



NAUTILUS LIVE
OCEAN EXPLORATION TRUST



Interviews Available with Team At-Sea

Media Contact: press@oceanexplorationtrust.org, (860) 339-6948

[Press Room](#) | #NautilusLive

www.NautilusLive.org

[@NautilusLive](#)



[Ocean Exploration Trust](#)



[@NautilusLive](#)



[@EVNautilus](#)



[@nautiluslive.org](#)



[@EVNautilus](#)



[@NautilusLive](#)

Flagship Imperial Japanese Naval Destroyer *Teruzuki* Found in Iron Bottom Sound

After 83 years, famed WWII vessel located by team exploring the shipwrecks of Guadalcanal on the seabed at over 800 meters depth in the Solomon Islands.

[See the video here](#) and [more accompanying assets here](#).

(Honiara, Solomon Islands — July 12, 2025) - For the first time, a team of scientists and explorers aboard the Ocean Exploration Trust (OET)'s Exploration Vessel (E/V) *Nautilus* has located the World War II Imperial Japanese Navy destroyer *Teruzuki* (照月)

The wreckage was discovered by [an expedition team](#) working to combine ocean technologies to demonstrate new efficiencies in ocean exploration. Using remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) to investigate a target found during seafloor mapping operations by the University of New Hampshire's uncrewed surface vessel (USV) *DriX*, the team found the never-before-seen ship resting in Iron Bottom Sound. This is the first time anyone has laid eyes on *Teruzuki* since it was sunk in WWII's battles off Guadalcanal, with surveyed details rewriting the ship's final hours. Japanese naval vessel plans were kept highly secret during the war, so much so that no historical images of *Teruzuki* exist today. This survey is the first ever look at the vessel for this generation.

"I feel so lucky to see this ship. The fact that we have not seen *Teruzuki* in over 80 years underscores the importance of recording maritime heritage now," said **Hiroshi Ishii, *Nautilus* science team member and Program-Specific Researcher at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS), Kyoto University.** "As a Japanese person, I appreciate the opportunity to witness part of our history and to be part of an international team shedding light on this campaign, which is important to all of our nations' history."

Commissioned in 1942, *Teruzuki* (照月; "Shining Moon" or "Illuminated Moon") was a 134-meter-long Akizuki-class destroyer designed for screening aircraft carriers from aerial attacks. However, the ship would be sunk in a very different type of combat. The ship fought fiercely in the November 1942 [First and Second Naval Battles of Guadalcanal](#), torpedoing multiple



American warships without taking damage. *Teruzuki* was the flagship of Rear Admiral Raizou Tanaka, a highly respected leader and torpedo expert in the Imperial Japanese Navy. The Admiral was given the nickname “Tenacious Tanaka” by US forces for his courage in leading nighttime attacks and Tokyo Express resupply missions.

After four months of warfare in the Solomon Islands campaign, Japanese troops on Guadalcanal desperately needed food and supplies that could only reach them if ships could successfully complete dangerous, high-speed supply dumps in the middle of the night when protected from American air cover by darkness. In the early hours of December 12, 1942, as *Teruzuki* protected supply ships off Cape Esperance on Guadalcanal’s northern coast, American patrol boats raced out to intercept the convoy. The fast attack boats struck *Teruzuki* in the stern with a pair of Mk-8 torpedoes. The detonation broke the rudder, disabling the ship and lighting fires. While most of her crew were rescued or swam to shore, including the injured Tanaka, nine men were killed as *Teruzuki* sank beneath the waves.

"The discovery of Rear Admiral Tanaka's flagship *Teruzuki* was made by a multidisciplinary, international team who together documented its remains, uncovering *Teruzuki*'s significance to former combatant, and now allied, nations," said **Phil Hartmeyer, marine archaeologist from NOAA Ocean Exploration who has been participating in expedition dives from shore.** "Only by exploring our planet's unknown waters can these significant stories of sacrifice and human connection to our ocean be brought to light."

Exploration today continues to reveal new details of historic events. When the exploration team found a 19-meter-long severed segment of *Teruzuki*'s stern littered with depth charges, it disproved a long-held theory that it was depth charge explosions that sealed the ship's fate. Severed by the torpedo strikes, *Teruzuki*'s stern was found more than 200 meters from the hull and located by high-resolution ROV sonar scans. The ship was found with its forward artillery turrets pointing skyward, illustrating its original purpose as a warship for a different type of battle. Using historical references, experts confirmed the identity of the ship.

This discovery is one from an ongoing expedition led by OET and supported by NOAA Ocean Exploration via the Ocean Exploration Cooperative Institute. The exploration utilizes the mapping capabilities of University of New Hampshire's USV [DriX](#) and the seafloor exploration and imaging capabilities of OET's ROVs deployed together to explore Iron Bottom Sound, the [stage of five major naval battles between August and December 1942](#). Throughout the mission, the surveys are streamed live via [NautilusLive.org](#), allowing the public and those with personal connections to the Solomon Islands campaign an opportunity to explore and honor this history and engage with the onboard expedition team. Hundreds of experts around the world are connected to ship operations via telepresence technology, helping guide the mission and providing valuable real-time interpretations throughout the surveys. *Teruzuki* is the twelfth World War II maritime heritage site



explored during the expedition so far. Dozens of military ships lost in Iron Bottom Sound remain to be found.

Led by OET President and famed explorer Dr. Robert Ballard, this exploration is made possible by the expertise, support, and collaboration of many partners, including NOAA Ocean Exploration, U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command, Solomon Islands government, the University of New Hampshire Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping/Joint Hydrographic Center, University of Rhode Island, and Japanese, Australian, and New Zealand colleagues.

About the Ocean Exploration Trust

The Ocean Exploration Trust was founded in 2007 by Dr. Robert Ballard to explore the ocean, seeking out multi-disciplinary discoveries while pushing the boundaries of STEAM education and technological innovation. Our international program is launched from aboard the Exploration Vessel (E/V) *Nautilus*, offering live exploration to participants on shore and the public via live video, audio, and data feeds. [Learn more about Ocean Exploration Trust](#). The 2025 E/V *Nautilus* expeditions are primarily sponsored by NOAA Ocean Exploration via the Ocean Exploration Cooperative Institute. OET program sponsors and partners for 2025 also include the Office of Naval Research, QPS, and the Phillip Stephenson Foundation. [Learn more about our partners and sponsors](#).

For more information on the 1942 Solomon Islands Campaign, [read our blog](#).

###

Additional Quote

“Beyond the discovery, witnessing *Teruzuki* shows a real sadness about war. It was very emotional to see this ship’s turrets pointed skyward. The ship was designed for an anti-aircraft purpose, but found itself facing an entirely different type of conflict. *Teruzuki* characterizes the tragedy of the “Tokyo Express” and the increasingly desperate logistic nightmare of the Solomon Island campaign that the Japanese Navy was trying to overcome while running low on options.” -- **Hiroshi Ishii, Nautilus science team member and Program-Specific Researcher at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University.**