



NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
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Remains of USS *Monitor* sailors interred at Arlington National Cemetery
151st anniversary of Battle of Hampton Roads

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The remains of two unknown USS *Monitor* sailors, recovered by NOAA and the U.S. Navy in 2002 from the ship's gun turret, were buried today, with full military honors, at Arlington National Cemetery. USS *Monitor* sank in a New Year's Eve storm just over 150 years ago, carrying 16 crew members to their deaths.

"Just as the crew of the *Monitor* fought tirelessly to keep their 'old-time knight in armor' afloat, so have many worked tirelessly since her loss to keep their commitment to her, and to the 16 sailors who answered the call-to-arms of a young nation in peril, and paid the ultimate price," said Kathryn D. Sullivan, Ph.D., acting under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and acting NOAA administrator, in remarks at the memorial service. "One major step toward that was taken some 40 years ago, when the nation designated the place where *Monitor* lies as America's first National Marine Sanctuary, marking it forever as a place of special national significance. We are gathered here today to take another major step, laying two of her sailors to rest in the hallowed ground of Arlington National Cemetery. As we do so, let us all reaffirm our own commitment to forever remember the work of the *Monitor* and insure her story is told to our children's children.

"As keepers of the USS *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary, NOAA is committed to protecting the final resting site of this 'little boat' and her valiant crew, and to assuring that the memory and the legacy of the *Monitor* and her crew are preserved and passed on to future generations," she added.

Sullivan was joined in making remarks by Ray Mabus, secretary of the Navy, and James McPherson, Ph.D., Pulitzer prize-winning Civil War historian, at a service attended by members of Congress, the military and family members descended from the original USS *Monitor* crew.

RDML Gerd Glang, NOAA director of the Office of Coast Survey, served as the NOAA Corps escort officer for the formal military services and traditional caisson carriage procession to the grave site. The site sits adjacent to the memorial for NASA astronauts killed in the explosions of the *Challenger* and *Columbia* space shuttles.

NOAA and the Joint POW-MIA Accounting Command in Hawaii worked for 10 years to try to identify the sailors including trying to match DNA of family descendents with that from the recovered remains. Last year, NOAA released forensic reconstructions of the sailors' faces, showing what they may have looked

like while aboard the ship. Neither effort has resulted in identification of the remains to date but efforts are ongoing.

For more than a quarter of a century, NOAA has forged and maintained an enduring bond to the legacy of USS Monitor and its crew. In addition to trying to identify the two sailors, NOAA has carried out numerous research expeditions at the site, including working with the Navy and other partners to recover important artifacts.

"This interment honors the sacrifice of a courageous crew and commemorates an important battle fought 151 years ago when, for the first time iron-clad ships clashed in naval warfare, signaling the end of the era for wooden ships," said Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus. "While Naval tradition holds the site of a shipwreck as hallowed ground and a proper final resting place for sailors who perish at sea, this ceremony pays tribute not only to the two sailors being interred, but to all who died when Monitor sank so many years ago during the Civil War. Little is certain in military service, but we can guarantee the Navy will always remain committed to honoring those who pay the ultimate price defending our nation."

The area around the shipwreck became the first National Marine Sanctuary in 1975. Since then, research at the Monitor site has focused on documenting the wreck in detail and understanding how it has been affected by natural deterioration and human activities. Many of the iconic Monitor artifacts were recovered - including the rotating gun turret - and are being housed and displayed at The Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Va.

Designed by Swedish inventor John Ericsson, USS Monitor is best known for its Civil War battle with the Confederate ironclad, CSS Virginia, in Hampton Roads, Va., on March 9, 1862. The engagement marked the first time iron-armored ships clashed in naval warfare and signaled the end of the era of wooden ships. Less than a year later, while being towed to a new field of battle, USS Monitor capsized and sank 16 miles south of Cape Hatteras, N.C. in 240 feet of water.

To date, no trace of the other 14 missing members of the crew has been found.

NOAA, in an effort to identify the remains, last year worked with the Navy and Louisiana State University to reconstruct the men's faces. In December, NOAA dedicated a memorial at Hampton National Cemetery to honor all 16 members of the crew who lost their lives when the USS Monitor was lost.

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