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SZENT ISTVAN 2005 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

(OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASE)

On the 10th of June 1918, Lieutenant Commander Luigi Rizzo of the Italian Navy, masterminded the sinking of the Austro-Hungarian battleship, the *Szent Istvan*. That day Commander Rizzo was in command of the Mas 15 and 21, in a mine-sweeping operation off the Dalmatian coast, in the Adriatic sea. On that fateful dawn in June, they unintentionally came into contact with the Austro-Hungarian fleet led by the *Szent Istvan*. Exploiting their greatest asset, the speed of their torpedo motorboats, Lieutenant Commander Rizzo skilfully and bravely overcame his opponents, sinking the *Szent Istvan* - pride of the Austro-Hungarian Navy. This date bears great historical significance: both for the states of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, and for Italy, where this date has become the celebration day of the Navy.



Today this important shipwreck is meticulously protected by the *Croatian Ministry of Culture*. However, due to the positive relationship built with IANTD during the July 2003 expedition, they granted permission for a second expedition; this time on archaeological and scientific grounds. The expedition took place between the 1st and 10th of July, 2005. The mission was to survey and measure the torpedo cavities;

assess the sinking damages; and perform a precise appraisal of the shipwreck's condition. All tasks were accomplished, thanks to the outstanding cooperation between *IANTD S.r.l.* and the *Department of Under-water Archaeology* of the *Conservation Institute* of the *Croatian Ministry of Culture*.

Fifteen IANTD instructors and divers - experts in using trimix and nitrox gas mixtures, and proven possessive of the skills necessary for such diving expeditions - dove on this shipwreck of enormous historical significance. The team consisted of: Fabio Ruberti, organiser and expedition leader; Kruno Zubcic, scientific director; Massimiliano Canossa, deputy expedition leader and video operator; Neven Lukas, deputy expedition leader and logistics manager; Carla Binelli, organisation manager; Andrea Bolzoni, dive safety manager and photographer; Toni Plancic, dive safety manager; Jurica Bezak, archaeologist; Lodovico Venturoli, survey manager; Marino Brzac, video operator; Nicola Boninsegna, photographer; Danijel Frka, photographer and technical adviser; Livio Loniti, photographer; and Massimiliano Rancan, photographer.

The project was supported by the following IANTD training facilities: *Acquamarina*, Marina di Pisa, Italy; *Medvescak Sava*, Zagreb, Croatia; *Nautica MareDive*, Verona, Italy; *Hydromania*, Trento, Italy; *Polo Sub*, Genova, Italy; and by the companies *Dive Rite®* and *Acquamarina®*.



The expedition consisted of three operational teams with specific daily diving tasks, namely: inspection and measurement, external investigation and assessment of relevant objects, and photographic examination of the whole wreck. Also, on the specific

request of the *Croatian Ministry of Culture*, a navigation light - lying on the seabed just outside the wreck - was removed. The scientific director considered the light to be in danger of being accidentally damaged or lost. After plotting its position in relation to the wreck, the light was recovered by the team that initially located it.

The light was immediately exposed to a field treatment; and, after adequate restoration, it will join the other items previously recovered from the wreck of the *Szent Istvan*, in the *Pola Naval Museum*.

The divers achieved their goal through employing the best diving techniques, coupled with teamwork and keen archaeological motivation. The most advanced equipment was utilised, notably, the *Dive Rite DPV Arrow*, used for fast paced surveying; and the *Ebinger*



metal detector, used to search for items around the perimeter of the wreck and hidden in the seabed.

It is a notable venture for technical divers to carry out an archaeological and scientific survey on a shipwreck such as the *Szent Istvan*; not only because of its huge mass (21, 254 tons, and over 150 metres long) at an operational depth of 65 metres, but also because of the need to establish a logistic base with technical support. Due to the lack of infrastructure, this required a great amount of commitment; which each member competently and passionately embraced.



Fabio Ruberti