
  - Naval History & Proceedings
  - Seapower
  - Undersea Warfare
  - American Submariner
  - The Submarine Review

• Assorted other national and international media

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Other Considerations

• Potential “Bi-lateral Training” opportunity
  ➢ JMSDF Mine sweepers are equipped with AQS-14 side-scan sonar

• Engagement with Government of Japan
  ➢ CNFJ and C7F to their respective Japan Maritime Self Defense Force counterparts
  ➢ Demonstrate interoperability of our two maritime forces

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17 Sep 1943:

- At 0735, aircraft # 17 spotted an oil slick at 320 degrees true at a range of approximately 4,000 meters from Shiriya Zaki light house.

- At 0930, sub chaser # 41 spotted oil at 350 degrees true at approximately 13,000 meters from Shiriya Zaki light house. Patrol boats prosecuted the contact and saw the oil slick moving east.

- The Japanese documented the general location of where they believe the sub was sunk.
USN Report: 23 July 2012

- USN Minesweeper conducted a side-scan sonar search while transiting the area. Scan revealed two uncharted wrecks

- One appeared to be a barge or small coastal ferry boat. The second measured approx. 138 ft long x 22 feet wide
  - USS Pompano - Length: 300’7”, Beam: 25’
  - Ocean Current: approx. 2.5 knots to the east
  - Ocean Bottom: silt and soft mud

- Opinion: “good confidence” of a possible submarine
QUESTIONS?