

D/V TENACIOUS

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DIVERS RELEASE FIRST SIDESCAN SONAR IMAGES OF U-550 AND THE STERN OF OIL TANKER PAN PENNSYLVANIA SINCE THEIR DISCOVERY IN 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Atlantic Wreck Salvage, owners and operators of D/V Tenacious, have released the first side-scan sonar images of German submarine U-550, and the stern of its last victim, oil tanker Pan Pennsylvania (“Pan Penn”) since a Tenacious-led expedition discovered the wrecks in 2012. The discovery made news worldwide as U-550 was, at the time, the last undiscovered U-boat resting in diveable North Atlantic waters. Atlantic Wreck Salvage has mounted several expeditions to U-550 and Pan Penn since 2012. The goal of the 2020 Expedition was to obtain new sonar images of both shipwrecks and to dive the wrecks to determine their current condition.

During an April 16, 1944 battle, U-550 fired at least one torpedo at the Pan Penn, which was the largest oil tanker in the world at the time of her sinking. An armed convoy protecting Pan Penn drove U-550 to the surface with depth charges, and the U-boat crew scuttled the submarine rather than allow her to fall into American hands. Pan Penn floated for two days before sinking many miles from the scene of the original attack. Original reports indicated Pan Penn floated capsized stern down, but Tenacious discovered and confirmed that more than 150’ of the stern (including the engine spaces) had broken free and lay near the wreck of U-550, creating an unusual event that attacker and victim of a maritime battle share a common resting place. The remarkable story of these vessels and the race for their discovery was chronicled in Randall Peffer’s 2016 book, *Where Divers Dare: The Hunt for the Last U-Boat*.

In addition to obtaining up-to-date sonar images, the 2020 Expedition Team made another noteworthy discovery when it located U-550’s “tail bustle” resting approximately 200 meters from the U-550 wreck site. Shortly after the submarine was depth charged, destroyer escort U.S.S. Gandy claimed to have rammed U-550 amidship as the submarine struggled on the surface. There was some speculation the ramming might have damaged the submarine’s pressure hull and contributed to her sinking. During an interview with surviving U-550 crew member Albert Nietche, he claimed U-550 had not been rammed and that the interior of the submarine had not been breached until the crew themselves opened a sea strainer and flooded the vessel.

Diver Harold Moyers, part of the 2012 expedition/discovery team, noticed the tail bustle was missing on one of his first dives to the wreck, leading him to believe the ramming caused only superficial damage to U-550. Moyers observed the stern was sheared off cleanly just behind the pressure hull. “The discovery of the tail proves the Gandy rammed U-550 but further aft than claimed. It also confirms it did not cause her to sink,” said Moyers when he learned of the sonar discovery. “Every dive and every small discovery our team makes writes another chapter in the historical record of this epic battle. This particularly is interesting because both the Germans and the Americans versions were somewhat aligned.”

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Sonar Operator Joseph St. Amand captured the images of U-550 and the Pan Penn stern in their final resting places. The pictures, as well as twenty dives conducted by the 2020 Expedition Team, reveal the submarine remains remarkably intact despite being submerged in the waters off Nantucket at a depth of more than 300 feet for 76 years. The large shadows cast by these wrecks in the sonar images indicate the sizeable height both the ship and the submarine still extend from the ocean floor.

2020 Expedition Team members include: Joe Mazraani, Jack Lawniczuk, Christopher Ogden, Christopher Shannon, Joseph St. Amand, Tom Zajac, and Jennifer Sellitti.

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About Atlantic Wreck Salvage and D/V Tenacious

D/V Tenacious is a New Jersey-based dive vessel that locates, dives, and salvages shipwrecks in the North Atlantic. Tenacious and her crew have discovered numerous wrecks in the waters off the coast of New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, the most celebrated of which is U-550, the last German U-boat known to rest in diveable North Atlantic waters. Tenacious and her expeditions have been chronicled in the books “Where Divers Dare: The Hunt for the Last U-boat,” “Dangerous Shallows, In Search of the Ghost Ships of Cape Cod,” and in dive publications worldwide. The vessel is owned by Atlantic Wreck Salvage and operated by Joe Mazraani and Jennifer Sellitti. When they are not at sea, Joe and Jennifer work as criminal defense attorneys in New Jersey.

Images attached:

Image 1 – View of U-550 showing both bow and stern planes and the blunted stern.

Image 2 – View of U-550 showing more detail. The propeller, conning tower and sharp bow are visible.

Image 3 – Pan Penn’s stern on its port side. The large shadow cast by the wreckage indicates 60 feet of relief from the ocean floor.

Image 4 – U-550’s “tail bustle” resting approximately 200 meters from the battle site.

Image 5 – Photo of U-505’s tail bustle. U-505 is part of the same series of U-boats as U-550. It is housed in Chicago’s Museum of Science and Industry.

Image 6 – Photo of 2020 Expedition Team with artifacts recovered from the Pan Penn.

Photographs/underwater video footage is available upon request.