

SUPSALV Support for CSS Georgia Recovery Operations

22 July 2015

NAVSEA SUPSALV has been tasked by CNO to support a USACE request for salvage assistance to recover historical artifacts from CSS GEORGIA which is going to be impacted by the proposed channel modification for the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project. CSS Georgia lies in the Savannah River on the Georgia/South Carolina border and covers an area approximately 350 by 200 feet, is situated atop dense clay in approximately 40 feet of water just downstream from the city of Savannah. Three sections of casemate, disarticulated railroad rail armor, elements of steam machinery, and ordnance comprise the major surviving elements of the vessel.

SUPSALV arrived on site on 23 June and began configuring two industrial barges to support the operation. SUPSALV tasked its East Coast Salvage Contractor, Donjon Marine, to mobilize local marine assets consisting of a barge with a 100 ton crane as a diving and equipment platform and a second barge with rigging crane to support artifact storage, sorting and transport.



The CSS GEORGIA dive and equipment barge on the left and the artifact storage barge (right) on-site in the Savannah River.

SUPSALV also mobilized Emergency Ship Salvage Material (ESSM) material and staff from its Cheatham Annex base in Williamsburg VA. ESSM will provide a variety of Salvage Equipment and a PacCat work boat. They also have a full time engineer, rigger and mechanic stationed on the barge supporting the operations.

Diving services are provided by MDSU-2/EODMU-6 Kingsbay who mobilized Surface Supplied Diver Air System and other support equipment to Savannah, GA. Diving is conducted during daylight hours, during periods of slack water, as weather conditions allow. The EOD divers conducted their first dive on the CSS GEORGIA wreck site on 26 June, have, to date, successfully located and recovered 128 pieces of unexploded ordnance.



Navy EOD diver entering the water on 29 June. MDSU 2 and EODMU 6 Kingsbay divers are supporting SUPSALV in the recovery of CSS GEORGIA artifacts during June - October 2015.

The team next concentrated on recovering the 4 cannons known to be on site. The first cannon was raised on 15 July. The second and third cannons were retrieved on 21 July and the last known cannon was raised and placed on the barge on 22 July. That afternoon, the 4 cannons were transferred ashore and custody will be transferred to the USACE on Friday, 24 July.



CSS GEORGIA's first recovered cannon is lifted clear of the water on 15 July 2015. The cannon was rigged by NAVY EOD divers and deposited in a wet storage container for transport ashore and conservation.



This is the second of GEORGIA's cannons. It was retrieved on 21 July. This is a 6.4" rifled 32 pounder which weighs approximately 6000 lbs. Pictured with the cannon is Mr. Jim Jobling, Texas A&M Archaeologist (left) and Mr. Rick Thiel, SUPSALV Program Manager (right).

When the artifacts are transferred ashore, USMC EOD from MCAS Beaufort, SC will support field inerting of the unexploded ordnance.

The surveying and raising the large artifacts comprise the next phase of the project. These targets consist of the propulsion equipment and machinery (Propeller and shaft, Steam Cylinders and Condenser) the hawse pipe and finally the casement sections (remaining portions of the hull). The SUPSALV, MDSU, and the Army Corps team plan to be on site thru October collecting the historical CSS GEORGIA artifacts.

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