

The Bermuda Triangle: A Breeding Ground for Rogue Waves or a Pit of Human Mistakes?

By Yasemin Saplakoglu



...and then they just disappeared.

The Bermuda Triangle, a mysterious stretch of ocean between Bermuda, Puerto Rico and the tip of Florida, has allegedly, throughout the years, swallowed a horde of unsuspecting ships, planes and people.

Many tales have been told about the vanishings. Aliens captured the humans for research. Some geomagnetic storm confused the pilots' navigational systems. The lost continent of Atlantis sucked the vessels into its grasp with a mysterious, unidentified force. Better yet, strong vortexes slurped the victims straight into another dimension.

But scientists throughout the years have pointed out that there are plausible explanations for the vanishings, and that the risks of traveling through the Bermuda Triangle are no different than other spots in the ocean.

New life has been breathed into one such theory: that the vessels could have easily been overcome by giant and unexpected rogue waves. This hypothesis isn't new, but a group of U.K. scientists recently discussed the evidence for freak waves and other theories (including the role of human error) in a three-episode documentary series "The Bermuda Triangle Enigma," produced by the BBC for Channel 5.

"There is no doubt this area is prone to rogue waves," Simon Boxall, an oceanographer at the University of Southampton and one of the scientists on the team, told Live Science. They are possible "anywhere you get multiple storms coming together."

Rogue waves are steep and tall, like "walls of water," and they often hit unexpectedly, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The tip of South Africa, for example, is very prone to them, where waves from storms in the South Atlantic Ocean, the Indian Ocean and the Southern Ocean all come together at once, Boxall said. Indeed, there were similar disappearances of big container vessels and tankers off the tip of South Africa throughout the years, he said.

This also holds true for the Bermuda Triangle, where storms can come from all directions, like Mexico, the equator and farther east in the Atlantic. If each wave can reach over 30 feet (10 meters) tall, occasionally they can coincide at the right moment and create a rogue, or "freak," wave that can be over 100 feet (30 m) high.

Engineers at the University of Southampton in England built some ship models, including one of the USS Cyclops, a vessel that vanished in the Bermuda Triangle in 1918 with over 300 people on board.



They simulated rogue waves in a wave tank and found that, indeed, ships can sink quickly if hit by them. The bigger the ship, the bigger the difficulty staying afloat, they found. Small ships can get swamped by them, but sometimes they can ride the wave if they hit it bow-on, Boxall said. But big ships — designed to be supported in the front by the top of one wave and in the back by the top of another — snap in two.

Gas bubbles, magnetic anomalies...humans being humans?

People often talk about weird magnetic anomalies over the Bermuda Triangle, Boxall said. "There aren't any," he said. There are magnetic anomalies in the world that have to do with the Earth's mantle moving beneath the crust, but the nearest one is about 1,000 miles [1,600 km] south, off the coast of Brazil — a long way away from the Bermuda Triangle, he said.

Another theory has to do with pockets of explosive methane gas that could, due to some disturbance, float up toward the water's surface and cause the water to be less dense than the ship, leading the ship to sink. However, no experiment to date has been able to prove that this is possible, Boxall said.

"Theoretically, it could be happening, but there are lots of places in the world where this can happen," not just in the Bermuda Triangle, Boxall said. Instead, he thinks the most common cause for the mysterious vanishings is human error. [The 20 Most Mysterious Shipwrecks Ever]

The famous disappearance of Flight 19 — five U.S. Navy aircraft that vanished during a training mission in 1945 — that led one journalist in 1964 to give the area its current name, probably occurred because the crew got lost and ran out of fuel, Boxall said.

About a third of all registered and privately owned ocean craft in the U.S. are in the states and islands of the Bermuda Triangle area, he said. And according to the most recent 2016 figures from the Coast Guard, 82 percent of incidents in this area that year involved people who had no formal training or experience of being at sea, he added.

"So, you take a third of the entire boating population of the U.S., you dump them in the Bermuda Triangle," and what you get is mysterious vanishings, Boxall said. You don't need any licensing or specific equipment like radios or navigation maps to take a boat to sea, he added.

"A number of times, working at sea, we've come across people who are navigating using a road map, who are relying on their mobile phones as their means of communication, discovering ... you get 30 miles offshore [and] you lose the signal," Boxall said.



In addition, "environmental considerations could explain many, if not most, of the disappearances," NOAA wrote on its website. "The ocean has always been a mysterious place to humans, and when foul weather or poor navigation is involved, it can be a very deadly place."

NOAA also says the area could be prone to accidents because of the Gulf Stream, a strong and fast ocean current that can cause "rapid, sometimes

violent, changes in weather," and shallow waters around the Caribbean islands that can prove fatal for ships.

"You can extend the Bermuda Triangle to ever bigger areas...what you'll find is that the Bermuda Triangle covers the entire globe," Boxall said. "Rogue waves can hit lots of different places, methane bubbles can hit lots of different places, and wherever you get a high concentration of amateurs without any



experience you're going to get a high concentration of mysterious disappearances."

But, you know, maybe it is aliens capturing unsuspecting humans using vortexes that lead straight into their laboratories that they've set up in the lost city of Atlantis.

NEW ARTICLE

PBM Martin Mariner The Bermuda Triangle Story

By Raj Bhattacharya



It was the same night of December 5, 1945 when all the five planes of Flight-19 went missing in the Bermuda Triangle area. Finally the order came from the US Navy to send two Martin Mariner planes to start the search operation.

It was past 7pm and the Navy had given up hope that the Flight-19

planes were still going to make it. So the two PBM Martin Mariners, that were essentially flying boats that could fly as well as float on water took off at 7.27pm from the Banana River Navy Base Station in Florida. The Martin Mariners were heavily used by U.S those days to patrol the ocean areas, detect any enemy submarine operations, and rescue pilots and crew who would have crashed into the Atlantic. They had the ability to easily land on ocean water. They used to carry huge amount of fuel so that they could carry out a search operation over long hours if required. Some even called them 'Flying Gas Tanks'.

So, the two such Mariners took off, this time to search for the Flight-19 planes. Both the mariners were generally used for training purposes. But this time they were on a special mission. One of them, called the Training-32 headed straight out into the ocean. The second one, called Training-49 went northbound along the east coast. After the second Mariner took off, the base station never heard from it again. It was around 9pm, when a message came in from a freighter ship SS Gaines Mill that they saw a huge explosion on the ocean at a distance.

Training-32 was still searching for the Flight-19 and was in constant touch with the base station. At about 10pm, the Training-32 mariner moved on and reached the spot reported by the freighter ship. But strangely, they saw no fire there and nor any debris floating. Water sample brought from that place did not show any trace of oil suggesting there could not have been any explosion there at all. But the crew of the freighter SS Gains Mill reported that they saw a huge ball of fire dropping into the ocean at a distance and then a big explosion.

So what really happened to the second Martin Mariner?

The mariner was in the best of conditions and thoroughly checked by both technicians as well as the captain before taking off. So any engine failures or such were ruled out. Some speculated that a cigarette lighting inside the cabin had blown up the plane. That theory was ruled out too. Since the mariners carried huge amount of gas, smoking was strictly prohibited in flight and no one should have lit a cigarette.

Now the interesting twist comes. The Navy board during the investigation reported that there are often greenish lights seen along the coastlines of Florida. This has also been confirmed by the resident locals. This green light would float around for a while, then descend and slowly disappear. This is often linked with something known as St. Elmo's fire which has a green hue. The fire is caused due to the area's unique climate. It radiates huge amount of electrical charge. And it is also known that airplanes seem to glow green when they come under the charge from such Elmo's fire even though they have anti-static equipment. And in one such occasion, a plane had actually blown up.



So was it such electrical charge from Elmo's fire that interfered with the navigational system, caused fire and blew up the mariner? This is a possible theory. But this has not yet been established with facts and evidence. Unfortunately the investigation of Martin Mariner is still incomplete and remained as a great mystery of the Bermuda Triangle.

NEW ARTICLE

INCIDENTS OF BERMUDA TRIANGLE DISAPPEARANCES

BY RAJ BHATTACHARYA



Over the past centuries, many ships and air planes have disappeared or met with fatal accidents in the triangular area on Atlantic ocean known as Bermuda Triangle. In several cases, no trace of the ships and aircraft were found even after extensive search operations were carried out for hundreds and thousands of square miles in the ocean. Such incidents of disappearances have been known since 1600s and continues to take place in present time. While

there are various explanations and theories behind such incidents, in many cases the incidents have remained unexplained.

In a shocking incident of 1945, a whole bunch of five training flights that took off from Florida naval base under the leadership of an experienced captain, never returned to the base. All are clueless as to what may have happened to it. In fact a Martin Mariner flying boat that was sent for the search operation, also went missing. In another incident of 1918, a large well known cargo ship went missing in the triangle area without a trace with over 300 crew members on board. This was probably one of the largest loss of lives on Bermuda triangle.

And there are many more such incidents. Theories such as methane gas blow out below the ocean causing ships to sink, electronic fog engulfing an aircraft and taking it to an unknown zone, hurricanes destroying aircraft, and several other such theories try to explain such cases.

So, are these incidents actually caused by Bermuda triangle phenomena? Or these are just mere accidents that also take place in other ocean areas as well, and are simply hyped up here by some theorists to draw unnecessary attention? Figure it out yourself.

Go through the following incidents that have left scientists completely baffled. I have arranged them in chronological order so that you can see earlier ones to most recent incidents by year.

1492 - Christopher Columbus reported strange lights and strange compass readings.

1609 - The Sea Venture got wrecked near the eastern end of Bermuda Island. The commander of the fleet Sir George Somers and his crew came ashore and were the first to start human settlement in the island.

1812 - Theodosia Burr Alston was the daughter of former United States Vice President Aaron Burr. Her disappearance has been cited at least once in relation to the Triangle. She was a passenger on board the Patriot, which sailed from Charleston, South Carolina to New York City on December 30, 1812, and was never heard of again.

1814 - The USS Epervier and her crew disappeared while carrying the peace treaty to end the war between America and the North African Barbary States.

1855 - The schooner James B. Chester was found floating in the ocean. The crew was missing but there was no sign of struggle, and the lifeboats were still in place.

1872 - Mary Celeste: Known as one of the ghost ships of Bermuda Triangle, Mary Celeste had many misadventures even before her mystery voyage in 1872. Find out the full story.

1881 - The Ellen Austin on its voyage in 1881 came across another ship that was sailing without a single soul on board. Ellen Austin transferred some of its crew onto the other ship and attempted to sail with it to New York. The other ship suddenly disappeared. Later it reappeared, but again without a person on board. Then it again disappeared without a trace.

1909 - S.V. Spray was a derelict fishing boat refitted as an ocean cruiser by Joshua Slocum and used by him to complete the first ever single-handed circumnavigation of the world, between 1895 and 1898. In 1909, Slocum set sail from Vineyard Haven bound for Venezuela. Neither he nor Spray were ever seen again.

1918 - USS Cyclops: This navy ship disappearance resulted in the single largest loss of life in the history of the US Navy. It went missing without a trace with a crew of 309, sometime after March 4th 1918 and after departing the island of Barbados.

1921 - Carroll A. Deering: This was a 5-masted commercial schooner built to carry cargo. On January 31, 1921 while returning home to Maine from Rio de Janeiro of Brazil, it was found wrecked at Diamond Shoals located off Cape Hatteras in North Carolina. While the ship was quite intact, all crew members vanished and never heard of again.

1941 - The USS Proteus and the USS Nereus vanished, just as their sister ship the USS Cyclops previously did along the same route.

1945 - Flight 19: They were training aircrafts of TBM Avenger bombers of US Navy that went missing on Dec 5, 1945 while flying over the Atlantic. They were scheduled to go due east from Florida Naval base for 120 miles, then north for 73 miles, and then get back over a final 120-mile route that would return them to the naval base. But strangely they never came back. Adding to the mystery, two rescue Martin Mariner aircraft with 13-man crew were sent to search for the missing flights. But one of the Martin Mariners itself did not return and was never traced again.

1945 - PBM Martin Mariner: Two Martin Mariner planes were sent on the 5th of December 1945 to search for the Flight-19. One did not return. Find out the full story.

1947 - The C-54 Aircraft: Apparently it would seem to be sudden thunderstorm that would have disintegrated the C-54 plane. But there was much more to the story.

1948 - Tudor Star Tiger: A Tudor Mark IV aircraft disappeared in Bermuda Triangle shortly before it was to land in Bermuda airport in January 1948.

1948 - Flight DC-3 Disappearance: The flight Douglas DC-3 NC16002 disappeared in Bermuda Triangle when it was only 50 miles south of Florida and about to land in Miami on December 28, 1948.

1954 - Flight 441 Disappearance: The flight 441, a Super Constellation Naval Airliner, disappeared in Bermuda Triangle on October 30, 1954

1963 - Marine Sulphur Queen: This 524-foot carrier of molten sulphur started sail Feb 2, 1963 from Beaumont, Texas with 39 crew. It was reported lost in Florida Straits on Feb 4.

1967 - Witchcraft: A 23-foot cabin cruiser went missing for ever in Bermuda Triangle area on the night of December 22, 1967. The owner took it offshore only to watch the lights of Miami shoreline.

1968 - USS Scorpion: USS Scorpion (SSN-589) was a Nuclear powered submarine of United States Navy that disappeared in Bermuda Triangle in May 1968.

1971 - Sting-27, a USAF Phantom jet, vanished completely without a trace. Official reports indicated it may have suffered an impact, but the details were never revealed.

1973 - On May 25, 1973 Robert (Bob) Corner and his friend Reno Regon started from Miami for a trip to Freeport, Bahamas. Bob was flying his own aircraft Navion A16 which was maintained very well. Bob himself was a great

pilot with over 5,000 hours of flying experience. The plane's tank was full and the flying distance to Freeport was only 110 miles, so shortage of fuel was never a problem. Midway through the flight Bob contacted the control tower at Miami to check the weather ahead. The control tower reported that there was a severe storm ahead and advised him to take a detour to avoid the stormy belt. He followed the instruction, so did another plane which was only 10 minutes behind him. However, that was the last time Bob could be contacted. The plane behind him was advised by the control tower to retrace its flight path and try to locate the Navion A16. US Coast Guards too swung into action soon... but Navion A16 was lost forever.

1976 - The Sylvia L. Ossa, a 590-foot ore carrier with a crew of 37 disappeared 140 miles from Bermuda.

1980 - S.S Poet, a 522-ft bulk cargo carrier left from a port in Philadelphia for Egypt. The next routine radio transmission reporting its position was expected 2 days after it left the port, but no signal was received. It was lost in the sea.

1991 - The pilot of a Grumman Cougar jet made a routine radio request to increase altitude. While ascending, the aircraft gradually faded from radar and vanished.

1999 - The cargo freighter Genesis sent a radio signal to a nearby vessel, indicating a problem with the bilge pump. Despite extensive searches by the Coast Guard, the ship and crew were never seen or heard from again.

2003 - A newly married couple Frank and Romina Leone went for fishing on their brand new 16-foot boat on June 18, 2003. They left from the Boynton beach inlet in Florida but never returned. The US Coast Guard eventually gave up the search & rescue operation after having combed a large part of the sea area for several days.

2005 & 2007 - On two separate incidents, two Piper-PA planes disappeared in the Bermuda Triangle area. One on June 20, 2005 between Treasure Cay island of Bahamas and Fort Pierce of Florida. There were three persons on board. The second incident took place on April 10, 2007 near Berry Island. Only the pilot was on board and no passengers..

2008 - A Britten-Norman Islander (also known as 3-engine Trislander) took off from Santiago for New York on December 15, 2008 at around 3:30pm with 12 persons on board. After about 35 minutes from take off, the aircraft fell off the radar. A massive search operation was launched by US Coast Guards, but the aircraft was never traced again. Its last known location was about 4 miles west of West Caicos Island. No debris has been found until now.

2015 - On October 1, 2015, the cargo ship SS El Faro became another tragic victim of Bermuda Triangle, the worst in over 30 years. The 790-ft container ship departed Jacksonville (Florida) bound for Puerto Rico with 33 crew members on board, carrying large number of containers, trailers and vehicles. A tropical storm hundreds of miles away, developed into fierce hurricane, dashed down towards El Faro, and started circling around the ship. Soon all communications from the ship went silent. And quite unbelievably and having created havoc on the sea, the hurricane went back out almost the same way it came from. After extensive search for weeks, the ship could be finally located sitting upright in one piece at a depth of about 15,000ft in the Atlantic, but there was no trace of any crew members.

2017 - The small private aircraft Mitsubishi MU-2B-40 with twin engine became another victim of Bermuda triangle on May 15, 2017 while flying from Puerto Rico (a corner of the triangle) to south Florida. Air traffic control at Miami lost radar contact with the aircraft at 2:10pm and the plane simply vanished with four passengers on board apparently when there was no weather warnings.