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ECU Alumni Participate in Discovery of Lost Japanese WWII Mega-Sub in Hawaii

GREENVILLE, N.C. (Dec. 5, 2013) — As Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day approaches on December 7, researchers in Hawaii, including two East Carolina University alumni, have found a large WWII-era Japanese submarine in 2,300 feet of water off the southwest coast of Oahu.

Terry Kerby, operations director and chief submarine pilot for the Hawai‘i Undersea Research Laboratory (HURL) at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, is the primary investigator involved in the discovery. Kerby’s research efforts and dives were funded by a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s maritime heritage research effort.

On his recent dive, two ECU alumni and co-investigators from the NOAA Office of National Maritime Sanctuaries joined Kerby. Dr. James Delgado, who received his MA in history from ECU in 1985, is director of the NOAA Maritime Heritage Program, and Dr. Hans Van Tilburg, who received his MA in maritime history from ECU in 1995, is a NOAA historian and maritime archaeologist.

“The I-400 has been on our ‘to-find’ list for some time,” said Kerby in an article from the University of Hawai‘i. “Finding it where we did was totally unexpected. Jim and Hans and I knew we were approaching what looked like a large wreck on our sonar. It was a thrill when the view of a giant submarine appeared out of the darkness.”

The discovery of the I-400, the largest submarine built prior to the introduction of nuclear-powered submarines in the 1960s, was lost in 1946 after it was scuttled by the U.S. Navy in an effort to keep its advanced technology secret.

“These submarines are indeed technical marvels, and they speak even more to past events which shaped the Pacific and the world,” said Van Tilburg. “Looking back on this advanced and deadly technology today, what also comes to mind is how two former enemies can remember the past, having achieved a reconciliation perhaps unimaginable at that time.”

A video of the dive that reveals the I-400 may be viewed in an article appearing on the CNN website at http://www.cnn.com/2013/12/03/us/japanese-submarine-found/.

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