



## Underwater City Reported Off Western Cuba

© 2001 by Linda Moulton Howe

"We are the first people ever to see the bottom of Cuban waters over 50 meters. ...It's so exciting. We are discovering...even possibly a sunken city built in the pre-classic period and populated by an advanced civilization similar to the early Teotihuacan culture of Yucatan."

- Paulina Zelitsky, ocean engineer, Advanced Digital Communications, May 2001



At the western tip of Cuba at a depth of about 2,200 feet (700-800 meters), ocean engineer Paulina Zelitsky of Advanced Digital Communications reports large plateau with "shapes that resemble pyramids, roads and buildings."

**May 18, 2001 Washington, D. C.** - Reporter Andrew Cawthorne reporting from Havana, Cuba for Reuters bylined a May 15 story entitled "Explorers Comb Cuban Seas for Treasure, Mysteries." (See complete text below.) He interviewed ocean engineer Paulina Zelitsky, employed by Advanced Digital Communications and based in Tarara along the Cuba coast east of Havana. According to the article, Ms. Zelitsky said, "We are the first people ever to see the bottom of Cuban waters over 50 meters. It's so exciting. We are discovering ...even possibly a sunken city built in the pre-classic period and populated by an advanced civilization similar to the early Teotihuacan culture of Yucatan. ...Researchers using sonar equipment have discovered at a depth of about 2,200 feet (700-800 meters) a huge land plateau with clear images of what appears to be urban development partly covered by sand. From above, the shapes resemble pyramids, roads and buildings. "

Further, Mr. Cawthorne reported that "ADC is excited but reluctant to speculate until a joint investigation with the Cuban Academy of Sciences and the U. S. National Geographic Society takes place early this summer (2001)."

I have tried to obtain contact information for Paulina Zelitsky, the Cuban

Academy of Sciences, and Advanced Digital Communications from the National Geographic Society and to confirm this story. The following are the only comments that National Geographic spokeswoman, Barbara Moffet, would give to date.

---

## **Interview:**

**Barbara Moffet, Director of Plans and Programs, Communications Office, National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.:** "We know what the Cuban people have told us on the basis of a fairly preliminary survey that they did for another purpose apparently, I believe, last year when they were working to test some deep water equipment off Havana Bay. They found some things they thought were interesting, but it was a preliminary search. I don't even know the details of the type of equipment being used. But they agreed that much more specific and different type of equipment would be needed to go back to the site. So they have made a proposal to us, I believe, that we get involved and help them explore the area. It's now just one of many proposals for such exploration that we are considering at the moment.

### **Who is Advanced Digital Communications?**

I don't know details on that.

### **But does National Geographic Society have knowledge about Advanced Digital Communications?**

I'm sure we do and yes, Linda, I could find out more on that if you need me to call you back on that.

### **Yes, I really do. I would like to talk to someone there. Now, in terms of the Reuters story, they have talked with Paulina Zelitsky who is identified as an ocean engineer. Can you tell me about Paulina Zelitsky?**

I don't know too much except that she was born in the Soviet Union and is based in Havana and she is someone very involved in underwater work in the waters off of Cuba and we have known her for some time. Again, she is someone who has made a proposal to us to do some exploration together.

### **So you at the National Geographic are in communication with Paulina Zelitsky?**

That's right.

### **The proposal she has made has been as an ocean engineer working with Advanced Digital Communications?**

Yes, I believe she has made the proposal on behalf of the company that she represents, ADC. But I just would say again that it is just so early in this project and frankly some of the things that Paulina has been quoted as saying are pretty speculative. We just don't know that anything like that exists yet.

### **In the Reuters article, she is quoted saying:**

**'We are the first people ever to see the bottom of Cuban waters over 50 meters' (down at 2,200 feet). 'It is so exciting. We are discovering the influence of currents on global climate, volcanoes, the history of formation of Caribbean islands, numerous historic wrecks and even possibly a sunken city built in the pre-classic period and populated by an advanced civilization similar to the early Teotihuacan culture of Yucatan.'**

**Then she said that ADC was using and testing deep water equipment off Havana Bay, as you just said, when they found**

**what she describes as clear 'high-resolution sonar images' that are showing white sand and in the middle of the white side are 'clear manmade large-size architectural designs. It looks like when you fly over an urban development in a plane and you see highways, tunnels and buildings.'**

Yeah, I have a copy of a story that is similar to that. I know she is quoted as saying all that. She also said that we don't know what it is and we don't have videotaped evidence yet. I think she would agree that it really is early to speculate as she has here. I don't know. It would be great if it turned out to be something that exciting. I would hope so if we want to get involved.

**Yes, this seems very important and the Reuters interview says that ADC has been using 'satellite-integrated ocean bottom positioning system, high-precision side-scan double-frequency sonar and remotely operated submarine robots. They plan to add two submersibles to take people down.' And it sounds as if Paulina Zelitsky has been looking at high-resolution sonar images.**

The copy I have said that ADC equipment includes those things. I don't know if they have had a chance to use them in the site yet. But I don't know. Obviously, there is a lot more to find out about this whole project and that is something we're in the process of trying to do right now.

**Reuters says, 'ADC is excited but reluctant to speculate until a joint investigation with the Cuban Academy of Sciences and the U. S. National Geographic Society takes place early this summer.' Can you talk about the work that you are doing with the Cuban Academy of Sciences?**

Again, that paragraph assumes that we have a project and unfortunately, that hasn't been decided yet. There are many logistical questions that we are still working out. And as I said, it is one of dozens if not hundreds of projects that we're considering right now from all over the world. So it is even earlier than this story is indicating. I don't think we have anything official with either group.

**But there must be someone at the National Geographic Society who has even images from the high-resolution sonar that Paulina Zelitsky is describing upon which to base a decision to do this underwater archaeological work?**

I haven't asked that. I haven't seen anything like that. I think it has been mostly just conversations. But I can find out and let you know.

**Also, this Reuters story quotes Paulina Zelitsky as saying, 'Our agenda is much broader. We are very anxious about global environmental changes. Archaeology is providing us with the means to conduct broader scientific ocean exploration.' And that three other foreign companies, 'one Canadian, one French and one South African operate in shallower waters than ADC. Under contracts with Cuban state partner, Geomar, all the firms have concessions to explore in different swathes of sea and would share profits with the government.' Can you make any comment about these other international efforts there off the coast of Cuba?"**

No.

**The National Geographic Society is working only with ADC?**  
As far as I know, yes.

**The Cuban Academy of Sciences?**

But we're not working with any of them for sure yet. It's just what we are considering.

**If you do, it would be this summer of 2001?**

I don't know that that question has been answered, but I think we would like to do it as soon as possible if it does happen. But it's not definite yet.

**When do you think a decision will actually be made about National Geographic going forward with the Cuban Academy of Sciences and ADC to look at this underwater find more closely?**

I don't know that either. I know that we're seriously considering it though."

**An hour later, Ms. Moffet left this message on my phone's voice mail:**

"Linda, it's Barbara Moffet at National Geographic calling back. I don't have anything else for you, I'm afraid. The principals involved in this project, most are not here today. But the ones who I have talked with, and my boss, say the nature, the status of this project and the place we are in this project, is still at a very confidential stage. There is nothing else we can release. We don't have images to release. I don't even think we have any images or any other phone numbers. It's just that the information is confidential right now. I'm sorry I can't be more helpful, but I hope you are able to do a little bit with what I have given you and I am keeping your name and number to inform you once that day comes. Thanks a lot."

---

## **More Information:**

REUTERS TEXT ON MAY 15, 1999:

"Explorers comb Cuban seas for treasure, mysteries

By Andrew Cawthorne

HAVANA, May 15 (Reuters) Barely touched since the colonial era of piracy and shipwrecks, sea bottoms around Cuba are an underwater fantasy world promising treasure-laden sunken ships, insights into times gone by - and maybe even a lost city.

Once a hub for shipments of gold, silver and other plunder from New World to Old, the Caribbean island's waters likely hide billions of dollars' worth of treasure from hundreds of ships that sank after encountering reefs, storms or pirates.

But that is not all that tempts foreign companies, which, in a joint venture with President Fidel Castro's government, are beginning an unprecedented, systematic search of one of the world's most-fascinating, least-explored undersea regions.

As well as gold-laden Spanish galleons, important secrets and insights into regional history, global environment trends, ancient geography and marine science also lurk in the depths.

"It's a new frontier," enthused Soviet-born Canadian ocean engineer Paulina Zelitsky, from British Columbia-based Advanced Digital Communications, poring over video images of hitherto unseen seafloor taken by underwater robots.

"We are the first people to see the bottom of Cuban waters over 50 meters. ...It's so exciting. We are discovering the influence of currents on global climate, volcanoes, the history of formation of Caribbean islands, numerous historic wrecks and even possibly a sunken city built in the pre-classic period and populated by an advanced civilization similar to the early Teotihuacan culture of Yucatan," she said.

ADC, the heavyweight among four foreign exploration firms here, was testing its deep-water equipment off Havana Bay late last year when its ship, 'Ulises,' found the century-old wreck of a U. S. battleship, The Maine, while surveying the seabed.

The ship blew up mysteriously in 1898, killing 260 American sailors and touching off the Spanish-American War.

ADC has also been exploring a string of underwater volcanoes about 5,000 feet (1,500 metres) deep off Cuba's western tip, where millions of years ago a strip of land once joined the island to Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula.

#### LOST CITY OFF WESTERN CUBA?

Most intriguingly, researchers using sonar equipment have discovered at a depth of about 2,200 feet (700-800 metres) a huge land plateau with clear images of what appears to be urban development partly covered by sand. From above, the shapes resemble pyramids, roads and buildings.

ADC is excited but reluctant to speculate until a joint investigation with the Cuban Academy of Sciences and the U. S. National Geographic Society takes place early this summer.

"It is stunning. What we see in our high-resolution sonar images are limitless, rolling, white sand plains and, in the middle of this beautiful white sand, there are clear manmade large-size architectural designs. It looks like when you fly over an urban development in a plane and you see highways, tunnels and buildings," Zelitsky said.

"We don't know what it is and we don't have the videotaped evidence of this yet, but we do not believe that nature is capable of producing planned symmetrical architecture, unless it is a miracle," she added in an interview at her office at Tarara, along the coast east of Havana.

ADC's deep-water equipment includes a satellite-integrated ocean bottom positioning system, high-precision side-scan double-frequency sonar, and remotely operated submarine robots. They plan to add two submersibles to take people down.

On the treasure trail, it has already located some 700 target sites where historic wrecks are thought to lie and it recently videotaped and identified three of them as large, 17th century ships with valuable cargo.

Bringing up treasure will finance the project. But Zelitsky said, "Our agenda is much broader. We are very anxious about global environmental changes. Archaeology is providing us with the means to conduct broader scientific ocean exploration."

The other three foreign companies - one Canadian, one French and one South African - operate in shallower waters than ADC. Under contracts with Cuban state partner, Geomar, all the firms have concessions to explore in different swathes of sea and would share profits with the government.

END REUTERS TEXT

#### Credits

Copyright © 1999 - 2009 by Linda Moulton Howe.  
All Rights Reserved.  
[www.earthfiles.com](http://www.earthfiles.com)  
[earthfiles@earthfiles.com](mailto:earthfiles@earthfiles.com)

screen or any part of this website are expressly prohibited without prior Earthfiles.com written consent.

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#)  
[Refund Policy](#)

Copyright © 1999 - 2009, [Earthfiles.com](#) / [DigitalEyeCandy.ca](#)  
All rights reserved.