

La Minerve, Vanished in 1968, Discovered off Toulon



The French navy has located *La Minerve*, one of its submarines that disappeared more than 50 years ago. Onboard were 52 crewmembers. The submarine was discovered on the seabed at a depth of 2,370 metres, 27 miles (45km) off the port of Toulon, the home of a French naval base in the Mediterranean. In January 1968 the submarine disappeared whilst on a military exercise. Until now repeated

searches have failed to find the vessel. A senior French naval officer told Agence France-Presse the submarine was discovered by the *Seabed Constructor*, a subsea support and construction vessel of the US company [Ocean Infinity](#).

The submarine (pictured in Norway), which had reportedly broken into three pieces, was located by Ocean Infinity's search ship the *Seabed Constructor*, which arrived off the French coast last week. Using underwater drones, it found the wreckage on Sunday, helped by the fact that *La Minerve* had sunk in an area of low sedimentation. The first three letters of the vessel's name were clearly visible on one piece of wreckage.



Submarine Probably Imploded

A fresh search was launched at the beginning of this year using the latest hi-tech equipment to map and model tides and currents in the Mediterranean. Data from the time of the accident was also re-examined. This included seismic reports that suggested the submarine probably imploded as it dropped to the bottom of the sea.

Discovered by Ocean Infinity

The submarine sank in less than four minutes. The cause of the accident has never been established. Initial reports suggested the submarine may have had rudder problems before sinking. It was engaged in an exercise with a military aircraft when it disappeared at about 7.55am. The alarm was raised when it failed to return to its base the following day. About 20 boats, helicopters, aircraft and a diving vessel used by the French oceanographer Jacques Cousteau were involved but the search was fruitless.

Missing During a Routine Patrol

In 2018, the *Seabed Constructor* found the *San Juan*, a submarine that sank in the Atlantic off the coast of Argentina. On 16 November 2018 the Argentine Navy reported that the wreck of *San Juan* had been found at a depth of 907 metres (2,976 ft), 460 kilometres (290 mi) southeast of Comodoro Rivadavia. The submarine's imploded wreckage was strewn over an area of 8,000 square metres (86,000 sq ft).



San Juan

ARA *San Juan* (S-42) was a TR-1700-class diesel-electric submarine in service with the Submarine Force of the Argentine Navy from 1986 to 2017. It was built in West Germany and entered service on 19 November 1985. It underwent a mid-life update from 2008 to 2013 (Photo credit Wikimedia).



On 15 November 2017, *San Juan* went missing during a routine patrol in the South Atlantic off the coast of Argentina, believed to have suffered an electrical malfunction, and a multi-nation search operation was mounted. Within hours of *San Juan*'s last transmission, an acoustic anomaly consistent with an implosion was detected in the vicinity of the vessel's last known location. On 30 November, the search and rescue operation was abandoned.

WWI German Submarine



UC-61 submarine

The *Minerve* wasn't the only submarine discovered in France this year. In January, a WWI German submarine resurfaced off the coast of France, more than 100 years after it sunk and was abandoned by its crew in 1917. The wreckage silted up but in some years becomes visible at low tide offshore in Wissant. (photo credit Wikimedia).

<https://www.hydro-international.com/content/news/le-minerve-vanished-in-1968-discovered-off-toulon>
