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## History from the depths



A shot from the video of the USS Lexington wreck site, showing an anti-aircraft mount.

We're delighted to announce we will be allowed to screen the remarkable footage gathered by the team led by US philanthropist Paul G Allen.

Earlier this year, Mr Allen's underwater discovery operation located the site where the USS Lexington lies on the bottom of the Coral Sea.

It's one of the most spectacular historical discoveries of a warship and a tribute to those who gave their lives during a pivotal moment in the war in the South Pacific.

We approached Mr Allen to use the footage on our video screen in the museum project office, and we've now signed an agreement to be able to do so, at no cost to us. We thank him and Vulcan Productions for this kind gesture.

## The world coming to us



Zehra and Hasan from Turkey

Most of our visitors are either locals, Australians or New Zealanders, but we continue also to have occasional arrivals from all parts of the globe.

In the past month we had our first Turkish visitors, yacht sailors Zehra and Hasan Sirin, and our first Brazilian visitor, Nestor Antunes De Magalhaes.

Nestor is an ex-Army officer who likes to mix his love of military history with diving, and has written three books about wrecks he has seen – including German U-Boats from World War II.

He dropped by our office several times during his stay on Espiritu Santo, and of course dived the SS President Coolidge and the destroyer Tucker, as well as several plane crash sites.

Nestor told us the Museum here is a very important project and he has promised to write about us on his





Nestor from Brazil, at a B-17 Flying Fortress wreck site, Espiritu Santo

blog site which covers his travels and dives through sites - and museums - around the world.

It is [www.cavaleirodasprofundezas.com](http://www.cavaleirodasprofundezas.com) but if you don't speak Portuguese, using Google translate will give you a fair idea of his content.

The title translates as Knight of the Deep Sea!

Thank you Nestor. We look forward to our Museum featuring on your blog.

## Locally made coconut soap

The Museum has a new product to sell – a range of soaps made from pure Espiritu Santo coconut oil and essential oils.

It is thanks to Wendy Turner, who is the wife of board member Steve Turner.

She is hand-making the soaps and has kindly donated them to the Museum.

It is just another use of the wonderfully versatile coconut and tree which is so symbolic in the minds of many people with the South Pacific and the war years. The Japanese invasion of the Philippines in fact cut off the US supply of coconut oil, so US manufacturers moved to vegetable oils instead.



The soldiers of course used them as a drink and food source, but probably did not realize its other qualities.

The soaps cost 400 vatu, and all of that goes towards our work here. For another 100 vatu, you can buy a nice accompanying bag.

Marina with new product of our project office to support our work

## What's wrong with a couple of mementos?



Souvenirs? Strictly not.

Sadly this month we've seen a case of a visitor to Vanuatu taking potentially dangerous wartime items out of the country.

The person, who was not identified, made it all the way to Auckland airport in New Zealand before declaring they were carrying what was described in media reports as "artillery shells". That touched off a security alert at the airport.

They were in the end not prosecuted, but there are a few obvious points to make. We'll make them just in case they aren't that obvious to some.

- Taking potentially explosive items on board an aircraft is dangerous to everyone. That's why airlines demand you declare such risks.
- Such wartime items - along with culturally significant objects - are protected under Vanuatu law from being exported unless official permission is granted. Penalties can go to 50 million vatu (that's US\$ 450,000) or six years jail.
- There is no justification for removing items which are part of Vanuatu's history.

There's justifiable outrage in recent years that some famous warships at the bottom of the ocean are being ripped up for scrap metal, especially as they typically are war graves.

Taking wartime items from a country like Vanuatu may seem trivial by comparison to the individuals who try it, but in the end, it's pretty much the same end result.

So please, the Museum urges you to enjoy the wartime heritage of these islands, including the world famous dive sites, but remember, it's got to be here to stay - for everyone's sake.

## Inspiring Everyday Heroes

Here's a story we've been hanging onto. It's from April this year and concerns NiVanuatu competition Kaltaliu Kalotiti. He'd just been surging at under-14 level.

When a picture of him with his taped up board appeared on social media, it sparked a flurry of interest from overseas, and when New Zealand Surf Magazine shared the story with readers, offers flooded in to send Kaltaliu a replacement board.

In the end, around 30 boards were offered and a way found to ship them economically to Vanuatu for Kaltaliu and other young Ni Van surf hopefuls. Now that's called riding a wave!



*Kaltaliu Kalotiti & the battered board that went around the world—picture courtesy of Vanuatu surfing Association*

*"Inspiring Everyday Heroes" is our Museum brand promise, and means how the stories of yesteryear and our project can inspire today's new generation.*

## McCain's role in Espiritu Santo

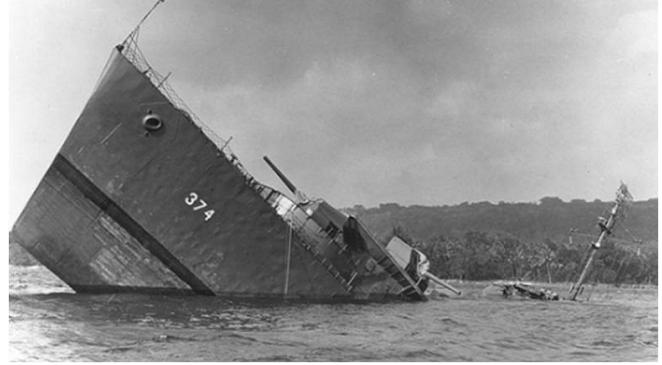
The sad news of the death of Senator John McCain late this month is a reminder of his grandfather's crucial role in Espiritu Santo becoming the pivotal base in the South Pacific war. Admiral John Slew McCain as commander of US air forces in the South Pacific was the first to recognize how critical Espiritu Santo was if Japan was to be stopped. His son, the father of Senator McCain, later became commander of the Pacific Fleet during the Vietnam war. And it was in that was that Senator McCain as a young pilot was shot down and held prisoner for five years. A remarkable fighting family.



*Rear Admiral John Slew McCain (left) shakes hands with Rear Admiral Aubrey W. Fitch on the occasion of McCain's relief by Fitch as Commander, Aircraft, South Pacific Force, 21 Sept 1942. Photo may have been taken onboard USS Curtis (AV-4) at Espiritu Santo (Photo by NARA)*

## This month in military history

*The Tucker, sinking a day after the fatal mine explosion near Espiritu Santo - courtesy of US Navy NHHC*



On August 3, 1942, the USS Tucker, DD-374, sailed in the water to the west of the Segond channel. She had received orders to escort the SS *Nira Luckenbach* to Espiritu Santo, and on 1 August, the two ships departed by way of a route north of Efate Island and west of the Malekula Islands. Threading their way through the channel, both ships then set courses to enter the Segond Channel for the final leg of their voyage to Espiritu Santo. At 2145, *Tucker* struck a mine which exploded and broke the destroyer's back. She slowed to a halt, mortally stricken, and began folding up. The explosion instantly killed three men. *Nira Luckenbach* quickly sent boats to aid in rescuing the destroyer men as they abandoned their sinking ship. Attempts the next day to tow the *Tucker* failed and she jack-knifed and sank in 10 fathoms. It was sad end for a ship that had survived the attack on Pearl Harbour. The *Tucker* of course remains the second most famous wartime shipwreck near Espiritu Santo – after the SS *Coolidge*, which also would sail into a US minefield less than three months later with fatal results.



*USS Tucker's diving site today at Espiritu Santo  
Courtesy of Mike Gerken of [Evolution Underwater Imaging](#)*

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**"Inspiring everyday heroes"**



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