



The cannon has been on the sea bed since before the Battle of Salamanca, in 1812

Portuguese lift Wellington's bronze cannon from sea bed

Portugal
Isambard Wilkinson Madrid

For more than two centuries a British cannon that was destined to be part of one of the Duke of Wellington's boldest gambits in the Peninsular War lay on the seabed in rough waters off Portugal. Why it never quite reached British forces remains a mystery but its recent discovery close to the mouth of the Tagus estuary near Lisbon has excited the interest of historians. They suggest the artillery piece was destined for Wellington's famed Lines of Torres Vedras, vast military defences built in secrecy against Napoleonic forces.

The bronze cannon, which is about 15 metres long, has been dated to 1808. Archaeologists found it off Carcavelos near Forte de São Julião de Barra. "The cannon and the remains of a ship were found this summer among wrecks concentrated around the delta of the Tagus, which is an area of perilous waters," said Joana Balbino, a councillor from Cascais, the municipality

that finances the archaeological project. "Alongside the cannon we found boxes of ammunition. We believe the ship was transporting arms to support the British army against the French invasion."

The name of the ship is not yet known but it was found with the remains of two other Royal Naval ships from the same period. All three are thought to have been wrecked while approaching a military port that Wellington established in 1809 to supply his army. One of the ships carried supplies, including cannons.

Edward Godfrey, chairman of the British Historical Society of Portugal, said that the bronze cannon may have been destined to join more than 600 artillery pieces positioned in the 126 forts of the Lines of Torres Vedras. "These were in fact three defensive lines



Wrecks of ships carrying supplies to Wellington's army have also been found

north of Lisbon, based on natural hilly terrain with forts which had been built at speed and in secrecy by thousands of Portuguese conscripts and workers, all overseen by Colonel Richard Fletcher, a Royal Engineer," he said. "It would be reasonable to conclude that the artillery piece recently recovered



from the sea at Carcavelos was in fact

destined for one of the forts in the Lines of Torres Vedras, construction of which began in late 1809."

The military ports at Carcavelos and nearby Oeiras formed part of the third line to cover retreat and any embarkation if it became necessary.

In 1810 Wellington retreated behind the Lines of Torres Vedras, which frustrated the French advance and eventually forced them to leave Portugal the following year. From then the Anglo-Portuguese army advanced into Spain winning hard fought battles at Albuera, Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz, Salamanca, Vitoria, and the Pyrenees. The last battle of the Peninsular War was fought at Toulouse in 1814.

Jorge Freire, one of the project's researchers, said the cannon had been quickly moved from the seabed for fear of being lost in the strong currents and tides. "The ship has yet to be fully excavated," he said. "British academics have been contacted to help learn more precise information about the finds."

Rome to ban multiple rescues by migrant boats

Italy
Philip Willan Rome

Italy's interior ministry is preparing to tighten rules for charity-run rescue ships in an attempt to deliver on Giorgia Meloni's electoral promise to reduce the flow of migrants.

Among the measures is an obligation for the ships to deliver migrants to a place of safety immediately, without waiting at sea to pick up more passengers. La Repubblica reported yesterday.

The rules will also prevent small rescue ships from transferring migrants to larger ships so they can remain at sea, the paper said.

The rules will be enshrined in a binding law rather than forming part of a voluntary code of conduct, as had previously been the case. La Repubblica said enforcement would pass from the courts to regional prefects with the power to impose fines and impound ships in the event of violations.

A possible first indication of the new tactic emerged last week with the rapid grant of a port of safety to the small German charity ship, Rise Above, which had previously transferred 63 rescued migrants to the larger Sea-Eye4. After rescuing 27 Syrians on Friday it was swiftly granted permission to land in the Calabrian port of Gioia Tauro. "Surprisingly quickly, a few hours after the rescue, we were assigned a port of safety. Rise Above is arriving," the charity said on Twitter.

Charities fear that the plan is to force their ships to make long and frequent trips ashore, consuming time and fuel, with the risk of being fined or impounded if they disobey.

Matteo Piantadosi, the interior minister and a former civil servant, has been given the job of implementing the prime minister's commitment to reduce immigration, which contributed to her rightwing Brothers of Italy party's victory at the September poll.

In a television interview last week Piantadosi said that some non-governmental organisations seemed determined "to bring migrants from Libya and other countries only to Italy" as part of a preordained plan.

Marc Bradley, a psychologist working for the migrant charity SOS Méditerranée, said governments didn't seem to appreciate that holding traumatised migrants on ships at sea was "playing with the lives and wellbeing of people".

Gangster points police to Dresden jewels

Germany
Bruno Waterfield

The police in Berlin have recovered 18th-century jewels and treasure plundered by robbers from the Green Vault collection in Dresden's former royal palace three years ago.

The 31 items include a diamond-encrusted breast star Order of the White Eagle and a jewelled hat decoration, the Heron Stutz.

The breakthrough, as six members of the Remmo clan stand trial, is said to have come after at least one of them told the police where the loot was.

Marion Ackermann, director of the Green Vault museum, described the return of the jewels as "simply incredibly beautiful". She told MDR television: "It's a real Christmas miracle."

Bild am Sonntag reported that the



The diamond-encrusted breast bow of Queen Amalie Auguste is still missing

police had "broken the code of honour of the Arab Remmo clan" after "at least one has now betrayed the others".

Jürgen Schmidt, spokesman for the Dresden public prosecutor's office, said: "There were exploratory talks with the prospect of a deal."

An epaulette that includes a 49-carat

stone known as the Dresden White Diamond is still missing, as is the large breast bow of Queen Amalie Auguste.

In a well-planned heist that was over in ten minutes the thieves plunged the streets around the museum into darkness. Masked figures then broke into the museum's gallery, smashed a glass display case with an axe and extracted the jewels with a fishing rod.

The Remmo clan, a German-Lebanese gang sometimes described as the Capone family of modern Berlin, are believed to control much of the city's trade in drugs and weapons from a base in the Berlin district of Neukölln.

Over the past 15 years members of the clan have been charged, and in many cases convicted, on more than 1,000 crimes, including murder.

Six of the gang are on trial for robbery, and the next hearing is tomorrow.

Revealed: the plot to expose Washington's 'naked envoy'

Philip Willan

The newspaper of the Italian Communist Party considered publishing a nude photograph of who it thought was the hawkish American ambassador to Italy at the start of the Cold War, according to CIA documents released last week.

Clare Boothe Luce, ambassador to Rome between 1953 and 1956, was a Catholic convert and fervent anti-communist.

Italy's communists considered using an image with her modestly concealed behind a strategically placed fan to discredit her, according to a 1954 CIA report. The document was one of more than 13,000 released on the orders of President Biden.

The agency, which worked closely with the ambassador to thwart the alarming growth of the Italian Communist Party, relayed a report warning of the plot against her from an agent in the Free Territory of Trieste.

That agent, said the party's newspaper L'Unita, had received a copy of a magazine called Fiammetta published in 1926 and containing a photo of a naked woman "who appears identical to the present ambassador".

The newspaper decided not to publish, not least because it was not certain that the photograph was Boothe Luce.

Although she was married to Henry Luce, a publisher, it was an open marriage and her lovers were said to include Randolph Churchill and Roald Dahl.

