The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Sunken Byzantine-Era Ship Found off the Coast of Crimea

May 27, 2015



The 125-meter-long ship was found off the coast of Crimea.

A ship dating back to the Byzantine era has been discovered in the Black Sea off the coast of Crimea, Russia's Southern Military District said in a statement Wednesday.

The statement boasts the discovery of the 125-meter-long ship as one of the most archeologically important in recent centuries.

The ship was found by diving enthusiasts from the nearby city of Rostov-on-Don, who had ventured 82 meters deep into the sea outside the city of Sevastopol, home to Russia's Black Sea fleet. The ship, which is thought to have been used to transport oil and wine, reportedly contains hundreds of amphorae, some of which are still intact, according to the statement.

Russia's Southern Military District said the vessel was from the Byzantine era, which spanned much of the period between 330 A.D. and 1453. The statement referred to the ship as "ancient" but did not provide the approximate year of its sinking.

The reason behind the ship's demise also remains unclear, the statement said.

Russian sailors, archeologists and local divers are working to map the area where the ship was found, and collect photographs and video footage of its contents before any artifacts can be recovered. A multi-year archaeological expedition is set to be launched in the area next month.

Stunt enthusiast President Vladimir Putin has in the past shown a penchant for ancient amphorae. In the summer of 2011, Putin went diving in the Black Sea, emerging from the water with what appeared to be two ancient Greek urns. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov later admitted that at least in that instance, Putin's archeological prowess had been staged.

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