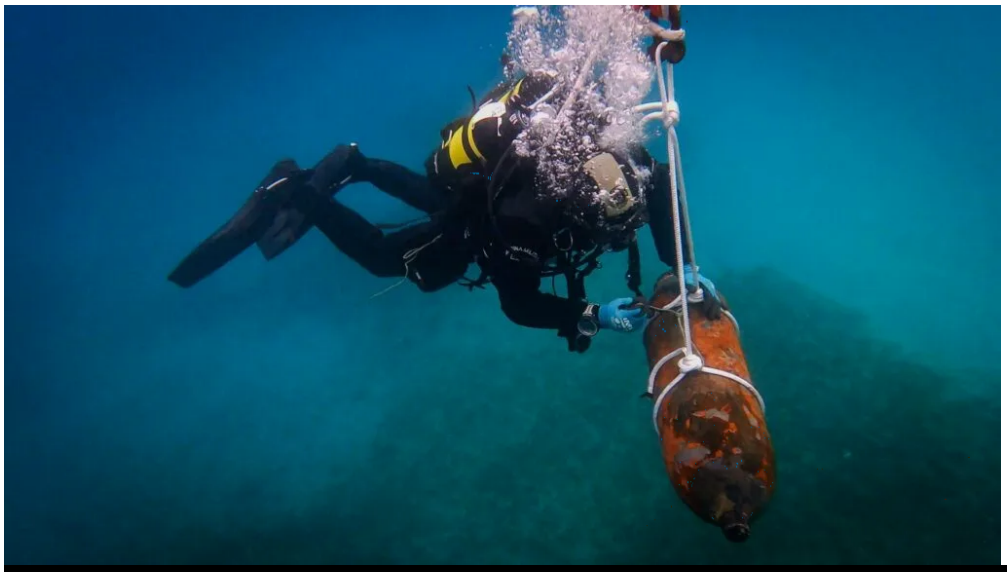
Strait of Messina, record clearance: nine explosive devices neutralized by COMSUBIN Divers

Published on 16/04/2025

The waters of the Strait of Messina once again required the intervention of the Divers of the Operational Diving Group (GOS) of the Underwater and Incursion Command of the Italian Navy (COMSUBIN), called to tackle one of the most complex underwater clearance operations in recent years. Detached to the SDAI (Sminamento Difesa Antimezzi Insidiosi) Unit in Augusta, the military operated in particularly difficult environmental conditions to neutralize nine explosive devices dating back to the Second World War.

The discovery occurred during preventive investigations conducted by a specialized company, as part of the Bolano-Annunziata infrastructure project: an important energy supply work that involves laying high-capacity underwater cables between Messina and Reggio Calabria. The areas affected by the operations were located between Bolano, Acciarello (RC), and along the Messina coast.

The finding was promptly reported to the competent authorities, and on the orders of the Prefectures of Messina and Reggio Calabria, a detailed operational plan was developed to secure the area. The identified devices, at depths between 35 and 40 meters, turned out to be four 500-pound aerial bombs, four 250-pound bombs, and a large-caliber projectile: war remnants that, even after decades, still pose a concrete risk.



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High complexity operation: the commitment of the Divers

The operations, which began on February 26 and concluded on April 10, required highly specialized skills, cutting-edge technical equipment, and a constant ability to adapt from the diving personnel. The challenges were numerous: strong marine currents, reduced visibility, irregular seabeds, and often adverse weather conditions made each dive a challenge. The intervention was made even more critical by the nature of the devices, still armed with fuses inserted. This required the Divers to operate with extreme caution, following strict procedures for removal, safe towing, and subsequent controlled destruction in a safe area.

Despite the complexity of the operation, the emergency management represented a virtuous example of interinstitutional coordination. Every phase was meticulously planned and involved personnel from the Port Authorities and the Naval Department of the Guardia di Finanza of Messina and Reggio Calabria. Also crucial was the work carried out in communication with local communities: timely updates, transparent information, and a proactive approach to safety helped avoid alarmism while ensuring the protection of the population.

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Safety, development, and protection of the marine environment

The success of the operation is measured not only by the removal of the devices but also by the future benefits it brings to the entire Strait area. The clearance of the seabed is a crucial step for the realization of the Bolano-Annunziata power line, an infrastructure that will bring up to 2,000 MW of power between Sicily and the Continent. Once operational, this new connection will be crucial for strengthening the electricity grid of the South, increasing the safety of local energy systems, and facilitating the integration of renewable sources, contributing to the ecological transition.

Moreover, the elimination of war remnants from the seabed of the Strait will improve safety for all maritime activities in the area: from commercial navigation to fishing, and even underwater tourism. The return to full usability of the waters is an important opportunity for the economic and environmental revival of the territory.

The operations conducted by the COMSUBIN Divers thus represent a concrete testimony of the daily commitment of the Italian Navy in the defense and protection of the country, both in peacetime and in emergency contexts. Interventions like this highlight the professionalism, courage, and operational rigor of a highly specialized sector, often away from the spotlight but crucial for collective safety.

As the personnel involved emphasized, each neutralized device is one less threat for the present and one more guarantee for the future. The waters of the Strait, once a theater of conflicts, today transform into a symbol of cooperation, safety, and development.

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