

MONTEVIDEO MARU SEARCH

Finding the HMAS Sydney and the Kormoran is wonderful news and a remarkable achievement after 67 years. Aside from the historical significance, more importantly, at last the families and friends of the 645 Australian service men aboard this ship can have closure and know where their loved ones rest. The healing process can now start for these people.

However, there are many Australian service men and civilians from World War II who are still considered missing. Many families and friends have been unable to grieve the loss of their loved ones as their final resting place remains unknown.

The Montevideo Maru is one of Australia's greatest losses in WW II and one without any clear answers. The fall of Rabaul, New Britain, Kavieng, New Ireland and the surrounding islands of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea resulted in over 1000 Australian service men, civilians and missionaries being captured. Apparently these men, now considered prisoners of war (POW), were on the Montevideo Maru. The official record states that the Japanese cargo ship was transporting the Australian men when it was torpedoed by the American Submarine USS Sturgeon on the 1st of July 1942, off Luzon, the Philippines.

Interestingly only the Japanese crew survived, but there were no Australian survivors. The question keeps arising, whether the POWs were actually on the vessel. The uncertainty following the sinking of the Montevideo Maru is only fuelled by the fact that information was not disclosed by both the Japanese and Australian Governments. And to this day, it is not known whether the 1000 missing Australians were on this ship or met their deaths in Papua New Guinea.

Therefore, over a 1000 Australian families, do not really know where their fathers, husbands, uncles, brothers, sons, cousins are. The family and friends of those supposed to have been lost on the Montevideo Maru deserve to know the truth of what really happened and where our loved ones' remains lie. Even though this is more than 60 years on since this great loss of World War II, we also need closure and to be able to grieve the loss of our loved ones.

The sinking of the Montevideo Maru is considered to be Australia's worst maritime disaster and yet very few Australian's have ever heard about it. The number of lives lost in this one incident is almost double the number which died in the whole of the Vietnam War. Sadly, it seems that Australia has forgotten these men.

We challenge the Australian Government to support the families and friends of the Australian servicemen and civilians who remain missing to this day. We are requesting that the Australian Government opens a full investigation into the fate of the over 1000 men. By recovering the Montevideo Maru using the technology utilised by the search for the HMAS Sydney, it could be proven, if in fact these men rest at the bottom of the ocean off the Philippines or elsewhere.

Please support Montevideo Maru Search by signing the petitions

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