

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:06,000

Tonight, the search for missing World War II heroes continues.

2

00:00:06,000 --> 00:00:10,000

February 1944, if you're here, you'd probably be running for cover.

3

00:00:10,000 --> 00:00:13,000

That's when the U.S. launched a major carrier-borne attack.

4

00:00:15,000 --> 00:00:20,000

On a group of remote Pacific islands, an eyewitness reveals buried secrets.

5

00:00:20,000 --> 00:00:26,000

After they tied them, he heard the explosion. The man were dead.

6

00:00:26,000 --> 00:00:29,000

Our team explores in the jungle.

7

00:00:29,000 --> 00:00:32,000

There could be bones, dog tags, anything.

8

00:00:32,000 --> 00:00:35,000

Hey guys, come here. Look at this.

9

00:00:35,000 --> 00:00:38,000

And we scan the ocean floor.

10

00:00:38,000 --> 00:00:41,000

Wow. That's a plane for sure.

11

00:00:41,000 --> 00:00:44,000

To find those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

12

00:00:44,000 --> 00:00:52,000

Look at this. An iconic World War II plane. This is unbelievable. I'm in shock.

13

00:00:55,000 --> 00:00:57,000

My name is Josh Gates.

14

00:00:57,000 --> 00:00:58,000

Hello.

15

00:00:58,000 --> 00:00:59,000

Explorer.

16

00:00:59,000 --> 00:01:00,000

Here goes nothing.

17

00:01:00,000 --> 00:01:01,000

Adventurer.

18

00:01:01,000 --> 00:01:02,000

Woo-hoo-hoo.

19

00:01:02,000 --> 00:01:03,000

Oh, that's a long way down.

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00:01:03,000 --> 00:01:07,000

And a guy who ends up in some very strange situations.

21

00:01:07,000 --> 00:01:09,000

I'm alive for now.

22

00:01:09,000 --> 00:01:15,000

With a degree in archaeology and a passion for the unexplained, I travel to the ends of the earth,

23

00:01:15,000 --> 00:01:18,000

investigating the greatest legends in history.

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00:01:18,000 --> 00:01:19,000

Ready to rock and roll.

25

00:01:19,000 --> 00:01:22,000

This is Expedition Unknown.

26

00:01:25,000 --> 00:01:26,000

Collected a lot of data.

27

00:01:26,000 --> 00:01:28,000

That's the big question. You got data.

28

00:01:28,000 --> 00:01:29,000

Yeah, yeah. Good data. It looks really clean.

29

00:01:29,000 --> 00:01:31,000

Okay. So, what's in it?

30

00:01:33,000 --> 00:01:34,000

That's a plane.

31

00:01:34,000 --> 00:01:35,000

It's a lot like a plane.

32

00:01:35,000 --> 00:01:38,000

That's a plane. For sure, right?

33

00:01:38,000 --> 00:01:40,000

Could this be the plane that we're looking for here?

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00:01:40,000 --> 00:01:41,000

It's in the right area.

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00:01:41,000 --> 00:01:43,000

We are in the right spot and we can dive that.

36

00:01:43,000 --> 00:01:45,000

We can dive that tomorrow.

37

00:01:47,000 --> 00:01:51,000

I'm in Chuk Micronesia, reviewing sonar data with Project Recover,

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00:01:51,000 --> 00:01:57,000

a group of scientists and historians dedicated to finding missing American servicemen.

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00:01:57,000 --> 00:02:00,000

And their current mission is daunting.

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00:02:00,000 --> 00:02:06,000

In the middle of the vast Pacific, more than 3,600 miles west of Hawaii sits the islands of Chuk,

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00:02:06,000 --> 00:02:08,000

once known as Truck Lagoon.

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00:02:08,000 --> 00:02:14,000

This remote atoll shelters 16 islands and more than 800 square miles of water,

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00:02:14,000 --> 00:02:17,000

an area the size of Rhode Island.

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00:02:18,000 --> 00:02:23,000

During World War II, Truck was Japan's biggest naval base in the Pacific,

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00:02:23,000 --> 00:02:27,000

with five airfields defending as many as 1,000 ships.

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00:02:27,000 --> 00:02:30,000

It was their Pearl Harbor in more ways than one.

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00:02:30,000 --> 00:02:35,000

To defeat Imperial Japan, we first needed to neutralize Truck.

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00:02:36,000 --> 00:02:42,000

In February of 1944, the U.S. Navy launched Operation Hailstone,

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00:02:42,000 --> 00:02:48,000

one of the largest aircraft carrier task forces ever assembled, descended on Truck Lagoon,

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00:02:48,000 --> 00:02:52,000

and our war planes obliterated the island's stronghold.

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00:02:54,000 --> 00:02:59,000

But 200 American airmen paid the ultimate price,

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00:02:59,000 --> 00:03:04,000

and 42 of their planes are still lost somewhere in the lagoon.

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00:03:05,000 --> 00:03:10,000

Eight decades later, and no American plane wreck has ever been found here,

54

00:03:10,000 --> 00:03:13,000

which is why this sonar hit is so exciting.

55

00:03:13,000 --> 00:03:17,000

So whatever that is, nobody's been down there to look at it.

56

00:03:17,000 --> 00:03:18,000

Not in 80 years.

57

00:03:18,000 --> 00:03:19,000

Wow.

58

00:03:19,000 --> 00:03:21,000

That's awesome.

59

00:03:21,000 --> 00:03:29,000

The next day, we take to the stormy waters to investigate the coordinates of the target.

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00:03:29,000 --> 00:03:33,000

Leading the charge is Project Recover co-founder Mark Moline,

61

00:03:33,000 --> 00:03:38,000

as well as lead historian Colin Colborne and archaeologist Dan Davis.

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00:03:38,000 --> 00:03:42,000

We motor out 14 miles from the port of the island,

63

00:03:42,000 --> 00:03:46,000

and we're going to take a look at the location of the ship.

64

00:03:46,000 --> 00:03:51,000

It's a soggy ride, but it will take more than a little rain to deter our efforts.

65

00:03:51,000 --> 00:03:56,000

Ooh, it's coming in. Nobody said it was going to be easy or dry.

66

00:03:57,000 --> 00:04:01,000

And we're going to take a look at the location of the ship.

67

00:04:01,000 --> 00:04:04,000

We're going to take a look at the location of the ship.

68

00:04:04,000 --> 00:04:07,000

We're going to take a look at the location of the ship.

69

00:04:07,000 --> 00:04:10,000

We're going to take a look at the location of the ship.

70

00:04:10,000 --> 00:04:15,000

Ooh, it's coming in. Nobody said it was going to be easy or dry.

71

00:04:16,000 --> 00:04:21,000

As to the identity of the plane-shaped sonar hit we're chasing, we may have a clue.

72

00:04:21,000 --> 00:04:25,000

Previously, a local tipped us off to a family story

73

00:04:25,000 --> 00:04:31,000

that a downed airman washed ashore on nearby Fanupungus Island shortly after Operation Hailstone.

74

00:04:31,000 --> 00:04:34,000

So your grandfather was able to protect this guy.

75

00:04:34,000 --> 00:04:36,000

What about a name? What did your grandfather call him?

76

00:04:36,000 --> 00:04:38,000

The name of the airman was Frederick.

77

00:04:38,000 --> 00:04:40,000

Frederick? Oh my God.

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00:04:40,000 --> 00:04:42,000

Is there a Frederick? Yes, there is definitely a Frederick.

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00:04:42,000 --> 00:04:43,000

There is. Oh yes.

80

00:04:43,000 --> 00:04:44,000

Among the missing.

81

00:04:44,000 --> 00:04:46,000

Actually, it's an Avenger. It's a three crewman torpedo bomber.

82

00:04:46,000 --> 00:04:53,000

So that means that in this strait between these two islands there may be an Avenger and two crewmen.

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00:04:53,000 --> 00:04:59,000

Our subsequent sonar scan of the area revealed the undeniable signature of a plane.

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00:04:59,000 --> 00:05:04,000

If it is an Avenger, then Frederick's crew, Radio Men Stanley S Stump

85

00:05:04,000 --> 00:05:07,000

pilot Newton B. Birx may still be inside.

86

00:05:17,000 --> 00:05:24,000

Now we need to position ourselves exactly over the coordinates of the target to investigate with our own eyes.

87

00:05:24,000 --> 00:05:26,000

There we go. 300 feet.

88

00:05:27,000 --> 00:05:32,000

The team readies a shot line, a weighted rope that will guide us down to the wreck.

89

00:05:32,000 --> 00:05:40,000

50, 40, 30, 20, throw it.

90

00:05:50,000 --> 00:05:52,000

Okay, here we go guys. Are you ready?

91

00:05:52,000 --> 00:06:05,000

Okay, let's head down the line and see if we can find this thing. Sounds good Josh.

92

00:06:05,000 --> 00:06:13,000

The object sits in over 100 feet of water, so we'll need to find it quickly to avoid risking decompression sickness,

93

00:06:13,000 --> 00:06:19,000

a potentially deadly condition caused by a buildup of nitrogen which can emerge as bubbles in the bloodstream.

94

00:06:19,000 --> 00:06:23,000

Bottom is coming into view. We're at about 80 feet.

95

00:06:27,000 --> 00:06:29,000

Mark, I don't see this thing, do you?

96

00:06:29,000 --> 00:06:33,000

Based on the GPS tag, I think we need to go west.

97

00:06:33,000 --> 00:06:37,000

Alright, let's swim west. Let's see if it's there. We gotta be quick.

98

00:06:37,000 --> 00:06:52,000

Hold on, I see something. There's a dark mass on the bottom here. I think we got something.

99

00:06:59,000 --> 00:07:04,000

That's a plane! That's definitely a plane, Josh.

100

00:07:05,000 --> 00:07:10,000

The wreck is inverted, but the preservation is stunning.

101

00:07:10,000 --> 00:07:15,000

Despite resting upside down on the sea floor, she almost looks like she could take off.

102

00:07:15,000 --> 00:07:21,000

Alright, let's figure out what this thing is. Let's start at the propeller and go back on the plane.

103

00:07:21,000 --> 00:07:31,000

Okay, here we go. The nose comes gone, but the blades are still attached.

104

00:07:34,000 --> 00:07:39,000

The blades are attached, but they're bent. You think that's from the impact on the water?

105

00:07:39,000 --> 00:07:43,000

Yeah, this is the best we can ever power when it's in the water.

106

00:07:43,000 --> 00:07:49,000

Diger stop sider, you see anything that indicates whether it's an American aircraft or a Japanese over.

107

00:07:49,000 --> 00:07:53,000

Let me get a light in here.

108

00:07:53,000 --> 00:07:58,000

Engines are like fingerprints that can help ID the make and model of a plane.

109

00:07:58,000 --> 00:08:03,000

We just need to look beneath the protective engine cover.

110

00:08:03,000 --> 00:08:08,000

Calling is still on, but underneath you can see it just as clear as day.

111

00:08:08,000 --> 00:08:13,000

Radial engine for sure, just like on an adventure.

112

00:08:13,000 --> 00:08:18,000

Stop side copy, radial engine, that looks good for American.

113

00:08:18,000 --> 00:08:24,000

The TBM Avenger engine has 14 cylinders radiating outward, like spokes on a wheel.

114

00:08:24,000 --> 00:08:30,000

But so do other planes that saw action in Halestone, including the American F4F Hellcat

115

00:08:31,000 --> 00:08:35,000

and the Japanese Zero.

116

00:08:35,000 --> 00:08:40,000

We continue to look for identifying features, working our way down the fuselage.

117

00:08:40,000 --> 00:08:45,000

Josh, I can see a little bit into the cockpit area here. Where did you have to look?

118

00:08:45,000 --> 00:08:49,000

Let me get my light in there.

119

00:08:49,000 --> 00:08:56,000

Look at this. I can see an instrument of some kind in here, part of the framing.

120

00:08:56,000 --> 00:09:04,000

I think that's the back of the seat. Oh my word. The rest of the cockpit is buried.

121

00:09:04,000 --> 00:09:10,000

But what I don't see tells us more. There's only room here for one seat.

122

00:09:10,000 --> 00:09:15,000

This was the cockpit of a fighter, not a larger three-man torpedo bomber.

123

00:09:15,000 --> 00:09:21,000

We can rule out Frederick's Avenger, but this mystery plane is still a major discovery.

124

00:09:22,000 --> 00:09:26,000

Do you think the pilot is still here?

125

00:09:26,000 --> 00:09:33,000

It's a good chance he's still in the plane. Wow, that is haunting.

126

00:09:33,000 --> 00:09:38,000

This is a solemn sight to be treated with deep respect.

127

00:09:38,000 --> 00:09:44,000

We move around the plane carefully to not disturb any of the wreckage which is frozen in time.

128

00:09:44,000 --> 00:09:47,000

Mark, where are the wheels on this thing?

129

00:09:47,000 --> 00:09:51,000

They're folded in toward the engine. See right here?

130

00:09:51,000 --> 00:09:54,000

Oh, there are the tires. Got it.

131

00:09:54,000 --> 00:09:58,000

So the wheels fold in toward the center of the plane.

132

00:09:58,000 --> 00:10:03,000

Yeah, that's right. Let's take a look at the wings.

133

00:10:03,000 --> 00:10:06,000

Josh, look at the angle of the flaps here.

134

00:10:06,000 --> 00:10:11,000

The plane's upside down so those flaps are actually pointed down, right?

135

00:10:11,000 --> 00:10:14,000

Yeah, it's like the pilot was trying to slow down the plane.

136

00:10:14,000 --> 00:10:18,000

It's amazing how this wreckage tells a story.

137

00:10:18,000 --> 00:10:24,000

You really get a sense of the last moments here just looking at the position to the machinery.

138

00:10:24,000 --> 00:10:27,000

A picture of the crash begins to emerge.

139

00:10:27,000 --> 00:10:33,000

The pilot, likely taking heavy fire, tried to slow the plane just before impact.

140

00:10:35,000 --> 00:10:41,000

And as each new forensic detail comes into focus, so does the identity of the mystery craft.

141

00:10:41,000 --> 00:10:45,000

Coming off the wing here. This is the machine gun, yes?

142

00:10:45,000 --> 00:10:47,000

Yeah, Josh, that looks like the machine gun.

143

00:10:47,000 --> 00:10:54,000

That's incredible. Look at that thing. Still in place, still protruding out from the wing.

144

00:10:54,000 --> 00:10:57,000

Now there's a flare on the end of the machine gun here.

145

00:11:00,000 --> 00:11:02,000

The driver's topside.

146

00:11:02,000 --> 00:11:06,000

A flare in the machine gun sounds like it could be Japanese. Over.

147

00:11:06,000 --> 00:11:08,000

I think I know what this plane is.

148

00:11:08,000 --> 00:11:12,000

I think we got a Japanese zero here. This is the zero.

149

00:11:12,000 --> 00:11:17,000

It is. An iconic World War II plane.

150

00:11:17,000 --> 00:11:23,000

The Type 99 machine gun on the wing with its signature flared barrel is conclusive.

151

00:11:23,000 --> 00:11:28,000

There is no question that this is a Mitsubishi A6M-0.

152

00:11:28,000 --> 00:11:32,000

The zero was the preeminent fighter plane at the beginning of the war.

153

00:11:32,000 --> 00:11:36,000

A lethal machine feared for its range and maneuverability.

154

00:11:36,000 --> 00:11:41,000

79 zeros were among the Japanese force that attacked Pearl Harbor.

155

00:11:41,000 --> 00:11:46,000

With this wreck now ID'd and photographed, we make our way topside.

156

00:11:54,000 --> 00:11:56,000

Really incredible, huh?

157

00:11:56,000 --> 00:11:58,000

That was amazing. Stunning.

158

00:11:58,000 --> 00:12:02,000

To just see an entire plane just laid out like that.

159

00:12:02,000 --> 00:12:05,000

It was beautiful. It really was. Eerie but beautiful.

160

00:12:05,000 --> 00:12:09,000

Nobody has seen that. Yeah. Until us. Yeah. Yeah. Amazing.

161

00:12:09,000 --> 00:12:13,000

It just shows you how much there is in this lagoon that's still undiscovered.

162

00:12:13,000 --> 00:12:16,000

Absolutely. Another piece of the puzzle.

163

00:12:17,000 --> 00:12:22,000

We will deliver all of our data on the newly discovered zero to the Japanese embassy.

164

00:12:22,000 --> 00:12:27,000

They may be able to identify the pilot and recover any remains.

165

00:12:27,000 --> 00:12:34,000

The airman inside was our enemy, but he was also a soldier who made the ultimate sacrifice for his nation.

166

00:12:35,000 --> 00:12:38,000

And one who may have family seeking closure.

167

00:12:47,000 --> 00:12:51,000

The next morning I'm back on the water to continue the search for MIAs

168

00:12:51,000 --> 00:12:56,000

with project recover historian Colin Colborne, archaeologist Dan Davis,

169

00:12:56,000 --> 00:13:00,000

and local investigator Mason Fritz. But today's mission is a bit different.

170

00:13:00,000 --> 00:13:05,000

We're going to be heading over to Tunawas. And in World War II the island was called Dublon.

171

00:13:05,000 --> 00:13:07,000

And what was Dublon's function during the war?

172

00:13:07,000 --> 00:13:12,000

It was the headquarters of the Japanese fleet. It was the administration center.

173

00:13:12,000 --> 00:13:17,000

There were multiple hospitals on the island. It was the center of gravity for the Japanese in World War II.

174

00:13:17,000 --> 00:13:18,000

What are we looking for there?

175

00:13:18,000 --> 00:13:22,000

We're looking for American POWs who were executed on Dublon during World War II.

176

00:13:23,000 --> 00:13:29,000

After the war, U.S. investigators heard rumors of POWs being killed on Dublon.

177

00:13:29,000 --> 00:13:34,000

But they couldn't elicit a single statement from anyone about wrongdoing on the island.

178

00:13:34,000 --> 00:13:38,000

That is, until we sent a Korean-American sailor undercover.

179

00:13:38,000 --> 00:13:46,000

His name was Da Young Park, and he exposed harrowing stories of torture and executions of American prisoners.

180

00:13:46,000 --> 00:13:54,000

Behind these shocking crimes was Hiroshi Iwanami, the commanding officer in charge of the military hospital on Dublon.

181

00:13:54,000 --> 00:14:01,000

Thanks to the intel Park uncovered, Iwanami was tried and convicted of war crimes in 1949.

182

00:14:01,000 --> 00:14:05,000

Any idea how many Americans were killed on the island?

183

00:14:05,000 --> 00:14:09,000

Investigators after the war added up to 23 Americans.

184

00:14:09,000 --> 00:14:10,000

That have never been found?

185

00:14:10,000 --> 00:14:11,000

That have never been found.

186

00:14:11,000 --> 00:14:14,000

We don't know their names, but they were executed on the island.

187

00:14:14,000 --> 00:14:18,000

How do we figure out where these POWs were executed or where they're buried?

188

00:14:18,000 --> 00:14:21,000

Well, Josh, I found an eyewitness.

189

00:14:21,000 --> 00:14:22,000

You found an eyewitness?

190

00:14:22,000 --> 00:14:23,000

Yes.

191

00:14:23,000 --> 00:14:24,000

A living eyewitness?

192

00:14:24,000 --> 00:14:25,000

Yes.

193

00:14:29,000 --> 00:14:32,000

Well, Josh, I found an eyewitness.

194

00:14:32,000 --> 00:14:33,000

You found an eyewitness?

195

00:14:33,000 --> 00:14:34,000

Yes.

196

00:14:34,000 --> 00:14:35,000

A living eyewitness?

197

00:14:35,000 --> 00:14:36,000

Yes.

198

00:14:36,000 --> 00:14:50,000

I'm in Truck Lagoon in Micronesia, working with the team from Project Recover, as they hunt down information that could lead to the lost location of executed American POWs on the island of Tonawas, once known as Dublon.

199

00:14:50,000 --> 00:15:00,000

But to hear a story from an actual eyewitness alive during World War II, we need to begin halfway across the atoll on the small island known as Eten.

200

00:15:02,000 --> 00:15:04,000

Today, deeply overgrown.

201

00:15:04,000 --> 00:15:09,000

Only an old Japanese dock jutting out of the jungle hints at what was once here.

202

00:15:10,000 --> 00:15:12,000

Josh, I'm going to show you something here.

203

00:15:12,000 --> 00:15:14,000

Take a look at what's under your feet.

204

00:15:14,000 --> 00:15:15,000

Concrete?

205

00:15:15,000 --> 00:15:16,000

Here?

206

00:15:16,000 --> 00:15:17,000

All over the island.

207

00:15:17,000 --> 00:15:18,000

This was all concrete?

208

00:15:18,000 --> 00:15:19,000

This was all concrete.

209

00:15:19,000 --> 00:15:26,000

Today, it looks like pure wilderness, but there's a reason this corner of the island is so squared off.

210

00:15:26,000 --> 00:15:27,000

It was terraformed.

211

00:15:27,000 --> 00:15:36,000

80 years ago, the Japanese turned Eten into an aircraft carrier-shaped island, with nearly every square inch coated in concrete.

212

00:15:36,000 --> 00:15:40,000

Is there any infrastructure left or just the remains of the runaway?

213

00:15:40,000 --> 00:15:41,000

Oh, no.

214

00:15:41,000 --> 00:15:42,000

There's still something here.

215

00:15:42,000 --> 00:15:43,000

It's a little ways away.

216

00:15:43,000 --> 00:15:44,000

Well, I'll take you to it.

217

00:15:44,000 --> 00:15:45,000

Yeah.

218

00:15:45,000 --> 00:15:46,000

Let's see what's here.

219

00:15:46,000 --> 00:15:49,000

You know, when the Japanese were here, there wasn't a tree on the island.

220

00:15:49,000 --> 00:15:50,000

Literally?

221

00:15:50,000 --> 00:15:51,000

Not one tree.

222

00:15:51,000 --> 00:15:52,000

Wow.

223

00:15:52,000 --> 00:16:02,000

In terms of POWs, some captured soldiers were brought and processed here, and while it may seem that nothing remains, Eten still hides its secrets.

224

00:16:02,000 --> 00:16:03,000

What is this?

225

00:16:03,000 --> 00:16:09,000

The Japanese got bombed almost every single day, so they had to find a safe way to move around.

226

00:16:09,000 --> 00:16:10,000

Tunnels?

227

00:16:10,000 --> 00:16:11,000

Tunnels inside the mountain.

228

00:16:11,000 --> 00:16:12,000

You got a light?

229

00:16:13,000 --> 00:16:14,000

Of course you do.

230

00:16:14,000 --> 00:16:15,000

After you.

231

00:16:15,000 --> 00:16:16,000

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

232

00:16:16,000 --> 00:16:17,000

All right, here we go.

233

00:16:24,000 --> 00:16:25,000

Wow.

234

00:16:25,000 --> 00:16:26,000

How far back does this go?

235

00:16:26,000 --> 00:16:30,000

Josh, there's a maze of these tunnels all throughout the mountain.

236

00:16:31,000 --> 00:16:38,000

Irreally preserved, as though Japanese troops just left, it is a claustrophobic and miserably hot labyrinth.

237

00:16:40,000 --> 00:16:41,000

Okay, we got a junction.

238

00:16:42,000 --> 00:16:43,000

Left?

239

00:16:43,000 --> 00:16:44,000

I think it's right.

240

00:16:44,000 --> 00:16:45,000

Well, as long as you think.

241

00:16:45,000 --> 00:16:46,000

Let's do it.

242

00:16:50,000 --> 00:16:54,000

We emerge near an iri and massive concrete fortress.

243

00:16:57,000 --> 00:16:58,000

This is crazy.

244

00:16:58,000 --> 00:17:01,000

Yeah, Josh, this is the radio communications center.

245

00:17:01,000 --> 00:17:04,000

This is the air traffic control for Truck Lagoon.

246

00:17:05,000 --> 00:17:12,000

This building was the nerve center of the Japanese operation in Truck, which is why its walls are four feet thick in some places.

247

00:17:12,000 --> 00:17:18,000

Evidence of Operation Hailstone's bombing campaign can be seen everywhere you look.

248

00:17:22,000 --> 00:17:26,000

Prisoners of war that were processed through Etan Island weren't kept here, though.

249

00:17:26,000 --> 00:17:28,000

There was another destiny for them.

250

00:17:29,000 --> 00:17:36,000

We return to the boat and follow the trail of the POWs across the lagoon, past dangerously shallow reefs.

251

00:17:36,000 --> 00:17:45,000

Our destination is another island, known today as Tonowass, where an eyewitness may be able to identify a site where American POWs were executed.

252

00:17:45,000 --> 00:17:47,000

Josh, that's Tonowass right there.

253

00:17:47,000 --> 00:17:48,000

Right ahead of us.

254

00:17:48,000 --> 00:17:49,000

That's it.

255

00:17:49,000 --> 00:17:51,000

Okay, that is an imposing looking island.

256

00:17:53,000 --> 00:17:57,000

From afar, it looks like the kind of place King Kong would call home.

257

00:17:58,000 --> 00:18:01,000

But up close, Tonowass reveals herself.

258

00:18:01,000 --> 00:18:07,000

Dotted with simple structures, the island is home to a few thousand people, making it a little bit more difficult to find.

259

00:18:07,000 --> 00:18:10,000

But it's not a place where you can't find a place.

260

00:18:10,000 --> 00:18:13,000

In the distance, Tonowass reveals herself.

261

00:18:13,000 --> 00:18:20,000

Dotted with simple structures, the island is home to a few thousand people, making new lives amidst the remnants of war.

262

00:18:21,000 --> 00:18:24,000

Some villagers live in old Japanese barracks.

263

00:18:24,000 --> 00:18:28,000

Even the bell at the local church is a recycled cannon.

264

00:18:32,000 --> 00:18:37,000

We hike inland, and soon, spine-tingling ruins come into view.

265

00:18:40,000 --> 00:18:46,000

The ghostly buildings are stairs to nowhere, and the foundations of an old hospital.

266

00:18:46,000 --> 00:18:51,000

And it's here that we meet Seiji Konic, who witnessed the horrors of war firsthand.

267

00:18:51,000 --> 00:18:53,000

Josh, I want you to meet Seiji.

268

00:18:53,000 --> 00:18:55,000

Seiji, very nice to meet you.

269

00:18:55,000 --> 00:19:00,000

He's a witness to the killing of the Americans here in this area.

270

00:19:00,000 --> 00:19:04,000

Seiji, you must have been very, very young during the war, yes?

271

00:19:04,000 --> 00:19:06,000

Not a fanciall war one.

272

00:19:06,000 --> 00:19:08,000

Yes, I was six years old.

273

00:19:08,000 --> 00:19:10,000

Can he describe what he saw here?

274

00:19:20,000 --> 00:19:22,000

He saw an American plane sat down.

275

00:19:22,000 --> 00:19:31,000

The pilots built out of it, parachuted out, and they could see the plane when all the way out and landed somewhere out on the reef.

276

00:19:32,000 --> 00:19:37,000

They were brought to the naval hospital here.

277

00:19:37,000 --> 00:19:39,000

And so what ultimately happened to them?

278

00:19:45,000 --> 00:19:46,000

They were killed.

279

00:19:46,000 --> 00:19:47,000

They were killed.

280

00:19:47,000 --> 00:19:49,000

And where did that happen? Do you remember?

281

00:19:50,000 --> 00:19:52,000

It's up in the hill.

282

00:19:52,000 --> 00:19:54,000

Can you take us there?

283

00:19:54,000 --> 00:19:55,000

Yes.

284

00:19:55,000 --> 00:20:01,000

Seiji leads us through the sweltering jungle to an area behind the ruined hospital grounds.

285

00:20:01,000 --> 00:20:05,000

While his steps may be slow, he never wavers in where he's going.

286

00:20:05,000 --> 00:20:07,000

Right in this area.

287

00:20:07,000 --> 00:20:08,000

This is the spot?

288

00:20:08,000 --> 00:20:10,000

Yes, this is the place.

289

00:20:10,000 --> 00:20:14,000

Tell us exactly what you saw, what you heard, what happened here.

290

00:20:14,000 --> 00:20:18,000

Seiji, you were very good for our reef.

291

00:20:18,000 --> 00:20:21,000

They brought him walking over.

292

00:20:21,000 --> 00:20:23,000

And then they tie him up.

293

00:20:23,000 --> 00:20:27,000

After they tied him, he left walking down the road.

294

00:20:27,000 --> 00:20:29,000

He heard the explosion.

295

00:20:29,000 --> 00:20:32,000

When you say explosion, do you mean gunfire?

296

00:20:32,000 --> 00:20:34,000

It's an explosion of dynamite.

297

00:20:34,000 --> 00:20:36,000

The men were dynamite?

298

00:20:36,000 --> 00:20:38,000

Yes, they did.

299

00:20:38,000 --> 00:20:39,000

Wow.

300

00:20:39,000 --> 00:20:42,000

It is an act of unimaginable horror.

301

00:20:42,000 --> 00:20:45,000

The American army was in the middle of the war.

302

00:20:45,000 --> 00:20:46,000

They did.

303

00:20:46,000 --> 00:20:47,000

Wow.

304

00:20:47,000 --> 00:20:50,000

It is an act of unimaginable horror.

305

00:20:50,000 --> 00:20:55,000

The American airmen were bound, marched behind the hospital and forced to their knees,

306

00:20:55,000 --> 00:20:58,000

as the Japanese soldiers rigged the explosives.

307

00:21:07,000 --> 00:21:14,000

Hearing the detonation, six-year-old Seiji returned to a traumatic scene of carnage he would never forget.

308

00:21:14,000 --> 00:21:17,000

When he came up the hill, the men were dead.

309

00:21:17,000 --> 00:21:22,000

They just went and buried them right in this area right here.

310

00:21:22,000 --> 00:21:23,000

Right on the site?

311

00:21:23,000 --> 00:21:24,000

Yeah.

312

00:21:24,000 --> 00:21:29,000

Despite covering their tracks by disposing of the dead, after the war, the truth emerged.

313

00:21:29,000 --> 00:21:33,000

19 soldiers were convicted of war crimes committed in truck.

314

00:21:33,000 --> 00:21:38,000

Surgeon Captain Hiroshi Iwanami, who ran the hospital, received the death penalty

315

00:21:38,000 --> 00:21:43,000

for ordering this and other sadistic experiments.

316

00:21:43,000 --> 00:21:48,000

So Seiji, can you show us exactly where that happened, where you saw the men sitting

317

00:21:48,000 --> 00:21:51,000

and then where they might have dug a hole?

318

00:21:51,000 --> 00:21:57,000

Yes, he remembered that it was next to that mango tree because that mango tree was already there.

319

00:21:57,000 --> 00:21:59,000

About in here?

320

00:21:59,000 --> 00:22:02,000

Yes, in this area.

321

00:22:02,000 --> 00:22:05,000

Seiji, thank you very much.

322

00:22:05,000 --> 00:22:09,000

You're welcome.

323

00:22:09,000 --> 00:22:16,000

Mason helps Seiji home while we prepare to search for any evidence of the executed airman.

324

00:22:16,000 --> 00:22:21,000

Dan and Colin prepare a test pit at the foot of the mango tree Seiji pointed out.

325

00:22:21,000 --> 00:22:25,000

They start by gritting out the area and then we dig.

326

00:22:25,000 --> 00:22:27,000

How far down do you think you need to go?

327

00:22:27,000 --> 00:22:32,000

Well, the war crimes, trials revealed that they were digging pits three to four feet deep or deeper.

328

00:22:32,000 --> 00:22:33,000

Yikes.

329

00:22:33,000 --> 00:22:36,000

There could be anything around here, you know?

330

00:22:36,000 --> 00:22:41,000

There could be bones, uniform buttons, dog tags, anything, I guess, scattered around here.

331

00:22:41,000 --> 00:22:42,000

Exactly right.

332

00:22:42,000 --> 00:22:52,000

While Colin and Dan expand the test pit, I start scanning the surrounding area with a metal detector.

333

00:22:52,000 --> 00:22:54,000

I'm going to hit in here.

334

00:22:54,000 --> 00:23:02,000

Strong hit in here.

335

00:23:02,000 --> 00:23:05,000

Thin, thin sheet of metal.

336

00:23:05,000 --> 00:23:07,000

I mean, this could be part of a roof or anything, right?

337

00:23:07,000 --> 00:23:13,000

Yeah, I'd say so.

338

00:23:13,000 --> 00:23:19,000

As the pit slowly grows, my metal detector keeps sounding off.

339

00:23:19,000 --> 00:23:24,000

Ooh, something there.

340

00:23:24,000 --> 00:23:31,000

Strong hit here.

341

00:23:31,000 --> 00:23:34,000

Hey guys, you need any AA batteries?

342

00:23:34,000 --> 00:23:41,000

Soon I might actually need a new battery because with every sweep, we find more metal.

343

00:23:41,000 --> 00:23:46,000

Okay, I'm going to hit here.

344

00:23:46,000 --> 00:23:48,000

Yep, something.

345

00:23:48,000 --> 00:23:53,000

Stand by.

346

00:23:53,000 --> 00:23:57,000

It's just like there's tiny pieces of metal in the soil.

347

00:23:57,000 --> 00:23:59,000

There's almost like scrap metal everywhere here.

348

00:23:59,000 --> 00:24:03,000

You think about all the troops that were here, all the activity, the movement here.

349

00:24:03,000 --> 00:24:07,000

I mean, it could be from anything.

350

00:24:07,000 --> 00:24:21,000

Still, we press on in the jungle heat, hoping for some evidence of the POWs who perished here.

351

00:24:21,000 --> 00:24:32,000

What is that?

352

00:24:32,000 --> 00:24:34,000

Hey guys.

353

00:24:34,000 --> 00:24:37,000

Oh my.

354

00:24:37,000 --> 00:24:38,000

Guys?

355

00:24:38,000 --> 00:24:41,000

Hey guys, come here.

356

00:24:41,000 --> 00:24:42,000

Look at this.

357

00:24:42,000 --> 00:24:46,000

Oh, it's burned.

358

00:24:46,000 --> 00:24:51,000

Look at this.

359

00:24:51,000 --> 00:24:56,000

Oh, it's burned.

360

00:24:56,000 --> 00:24:58,000

Old, old machete.

361

00:24:58,000 --> 00:25:03,000

Handle, which would have been wood, is completely rotted out.

362

00:25:03,000 --> 00:25:06,000

But that, that is really cool.

363

00:25:06,000 --> 00:25:07,000

Look at that.

364

00:25:07,000 --> 00:25:11,000

That is an artifact of the war.

365

00:25:11,000 --> 00:25:16,000

We're investigating the ruins of a Japanese naval hospital on the island of Tonowas,

366

00:25:16,000 --> 00:25:25,000

where a local witnessed the brutal execution of two American POWs by dynamite.

367

00:25:25,000 --> 00:25:29,000

You could really imagine this being connected to the site back in World War II.

368

00:25:29,000 --> 00:25:31,000

This could be from a Japanese soldier.

369

00:25:31,000 --> 00:25:33,000

That's kind of spooky just seeing that, isn't it?

370

00:25:33,000 --> 00:25:37,000

It's haunting in the sense that we're finding a long-edged weapon at an execution site.

371

00:25:37,000 --> 00:25:38,000

Right.

372

00:25:38,000 --> 00:25:41,000

I keep thinking about these two guys.

373

00:25:41,000 --> 00:25:47,000

The fact that their stories almost vanished into thin air.

374

00:25:47,000 --> 00:25:54,000

It's just this tiny thread of this eyewitness who's kind of brought some attention to this place that we're standing,

375

00:25:54,000 --> 00:25:57,000

which otherwise would have just been totally reclaimed by the jungle.

376

00:25:57,000 --> 00:25:59,000

This project is about memory.

377

00:25:59,000 --> 00:26:02,000

This is about keeping those memories alive.

378

00:26:02,000 --> 00:26:08,000

We don't know the names of these guys, but they died here in service to our country, and we have to keep looking for them.

379

00:26:08,000 --> 00:26:13,000

That's right.

380

00:26:13,000 --> 00:26:21,000

We continue searching until late in the day, and then we head back to the boat to steam to Project Recovers headquarters.

381

00:26:21,000 --> 00:26:38,000

Today was a powerful reminder that sharing these stories is what this mission is really about, so that our nation's heroes are not forgotten.

382

00:26:38,000 --> 00:26:42,000

The next day, we're back on the water.

383

00:26:42,000 --> 00:26:49,000

In 2019, Project Recover conducted their first search for American MIAs in truck lagoon.

384

00:26:49,000 --> 00:26:57,000

Using sonar-equipped AUVs or autonomous underwater vehicles, they mapped the sea floor between several islands in the lagoon.

385

00:26:57,000 --> 00:27:03,000

But then the pandemic hit, and Micronesia was put on COVID lockdown.

386

00:27:03,000 --> 00:27:06,000

Now we're finishing the work they started.

387

00:27:06,000 --> 00:27:09,000

We've already investigated two targets.

388

00:27:09,000 --> 00:27:15,000

We discovered an anchor, likely cut from a fleeing Japanese ship and a mooring buoy.

389

00:27:15,000 --> 00:27:19,000

Now we turn our attention to two additional targets.

390

00:27:19,000 --> 00:27:23,000

This is the first target we're going to go through, and you can see the shadows.

391

00:27:23,000 --> 00:27:24,000

Yeah, for sure.

392

00:27:24,000 --> 00:27:30,000

This definitely looks man-made. It has very distinct angles to it, and the whole pile is about 30 feet.

393

00:27:30,000 --> 00:27:31,000

Okay.

394

00:27:31,000 --> 00:27:33,000

So it's a big chunk of something.

395

00:27:33,000 --> 00:27:34,000

Something significant?

396

00:27:34,000 --> 00:27:36,000

That could be part of a plane.

397

00:27:36,000 --> 00:27:38,000

Whatever it is, it's deep.

398

00:27:38,000 --> 00:27:45,000

Resting at 150 feet, our bottom time will be limited to about four minutes before we risk decompression sickness.

399

00:27:45,000 --> 00:27:48,000

It's therefore essential that we find it quickly.

400

00:27:48,000 --> 00:27:53,000

We carefully position the boat exactly on top of the coordinates.

401

00:27:53,000 --> 00:27:55,000

Throw it!

402

00:28:08,000 --> 00:28:13,000

Alright. Let's go down to the bottom. Mark, let's do this.

403

00:28:13,000 --> 00:28:19,000

Yeah, Josh. We're only going to have a couple minutes at the bottom, so let's hit it and then come back up.

404

00:28:19,000 --> 00:28:22,000

Yeah, we'll just try to idea quick if we can.

405

00:28:22,000 --> 00:28:27,000

Oh, I see it. It's down there.

406

00:28:27,000 --> 00:28:28,000

Okay.

407

00:28:28,000 --> 00:28:31,000

Topside, we're on the target. We're coming down on it.

408

00:28:31,000 --> 00:28:33,000

Diver's topside. What do you see? Over.

409

00:28:33,000 --> 00:28:38,000

It's hard to tell. Could be a plane. There's an elongated shape.

410

00:28:38,000 --> 00:28:39,000

Stand by.

411

00:28:39,000 --> 00:28:42,000

What the hell is that?

412

00:28:42,000 --> 00:28:46,000

If that's a plane, it's a big plane.

413

00:28:46,000 --> 00:28:48,000

It's a big plane.

414

00:28:48,000 --> 00:28:49,000

It's a big plane.

415

00:28:49,000 --> 00:28:50,000

It's a big plane.

416

00:28:50,000 --> 00:28:51,000

It's a big plane.

417

00:28:51,000 --> 00:28:52,000

It's a big plane.

418

00:28:52,000 --> 00:28:53,000

It's a big plane.

419

00:28:53,000 --> 00:28:54,000

It's a big plane.

420

00:28:54,000 --> 00:28:55,000

It's a big plane.

421

00:28:55,000 --> 00:28:59,000

What's that? If that's a plane, it's a big plane.

422

00:28:59,000 --> 00:29:08,000

The target is clearly man-made, but is it aviation? With just two minutes of bottom time remaining, we have to make the ID fast.

423

00:29:08,000 --> 00:29:14,000

There's a propeller. I can see a trap.

424

00:29:14,000 --> 00:29:23,000

Hold on. I got a better look at it. It's a propeller, but it's not aviation. Mark, that's a bomb, yeah?

425

00:29:23,000 --> 00:29:25,000

That's a dry shot for a bomb.

426

00:29:25,000 --> 00:29:29,000

Diver's topside. Looked Japanese to you. Or modern. Over.

427

00:29:29,000 --> 00:29:34,000

Yeah, let's say this is period. This is all but down here a long time.

428

00:29:34,000 --> 00:29:38,000

There's almost nothing left of it. It's just ran it away.

429

00:29:38,000 --> 00:29:44,000

I stick a couple of portholes here and some metal. Looks like a foil of old cable.

430

00:29:44,000 --> 00:30:00,000

Oh, my God. That scared the hell out of me. Right in front of me just blended in. I don't think he's used to company.

431

00:30:00,000 --> 00:30:09,000

Nobody's probably been down here in almost a century. Yeah, that's his wreck. Absolutely. Okay, we'll leave the eel in peace.

432

00:30:09,000 --> 00:30:18,000

We've discovered and photographed an undocumented wreck that likely sank during Hailstone, another lost piece of history that can be added to the map.

433

00:30:18,000 --> 00:30:33,000

Out of bottom time, we swim back toward the surface where we'll move on to our next target.

434

00:30:33,000 --> 00:30:41,000

The final sonar hit we haven't yet investigated turns out to be one that project recover has a high degree of confidence in.

435

00:30:41,000 --> 00:30:48,000

Hey, Josh, we have one final target we need to interrogate. And what's special about this target?

We think it's a plane. You do. Yeah.

436

00:30:48,000 --> 00:30:59,000

But your hope is that it's American. Yeah, we don't know much about it. So we we're going to go down and fully document it, do photogrammetry on it and collect as much information on that site as we can.

437

00:30:59,000 --> 00:31:05,000

So for folks who don't know photogrammetry, basically you're going to take a huge amount of photos, high resolution that you can stitch together. Yeah.

438

00:31:05,000 --> 00:31:14,000

So hopefully if we can get more data, we can put the pieces together and figure out which aircraft this is. Okay, let's dive it. Let's do it. All right, come on.

439

00:31:14,000 --> 00:31:33,000

We make our way to the coordinates and deploy the shot line. If we can positively identify the plane as American, it would be historic. The first U.S. wreck ever found in truck Lagoon.

440

00:31:44,000 --> 00:32:10,000

Okay, passing 30 feet. Hey, Josh, you see that dark patch down there? I see that's a plane. What's left of it? The state of destruction here is extensive. This is night and day from that zero we saw. This plane is really, really broken up.

441

00:32:10,000 --> 00:32:31,000

Yeah, it doesn't even look like a plane, does it? There are 42 missing American planes in the Lagoon. The question is, could this twisted pile of metal be one of them? What am I looking at here? Josh, this is the canopy of the aircraft. What's left of it? Right? This is the transparent copper over the cockpit.

442

00:32:31,000 --> 00:32:43,000

Yeah, these cities have thick areas on the side here. This would have been the rail of the canopy. And this thing is thrown about 20 feet from the body of the wreck. Must have been such a violent impact.

443

00:32:44,000 --> 00:32:56,000

The debris field is littered with metal. Most of it pancaked to the ocean floor, except for one telltale object. See the problem, Josh? Yeah, it's about all that's sticking up.

444

00:32:57,000 --> 00:33:08,000

This thing was spinning when it hit the water. Most definitely. There's been diagnostics here on the propeller.

445

00:33:09,000 --> 00:33:22,000

Oh, right here, Josh. See these three bolts, patterns between the two propellers? Yeah, I can see them. Yeah, this is really diagnostic of an American Hamilton standard propeller.

446

00:33:23,000 --> 00:33:31,000

The Hamilton standard propeller had three bolts securing each blade. It is a designed fingerprint that allows us to ID our suspect.

447

00:33:32,000 --> 00:33:43,000

So wait, does that mean what I think? Oh yeah, no question about it. We've got an American plane here. Just as the first American plane, it's about to go.

448

00:33:44,000 --> 00:33:47,000

Honestly, Mark, I'm speechless.

449

00:33:53,000 --> 00:34:02,000

Yeah, this is really diagnostic of an American Hamilton standard propeller. This is unbelievable. I'm in shock.

450

00:34:03,000 --> 00:34:10,000

Eight decades after World War II, we just located an American plane wreck, the first ever found in Truck Lagoon.

451

00:34:11,000 --> 00:34:19,000

What an honor, Mark. To be here, to see this, it's incredible. Okay, let's go and see what we found in the wreck, yeah?

452

00:34:19,000 --> 00:34:29,000

It's a historic discovery. Now, we need to gather as much information as we can to determine which missing plane this is and who was in it.

453

00:34:30,000 --> 00:34:33,000

Is that the rudder? Yeah, it's very interesting to see.

454

00:34:35,000 --> 00:34:43,000

These circular perforations here look like airbricks on the center of the fuselage. Got it.

455

00:34:43,000 --> 00:34:51,000

These are usually on the wings and here on the belly to slow it like when it's in a dive. That's correct, Tarj.

456

00:34:52,000 --> 00:34:58,000

The puzzle pieces are starting to come together. We're looking at an American dive bomber, but which one?

457

00:34:59,000 --> 00:35:06,000

There's two different types of American planes that have these kinds of airbricks, the Helgiver and the Dauntless.

458

00:35:07,000 --> 00:35:18,000

The Douglas SBD Dauntless was the main U.S. carrier bomber for most of World War II, famous for delivering one of the most devastating defeats in military history at the Battle of Midway.

459

00:35:19,000 --> 00:35:24,000

Its successor, the Curtis SB-2C Heldiver, was faster but harder to handle.

460

00:35:25,000 --> 00:35:33,000

Over 7,000 Heldivers were built, yet there is only one left on Earth that flies. The question is, which plane is in front of us?

461

00:35:36,000 --> 00:35:44,000

Mark, look at this. We've got a wheel over here. So really, really small. This must be the rear wheel on the plane, the one in the tail, yeah?

462

00:35:45,000 --> 00:35:46,000

Yeah, that's what it looks like.

463

00:35:50,000 --> 00:35:54,000

Look what's next to it, Tarj. This is the assembly for the rear wheel.

464

00:35:55,000 --> 00:35:56,000

Oh, that's like a piston there.

465

00:35:57,000 --> 00:36:00,000

Yeah, that's a piston action for shock absorbing.

466

00:36:00,000 --> 00:36:06,000

Incredible. Something colored here, Mark, kind of yellow, looks like fabric.

467

00:36:08,000 --> 00:36:16,000

I think this is for our life friends. The life friends. Oh my word. So, not deployed, still in the plane.

468

00:36:17,000 --> 00:36:23,000

Which leads to a sobering realization. The pilot and crew may also still be inside.

469

00:36:24,000 --> 00:36:27,000

Mark, I've got something here. Look at this. Oh my God.

470

00:36:27,000 --> 00:36:38,000

Is that what I think it is? Oh, wow. I think it is. Is that from a shoe? Yeah, it's a sole of a shoe.

471

00:36:44,000 --> 00:36:52,000

Oh, man. So we'll photograph that, obviously, leave it where it is. Yeah, we're not going to disturb anything down here.

472

00:36:52,000 --> 00:37:01,000

Oh, my God. This wreck is a war grave, the final resting place of American soldiers. This is hallowed ground.

473

00:37:02,000 --> 00:37:11,000

Boy, that really puts things into a very real perspective real quick. Yeah, it's evidence that somebody didn't get out of this place.

474

00:37:11,000 --> 00:37:23,000

And it's that this goes from being a piece of machinery and a piece of wreckage to also being the story of an individual here. That's something, wow.

475

00:37:25,000 --> 00:37:30,000

I'd like to start the photo-gravtry now. Carbine out, I'm clearing out. Here we go.

476

00:37:33,000 --> 00:37:37,000

Mark slowly circles the wreck, snapping hundreds and hundreds of photos.

477

00:37:42,000 --> 00:37:47,000

We surface and head back to project recover headquarters.

478

00:37:53,000 --> 00:38:01,000

We know this is an American plane, one of 42 lost in combat here. Now the question is, which one?

479

00:38:02,000 --> 00:38:09,000

Hey, Josh. Hey. How do we do on the photogrammetry? We spent some time on it and I think you're going to be amazed. We got some really good stuff. Really? Yeah.

480

00:38:09,000 --> 00:38:19,000

Okay, take me through it. What do we got? We took over 2000 photos to put this thing together. Okay. So this is individual photos that are then stitched to give us a perspective of the entire site.

481

00:38:20,000 --> 00:38:33,000

And what you end up with is a picture like this. Wow, look at that. You can see the entire wreck. The entire wreck. It gives us a much wider view of this, certainly than I had down there diving around.

482

00:38:33,000 --> 00:38:46,000

And I didn't even see some of these outlying pieces of debris. Yeah, and we can even now dial down into the anatomy of the crash itself. The thing, I guess to me that jumps out right away is just the complete and total destruction here.

483

00:38:47,000 --> 00:39:00,000

Yeah, and what's striking about this photo, Josh? How far off the sea floor is that aircraft? It's hand-caked on the bottom. That's right. It is barely coming off of the sea floor. This must have been a really dramatic crash.

484

00:39:00,000 --> 00:39:16,000

Yeah, that's right. This is an aircraft that hit the water at extremely high speeds. Right. Taking the forensic analysis a step further, the steep angle of descent at high speed suggests that this plane didn't just crash. It was shot down.

485

00:39:18,000 --> 00:39:28,000

And the thousands of photographs we took not only enable us to see the full scope of the wreck site, they also reveal minute details that help identify the plane.

486

00:39:28,000 --> 00:39:35,000

So when we talk about really pressing down into the anatomy of this, what do we see in the photogrammetry? What jumps out at a granular level?

487

00:39:36,000 --> 00:39:50,000

Here's the rudder. Yes, I do remember seeing this down there laying in the sand. And take a look at this from a manual. So this diagram is from what aircraft? An SBD Dauntless. That is an almost perfect match. Yeah.

488

00:39:51,000 --> 00:40:00,000

Well, we have another part here. This is the elevator torque tubes. So you see these kind of cross pieces here are the same as these two here? Exactly.

489

00:40:04,000 --> 00:40:18,000

This is the landing gear strut with the shock absorber, which you see right here. And we saw those perforated air brakes, which were both under the wings and under the belly of the plane. That's from the manual. Exactly the same.

490

00:40:19,000 --> 00:40:28,000

Your confidence that this is an American aircraft is 100%? Yeah, that's exactly what this is. This is an SBD five dollars.

491

00:40:29,000 --> 00:40:42,000

Armed to the teeth with four machine guns and more than 2000 pounds of bombs, the Dauntless is credited with 138 aerial victories and sank more than 18 enemy warships and six carriers.

492

00:40:43,000 --> 00:40:54,000

In short, the plane is an absolute legend of World War II. So if we now know this is a Dauntless and obviously we know where it is, now what?

493

00:40:55,000 --> 00:41:03,000

I've been doing a lot of research, of course, on all the aircraft that crashed here and there are two Dauntless's that crashed in the lagoon. And one of them had a crash profile that looked very similar to this.

494

00:41:04,000 --> 00:41:10,000

Wait, you're telling me you know who was flying that plane? I have a confidence of 100%. Wow, no doubt. No doubt.

495

00:41:13,000 --> 00:41:27,000

With an average year round temperature of 81 degrees, no one in this part of the Pacific dreams of a white Christmas. Instead, they dream of a holiday splashdown.

496

00:41:27,000 --> 00:41:47,000

In 1952, the US military started a tradition here known as Operation Christmas Drop. Boxes packed with toys and clothes are loaded onto C-130 transport planes and parachuted to remote islands throughout Micronesia.

497

00:41:48,000 --> 00:41:55,000

It's the longest running humanitarian airlift in the world. Ho, ho, ho, and Merry Chukmus.

498

00:41:59,000 --> 00:42:02,000

So if we now know this is a Dauntless, now what?

499

00:42:03,000 --> 00:42:09,000

There are two Dauntless's that crashed in the lagoon and one of them had a crash profile that looked very similar to this.

500

00:42:09,000 --> 00:42:20,000

Project Recover has just identified a Dauntless dive bomber, the first American World War II wreck ever found in truck lagoon, and Colin may have identified its crew.

501

00:42:21,000 --> 00:42:24,000

Can I have a document that I found that I'd like to show you?

502

00:42:25,000 --> 00:42:27,000

Okay, so this is an account from who?

503

00:42:28,000 --> 00:42:33,000

This is an account from David J. Collie. He was the backseat gunner on another Dauntless in the same squadron.

504

00:42:33,000 --> 00:42:42,000

And so Collie says in this account, quote, we dropped low over the water and were taken under fire by a rusty hulk of an old cargo ship or tanker.

505

00:42:43,000 --> 00:42:47,000

It was covered with anti-aircraft and machine guns and they were all firing at us.

506

00:42:48,000 --> 00:42:53,000

And at this point, this squadron is probably dive bombing on the high end maroo.

507

00:42:54,000 --> 00:42:58,000

That's right. Those two main ships in the area were the Hayon Maroo and the Tonon Maroo number three.

508

00:42:58,000 --> 00:43:08,000

I spotted one of our SBDs, Dauntless, about a half mile behind us still in his vertical dive and he dove almost vertically into the water.

509

00:43:12,000 --> 00:43:18,000

As our planes joined up, we soon figured out that it was Donald Dean and J.J. Magory.

510

00:43:19,000 --> 00:43:24,000

I have always thought that they were hit by AA anti-aircraft fire just before pullout.

511

00:43:25,000 --> 00:43:26,000

Yeah.

512

00:43:29,000 --> 00:43:41,000

This guy is describing another Dauntless just behind them in this area in a vertical dive.

513

00:43:42,000 --> 00:43:45,000

So we have their names here. Donald Dean and J.J. Magory.

514

00:43:47,000 --> 00:43:55,000

Gunner J.J. Magory and pilot Donald Dean were members of the VB-10 bombing squadron stationed on the USS Enterprise.

515

00:43:56,000 --> 00:44:01,000

Dean was a quarterback in college and father of a newborn that he never got a chance to meet.

516

00:44:02,000 --> 00:44:10,000

They flew dive bombing missions in the Marshall Islands and two successful missions in Operation Hailstone before they were shot down.

517

00:44:11,000 --> 00:44:17,000

Not only are we now able to tell more of their story, but Project Recovers' efforts may finally bring them home.

518

00:44:18,000 --> 00:44:29,000

This is invaluable for the next phase of MIA recovery. The detail of this photo will be analyzed.

519

00:44:30,000 --> 00:44:37,000

They have an image of the entire site at such high resolution that you can actually dive into the picture without even being there.

520

00:44:38,000 --> 00:44:44,000

This becomes a tool then for figuring out how to plan and ultimately extract maybe remains from the wreck in the future.

521

00:44:44,000 --> 00:44:45,000

Exactly.

522

00:44:46,000 --> 00:44:48,000

And once those remains are recovered, what happens?

523

00:44:49,000 --> 00:44:50,000

They'll be brought back home.

524

00:44:51,000 --> 00:44:52,000

With honors.

525

00:44:59,000 --> 00:45:03,000

So when we started this, there were 42 missing American planes here in Truk Lagoon.

526

00:45:04,000 --> 00:45:09,000

Now there's 41 in the first American aircraft ever located in Truk Lagoon. We can check it off the list.

527

00:45:09,000 --> 00:45:17,000

I'm so touched and humbled to have been able to be here to document this, to play just a small role in what you do.

528

00:45:18,000 --> 00:45:19,000

It's extraordinary work. Leads to this.

529

00:45:20,000 --> 00:45:22,000

Well thank you for having me out here. I really appreciate it.

530

00:45:23,000 --> 00:45:24,000

Thank you, Jackson.

531

00:45:25,000 --> 00:45:30,000

Keep up the amazing work and here's to these guys and to many more to be found soon.

532

00:45:31,000 --> 00:45:32,000

And brought home.

533

00:45:33,000 --> 00:45:39,000

On the main island in Truk, there is a memorial to the thousands of Japanese who died here during the war.

534

00:45:40,000 --> 00:45:43,000

But there's no memorial to the Americans who perished until now.

535

00:45:44,000 --> 00:45:51,000

We worked with the entire Project Recover team to have one made and presented in a ceremony with the Lieutenant Governor.

536

00:45:52,000 --> 00:45:54,000

I want to thank Josh, an expedition unknown.

537

00:45:55,000 --> 00:45:58,000

It's because of your team that we are able to actually do this.

538

00:45:58,000 --> 00:46:02,000

So I really want to extend a warm thank you to you for helping do this.

539

00:46:03,000 --> 00:46:04,000

Without further ado.

540

00:46:10,000 --> 00:46:22,000

So the plaque reads, in remembrance of over 200 United States servicemen who made the ultimate sacrifice on and around the islands of Truk Lagoon in World War II.

541

00:46:23,000 --> 00:46:27,000

Today known as Chuuk, the Federated States of Micronesia.

542

00:46:29,000 --> 00:46:33,000

And it cites a passage from the poem by Lawrence Binion for the fallen.

543

00:46:36,000 --> 00:46:39,000

They that shall not grow old as we that are left grow old.

544

00:46:40,000 --> 00:46:46,000

Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn at the going down of the sun and in the morning.

545

00:46:47,000 --> 00:46:49,000

We will remember them.

546

00:46:58,000 --> 00:47:03,000

Family to ensure your sacrifice goes down in history.

547

00:47:04,000 --> 00:47:08,000

And I feel so unworthy.

548

00:47:09,000 --> 00:47:14,000

But I'm here to tell your story.

549

00:47:15,000 --> 00:47:19,000

You are not forgotten.

550

00:47:20,000 --> 00:47:24,000

This I promise you.

551

00:47:24,000 --> 00:47:27,000

I'll never let you go.

552

00:47:28,000 --> 00:47:32,000

Your story only grows.

553

00:47:36,000 --> 00:47:40,000

You are not forgotten.

554

00:47:41,000 --> 00:47:45,000

I'll let everybody know.

555

00:47:46,000 --> 00:47:48,000

I found your legacy.

556

00:47:49,000 --> 00:47:53,000

And what you mean to me.

557

00:47:54,000 --> 00:47:55,000

Please remember.

558

00:47:56,000 --> 00:47:59,000

You're not forgotten.