Mission K-141 and Russia's Kursk Submarine

(Abstract from an article by: Charles Smith, a national security and defense reporter for WorldNetDaily).

What do we ***really*** know about Russia's dark mission, code named K-141? On August 12, 2000, Russia's nuclear submarine the Kursk, an Antyey type 949A nuclear attack submarine, went down in the Barents Sea. What was the cause?

On that fateful Saturday, the Russian sub sank with all hands lost. Since then, the incident has been swirled in controversy. Did the Kursk collide with another submarine, as some in the Russian military claim, or was it an explosion onboard? Lately, the explosion on board theory is becoming reality.

When the top-secret sub dropped to the bottom of the sea, it was a mystery to the free world. Reportedly, earlier that morning, it had fired upon a hulk target and destroyed it. Mission accomplished. The target was a mockup of an American vessel. Fact is, the Kursk was especially designed to kill American carriers and submarines.

The Kursk, one of eight active Oscar II class submarines, was the pride of the Russian navy and the leading edge of the new Northern Fleet. Commissioned in 1995, the Kursk was the Northern Fleet's most powerful weapon. It made a high-profile voyage to the Mediterranean in September 1999 and was due to return later this year as part of a planned Russian nuclear task group deployment to the Middle East.

The Russian naval exercise in the Barents Sea was to provide the West with good reason to remember the Kursk. Reports now show the exercise was intended to showcase the Kursk as she performed her two primary roles, killing American carriers and submarines. The Russian navy exercise also drew a small crowd of interested observers in the form of two U.S. Los Angeles attack submarines, loitering in the shallow polar sea near the Kursk.

The Kursk reportedly completed a successful firing of her main killer, the Chelomey Granit missile, NATO code-named SS-N-19 Shipwreck. The Kursk and her sister boats carry twenty-four Shipwreck missiles. The missiles are stored on each side of the huge submarine in banks of twelve, hidden between the layers of the boat's thick twin hull skin. The Shipwreck missiles are stored in launching tubes external to the inner pressure hull where the 118 crewmembers worked and lived.

The Shipwreck missile fired by the Kursk that Saturday morning contained a 1,600-pound conventional warhead. It reportedly scored a direct hit on a Russian hulk target over 200 miles away. The Shipwreck is intended to strike U.S. carriers but can also be targeted against U.S. cities. Russian naval sources

indicate that the Shipwreck missile can be armed with an H-bomb warhead equal to one half million tons of TNT, more than enough to flatten Los Angeles or New York City. That Saturday, in the dim afternoon light of the arctic summer sun, the Kursk began her last performance, the simulated destruction of a U.S. submarine using the 100-RU Veder missile. The Veder, NATO code-named SS-N-16A Stallion, is a rocket-boosted torpedo. The Stallion is launched from the huge 26-inch diameter torpedo tubes installed on each Oscar II class submarine.

The Stallion is so secret that no picture of the weapon has ever been published. The projectile is fired from the submarine's torpedo tube but flies like a missile. The Stallion rocket booster ignites underwater once the weapon is clear of the submarine, sending the missile to the surface. The missile then flies to the target under rocket power where it finally ejects a lightweight torpedo at supersonic speed.

The mini-torpedo then uses its own little parachute, slowing to drop gently into the water directly above the target. The mini-torpedo then homes in on the target submarine for the final kill. The conventional Stallion fired by the Kursk was armed with a mini-220 pound explosive warhead. Jane's Defense reports that the missile can also be armed with a mini-nuclear warhead equal to 200,000 tons of TNT.

According to Jane's, the last moments of the Kursk were recorded as she prepared to fire the Stallion. Seismologists in Norway told Jane's that a monitoring station registered two explosions at the time the Kursk sank. The first registered 1.5 on the Richter scale. A second, stronger explosion measuring 3.5 on the Richter scale was equivalent to one to two tons of TNT. That one was recorded just over two minutes later. Experts theorize that the Stallion rocket motor may have ignited inside the sealed torpedo tube just before firing. Hence, the Stallion may have jammed itself inside the torpedo tube as it was fired.

In any event, the underwater rocket appears to have ignited inside the inner manned pressure hull. The force of the Stallion rocket motor would have twisted the huge torpedo tube, melting through the metal walls within seconds—just enough time for alarms to sound and men to die. Then the small 220-pound warhead exploded, blowing a gaping hole in the twisted skin of the attack submarine.

The submarine immediately fell forward as the icy water rushed to fill the forward weapon bay. The last moments of the Kursk and most of her crew were filled with fire and ice as the vessel plunged into the cold arctic depths. The rush of cold water did not extinguish the fire since the Stallion rocket booster *was designed to burn without air*. The exploding warhead would have sent huge flaming chunks of the rocket booster into the forward weapon control room.

The force of the 14,000-ton submarine striking the bottom on the damaged torpedo bay was the final blow, detonating one of the many weapons inside upon impact. The force of the explosion inside the twin hull submarine ripped the starboard side open back to the sail. The manned areas forward of the reactor compartment, including the control room and living quarters, rapidly flooded, leaving no time for personnel in those compartments to escape.

Despite being broke, Russia continues to build and deploy the Oscar II submarine force. There are seven active Oscar II class boats. The latest, K-530 the Belgorod, is still under construction at the Severodvinsk Shipyard. Budget cutbacks have slowed progress on the boat to a standstill but nevertheless, construction continues.

The Kursk sailed the Mediterranean in late 1999 as a show of flag to Russian allies such as Syria, Libya and Serbia. At the same time, a Pacific Fleet Oscar II submarine was quietly cruising the western seaboard of the United States, within missile range of California, Oregon and Washington. While we all mourn the passing of K-141 and her crew, we should also reflect on exactly what her mission was.

Charles Smith <mailto:csmith@worldnetdaily.com> is a national security and defense reporter for WorldNetDaily (www.worldnetdaily.com)