




AMS CHRONICLE

IPMS DENVER ROB WOLF CHAPTER
APRIL 2018

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|  | 2018 OFFICERS | 2017 OFFICERS EMAILS |
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| NEXT MEETING: 02 MAY, 2018 1900 | CLUB CONTEST CRAZY 8'S <u>AT COLPAR EAST</u> | Any subject in any scale where "eight" is a major feature |

EDITOR RAMBLINGS FROM THE BUNKER

Classes are proceeding well. This is my first time doing the Russian Civil War(s) so I am trying different things to see what work and what does not. Mid term (4 week) reviews were good which is always nice to read.

I have not done much model work and plan to remedy tht starting mid May when classes are almost over. I will have a lot for November's **Better Late Than Never** contest

Nikto ne Zabyt
 Nichto ne Zabyto

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Coming Attractions

First I want to thank Al Gonzalez, Dale Summers, Bob Nixon and Martin Sagara for running the Annual Club Kit Auction. The proceeds of the auction comes to \$365. If you still owe payment for your winning bids please bring it to the May meeting.

Our May meeting will be held at **Colpar HobbyTown EAST** at 6:30 P.M. and consists of our Annual Club Model Contest.

Try to arrive on time so we can get all of the models entered.

Remember this is *our* contest, so let's have a great turnout and please, if possible, volunteer to help with setup, judging, handing out awards and cleanup. John Trueblood is slated to photograph all of the entries and presentation of awards, we will need a volunteer to assist John. Our Contest Committee Chairman will be reaching out for volunteers.

This contest isn't just about awards, show us what you've been up to modeling wise. If you just

want to display your models, completed or not, we will have a table for that too.

In an attempt to gain the interest of Junior Modelers we have opened the Juniors category to non-members so feel free to invite Junior non-members to our contest.

Remember there will be no Show and Tell at this meeting and we will only hold a minimal Business Meeting.

No interest has been expressed in holding any seminars at our June meeting. If you would be willing to present a program for our June meeting please let me know.

Thanks

Matt Levesque

RUNWAY OF HONOR FOR BILL BERDEN

The orders have been submitted and we are finishing plans for the next dedication ceremony which will be held at 1:30 pm, Sunday, May 27th of Memorial Day Weekend.

The ceremony (weather permitting) will be held outside in the Veterans Plaza and will be supported by the Wings Civil Air Patrol Squadron.

The ceremony normal lasts about 20-25 minutes.

I hope you will be able to join us that day.

If you ordered miniatures bricks they will be available for you after the ceremony if you attend. If you do not attend I will mail them to you shortly after the ceremony.

To ensure that we have adequate seating, I am requesting that you RSVP whether you are or are not planning to attend and if attending how many will be in your party.

Thanks again for your support and I look forward to meeting you at the ceremony.

REVELL SOLD

Ever since it was announced earlier this year that Hobbico, the owner of Revell and Revell Germany, was in bankruptcy modelers have been concerned for the fate of one of the world's oldest plastic model companies. This week it was announced that a German holding group, Revell AG had purchased Revell and Revell Germany thereby securing the future of the company.

What does this mean for you? First of all, everyone in the modeling community has issued a combined sigh of relief. You'll still be able to buy and build your favorite Revell kits. There may be a small delay in obtaining certain products during the transition but rest assured Hobby Models will do everything we can to fulfill your orders as quickly as possible.

As with any new venture, there will be bumps along the way but we're confident this is the best path for Revell to travel.

We do recommend that you get your orders in for any Revell products now before existing supplies sell out. There is also the possibility of increased pricing by the new owners.

Sincerely,

Hobby Models, LLC

www.hobbymodels.com

...2018 MONTHLY CONTEST THEMES

| Month | Theme | Description |
|------------|--------------------------------|--|
| January | Under the Red Star | Any subject made in Russia/Soviet Union, in Russian/Soviet markings, any scale, any era. CANNOT be Russian vehicles in another country's marking, such as North Korean MiGs |
| February | Enter the Dragon | Any DML/Dragon kit. Bring proof (box lid or instructions) |
| March | Winter Storm Watch | Anything in a winter theme, any scale, any era |
| April | Club Kit Auction | Get rid of your trash and buy my treasure! |
| May | Club contest: Crazy 8's | Any subject in any scale where "eight" is a major feature. Examples, F-8 (not F-18), V-8 engines autos, M8 Greyhound, 8th Air Force markings, hull number or race car with an 8, etc. |
| June | Viva la Revolucion! | Civil wars, insurrections, uprisings, revolutions...you get the idea. Any scale, any era |
| July | Warrior Class | Any subject named after a class of warrior: chieftain, gladiator, corsair, pirate, commando, centurion, etc. Also, named after any Indian or native tribes. CANNOT be named after a specific warrior, such as a Patton, Sherman, Lee, Montgomery, etc. |
| August | That's Depressing! | Any civilian subject in any scale in a version and markings appropriate to the years 1925-1945 |
| September | Trash Haulers | Cargo and transport (aircraft, vehicles, ships), military or civilian, any scale, any era |
| October | SciFi and Fantasy | Any scale, any subject with a science fiction or fantasy theme |
| November | Better Late Than Never | Any model that would have fit any of the previous 2018 contest themes that you didn't get a chance to finish |
| December | Cut Throat Gift Exchange | It's better to give than receive, but even better to steal what someone was given! |

APRIL AUCTION



This is my haul from the auction. The KING TIGER was bundled with the BA-3 but I do have a TIGER, PANTHER, and JGSDF 4x4 in the scale.

The Brazilian tank was a surprise (and more “ammo” for double entendre comments between AI and I) . it fits with my 2 Italian ARIETEs, French AMX-30B2. and PLA tanks.

MOON DIRECT: HOW TO BUILD A MOONBASE IN FOUR YEARS

by [Robert Zubrin](#) — March 30, 2018

This op-ed originally appeared in the March 26, 2018 issue of SpaceNews magazine.

The recent amazing success of the Falcon Heavy launch offers America an unprecedented opportunity to break the stagnation that has afflicted its human spaceflight program for decades. In short, the moon is now within reach.

Here's how the mission plan could work. The Falcon Heavy can lift 60 tons to low Earth orbit (LEO). Starting from that point, a hydrogen/oxygen rocket-propelled cargo lander could deliver 12 tons of payload to the lunar surface.

We therefore proceed by sending two such landers to our planned base location. The best place for it would be at one of the poles, because there are spots at both lunar poles where sunlight is accessible all the time, as well as permanently shadowed craters nearby where water ice has accumulated. Such ice could be electrolyzed to make hydrogen-oxygen rocket propellant, to fuel both Earth-return vehicles as well as flying rocket vehicles that would provide the lunar base's crew with exploratory access to most of the rest of the moon.

The first cargo lander carries a load of equipment, including a solar panel array, high-data-rate communications gear, a microwave power-beaming set up with a range of 100 kilometers, an

electrolysis/refrigeration unit, two crew vehicles, a trailer, and a group of tele-operated robotic rovers. After landing, some of the rovers are used to set up the solar array and communications system, while others are used to scout out the landing area in detail, putting down radio beacons on the precise target locations for the landings to follow.

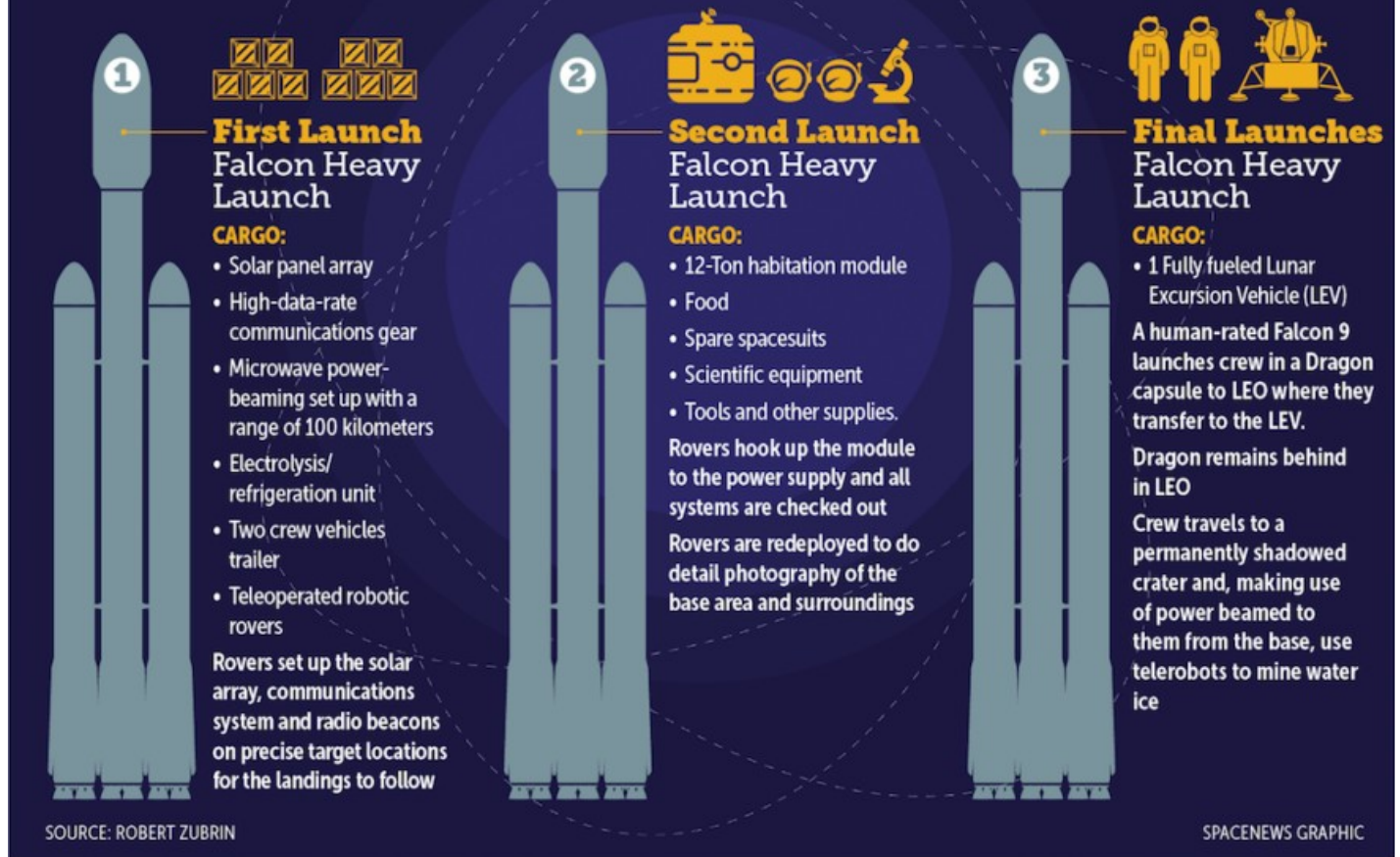
The second cargo lander brings out a 12-ton habitation module, loaded with food, spare spacesuits, scientific equipment, tools, and other supplies. This will serve as the astronauts' house, laboratory, and workshop of the moon. Once it has landed, the rovers hook it up to the power supply and all systems are checked out. This done, the rovers are redeployed to do detailed photography of the base area and its surroundings. All this data is sent back to Earth, to aid mission planners and the science and engineering support teams, and ultimately forming the basis of a virtual reality program that will allow millions of members of the public to participate in the missions as well.



SpaceX's Falcon Heavy rocket, which made its debut Feb. 6, is the foundation of author Robert Zubrin's "Moon Direct" plan for affordably returning humans to the moon within four years. Credit: SpaceX

The base now being operational, it is time to send the first crew. A Falcon Heavy is used to deliver another cargo lander to orbit, whose payload consists of a fully fueled Lunar Excursion Vehicle (LEV). This craft consists of a two-ton cabin like that used by the Apollo-era Lunar Excursion Module mounted on a one-ton hydrogen/oxygen propulsion system filled with nine tons of propellant, capable of delivering it from the lunar surface to Earth orbit. A human-rated Falcon 9 rocket then lifts the crew in a Dragon capsule to LEO where they transfer to the LEV. Then the cargo lander takes the LEV, with the crew aboard, to the moon, while the Dragon remains behind in LEO.

HOW TO BUILD A LUNAR BASE IN FOUR YEARS



After landing at the moon base, the crew completes any necessary set up operations and begins exploration. A key goal will be to travel to a permanently shadowed crater and, making use of power beamed to them from the base, use telerobots to mine water ice. Hauling this treasure back to the base in their trailer, the astronauts will feed the water into the electrolysis/refrigeration unit, which will transform it into liquid hydrogen and oxygen. These products will then be stored in the empty tanks of the cargo landers for future use — primarily as rocket propellant but also as a power supply for fuel cells and a copious source of life-support consumables.

Having spent a couple of months initiating such operations and engaging in additional forms of resource prospecting and scientific exploration, the astronauts will enter the LEV, take off and return to Earth orbit. There they will be met by a Dragon — either the one that took them to orbit in the first place or another that has just been launched to lift the crew following them — which will serve as their reentry capsule for the final leg of the journey back home.

Thus, each mission that follows will require just one \$100 million Falcon Heavy launch and one \$60 million Falcon 9 launch to accomplish. Once the base is well-established, there will be little reason not to extend surface stays to six months.

Assuming that cost of the mission hardware will roughly equal the cost to launch it, we should be able to create and sustain a permanently occupied lunar base at an ongoing yearly cost of less than \$700 million. This is less than four percent of NASA's current budget — or about a quarter of what is being spent yearly on the agency's now obsolete Space Launch System program which has

been going on for over a decade without producing a rocket.



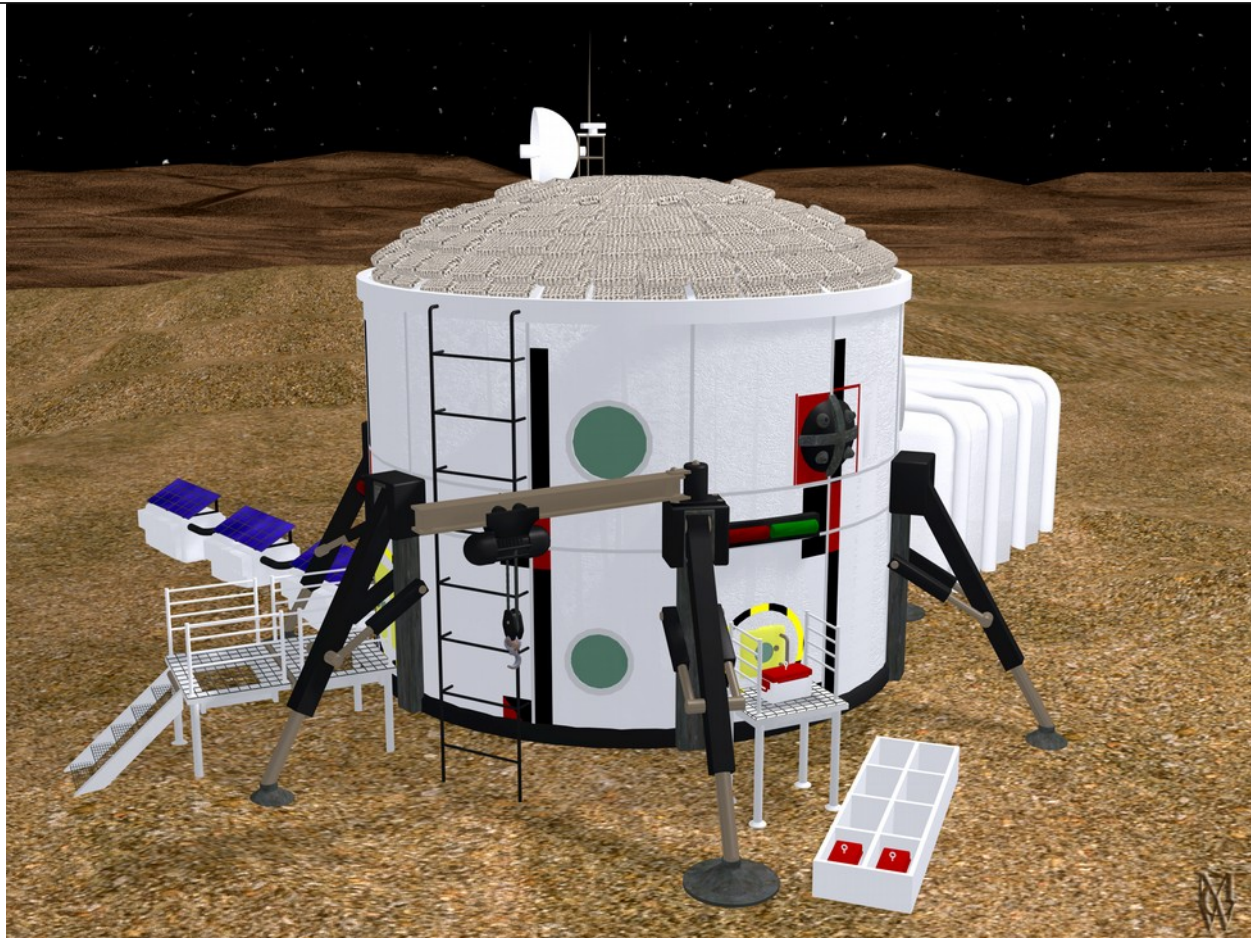
U.S. Vice President Mike Pence gets a close look at a recovered Falcon 9 booster during a February visit to Kennedy Space Center, Florida, for the National Space Council's second public meeting. Credit: NASA

The astronauts will not be limited to exploring the local region around the base. Refueled with hydrogen and oxygen, the same LEV spacecraft used to travel to the moon and back can be used to fly from the base to anywhere else on the moon, land, provide on-site housing for an exploration sortie crew, and then return them to the base. We won't just be getting a local outpost: we'll be getting complete global access to an entire world.

Currently, NASA has no such plan. Instead it is proposing the build a lunar orbiting space station dubbed the Deep Space Gateway. This boondoggle will cost several tens of billions of dollars, at least, and serve no useful purpose whatsoever – except perhaps to provide a launch manifest for the Space Launch System. We do not need a lunar-orbiting station to go to the moon. We do not need such a station to go to Mars. We do not need it to go to near-Earth asteroids. We do not need it to go anywhere. If we do waste our time and money building it, we won't go anywhere.

If you want to get to the moon, you need to go to the moon. We now have it in our power to do so. Let's seize the time.

Robert Zubrin is president of Pioneer Astronautics and the Mars Society. An updated edition of his book, "The Case for Mars: The Plan to Settle the Red Planet and Why We Must," was recently published by the Free Press.



(ED NOTE): I worked with the Mars Society in 2000 helping with doing a 3D rendering of proposed Simulated Mars habitat that was build on Devon Island which is north of the Arctic Circle.

JAPAN ACTIVATES FIRST MARINES SINCE WW2 TO BOLSTER DEFENSES AGAINST CHINA

In a ceremony held at a military base near Sasebo on the southwest island of Kyushu, about 1,500 members of the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (ARDB) wearing camouflage lined up outside amid cold, windy weather.

The troops conducted a 20-minute mock public exercise recapturing a remote island from invaders.

The formation of the Japanese marine brigade is controversial because amphibious units can project military force and could, critics warn, be used to threaten Japan's neighbors. In its post World War Two constitution Japan renounced the right to wage war.

Soldiers of Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF), the brand-new Marines named The Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade attend a ceremony in Camp Ainoura in Sasebo, Nagasaki Prefecture, Japan on April 7, 2018.

Japan on Saturday activated its first marine unit since World War Two trained to counter invaders occupying Japanese islands along the edge of the East China Sea that Tokyo fears are vulnerable to attack by China.

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members of the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (ARDB) wearing camouflage lined up outside amid cold, windy weather.



Richard Atrero de Guzman | NurPhoto via Getty Images

"Given the increasingly difficult defense and security situation surrounding Japan, defense of our islands has become a critical mandate," Tomohiro Yamamoto, vice defense minister, said in a speech.

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The brigade is the latest component of a growing marine force that includes helicopter carriers, amphibious ships, Osprey tilt-rotor troop carriers and amphibious assault vehicles, meant to deter China as it pushes for easier access to the Western Pacific.

China, which dominates the South China Sea, is outpacing Japan in defense spending. In 2018, Beijing which claims a group of uninhabited islets in the East China Sea controlled by Tokyo, will spend 1.11 trillion yuan (\$176.56 billion) on its armed forces, more than three times as much as Japan.

The activation of the 2,100 strong ARDB takes Japan a step closer to creating a force similar to a U.S. Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) able to plan and execute operations at sea far from its home base.

"They've already demonstrated the ability to put together an ad hoc MEU. But to have a solid, standing MEU capability requires concerted effort," Grant Newsham, a research fellow at the Japan Forum for Strategic Studies.

"If Japan put its mind to it, within a year or year and a half it could have a reasonable capability."

Newsham, who helped train Japan's first amphibious troops as a U.S. Marine Corps colonel liaison officer assigned to the Ground Self Defense Force (GSDF), said Japan still needs a joint navy-army amphibious headquarters to coordinate operations as well as more amphibious ships to carry

troops and equipment.

Japanese military planners are already mulling some of those additions. Its Air Self Defense Force (ASDF) wants to acquire F-35Bs to operate from its Izumo and Ise helicopter carriers, or from islands along the East China Sea, sources have told Reuters.

The United States last month deployed its F-35Bs for their first at-sea operations aboard the USS Wasp amphibious assault ship, which is based in Sasebo. The Kyushu port is also home to Japan's Ise and close to the ARDB's base.

Separately the GSDF may acquire small amphibious ships up to a 100 meters (328.08 ft) long to transport troops and equipment between islands and from ship to shore, two sources familiar with the discussion said. Japanese ground forces have not operated their own ships since World War Two.

"The idea is to bring forces and gear on large ships to the main Okinawa island and then disperse them to other islands on smaller vessels," said one of the sources, who asked not to be identified because they are not authorized to talk to the media.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/07/japan-activates-first-marines-since-ww2-to-bolster-defenses-against-china.html>

MISSING SUB RUMORED TO HAVE BROUGHT NAZIS TO SOUTH AMERICA DISCOVERED

A missing German submarine said to have taken the defeated Nazi leadership to South America has been discovered after being lost at sea for nearly 73 years.

The U-3523 was one of Hitler's Type XXI submarines – a new and highly advanced design which came too late to stop an allied victory.

It was the first class of U-boats designed to sail submerged for a prolonged period of time and had a range which allowed it to sail non-stop to South America.

The U-3523 was thought to have been sunk by a British B24 Liberator attack on May 6, 1945, but the inability to locate the wreck fuelled rumors that it had escaped.

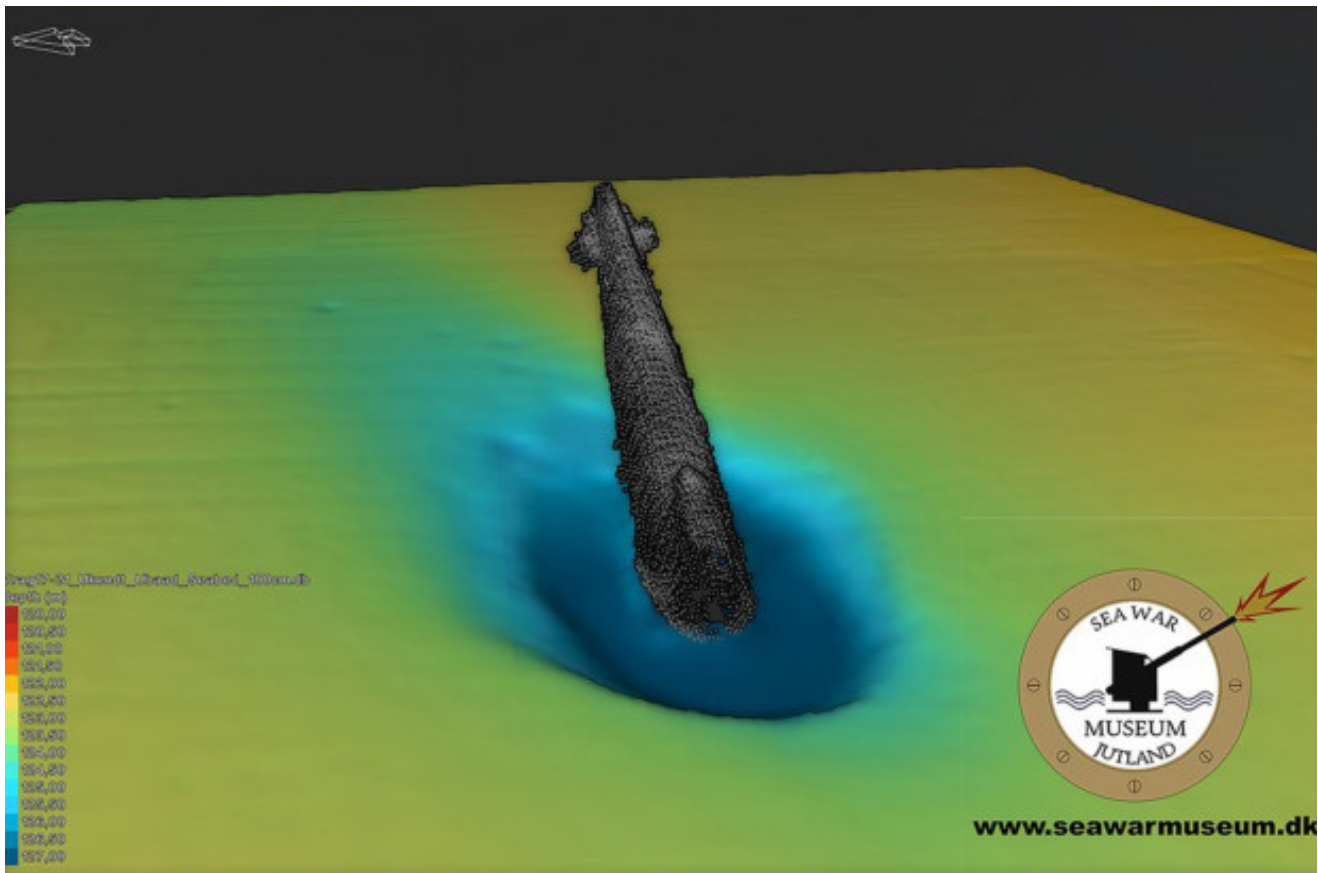
Now the wreck has been located ten nautical miles north of Skagen – Denmark's northernmost town – and nine miles west of the position reported by the British bomber.

Denmark's Sea War Museum, which found the submarine, said there was no evidence that it was escaping with Nazi leaders or loot.

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The missing submarine was found off the coast of Denmark. Sea War Museum Jutland

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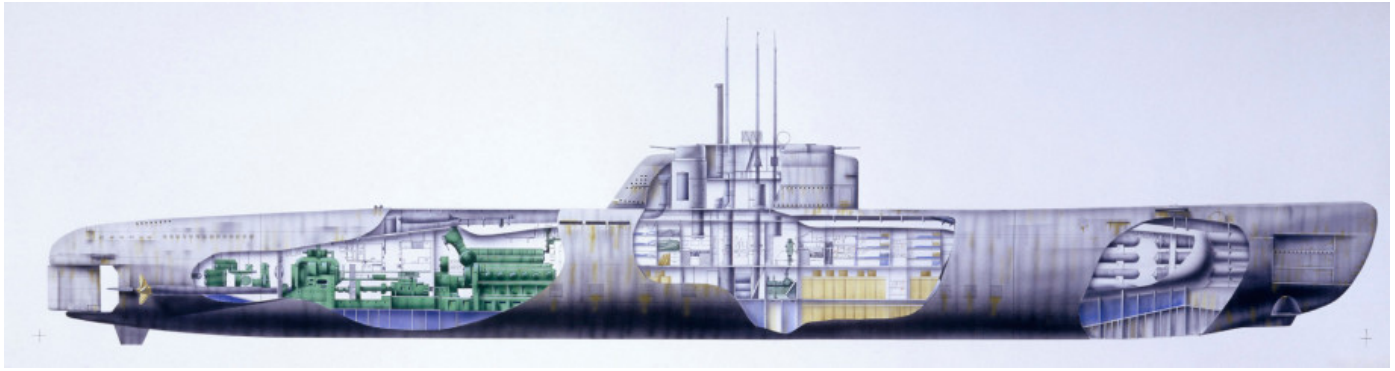
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Denmark’s Sea War Museum, which found the submarine, said there was no evidence that it was escaping with Nazi leaders or loot.

Gert Normann Andersen, the museum’s director, said: “Rumor has it that the submarine had great valuables from Germany because it was heading away from Germany even though the war ended.”

“I think the rumor developed because U-3523 was a very modern, long-distance U-boat and some Nazis tried to escape with valuables in the last days.”

“But the submarine was going to Norway, and not to South America with Nazis and valuables.”

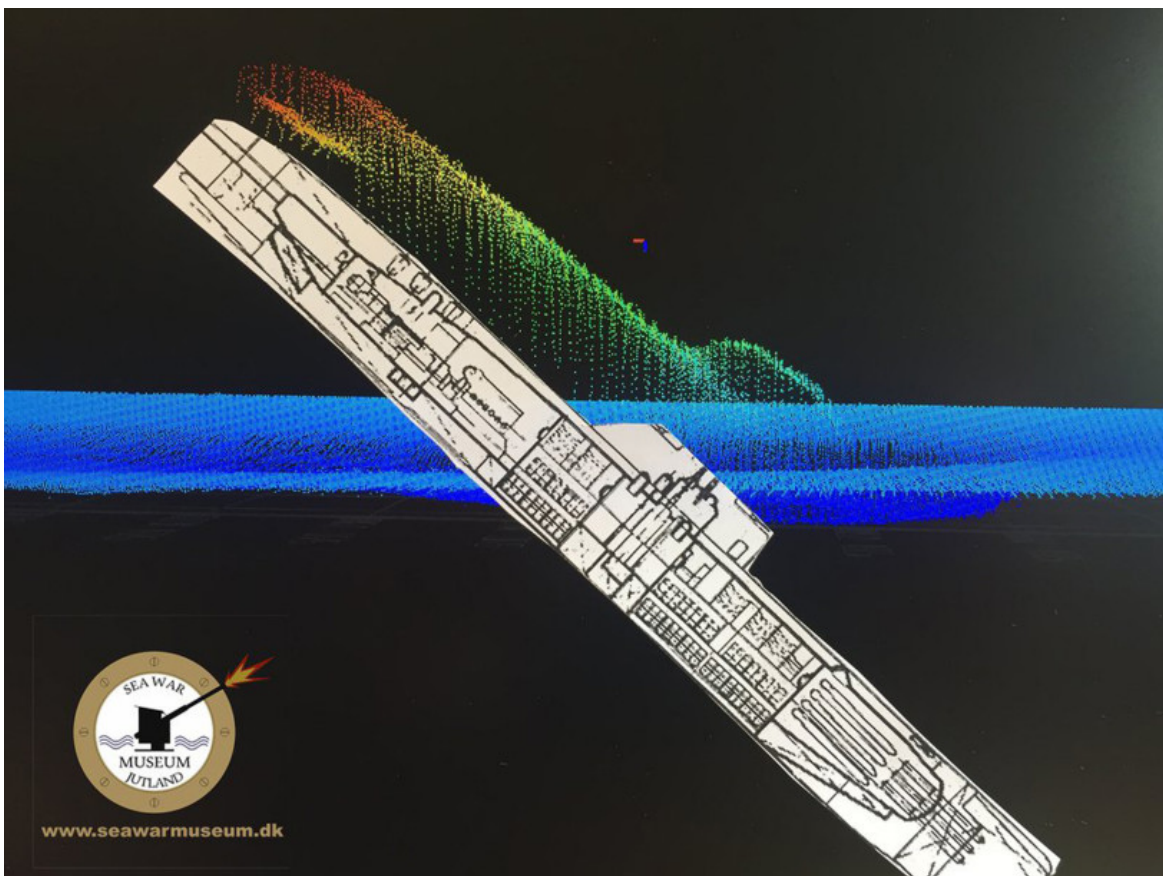


The German Type XXI submarine was so advanced that the US, France, Soviet Union and China would end up copying it. Getty Images

Declassified documents from US intelligence have fuelled claims that the Nazi leadership, including Adolf Hitler himself, escaped to South America in the final days of the war.

One CIA file dated October 3, 1955, carried allegations from a former SS trooper named Phillip Citroen that Hitler had been hiding in Colombia and later Argentina.

The trooper even had a photo taken in 1954 in the Colombian city of Tunja, allegedly showing him with a man said to be Hitler.



For years, the missing submarine was a locus of conspiracy theories. Sea War Museum Jutland
The document stated: "According to Citroen, the Germans residing in Tunja followed this alleged

Adolf Hitler with an idolatry of the Nazi past, addressing him as 'der Fuhrer' and affording him the Nazi salute and storm-trooper adulation."

Meanwhile a file from the FBI archives, dated September 21, 1945, detailed eyewitness claims that Hitler had arrived in Argentina via a submarine two-and-a-half weeks after the fall of Berlin.

It said: "By pre-arranged plan with six top Argentine officials, pack horses were waiting for the group and by daylight all supplies were loaded on the horses and an all-day trip inland toward the foothills of the southern Andes was started."

"At dusk the party arrived at the ranch where Hitler and his party, according to (redacted), are now in hiding."

Several prominent Nazis are also known to have fled to South America, including Adolf Eichmann – a leading architect of the Holocaust, and the notorious Auschwitz doctor Josef Mengele.

However, the new discovery proves that U-3523 never made the trip and sank with all 58 crewmen.

Andersen also has a copy of the last telegram sent by the submarine, dated May 5, 1945, which makes no mention of any precious cargo or high-ranking passengers.

Nazi Germany would sign the first instrument of unconditional surrender just two days later on May 7, 1945.

Scans of the seabed reveal the U-boat now lies in 403 feet of water, making it very difficult to access.

Unusually, the whole fore of the ship lies buried in the sand, while the stern stands 65 feet above the bottom.

Nazi Germany built 118 Type XXI U-boats but – due to poor quality control – only four were fit for combat before World War II ended and just two were deployed, neither sinking any allied ships.

Their design was later copied by Britain, the US, France and the Soviet Union with Soviet models subsequently inspiring Chinese submarines.

Only one original Type XXI U-boat survives, the Wilhelm Bauer (formerly U-2540), which is now part of the German Maritime Museum in Bremerhaven.

TEAM BACKED BY MICROSOFT CO-FOUNDER PAUL ALLEN DISCOVERS WRECK OF USS HELENA THAT WAS SUNK BY JAPANESE TORPEDOES IN SOUTH PACIFIC

- **Vulcan Inc team led by Paul Allen discovered the light cruiser off of Solomon Islands on March 23, nearly 75 after it was sunk**
- **More than 730 of the Helena's crew of 900 survived the July 5, 1943, sinking during the Battle of Kula Gulf**
- **It had survived a torpedo strike during the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor and sunk Japanese vessels in other battles**
- **USS Helena was the third World War II discovery in less than three weeks by Allen's team**

By [Associated Press](#)

PUBLISHED: 10:21 EDT, 18 April 2018 | **UPDATED:** 16:19 EDT, 18 April 2018

Microsoft co-founder's mission to locate sunken warships in the South Pacific has chalked up another victory with the discovery of the USS Helena nearly 75 years after it was sunk by Japanese

torpedoes in the waters off the Solomon Islands.

Paul Allen's team searches for the ships to 'bring the history back into a relevant conversation,' said Janet Greenlee, a spokeswoman for Allen's [Vulcan Inc.](#) 'He wants to honor those that have served and are serving.'

The wreckage of the Helena was found on March 23, about a half mile below the surface of the New Georgia Sound. The team identified the light cruiser by the number 50 on its side and by comparing the wreck to the USS Helena's schematics.

Scroll down for video



This March 24, 2018 photo provided by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen shows part of the stern section on the light cruiser USS Helena that was found last month in the South Pacific



USS Helena was sunk by Japanese torpedoes in the waters off the Solomon Islands nearly 75 years ago. Pictured: a 5-inch port side turret on the light cruiser



Allen's Vulcan Inc team identified the sunken ship by the number 50 on its side (pictured)



+9The Helena was a St. Louis-class light cruiser of the US Navy that was completed shortly before World War II

In all, more than 730 of the Helena's crew of 900 survived the July 5, 1943, sinking during the Battle of Kula Gulf.

Most of the crew was rescued out of the water and another group was picked up nearby the next day. But a third group spent nearly five days adrift in life rafts, during which some of the injured died, before the sunburned, dehydrated and emaciated men decided their best chance of survival was to take shelter on Vella Lavella Island.

The shoeless sailors had to walk across a sharp coral reef to get to the jungle island, which they knew was occupied by Japanese troops, Navy gunner's mate Frank P. Cellozzi of Ohio wrote in a 1984 account.

They crawled into the jungle and fell asleep before being awakened by a group of natives wearing loin cloths and carrying spears, Cellozzi wrote.

One spoke enough broken English to make it clear they would help. The natives in some cases carried the Americans into the jungle for miles, stopping occasionally to pick coconuts. The survivors built a latrine and a shelter and the natives escorted them to a freshwater stream where they could bathe, Cellozzi wrote.



© Associated Press Photo

In this July 1943 file photo, oil-smeared crew members of USS Helena 'report in' during the battle of Kula Gulf when the ship was sunk by enemy action



In this Aug. 14, 1943 file photo, one of 732 survivors of the USS Helena is transferred on a gangplank from the rescuing destroyer, left, to a US battleship



A memorial honoring the history of the USS Helena is pictured at Anchor Park in Helena, Montana. An Australian Methodist missionary named A.W.E. Silvester and two other Coastwatchers aided in their care and helped arrange for their middle-of-the-night rescue 12 days after their ship sank. Coastwatchers were intelligence operatives stationed on remote Pacific islands during World War II to observe enemy movements and help rescue stranded troops.

'One of the remarkable stories, not just about the crew and the ship's service, is the tenacity of the crew after the sinking and being separated,' said Allen's spokeswoman, Greenlee. 'It really does sound like a movie script.'

The USS Helena was the third World War II discovery in less than three weeks by Allen's [R/V Petrel](#) team. The aircraft carrier the USS Lexington was discovered March 4 and the USS Juneau, another light cruiser, was located March 17.

The USS Helena was the second of five vessels named for Montana's capital city, and was the first ship to receive the Navy Unit Commendation for its role in the World War II battles.

It survived a torpedo strike during the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor and sunk Japanese vessels in other battles.

The USS Helena was the first ship to receive the Navy Unit Commendation for its role in the World War II battles



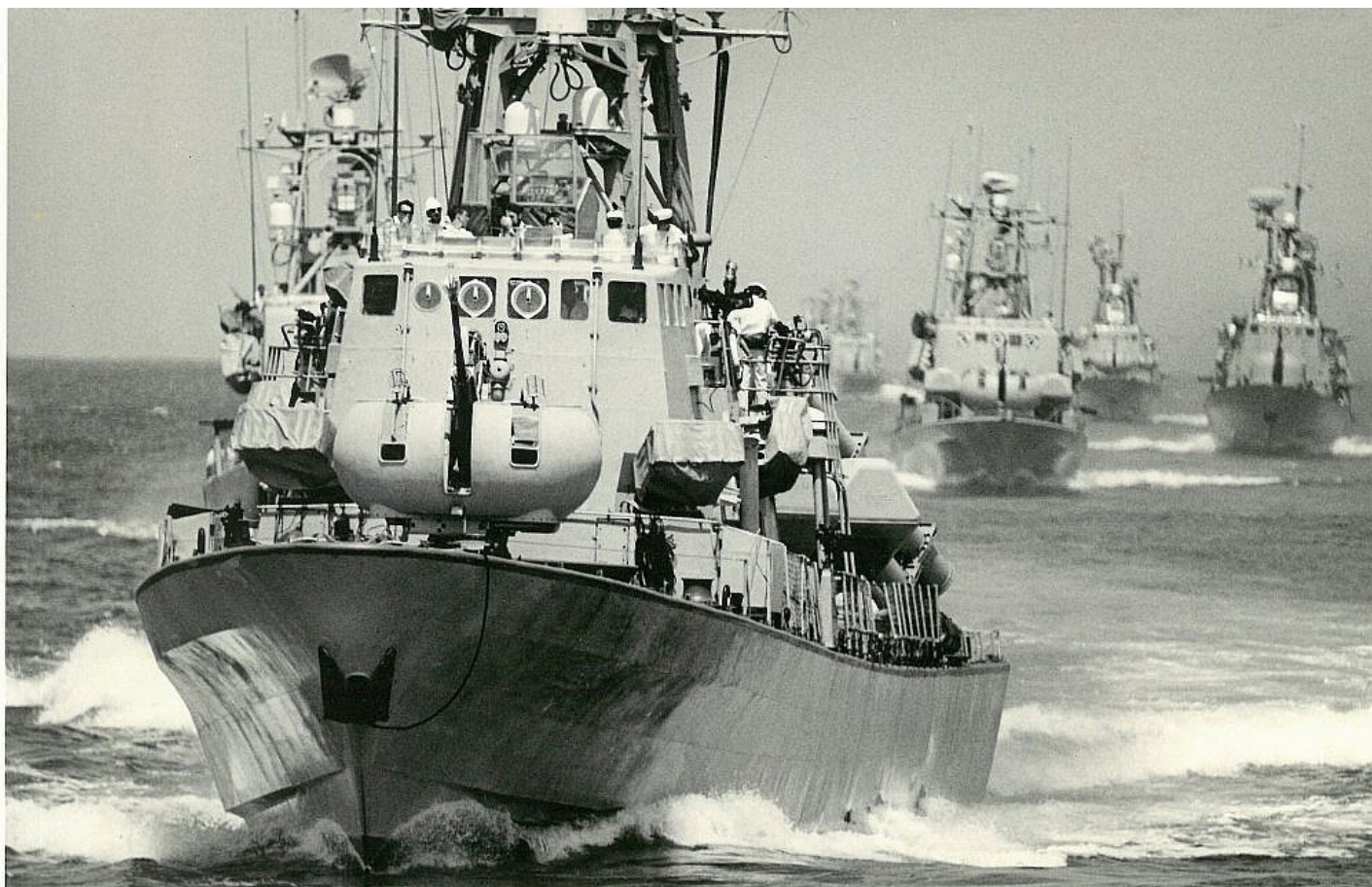
© Associated Press Photo

A plaque at the Montana memorial depicts the USS Helena in its prime

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5630273/Team-backed-Microsoft-founder-locates-USS-Helena-wreck.html#ixzz5DE57qBTv>

HOW ISRAEL BECAME A NAVAL STARTUP NATION WITH THE FAMOUS BOATS OF CHERBOURG

[The Jerusalem Post](#) ^ | 17 April 2018 | ABRAHAM RABINOVICH



Israeli missile boat flotilla on maneuvers. (Israel Government Press Office)

On New Year's Eve 1970, Israel Radio reported the arrival in Haifa of five newly built Israeli patrol boats which had escaped from a Cherbourg shipyard where they had been embargoed by the French government for political reasons. The brazen getaway on Christmas Eve into the teeth of a Force Nine gale raging in the English Channel galvanized the international media. News organizations sent up planes looking for the boats during the coming week as they raced for home. I had joined *The Jerusalem Post* just a few months before and thought "What a great story." I was sure that veteran Israeli journalists would soon get their teeth into it. However, the story behind the story would be classified and remained hidden.

Fast forward five years. Israel's top military brass, academics and other experts were participating in an international symposium in Jerusalem on the Yom Kippur War, two years before. At my paper, coverage of key panels was divided among reporters. One of the events not covered was a talk by the navy commander, Admiral Binny Telem. I followed the media closely, but had heard virtually nothing of naval activities in the war. Curious about what Telem might have to say, I dropped in after finishing my assignment.

His talk proved astonishing. The navy, he revealed, had not only been involved in battles against the Egyptian and Syrian fleets but had engaged in battles, for the first time since the invention of

cannon, involving not guns but missiles with built-in radar which enabled them to pursue moving targets.

No other navy in the West had such a weapon system.



A launch of Israel's Gabriel Missile (Israel Aircraft Industries)

Unknown to Israel when it began its project, the Soviet Union was also developing missile boats. It was these vessels, passed on to the Arab navies, that Israel would encounter in the Yom Kippur War. The Arabs had twice as many missile boats as Israel and their missiles had twice the range of Israel's, which enabled them to always get in the first salvos.

But the Soviet-made vessels did not have what the Israeli vessels had – electronic and other systems to divert incoming missiles by providing them with false targets. All 54 missiles fired at the Israeli vessels missed, throwing up enormous geysers as they exploded in the sea. Almost all the Arab warships which engaged were sunk, without a single Israeli loss.

After three days, the Arab navies did not venture out of their harbors and the vital sea lanes to Haifa remained open. Compared to the fierce battles waged by Israel on land and in the air, with their heavy losses, the total victory at sea was stunning.

Again, I thought, "What a story." But amidst all the revelations that emerged at the symposium, Telem's talk drew scant attention.

Epiphany, mid-stride Fast forward another six years. 1981. Walking down the Ben-Yehuda pedestrian mall in central Jerusalem, thinking random thoughts not connected to the navy, I had an epiphany that stopped me in my tracks.

Might those missile boats that performed so brilliantly in the 1973 war be the same "patrol boats" that had escaped from Cherbourg a few years earlier? That would really be a story.

It could, among other things, explain why the Israeli government had risked its diplomatic relations with France in order to run off with five embargoed patrol boats. Perhaps they were not simple patrol craft, as we had been told, but platforms that were to be converted to revolutionary missile boats.

This time I decided to grab the story by the neck. I wrote to then-Defense Minister (and future 7th president of Israel) Ezer Weizman to outline the story that had taken shape in my head, and to ask

whether I would have the ministry's cooperation if I wrote a book about it. The minister himself replied: The subject was too sensitive, he wrote, to be made public at this time.

Implicitly, however, he had confirmed that the missile boats were indeed the Cherbourg boats. Weizman was not long afterwards replaced by Ariel Sharon to whom I sent a similar query and from whose office I received a similar reply. In 1983, Sharon was forced out after the Sabra/Shatilla massacre in Beirut and the defense portfolio was temporarily shifted to prime minister Menahem Begin.

I duly sent the same query to the prime minister's office. This time I was informed that it had been forwarded to the navy.

To my delight, I shortly received an invitation to naval headquarters in Tel Aviv. The navy captain who heard me out was encouraging. At his request, I left a copy of a book I had written on the 1967 battle for Jerusalem for him to look at and a follow-up meeting was arranged soon after. This one proved awkward. The captain, looking solemn, said that the navy had recently cooperated with an Israeli navy veteran who made a feature film about his unit. The navy command was unhappy with the results and a decision had been made – apparently after my request — not to lend the navy's prestige again to any such outside enterprise.

Deeply disappointed, I made ready to rise when the officer stopped me.

"If you decide to pursue the book on your own, I can give you the phone numbers of a couple of people who might be able to help you." He wrote down the names and numbers of two men and handed them to me. He declined to tell me who they were. His gesture was puzzling. How could I write a book on the subject if the navy did not give me access to its personnel?

It would be a while before I understood what was happening: The navy did not wish to be publicly linked to the project but it was interested in the story of the missile boats, an enormous accomplishment, being told. They were giving me a chance to run with the story while leaving the navy in a position to distance itself from the book if it disapproved of it.

The dead-end's lead I had still not figured this out when I drove up to Haifa on a stormy winter night to meet the first man whose number the captain had given me, not knowing, in that pre-Google age, who answered to that name or what he might have to tell me.

Hadar Kimche had been expecting my call. As we sat before his fireplace, he revealed that he was a retired naval officer, the first commander of the missile boat flotilla and commander of the Cherbourg breakout. For the next four hours, I took notes as he outlined a mind-spinning tale of quasi-political hanky-panky and operational hocus-pocus surrounding the Cherbourg episode.

The second name I had was that of Kimche's former deputy. Both men gave me the names of others who would lead me to still others, about 100 in all, including French officials in Paris and Cherbourg. Attempting to understand the technical aspects of the story despite being technically challenged myself, I received patient explanations from scientists, naval architects and engineers involved in the project who spelled out the various elements in the system.



One of the 'Cherbourg boats,' the INS Mitvach, on display at Haifa's Clandestine Immigration and Navy Museum. (Amanda Borschel-Dan/Times of Israel)

The Cherbourg breakout and the missile battles, I learned, were but two sides of a three-sided tale. The third side, no less dramatic than the others, involved Israel's fledgling military industries which, together with the navy, had conceived a new type of naval warfare, a creative process laced with moments of despair and flashes of brilliance.

The system they developed would enable an underfunded navy to deploy small, affordable, vessels carrying the devastating punch of large cruisers. Undertaken by a nation with a population then of only three million, the project would be pursued virtually round-the-clock for a decade. Key personnel for years worked every day in the year and late into the nights, except for Yom Kippur. (A few also worked on Yom Kippur.)

The effort marked the beginning of Israel's emergence as "the start-up nation" and a major weapons innovator.

The missile boat flotilla — now numbering 12 vessels — held its first full-scale maneuvers, employing innovative tactics, the week before the Yom Kippur War.

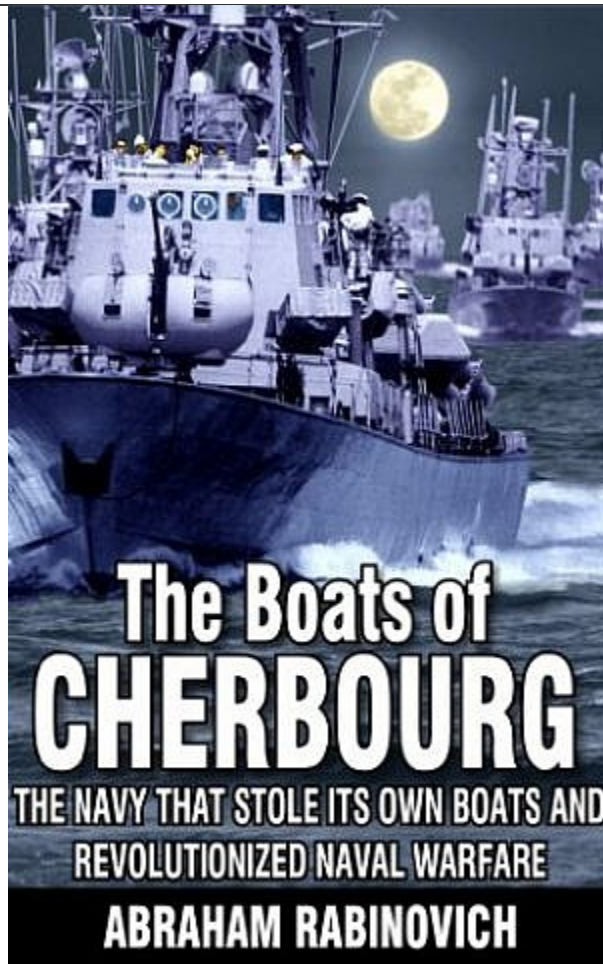
In the end, the navy made available to me all the personnel I wanted to interview and enabled me to go to sea with the missile boats on a training exercise, even to push the missile launch button during a dry run.

My resultant book, *The Boats of Cherbourg*, would be published by the United States Naval Institute Press.

The writer is also author of "The Yom Kippur War" and "The Battle for Jerusalem."

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[*How Israel became a naval startup nation with the famous boats of Cherbourg*](#)



The Boats of Cherbourg, by Abraham Rabinovich

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