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features

Ex-Yugo leader's iconic yacht given new life

Once a stage for geopolitical deal-making and a host to the 20th century's most glamorous stars, the now-dilapidated yacht of late Yugoslav leader

AP | Rijeka, Croatia

Decades of rust are covering its hull, the furniture is broken in its once luxurious salons, its powerful engines are permanently idle. But against all odds, the iconic yacht that once belonged to the late Yugoslav strongman Josip Broz Tito has been given a new lease on life.

The once-imposing ship that hosted Hollywood celebrities, some 70 world leaders and took Tito up the River Thames for a historic meeting with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill will be turned into a floating museum.

The ship, called Galeb, or Seagull, is moored at the northern Croatian Adriatic port of Rijeka. After its turbulent history, including two sinkings since it was launched in 1938 and a failed purchase by a Greek tycoon, it was destined for a junkyard.

But authorities in Rijeka, the city that has been chosen by the European Union to be the European Capital of Culture in 2020, decided to completely refurbish it in a 5.4 million euro (\$6.4 million) project that will start in 2019.



With the speed of 17 knots (31 km/h) it is powered by two Fiat diesel engines of 7,200 horsepower in total. The Italians, at one point, offered to Yugoslavia to remove them and exhibit them in the Fiat museum in Torino. In return, they offered to build an entirely new, modern, school ship, but the Yugoslavs declined



A seagull flies over the Galeb (Seagull), the yacht once used by the late president of socialist Yugoslavia Josip Broz Tito, moored in the port of the Adriatic city of Rijeka, Croatia

"Galeb is a ship with very interesting and turbulent history," Rijeka Mayor Vojko Obersnel said. "Of course the most interesting part of that history is when it was a ship belonging to President Josip Broz Tito."

The decision to renovate the 5,100-ton, 106-meter (350-foot) vessel has triggered anger from Croatia's nationalists.

They blame Tito, who ruled communist Yugoslavia for 35 years until he died in 1980, for autocratic rule and for forcing Croatia to join the former federation of six republics that comprised Yugoslavia.

The boat has become a symbol

of Tito's well documented life of luxury and splendour. And his critics in Croatia want it to be destroyed.

But Obersnel says the renovation plan will go forward. "First of all, it's our history and we cannot change that history," Obersnel said. "During that period, we could talk about good things and maybe some not so good things. But that's our history."

The decaying ship hull has been towed to an isolated dock in the harbour, with its bow pointing at downtown Rijeka, once a drab port town that is gradually becoming one of Croatia's main tourist destinations.

"The idea of renovation is to make it a ship museum to primarily show its history, all of its life phases that were many and very interesting," said Kristina Pavec from Rijeka's City Museum, which is overseeing the project.

The ship's once luxurious salons and stairways are full of broken down 1960s furniture. Torn carpets and wallpaper lines the decks and bulkheads. In his private quarters, Tito's walk-in closet for ties, shoes and flashy military uniforms stands empty; his bed mattress is still there, but the bed is not.

On the captain's fly bridge, na-

val maps flutter in spring breeze and the engine order telegraph is pointing at idle.

In Tito's era, the ship belonged to the Yugoslav naval academy. After the bloody breakup of the federation in the 1990s, it first was parked in Montenegro before being sold to Croatia for \$150,000.

Built in Genoa, Italy, the ship was intended for transport of tropical fruit from Africa. During World War II, the Nazis used it as an auxiliary naval ship to lay mines. The ship was eventually sunk in Allied bombings of Rijeka's port toward the end of the war.

Cement, extreme cold experiments head to space aboard

Orbital ATK Antares rocket pierced the clouds in the predawn sky over Virginia yesterday with a dazzling predawn launch to deliver more than 3 tons of vital supplies to the International Space Station

AFP | Tampa

Food for astronauts, new space gardening gear and experiments to test extreme cold and how cement forms in weightlessness blasted off yesterday to the International Space Station aboard Orbital ATK's unmanned Cygnus spacecraft.

The white Antares rocket, emblazoned with a US flag, rumbled and roared into the dark night sky over Wallops Island, Virginia at 4:44 am (0844 GMT).

The spacecraft is carrying 7,800 pounds (3,500 kilograms) of cargo on the ninth of a series of launches by Orbital ATK, un-



An Orbital ATK rocket makes its final approach to launch Pad-0A at Wallops Flight Facility on May 17, 2018 in advance of a launch

der a \$1.9 billion contract with NASA to resupply the orbiting outpost. SpaceX also runs supply missions using its Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon cargo vehicle.

Thirty-four new experiments are on board, including one that

will create the coldest man-made temperatures anywhere in the universe, called the new Cold Atom Lab (CAL) facility. The US space agency hopes that CAL will lead to new breakthroughs in modern physics.

"CAL creates a temperature 10 billion times colder than the vacuum of space, then uses lasers and magnetic forces to slow down atoms until they are almost motionless," NASA said in a statement.

"Results of this research could potentially lead to a number of improved technologies, including sensors, quantum computers and atomic clocks used in spacecraft navigation."

Also on board is the first European commercial system aimed at increasing researchers' access to space lab by offering "plug-and-play" experiment cubes that are low-cost and easy to install and remove. The International Commercial Experiment, or ICE Cubes Service, is a joint venture of the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Belgian company Space Application Services.

For human explorers to set up camp on Mars, they will need to build habitats to live in and places to protect their gear, and one experiment aims to test how cement acts in space and whether it will harden up and set like it does on Earth.

3,500
kilograms of cargo is being carried by the spacecraft on the ninth of a series of launches by Orbital ATK, under a \$1.9 billion contract with NASA