



PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA
Marine National Monument

NEWS RELEASE
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Scientists discover remains of World War II-era U.S. Navy ship in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands

(Honolulu, HI) – Researchers announced today the discovery of a World War II-era U.S. Navy tanker that sank nearly 60 years ago after running aground on Maro Reef in waters that are now part of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (PMNM) in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

On October 1, 1957, USNS *Mission San Miguel* departed Apra Harbor, Guam in the Mariana Islands, bound for Seattle, Washington, and ran aground on Maro Reef on October 8 while running at full speed and carrying only ballast. The Navy safely evacuated the 42-member crew.

Earlier this month, a team of NOAA scientists and research partners aboard NOAA Ship *Hiʻialakai* discovered *Mission San Miguel* during a multidisciplinary expedition to the monument. At 523 feet in length, *Mission San Miguel* is the largest ship reported lost in the monument.

“To identify the remains of this tanker in the maze-like structure of Maro Reef is thrilling,” said Jason Raupp, Ph.D., PMNM maritime heritage field leader. “The maritime heritage team carefully researched the available data and worked closely with *Hiʻialakai* crewmembers and NOAA Corps officers to determine a search area that ultimately led to the location of the site.”

Built by Marinship Corporation in Sausalito, California, *Mission San Miguel* was used to deliver petroleum products across the globe. Like Liberty and Victory cargo ships, tankers were crucial to the war effort. Despite the significant role tankers played in the war, few examples of these vessels remain in existence today.

“This discovery gives us a rare, exciting glimpse at this period in maritime transport history and reminds us of the important role these unheralded working vessels played during World War II and in the decades following,” said Kelly Keogh, Ph.D., PMNM maritime heritage program coordinator.

Mission San Miguel was awarded a number of commendations for its military service including a National Defense Service Medal, a Korea Service Medal, a Republic of South Korea Service Medal (retroactive), and a United Nations Service Medal.

“Each new discovery in PMNM adds to our understanding of the past uses of this special place and helps us reconnect our past to our future,” said Athline Clark, NOAA superintendent for Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.





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On August 3, during the annual month-long Reef Assessment and Monitoring (RAMP) cruise, a four-person maritime heritage team using towboard and drift dive surveys discovered *Mission San Miguel* lying on its side at a depth of 80 feet on Maro Reef. The team also discovered a WWII-era aircraft in the lagoon at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, which they are currently working to identify.

This year's RAMP cruise included six undergraduate students trained through ongoing collaborative field programs with the University of Hawai'i; one of the students was a member of the maritime heritage team. Ongoing since 2000, RAMP utilizes such highly-qualified students as part of PMNM's efforts to mentor the next generation of resource managers and scientists.

"We are delighted to have so many talented young researchers participate as members of our field team and look forward to the many results that will be forthcoming from this year's RAMP cruise," Clark said.

Images and video available at

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B_0jPZ_hV0yBfkc3VW5OcF92cHpuM2txSk5HaHF3cVUtWkd5U2ZERGFsUzBkQVdWN0pVbUE.

Papahānaumokuākea is cooperatively managed to ensure ecological integrity and achieve strong, long-term protection and perpetuation of Northwestern Hawaiian Island ecosystems, Native Hawaiian culture, and heritage resources for current and future generations. Three co-trustees - the Department of Commerce, Department of the Interior, and State of Hawai'i - joined by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, protect this special place. Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument was inscribed as the first mixed (natural and cultural) UNESCO World Heritage Site in the United States in July 2010. For more information, please visit www.papahanaumokuakea.gov.

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