

New Expedition to Find the Wreck of Polish Submarine



A group of Polish specialists intend to explore the bottom of the North Sea in another search for the submarine 'ORP Orzeł,' which was lost, and possibly mistakenly sunk by a British plane, in 1940. The two-week expedition will once again be supported by high-class equipment, including sonar and echosounders. Most of the equipment will be provided by the Marine Institute from the Polish coastal city of Gdańsk. It will be installed on a Danish keelboat.

Tomasz Stachura, one of the participants of the project, called 'Santi' after the name of a sponsor company, informed the Polish Press Agency that the exploration would last for two weeks. Within that time the experts plan to explore around 600 square metres of the designated area.

Positions of shipwrecks

"We are going to explore several places containing shipwrecks that were pointed out to us by Danish fishermen", Mr Stachura said. He added that last May the expedition's crew had spent several days in Denmark and met Danish fishermen who turned out to possess an extensive knowledge of the positions of shipwrecks lying on the bottom of the North Sea.

The area that will be explored was selected due to the hypothesis that on 3 June 1940 the submarine was bombed at a specific location by a British airplane, after being misidentified as a German U-boat.

Previous expeditions in 2014, 2015 and 2016 searched for the *ORP Orzeł*, in an area near the English coast. In 2016 searches took place off the coast of the Netherlands.

Mr Stachura said that in his view the only guarantee of success is consistency, thus the project is a long-term one, based on searching consecutive areas.

Courageous escape

There are numerous theories regarding the submarine's loss. It is said to have been either sunk in a minefield, scuttled by a German warship, or mistakenly bombed by an English plane, a theory Mr Stachura's team lean towards.

ORP Orzeł, was built during the interwar period. It is best known for its courageous escape from internment in Tallinn in September 1939, forcing its way through a German blockade. The submarine is also famous for the sinking on 8 April 1940 of *MS Rio de Janeiro* with a clandestine load of hundreds of German troops intended for the invasion of Norway.

On 23 May 1940 *ORP Orzeł*, set off for a patrol in the North Sea. The ship never returned from that mission.

Source: Polish Press Agency.