
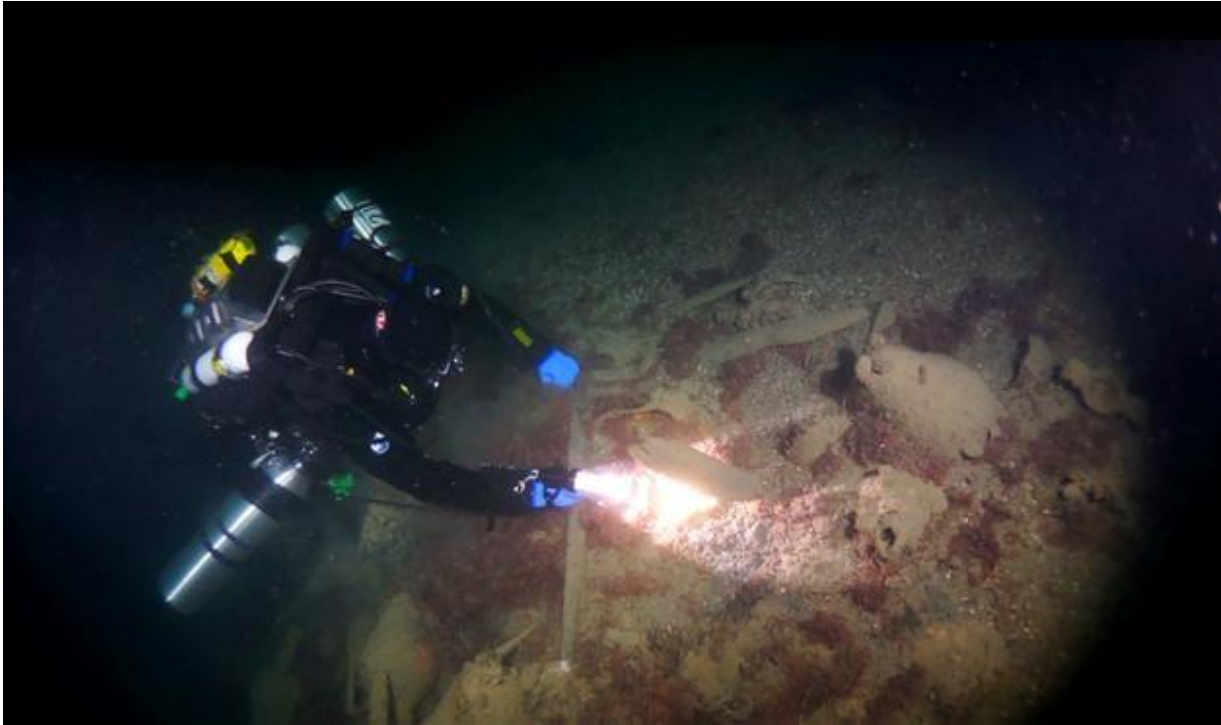


Russian divers report ancient ship find near Crimea

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An undated handout picture released by Russia's Rostov Dive divers club shows a diver observing ancient amphoras at the site of a Byzantine shipwreck off the city of Sevastopol. AFP Photo

A group of Russian divers said May 27 they had found Byzantine-era ship wreckage in the Black Sea off Crimea that included a trove of 10th century pottery.

The wreck was discovered off the coast of Sevastopol in Crimea, the peninsula with a rich history that Russia annexed last year from Ukraine, and could have come from a collision between several ships, the expedition leaders said in a statement.

"This archaeological discovery, judging by its size, could become one of the biggest known finds to date," the statement from dive chief Roman Dunayev and Russian Academy of Sciences historian Viktor Lebedinsky said.

"Further study of the vessel will help confirm the particularities of trade, economic, and cultural ties between Black Sea states." Researchers will have to precisely date the artefacts and perform other underwater work in a wider expedition next month, the statement said.

Underwater footage shown on state television from the dive earlier in May showed hundreds of sediment-covered, two-handled pots called amphoras, with some seemingly still intact.

Coastal areas of Crimea were largely populated by Greeks during the Byzantine Empire and Sevastopol, which now serves as a base for Russia's Black Sea fleet, was on major trade routes.