

Australian WWII wreck seen for first time in 66 years

10 January 2010



The small raised star on the side of the wreck of Australian hospital ship Centaur, lying at a depth of 2,059 metres, off Australia's northeast coast. The ship was torpedoed in World War II and sank with the loss of 268 lives was seen for the first time in 66 years on January 10 when a remote-control camera captured footage of the wreck.

An Australian hospital ship which was torpedoed in World War II and sank with the loss of 268 lives was seen for the first time in 66 years Sunday when a remote-control camera captured footage of the wreck.

The clearly-marked Centaur was lost on May 14, 1943 and only found off Australia's northeast coast last month when a high-tech search uncovered it at a depth of 2,059 metres (1.3 miles).

Search director David Mearns said he hoped Sunday's photographic proof would remove all doubt and "hopefully end a 66-year quest for unanswered questions and bring comfort to many families across Australia and beyond".

"The wreck was found leaning over towards its port side at an angle of approximately 25 degrees and the bow is almost completely severed from the rest of the hull in the area where the single torpedo hit," he said.

"Although the wreck is very badly damaged, characteristic markings and features that identify the wreck as the Centaur were clearly visible."

Australia believes the ship was struck without warning by a Japanese [submarine](#) but Japan says the circumstances around the sinking are unclear.

Among the distinctive features revealed Sunday by the remotely-operated submersible vehicle equipped with a camera are the large red cross on both sides of the bow and the number 47 that designated the vessel as Australian Hospital Ship 47.

Mearns said conditions for filming the wreck were not ideal because strong seabed currents were stirring up sand and other material which was obscuring the view. More dives would be needed to completely document the [shipwreck](#), he said.

In announcing the search for the lost ship last year, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said the boat's sinking "struck deeply at the heart of our nation, and became a symbol of our determination to fight on against a brutal enemy".

But a statement issued by the Japanese Embassy in Canberra said the circumstances in which the Centaur went down were not conclusive.

In 2008, Australian searchers found the wreck of the HMAS Sydney II off the coast of Western Australia. The Sydney, then the pride of the Australian wartime fleet, sank in 1941 with the loss of 645 lives after a battle with the German raider Kormoran.

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