

Project Azorian: The Submarine Beneath the Mining Ship

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A vessel publicly associated with deep-ocean mining was built for an extraordinary intelligence recovery. Beneath its cover story, the CIA attempted to lift part of a sunken Soviet submarine from the abyss.

STATUS	Documented covert recovery with partial success
CLASSIFICATION	STR
MATERIAL	Pacific Ocean
DISPOSITION	PUBLIC / SOURCED STORY
CATEGORY	Strange Files
RECORD TYPE	Secrets & conspiracies
STORY HISTORY	1968-1975

THE ACCOUNT

The Hughes Glomar Explorer appeared to belong to an ambitious deep-sea mining venture. Its real target was not a mineral deposit. The CIA wanted to recover a section of K-129, a Soviet submarine lost in the Pacific in 1968. The task required immense machinery to descend into the ocean, grasp the wreck and raise it while the surface ship maintained a convincing reason to be there.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

The CIA's public history identifies Project AZORIAN as a secret recovery program and describes the mining cover. The 1974 lift recovered only part of the intended target after a failure during the operation. The agency acknowledges that it did not meet all its intelligence objectives. Public exposure followed, ending the project's covert future. The basic operation is documented even though not every intelligence result is publicly detailed.

WHY IT STAYS WITH US

This is the rare hidden-operation story whose engineering sounds almost less believable than its cover. A ship tried to move a wreck through miles of water while hiding the purpose of the machinery doing it. The ocean supplied physical concealment, but secrecy at the surface depended on a narrative persuasive enough to explain an extraordinary vessel.

WHERE THIS TELLING COMES FROM

Project AZORIAN

Central Intelligence Agency

<https://www.cia.gov/legacy/museum/exhibit/project-azorian/>

RETURN TO THE STORY

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