

## **Joint Press Statement**

### **Joint Diving Expedition between Malaysia and the Netherlands off the Coast of Tioman Island from 28 June - 7 July 2019**

A team of underwater survey experts and researchers from the Netherlands and Malaysia conducted a joint expedition to the sites of two Royal Netherlands Navy World War II shipwrecks off Tioman Island from 28 June to 7 July 2019. The team from the Netherlands was led by the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science), in collaboration with the Ministry of Defense (Royal Netherlands Navy) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the Dutch Embassy in Kuala Lumpur).

On the Malaysian side the expedition was coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Department of National Heritage, Ministry of Defence (the Royal Malaysian Navy), Ministry of Home Affairs (the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency), Ministry of Transport (Marine Department), and Prime Minister's Department (the National Security Council).

The research team visited two of the four known wreck locations in Malaysian waters. These are sites of two Royal Netherlands Navy submarines that sank close to the Tioman Island during World War II. The submarines are the O-16, commanded by Anton Bussemaker, and the K-XVII, commanded by Henri Charles Besançon.

The initial findings of this expedition show that, regrettably, the wrecks of the submarines appear to have been salvaged. A report of the findings by the expedition will be released soon.

A commemoration ceremony was held during the expedition at the wreck sites in honour of those who lost their lives while serving onboard these submarines, 41 crew from the O-16 and 36 crew from the K-XVII.

Prior to the expedition, a Letter of Intent was signed by the Netherlands and Malaysia to officially execute the joint expedition and to explore future collaborations on a joint management plan of Dutch shipwrecks in Malaysian waters. The findings of the expedition and follow-up actions will be discussed between the Netherlands and Malaysia. Both sides will study the data collected during the expedition as well as other related data to find out what happened to the salvaged wrecks.

**Putrajaya, Malaysia  
10 July 2019**