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Operation to Retrieve Rare 'Stuka'

German Army to Lift WWII Divebomber from Baltic

The German army is lifting a Junkers 87 'Stuka' divebomber from the Baltic Sea floor just off the coast. Berlin's military museum is eager to exhibit the feared plane, known for its ear-piercing siren designed to spread panic in World War II. There are virtually no original German aircraft left from either the two world wars.

The German army began an operation this week to lift a World War II divebomber from the seabed off the island of Rügen, located in the Baltic Sea just off of Germany's northern coast.

The Junkers Ju 87 "Sturzkampfbomber," or Stuka, was a feared weapon in Nazi Germany's arsenal, especially at the start of the war when it became a symbol of German aggression with its trademark siren, known as "Jericho trumpets," blaring as the aircraft hurtled down to its target.

"The Stuka as an exhibit is incredibly important to us because there are hardly any left," Sebastian Bangert, spokesman for the Military History Museum in Berlin, told German news website ntv.de.

"The ones left after the end of the war were destroyed as part of the demilitarization program. A Stuka provides a good way of explaining the inhuman system that stood behind it. The siren wasn't intended to sound pretty, it was designed to intimidate the civilian population and the enemy. The siren was intended to spread even more fear and panic."

Popular Spot for Divers

The operation is expected to take 10 days and will involve some 50 soldiers. The aircraft is located 10 kilometers from the harbor of Sassnitz, and lies at a depth of 18 meters (60 feet).

"Initial inspections suggest that the aircraft is in relatively good condition after having lain in the water for almost 70 years," the museum said in a statement. It added that while many vintage planes from the Allied forces still exist, virtually no original German planes remained from either World War I or World War II.

The location of the plane has long been known and it is a popular spot for divers. It is unclear what brought the plane down and if the pilot managed to bail out. Before the plane can be hoisted up, army divers will search it to check whether it still has live ordnance on board.

cro -- with wire reports

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