

1

00:00:00,296 --> 00:00:16,777

This series presents information based in part on theory and conjecture.

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00:00:16,777 --> 00:00:21,297

The producer's purpose is to suggest some possible explanations, but not necessarily

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00:00:21,297 --> 00:00:26,378

the only ones to the mysteries we will examine.

4

00:00:26,378 --> 00:00:29,258

We represent the government of the United States of America.

5

00:00:29,258 --> 00:00:32,138

We have permission from your government to board your vessel.

6

00:00:32,138 --> 00:00:35,378

Stop your engines immediately and prepare to be boarded.

7

00:00:35,378 --> 00:00:37,378

Stand by and prepare to be boarded.

8

00:00:37,378 --> 00:00:41,379

Nosotros representamos el gobierno de los Estados Unidos.

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00:00:41,379 --> 00:00:46,379

Nosotros tenemos el permiso de su gobierno a abordar su barco.

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00:00:56,379 --> 00:01:16,381

A ghost ship is discovered adrift on the Caribbean.

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00:01:16,381 --> 00:01:21,381

Another mystery for the men who patrol those waters of dreadful fascination,

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00:01:21,381 --> 00:01:35,382

the infamous Bermuda Triangle.

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00:01:35,382 --> 00:01:39,382

Distressed, unknown vessel.

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00:01:39,382 --> 00:01:46,383

The 7th District United States Coast Guard at Miami Beach is one of the busiest Coast Guard stations in the world.

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00:01:46,383 --> 00:01:51,383

It may also be the best.

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00:01:51,383 --> 00:01:57,383

It operates in that now legendary body of water known as the Bermuda Triangle.

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00:01:57,383 --> 00:02:01,384

Its commander is Rear Admiral Robert Durkey.

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00:02:01,384 --> 00:02:09,384

There are, as a matter of interest, between 800,000 and 900,000 registered recreational boats in this district.

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00:02:09,384 --> 00:02:14,384

So this presents just a tremendous potential for people getting in trouble.

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00:02:14,384 --> 00:02:20,385

Fully one-third of America's missing ships and planes vanish in the Bermuda Triangle.

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00:02:20,385 --> 00:02:23,385

Many can be attributed to the inexperienced sailor,

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00:02:23,385 --> 00:02:30,385

lulled into a complacent carelessness by the nearness of land and the deceptive tranquility of the sea.

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00:02:30,385 --> 00:02:38,386

As for the others, they have been attributed to such theories as magnetic anomalies, UFOs, lost continents.

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00:02:38,386 --> 00:02:48,386

While some of these ideas may seem far-fetched, they stem from a desperate need to explain a host of disappearances which make no sense.

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00:02:48,386 --> 00:02:53,387

One of the men looking for answers is Miami Herald reporter Carl Hyerson.

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00:02:53,387 --> 00:02:59,387

He has concentrated on 44 recent disappearances and has studied the Coast Guard's explanations.

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00:02:59,387 --> 00:03:04,387

They have nine that they said were presumed sunk, and I wouldn't quarrel with that.

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00:03:04,387 --> 00:03:10,388

Given the size of the ocean and the number of inept or inexperienced captains,

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00:03:10,388 --> 00:03:15,388

the impulsive thing to do down here is if you've got some money, you go out and buy a nice big yacht.

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00:03:15,388 --> 00:03:21,388

Early in 1974, four young Philadelphia businessmen bought a nice big yacht.

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00:03:22,389 --> 00:03:30,389

Their story, recreated for in search of, begins in Miami as they joked about venturing out into the Bermuda Triangle.

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00:03:30,389 --> 00:03:35,389

They'd read up on the legends of the ghostly Spanish galleons on the Sargasso Sea,

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00:03:35,389 --> 00:03:43,390

of the dancing coffins in a Barbados graveyard, of the haunted lighthouse on Great Isaac Rock.

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00:03:43,390 --> 00:03:50,390

But to the four men that day, these were but fanciful tales from antiquity.

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00:03:50,390 --> 00:03:55,391

They were men of today, John Tarkino, 42,

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00:03:55,391 --> 00:03:59,391

Sye Cisentner, 32,

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00:03:59,391 --> 00:04:03,391

Elliot Cohen, 30,

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00:04:03,391 --> 00:04:07,391

and Rafael Kaplan, 26.

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00:04:07,391 --> 00:04:12,392

And in a few weeks, they would set out on a shakedown cruise.

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00:04:12,392 --> 00:04:16,392

In the beginning, they adhered to standard operating procedures.

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00:04:16,392 --> 00:04:18,392

They filed a float plan.

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00:04:18,392 --> 00:04:23,392

They were to be back in Miami on April Fool's Day.

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00:04:23,392 --> 00:04:29,393

Their boat was moored in dinner-key marina near Miami Beach.

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00:04:29,393 --> 00:04:40,393

They boarded as planned on the 1st of March, 1974, carrying the gear and provisions for a one-month voyage.

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00:04:41,393 --> 00:04:51,394

The weather was good that year, and after a Philadelphia winter, Miami was a place of tropical promise.

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00:04:51,394 --> 00:04:53,394

The ship was the Sabah Bank.

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00:04:53,394 --> 00:05:00,395

They had hired an experienced skipper, for this was not a toy, but a \$300,000 boat.

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00:05:00,395 --> 00:05:07,395

It was equipped for the wildest blow, with the finest navigational and safety devices that money could buy.

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00:05:11,395 --> 00:05:18,396

Ten days later, the Sabah Bank arrived ship-shaped in Nassau.

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00:05:18,396 --> 00:05:22,396

In passing, they might have joked about the famous tales of the Triangle,

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00:05:22,396 --> 00:05:28,396

of the five Avenger aircraft that talked to the Controlled Tower as they banished forever,

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00:05:28,396 --> 00:05:34,397

of a naval captain whose mind had darkened into madness while sailing through the Triangle.

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00:05:34,397 --> 00:05:38,397

He had taken his ship, the Cyclops, into oblivion.

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00:05:41,397 --> 00:05:46,397

The legends of the doomed sea must have amused rather than troubled the four men of Philadelphia.

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00:05:51,398 --> 00:05:57,398

They were not seen leaving Nassau, but were spotted three days later at Port Royale, Jamaica,

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00:05:57,398 --> 00:06:01,398

en route, they said, to Aruba in the Dutch Antilles.

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00:06:02,398 --> 00:06:12,399

The Sabah Bank was due back to the custom shed at Miami Beach on the 1st of April, 1974.

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00:06:12,399 --> 00:06:18,399

A few boats came in that day, but none was the Sabah Bank.

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00:06:21,400 --> 00:06:26,400

On that April Fool's Day, a Philadelphia secretary began to make inquiries.

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00:06:27,400 --> 00:06:32,400

At first they were casual, but as the days passed, there was a tinge of alarm.

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00:06:43,401 --> 00:06:50,401

Because the Sabah Bank had filed a float plan, Coast Guard's search and rescue could begin the moment the boat was overdue.

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00:06:51,401 --> 00:06:58,402

But as the search expanded over 22 days to eventually cover half a million square miles of the Caribbean,

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00:06:58,402 --> 00:07:05,402

not a trace was found of the Sabah Bank, its seasoned captain, and the pleasure-seeking new owners.

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00:07:09,403 --> 00:07:11,403

They were never seen again.

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00:07:12,403 --> 00:07:17,403

Two years earlier, the Coast Guard was faced with a case bearing a marked similarity.

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00:07:17,403 --> 00:07:19,403

The boat was called the Como No.

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00:07:19,403 --> 00:07:27,404

It was a sturdy vessel and 66-year-old Charles Fisher of Portland, Oregon, had paid \$100,000 for it.

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00:07:28,404 --> 00:07:33,404

He and his wife, Terry, had sailed out of Fort Lauderdale in August 1972.

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00:07:35,404 --> 00:07:39,404

To this day, no one knows how that voyage ended.

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00:07:40,405 --> 00:07:48,405

During its subsequent search and investigation, the Coast Guard learned that the elderly couple had spent the fall island hopping in the Caribbean,

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00:07:48,405 --> 00:07:51,405

en route to their retirement home in Puerto Vallarta.

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00:08:01,406 --> 00:08:05,406

They were seen on the 12th of December off Corinto, Nicaragua.

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00:08:06,406 --> 00:08:14,407

All the Coast Guard ever found of Mr. and Mrs. Fisher and the ship, Como No, was a small plastic lifeboat.

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00:08:19,407 --> 00:08:27,407

It was cases such as these, cases for which the Coast Guard had no ready explanation that fascinated Carl Hyerson.

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00:08:27,407 --> 00:08:34,408

One could talk of far out Bermuda Triangle explanations, black holes, electromagnetic earthquakes.

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00:08:34,408 --> 00:08:37,408

But Hyerson was exploring another possibility.

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00:08:38,408 --> 00:08:47,409

The most celebrated disappearance in recent years was the case of a luxury yacht Pirates Lady, owned by New Orleans millionaire Charles Slater.

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00:08:47,409 --> 00:08:53,409

Slater is convinced his ship is still afloat and he has put up a \$25,000 reward.

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00:08:53,409 --> 00:08:58,409

It was a burger yacht, I believe it was 75 feet long, cost over a million dollars.

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00:08:58,409 --> 00:09:07,410

They had enough electronic equipment on it to impress even the most hardened cynical sailors.

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00:09:07,410 --> 00:09:16,410

It was a fine, fine ship and he sent his captain and a 17-year-old boy who he had known as a crewman and had hired on his crewman on the boat.

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00:09:16,410 --> 00:09:21,411

A trusted family friend, no suspicion of any involvement.

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00:09:21,411 --> 00:09:26,411

And the boat to the left of New Orleans refueled in Apalachicola.

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00:09:29,411 --> 00:09:32,411

They had some engine trouble. So they went into Apalachicola.

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00:09:32,411 --> 00:09:37,412

Next morning the dockmaster heard the boat start up at 6.30 am and leave.

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00:09:37,412 --> 00:09:43,412

Was there some common factor that would lead to an explanation of these three disappearances and others like them?

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00:09:44,412 --> 00:09:51,413

Investigators think they have an answer. An answer that seems wildly out of time in the 20th century.

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00:10:02,413 --> 00:10:09,414

There is one hard fact. Many weekend sailors are known to have vanished in the past six years.

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00:10:10,414 --> 00:10:16,414

Carl Hyacin does not pretend to have all the answers, but he has a theory.

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00:10:16,414 --> 00:10:19,414

A theory that is cautiously accepted by the Coast Guard.

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00:10:19,414 --> 00:10:32,415

Since 71 through 77 they had 44 vessels that disappeared and that they regarded as possible or probable.

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00:10:32,415 --> 00:10:37,415

I don't, not probable, they use the word very carefully, possible hijackings.

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00:10:38,416 --> 00:10:43,416

The fear among yachtsmen is reflected by the words of Marine Insurance Broker Ted Hald.

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00:10:43,416 --> 00:10:52,416

10, 15 years ago young college students or young folks used to come down here and hang around the docks on Miami and Beech or in the Lauderdale area.

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00:10:52,416 --> 00:10:58,417

And if they wanted to go to the Bahamas they go ask a yachtsman and the yachtsman would take him to the Bahamas, free of charge.

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00:10:58,417 --> 00:11:02,417

That's all stopped. Most yachtsmen will not take anybody on board.

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00:11:02,417 --> 00:11:08,417

I've had a friend that said he saw a barometer that he'd given another friend who the family turned up missing.

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00:11:08,417 --> 00:11:14,418

But here this barometer was on an island in the Bahamas for sale in a gift shop.

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00:11:15,418 --> 00:11:23,418

There is a growing suspicion that a number of seemingly inexplicable disappearances can be laid at the feet of a bizarre anachronism.

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00:11:23,418 --> 00:11:25,418

The plundering buccaneer.

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00:11:26,419 --> 00:11:32,419

The modern pirate does not fly the Jolly Roger or lurk in the remote coves of the Spanish Maine.

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00:11:32,419 --> 00:11:44,420

There is reason to believe that the modern pirate strolls the streets of Miami Beach, made undetectable by his commonplace appearance and his belief in the age-old tradition of piracy.

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00:11:44,420 --> 00:11:47,420

That dead man tell no tales.

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00:11:48,420 --> 00:11:54,420

Pierson has developed the profile of a typical modern buccaneer.

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00:11:54,420 --> 00:12:01,421

A cold-blooded person, fairly intelligent and ironically a pretty personable sort of character.

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00:12:01,421 --> 00:12:11,421

And this is the sort of thing that happens. They make friends with them, they let them come on board, and they might mention that the wife has some diamonds with her or something.

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00:12:11,421 --> 00:12:13,421

And then the, you know, the fella says, oh really?

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00:12:14,422 --> 00:12:28,422

The pirate is looking for a congenial victim, a man proud of his boat, a man who doesn't ask for credentials or identification, the type of person who will sign his own death warrant.

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00:12:29,422 --> 00:12:40,423

As seen in this reenactment, the typical pirate of today must first discover essential facts that make a particular vessel the perfect target.

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00:12:40,423 --> 00:12:48,424

The vessel has no specific float plan, its destination is not defined, its schedule is undetermined.

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00:12:48,424 --> 00:12:52,424

The buccaneer will have the necessary time to complete his deadly deed.

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00:12:52,424 --> 00:12:58,424

He knows that boat owners can be like kids, even to wearing official-looking uniforms.

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00:12:58,424 --> 00:13:06,425

In these cases, another thing that happens frequently is that the boat leaves, and in the case of the Pirate's Lady, it leaves virtually unnoticed.

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00:13:06,425 --> 00:13:11,425

Either late at night, early in the morning, it motors out very quickly.

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00:13:11,425 --> 00:13:20,426

There's no chatting around the dock, no, you know, buying a six-pack and shooting the breeze with the dog master.

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00:13:20,426 --> 00:13:22,426

The boat is gone, right, and early.

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00:13:22,426 --> 00:13:30,426

Now it is just a matter of time until the victim takes his would-be killer to a suitable secluded piece of open sea.

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00:13:30,426 --> 00:13:34,426

In each of these cases, the boat was outfitted for a long voyage already.

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00:13:34,426 --> 00:13:44,427

That is, there were provisions, there was fuel, there was charts, there was either radar or certainly radio long-distance communication.

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00:13:44,427 --> 00:13:47,427

There was everything they needed to make a good long trip.

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00:14:05,428 --> 00:14:15,429

By changing some of the lesser work stop-sight masks, some parts of the superstructure,

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00:14:15,429 --> 00:14:22,429

or changing just the color combination on those parts, adding canvas parts, taking canvas parts off,

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00:14:22,429 --> 00:14:27,430

you can change the look of the vessel quite easily and quite quickly.

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00:14:27,430 --> 00:14:32,430

Florida coast with its overgrown bayous is ideal country for the pirate.

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00:14:32,430 --> 00:14:37,430

Here, he can affect the face-lift on the yacht if he wants to use it.

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00:14:40,431 --> 00:14:48,431

But why would a man commit piracy and murder? Why would he take these risks? Does piracy have another motive?

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00:14:48,431 --> 00:14:57,432

If an expensive boat is stolen, it can be altered, but the basic structural design as well as registration licenses cannot be erased.

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00:14:57,432 --> 00:15:01,432

We are a nation of record keepers, identification numbers, state forms,

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00:15:01,432 --> 00:15:07,432

so a pirate knows he would get caught trying to sell such a boat or parading it himself.

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00:15:07,432 --> 00:15:15,433

What use is it then? In the water south of Miami, piracy today is almost commonplace and there appears to be a possible explanation.

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00:15:15,433 --> 00:15:21,433

In four of the confirmed cases of piracy, the hijackers were in the drug trade.

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00:15:21,433 --> 00:15:26,433

We asked Hyacin if most hijackers are connected to drug traffic.

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00:15:26,433 --> 00:15:33,434

In my opinion, I think they probably would be, mainly because of the areas they've taken place in, particularly off Mexico, Colombia.

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00:15:33,434 --> 00:15:41,434

There are captains that I know, people that I spoke with, who are reputable people who have sailed these waters for the better part of their lives,

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00:15:41,434 --> 00:15:44,435

who no longer go anywhere near Colombia, for instance.

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00:15:44,435 --> 00:15:49,435

Also the waters of Honduras, anywhere in that neck down around the Panama Canal zone.

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00:15:49,435 --> 00:15:55,435

Some of your underwriters will not let boats go and transit through Colombian waters.

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00:15:55,435 --> 00:16:01,436

The drug traffic from Colombia into Miami travels one of the busiest crime routes in the world.

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00:16:07,436 --> 00:16:13,436

Today we're going to be auctioning a 1973 28-foot Donzie.

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00:16:13,436 --> 00:16:17,437

This is a common ceremony in Miami.

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00:16:17,437 --> 00:16:21,437

The public auction of a drug boat seized off South Florida.

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00:16:21,437 --> 00:16:26,437

Somewhere in this crowd of honest, legitimate bidders may be the front man for a crime syndicate,

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00:16:26,437 --> 00:16:31,437

with the ready cash to put a seized vessel right back into the drug trade.

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00:16:34,438 --> 00:16:37,438

On this particular day, the boat is bought by a water skier.

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00:16:37,438 --> 00:16:45,438

But it is generally believed that a number of the supercharged speed boats that fill the waters of South Florida are in the drug trade.

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00:16:45,438 --> 00:16:51,439

They are used by the big syndicates to run dope in from other ships which sit out in international waters.

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00:16:54,439 --> 00:17:00,439

In the mid-70s, the Dauntless and other Coast Guard vessels working with the drug enforcement agencies

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00:17:00,439 --> 00:17:06,440

and U.S. Customs had been relatively successful in breaking the big heroin syndicates.

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00:17:06,440 --> 00:17:10,440

Now cocaine and marijuana began to appear in huge quantities.

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00:17:10,440 --> 00:17:17,440

At about the same time, Coast Guard Captain Edmund L. Cope noted a curious new development in southern waters.

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00:17:17,440 --> 00:17:26,441

Private yachts began to disappear, boats that could make a long trip without the necessity of mother ships or messenger boats.

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00:17:28,441 --> 00:17:31,441

Why were these boats being pirated instead of purchased?

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00:17:31,441 --> 00:17:36,441

It appears that a new and more deadly breed of drug runner is now abroad.

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00:17:36,441 --> 00:17:42,442

The lone wolf with connections in the drug culture but operating outside the big crime syndicates.

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00:17:42,442 --> 00:17:47,442

Boats were being hijacked because they couldn't afford to buy one that size.

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00:17:47,442 --> 00:17:55,443

Couldn't buy what he needed to get involved in his particular business which would be running

marijuana from the Gulf Stream into the Florida.

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00:17:59,443 --> 00:18:02,443

What sort of boats were these men looking for?

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00:18:02,443 --> 00:18:06,443

The Coast Guard has prepared a profile of a potential victim.

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00:18:06,443 --> 00:18:12,444

Well, it would have to be a boat that's capable of going a long ways with a good size cargo.

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00:18:12,444 --> 00:18:16,444

That is a long-legged yacht. Otherwise it's not worth it. It's not worth it to steal it.

161

00:18:16,444 --> 00:18:21,444

It's not worth it to kill people on board. It's not worth it to try to stuff a lot of drugs inside of it.

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00:18:21,444 --> 00:18:24,444

They want something that'll hold a lot.

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00:18:25,445 --> 00:18:31,445

Just such a boat was the Sabah Bank which disappeared on April Fool's Day 1974.

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00:18:31,445 --> 00:18:34,445

The perfect victim for a hijacker.

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00:18:34,445 --> 00:18:37,445

In studying the Coast Guard investigation,

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00:18:37,445 --> 00:18:40,445

Huyerson learned that when the boat was last seen in Nassau,

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00:18:40,445 --> 00:18:47,446

the owners were observed in conversation with persons described as drug or hippie types.

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00:18:47,446 --> 00:18:56,446

Did the four Philadelphia businessmen invite these people to join in the fun trip to Jamaica and in effect arrange their own murder?

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00:18:56,446 --> 00:19:02,447

No one knows for sure, but no one saw them leave and their disappearance remains a mystery.

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00:19:06,447 --> 00:19:11,447

And what about the Como No and the elderly couple en route to their retirement home?

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00:19:11,447 --> 00:19:15,448

The Coast Guard discovered that they were carrying their life savings,

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00:19:15,448 --> 00:19:21,448

\$30,000 in cash and that this fact was well known around the marinas.

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00:19:22,448 --> 00:19:27,448

Also, there was the daughter who gave evidence that she had received a letter from the couple.

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00:19:27,448 --> 00:19:31,449

They wrote that they had taken on a pair of strangers as deck hands

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00:19:31,449 --> 00:19:36,449

and admitted they had become afraid of them but did not know how to get rid of them.

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00:19:36,449 --> 00:19:40,449

Had this couple issued an invitation to their own murder?

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00:19:44,449 --> 00:19:48,450

If you're a freelancer and if you're dirt poor and you have no boat

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00:19:48,450 --> 00:19:53,450

load of Americans pulls up offshore with a nice yacht and you've got about two tons

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00:19:53,450 --> 00:19:56,450

you can get to someone in the Boca Raton,

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00:19:56,450 --> 00:20:02,451

my way of thinking is Americans are as good a target as anybody.

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00:20:02,451 --> 00:20:08,451

The people that do the so-called drug hijacks, for whatever motive a yacht is hijacked,

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00:20:08,451 --> 00:20:11,451

are generally not professional smugglers or professional criminals.

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00:20:11,451 --> 00:20:15,451

They're people that have no other option

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00:20:15,451 --> 00:20:19,452

because it's not a particularly safe crime.

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00:20:22,452 --> 00:20:26,452

And so there appears to be ample evidence that piracy on the high seas

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00:20:26,452 --> 00:20:31,452

may account for some of the unexplained mysteries of the triangle,

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00:20:31,452 --> 00:20:35,453

which is not to say that all the deadly secrets have been unlocked.

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00:20:35,453 --> 00:20:44,453

The curious and tragic events of these mysterious waters are too complex for a single simple solution.

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00:20:46,453 --> 00:20:52,454

The bulk of the clientele in this Fort Lauderdale gun shop is yachtsmen,

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00:20:52,454 --> 00:20:58,454

where they formally bought sports rifles, they are now buying what are called people killers.

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00:20:58,454 --> 00:21:02,454

Boat owners are interested in self-defense.

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00:21:02,454 --> 00:21:05,454

How would this be for the boat, you think, for protection purposes?

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00:21:05,454 --> 00:21:06,454

That's all I'm looking for.

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00:21:06,454 --> 00:21:09,455

Very formal, that particular weapon there.

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00:21:09,455 --> 00:21:14,455

And yet, even with powerful guns, there are dangers in the triangle

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00:21:14,455 --> 00:21:19,455

which man and all his firepower may be unable to conquer.

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00:21:25,456 --> 00:21:30,456

Coming up next, in search of continues with a look into the mysterious deaths

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00:21:30,456 --> 00:21:33,456

surrounding the quest to find Captain Kid's treasure.

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00:21:33,456 --> 00:21:37,456

Then, agents hunt for a mountain man who's murdered their colleagues on FBI,

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00:21:37,456 --> 00:21:39,457

the untold stories.

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00:21:39,457 --> 00:21:43,457

And log on at veterans.com, a new website brought to you by the History Channel.

202

00:21:43,457 --> 00:21:47,457

Veterans.com, a place where veterans, their families and others can connect,

203

00:21:47,457 --> 00:21:51,457

share stories and pass on the legacies of all American veterans.