



NEW SOUTH WALES

MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Frank Sartor MP

Minister for Planning

Minister for Redfern Waterloo

Minister for the Arts

28 April 2007

ACOUSTIC SURVEILLANCE FOR JAPANESE SUBMARINE WRECK

Planning Minister Frank Sartor today announced a sophisticated underwater surveillance and alarm system is in place off the coast of Sydney to protect the wreck of the World War II Japanese submarine.

Planning Minister Frank Sartor said the cutting-edge acoustic camera system, which was developed in partnership with the Commonwealth, was a first for an Australian shipwreck.

The system includes monitoring of the water around the no-entry protected zone surrounding the wreck through high-tech buoys, with detailed camera surveillance and underwater sonar alarm monitoring.

Any intrusions can trigger an immediate response from the NSW Water Police. The system will be managed by the Heritage Office of the NSW Department of Planning.

“The *M24* midget submarine was a remarkable discovery and must be protected as a significant historical site – both for Australia and Japan,” Mr Sartor said.

“The surveillance system will help to ensure the important maritime find is protected for future generations.

“This technology could be applied to other maritime surveillance such as oil and gas platforms, defence and critical infrastructure and environmental monitoring.”

Minister Sartor said the Heritage Office of the Department of Planning had undertaken detailed archaeological mapping of the wreck site, using the latest remote vehicle video and sonar imaging technology.

The Royal Australian Navy agreed to support the *M24* survey with the same US Navy deep sea remote operated vehicle used to retrieve the Black Hawk helicopter which sank in deep water off Fiji.

Mr Sartor said archaeologists were piecing together the final moments of the *M24* which disappeared mysteriously after the attack on Sydney Harbour in May 1942.

“We are now discovering details of the wreck structure which will help us better understand the effects of 65 years resting on the seabed off Sydney’s northern beaches,” Minister Sartor said.

“While the submarine hull is intact, it has suffered deterioration at key areas, such as the hull behind the conning tower.”

Last year the Commonwealth declared the *M24* submarine to be a historic shipwreck and gazetted a no-entry Protected Zone around the wreck under the *Historic Shipwrecks Act*.

The NSW Government then placed an Interim Heritage Order over the site which allows for penalties of up to \$1.1 million to apply to any person caught damaging the site.

THE KEY FACTS

- Japanese submarines sank 16 vessels off the NSW coast alone during 1942-43 (some 30 lost to wartime action around Australia), with two others lost to mines.
- Due to wartime secrecy little was known of the success of the merchant shipping campaign, or of the 150 sailors who lost their lives in NSW (over 500 nationally).
- A further ten vessels were damaged in NSW by torpedoes but managed to limp into port.
- The *M24* midget submarine was detected by Sydney recreational diving group, No Frills Divers, off Sydney's Northern Beaches on 12 November 2006.
- The surveillance system was developed by Australian technology company Zylotech Ltd.
- Survey operations have been made possible with the generous support of the Royal Australian Navy and the NSW Government.
- A sonar imaging survey of the wreck was undertaken by Sonartech Atlas Pty Ltd., while Defence Maritime Services undertook additional video footage with the aid of the visiting US Navy submersible vehicle in February 2007.