

## **Navy Confirms Sunken Sub In Balabac Strait Is USS Flier**

*From Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs*

(PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii) – Commander, Submarine Forces Pacific Fleet (COMSUBPAC), Rear Adm. Douglas McAneny announced today that a sunken vessel located in the Balabac Strait area of the Philippines is in fact the World War II submarine USS Flier (SS 250).

“I am honored to announce that, with video evidence and information provided by a team from YAP Films and assistance from the Naval History and Heritage Command, USS Flier has been located,” said McAneny. “We hope this announcement will provide some closure to the families of the 78 crewmen lost when Flier struck a mine in 1944.”

USS Flier, a 1525-ton Gato class submarine built at Groton, Connecticut, was commissioned in mid-October 1943. She departed from Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, for her first war patrol in January 1944. While entering the harbor at Midway Island during a storm, she went aground and was seriously damaged.

The damaged submarine was towed back to Pearl Harbor and finally reached the Mare Island Navy Yard, California, where she was repaired. Flier made another start on her first war patrol in May 1944, heading from Pearl Harbor to the waters off Luzon. While en route on 4 June she attacked and sank the transport Hakusan Maru. On June 13, she attacked a Japanese convoy off Subic Bay, receiving a depth charging in return, and on June 22-23, hit another convoy off Mindoro, apparently damaging one or more ships.

In early August 1944 Flier left Fremantle, Australia, for her second war patrol. On 13 August, while transiting shallow water to enter the South China Sea, she struck a mine and quickly sank. Fourteen of 86 crewmen escaped, but only eight survived the subsequent long swim to reach shore. After making their way by raft to Palawan and being protected by local people and a group of guerrillas, at the end of the month they were evacuated by the submarine USS Redfin (SS-272).

The last surviving crew member of Flier, Ens. Al Jacobson, never gave up the search for his lost shipmates. Sadly, Jacobson passed away in 2008, but his family was determined to continue the search. The family provided notes and research to the production company YAP Films, which investigates nautical mysteries, and Jacobson’s son Steve and grandson Nelson participated in the search.

“After my father retired in 1990, he became very active in the quest to understand more of what happened,” said Steve Jacobson. “He put together as much information as he could from naval records of the investigation and put together charts of where he believed Flier was. We provided YAP Films with everything my father had collected.”

In the spring of 2009, with the aid of the Jacobson family, the team from YAP Films located wreckage of a submarine in the area that USS Flier was lost. Father and son divers Mike and Warren Fletcher of the television show “Dive Detectives” captured the first views of the sunken submarine in more than 64 years. YAP Films provided the Naval History and Heritage Command with footage taken in the Balabac Strait to aid in the identification.

"The Flier discovery presented the Dive Detectives with one of our most challenging dives," said Warren Fletcher. "At a depth of 330 feet there is little margin for error. As my father and I descended into the dark blue water, the unmistakable shape of a Gato-class submarine came into view. That moment made all of the hard work and danger pale in comparison with the feeling of pride it gave me to know that the Flier and her crew will not be forgotten."

With the information provided by YAP Films, COMSUBPAC and the Naval History and Heritage Command examined the evidence and historical records and determined that the submarine found at the reported position could only be USS Flier. No Japanese or U.S. submarine other than Flier was ever reported lost in the area, and the gun mount and radar antenna clearly identifiable in the video matched historical photographs of USS Flier. Additional identifiable characteristics of the hull indicated that the wreck is indeed a Gato-class submarine. These factors taken together led COMSUBPAC and the Naval History and Heritage Center to conclude that the wreck found by YAP Films could only be that of USS Flier.

"The Flier was found because all the right people came together for all the right reasons," said Mike Fletcher. "But mostly the Flier was found because of the love a family has for their dad."

"It was a pretty emotional experience," said Jacobson. "Although I was really confident of the position, you still don't know. Literally, it was exactly at the coordinates he said it would be. It is tremendous closure and I wish that my dad could have experienced this."

Former Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz once said, "When I assumed command of the Pacific Fleet on 31 December 1941 our submarines were already operating against the enemy, the only units of the Fleet that could come to grips with the Japanese for months to come. It was to the Submarine Force that I looked to carry the load until our great industrial activity could produce the weapons we so sorely needed to carry the war to the enemy. It is to the everlasting honor and glory of our submarine personnel that they never failed us in our days of great peril."

By the end of World War II, submarines had made more than 1,600 war patrols. Pacific Fleet submarines like Flier accounted for more than half of all enemy shipping sunk during the war. The cost of this success was heavy: 52 U.S. Pacific Fleet submarines were lost, and more than 3,500 submariners remain on "eternal patrol."