



Bow cut from U.S. ship, lifted from Philippine reef

By **Brad Lendon**, CNN
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End of the USS Guardian

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STORY HIGHLIGHTS

Two huge chunks of USS Guardian have been removed from the reef

U.S. Navy minesweeper has been on reef since January 17

Ship is expected to be completely removed by mid-April, official says

(CNN) -- The bow of a U.S. Navy warship that grounded on a Philippine reef in January was cut from the rest of the hull on Tuesday, lifted by a massive crane and dropped on a waiting barge.

"The bow section of the USS Guardian was lifted out of the water around 2:45 p.m.," said Enrico Efen Evangelista, head of the Philippine coast guard Palawan District, according to the official Philippine News Agency.

"The lifting of the first large hull section was a significant accomplishment. Each of these sections weigh about 250 tons," Capt. Mark Matthews, supervisor of the salvage operation, said in a U.S. Navy 7th Fleet blog post. The hull will be removed in four sections, the Navy said.

"Preparing the ship for this sectioning has been extremely challenging. We have had to painstakingly clear about a two-foot path inside the ship, removing everything that is in our way," Matthews said. "Once the path is clear, the hull cutting is done manually by Navy divers and salvage contractors using chainsaws and reciprocating saws, and some of this cutting is underwater using hydraulically driven tools."

Big parts coming off ship on reef

The removal of the bow of the U.S. Navy minesweeper was followed by that of the ship's auxiliary engine room, a 200-ton piece that was removed Wednesday afternoon.

With the removal of the two sections, about 900 tons of the formerly 1,312-ton warship remain on Tubbataha Reef, the news agency reported.



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updated 11:53 AM EST, Thu March 6, 2014

He's 12 years old and going blind -- so his parents are

The U.S. Navy expects the Guardian to be completely removed from the reef by the second week of April, Evangelista said.

It was decommissioned and stricken from the naval registry on February 15.

The minesweeper ran onto the reef on January 17. An investigation into the grounding is ongoing, but Navy officials said in January that the U.S. National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, which prepares the digital navigation charts used by the Navy, has reported the location of the reef was misplaced on a chart by nine miles.

Tubbataha Reef, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is home to about 500 species of fish, 350 species of coral as well as whales, dolphins, sharks, turtles and breeding seabirds, according to UNESCO.

The Guardian is estimated to have damaged about 4,000 square meters (about 43,000 square feet) of the reef. The Navy has pledged to clean up the debris created when waves stripped off pieces of fiberglass covering the wooden hull of the ship and to try to restore the reef as much as possible.

Philippine officials said that the country would seek compensation for reef damage. Harry K. Thomas Jr., the U.S. ambassador to the Philippines, has assured Filipinos that the United States "will provide appropriate compensation for damage to the reef caused by the ship."

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Too bad about the loss of the ship and the damage to the reef. The map being off by 9 miles is a huge error. The root cause of the map error needs to be determine and corrected. Thank goodness there was no loss of human life.

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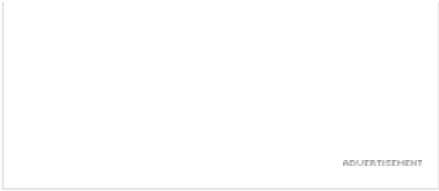
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