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NAVY COMPLETES REMOVAL OF WRECKED GUNBOAT  
AT CURACAO, NETHERLANDS WEST INDIES

Completion of the removal of the wreck of the gunboat ERIE (ex-PG 50) from Willemstad Harbor, Curacao, Netherlands West Indies, was announced today by the Department of the Navy. The project was completed on December 9.

Salvage operations on the vessel had been conducted by U.S. Navy personnel, operating under the direction of the Bureau of Ships, since February, 1952. Because location of the wreck prevented expansion of the Willemstad Harbor, the Netherlands Government had asked that it be removed. At the request of the State Department, and in order to train salvage personnel for harbor clearance type work, the Navy Department agreed to remove the wreck.

The ERIE was torpedoed, sustained heavy fire damage, and was beached a short distance from Willemstad in November, 1942. She was salvaged in that same month and brought inside Willemstad Harbor where she again sank on December 5, 1942.

On-the-scene direction of the salvage operation was performed by Captain J. E. Flynn, USN, while diving officers, divers and specialists in ship salvage techniques were rotated in order to train the maximum number of personnel.

Vessels participating in the work were the USS ESCAPE (ARS-6), the USS OPPORTUNE (ARS-41), and the USS RECOVERY (ARS-43). All of these are salvage vessels of the Atlantic Fleet. In addition the YFND-17, a 1000-ton seagoing barge with ships salvage equipment, was also used.

Torpedo damage and fire aboard the former gunboat, plus the corrosive action of the industrial wastes in the water over a period of almost ten years, caused the hulk to be such a difficult salvage problem that it was found to be uneconomical to salvage her for scrap. The hulk was therefore towed out to sea in an awash condition and sunk in very deep water.

The Bureau of Ships states that this operation was one of its most important peacetime opportunities for gaining valuable experience in clearing a severely damaged hulk from an important harbor.

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