

Russian Submarine Accidents

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Overview

There have been many accidents involving Russian nuclear-powered submarines which raises serious concerns about the manufacture and maintenance of these vessels. However, there are no known accidents involving the **Rubin** non-nuclear Kilo, Amur or Lada class boats that *NewAustralia* [recommends](#) for the Australian Navy.

Three incidents to unrelated Russian diesel-electric boats are highlighted in [blue](#).

"The (Kilo) submarine consists of six watertight compartments separated by transverse bulkheads in a pressurised double-hull. This design and the submarine's good reserve buoyancy lead to increased survivability if the submarine is holed, even with one compartment and two adjacent ballast tanks flooded." - [Federation of American Scientists](#) on the Rubin Kilo submarine.

List of all known Russian Submarine Accidents

November 8, 2008 - At least 20 men died on board a Russian nuclear submarine reportedly named "Nerpa", during exercises. The submarine belongs to the Pacific Fleet. Preliminary reports indicate that the accident occurred when a fire-extinguishing system went into operation in error aboard the submarine. Among the dead are sailors and shipbuilders. The submarine was heading back to shore on its own power, and 21 people injured in the accident were evacuated to a ship that was escorting the sub. There were 208 people aboard the vessel.

August 28, 2003 - The nuclear-powered K159 on route to the breakers yard was overwhelmed in a storm while under tow the pontoons floating the submarine broke apart and the submarine sank after someone left the sail hatch open. 9 die as a result and only one survived. The commander of the base was later fired and found guilty of neglect and dereliction of duty.

13 August, 2000 - The Oscar II-class nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine Kursk is destroyed while participating in an exercise. An experimental torpedo powered by high test hydrogen peroxide suffers an accident. The torpedo fuel explodes, starting a massive fire. Moments later, several torpedo warheads explode, wrecking the submarine. Some men survive the initial accident, but succumb before they can be rescued.

26 January, 1998 - During routine tests aboard a moored nuclear-powered submarine, a cooling system pipe breaks, releasing ammonia and nitrogen gas into the compartment. A total of 5 crew members are injured, and one, a Captain of the 3rd Rank, succumbs to his injuries while in the hospital on 28 January. This submarine is reportedly the Oscar-II nuclear-powered guided missile submarine Tomsk.

11 February, 1992 - While on patrol, the Sierra-class nuclear-powered attack submarine Barracuda is involved in a collision with the American Los Angeles-class nuclear-powered attack submarine Baton Rouge (SSN-689). Although able to return to base under her own power, damage is so severe that the Barracuda must be dry-docked for repairs and the Baton Rouge is decommissioned.

27 September, 1991 - A new construction Typhoon-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine reportedly suffers severe damage after a missile miss-fire during a missile test-firing. As a consequence of this damage, all Typhoon-class subs are modified to carry a new, more modern ballistic missile.

June 25, 1989 - While returning from patrol, the Echo II-class nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine K-192 (ex-K-131) suffered a reactor accident. Radiation contamination is so severe that the K-192 is removed from service. She remains unusable and unrepairable to this day.

April 7, 1989 - While on its first patrol, the Mike-class nuclear-powered attack submarine K-278 (Komsomolets) catches fire and sinks in the Barents Sea north of Norway. There are conflicting reports about the number of survivors. Some reports claim only one survivor. Other reports indicate as many as 25 crew members were rescued.

October 6, 1986 - The Yankee-I class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine K-219 sinks in the Atlantic, 680 miles north-east of Bermuda, after suffering an explosion and fire. The seal in a missile hatch cover failed (probably to do with a collision), allowing sea water to leak into the missile tube. The sea water reacted with fuel residue from the liquid-fuelled missile, causing an explosion and fire. Three crew members are killed outright. A fourth crew member, an enlisted seaman, dies after successfully securing the nuclear reactor by hand, when he is trapped in the engine compartment. The submarine is intentionally scuttled by the captain when attempts to tow it fail (captain Igor Britanov has never admitted to scuttling his ship). The seaman is posthumously awarded the Red Star for his bravery.

September 20, 1984 - A Golf II-class diesel-powered ballistic missile submarine surfaces in the Sea of Japan after catching fire. The submarine returns to port under her own power.

November 2, 1983 - A disabled Victor III-class nuclear-powered attack submarine surfaces in the Atlantic between Bermuda and South Carolina. Soviet ships tow it to Cuba for repairs.

June 24, 1983 - The Charlie-class nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine K-429 sinks in the North Pacific. Most or all of the crew are killed. The submarine is salvaged by the Soviet Navy in August, one of the few cases of a nuclear powered submarine being lost and later being salvaged. She was recommissioned and finally decommissioned some years later while moored at a pier in Vladivostok she sinks again and again is raised.

August 8, 1982 - While on patrol in the Barents Sea, the Alfa-class nuclear-powered attack submarine K-123 suffers a coolant leak in its liquid-metal cooled reactor. Damage is so severe that the reactor must be removed and replaced. The K-123 is lost to service for over 8 years.

October 27, 1981 - A Whiskey-class diesel-powered attack submarine runs aground in Swedish territorial waters, near a Swedish naval base, apparently while on a intelligence-gathering mission. (Designed by Lazurit Design Beureau based in Gorki.)

August 21, 1981 - K-122, an Echo I-class nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine that had been converted to an SSN configuration under the SALT-I agreement, surfaces in the Philippine Sea after a fire and propulsion failure. It also must be towed back to port. Reports indicate as many as 9 crewmen died.

August 19, 1978 - K-116, another Echo II-class nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine suffers a propulsion failure west of Scotland and must be towed home.

September 26, 1976 - The Echo II-class nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine K-47 suffers a fire while returning from a routine patrol. 8 crewmen die of injuries.

June 13, 1973 - The Echo II-class nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine K-56 is involved in a collision. 26 crewmen and a civilian technician are killed (Russian authorities refused to disclose the cause of this accident for many years, leading people to believe that the deaths were caused by a reactor accident, and many sources continue to incorrectly list this as a reactor accident.)

February 24, 1972 - The Hotel II-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine K-19 catches fire while on patrol in the North Atlantic. 12 crewmen are trapped in an after compartment, and cannot be rescued for 24 days. Damage is severe enough that the submarine needs to be towed to port, a rescue effort that requires the participation of over 30 soviet ships. A total of 28 crewmen die in the fire.

June, 1970 - The U.S.S. Tautog, a Sturgeon-class nuclear-powered attack submarine, collides with the K-108, an Echo II-class nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine. Tautog departs the area, believing that the K-108 has sunk. Tautog returns to Pearl Harbor for repairs to her sail, periscopes, and antennas. K-108 suffers a hole in her outer hull and her starboard propeller shaft was bent (part of the propeller itself was left embedded in Tautog's sail). Like Tautog, K-108 returns to port for repairs.

April 12, 1970 - The November-class nuclear-powered attack submarine K-8 sinks in rough seas during a tow-rescue attempt in the Bay of Biscay after a fire. 52 men, including the Captain, are lost. The K-8 had been involved in a major reactor accident in 1960.

May 24, 1968 - The modified November-class (Project 675) nuclear- powered attack submarine K-27 suffers a major reactor accident while at sea. 9 men die of radiation exposure.

April 11, 1968 - The Golf-class diesel-powered ballistic missile submarine K-129 sinks in 16,000 feet of water in the Pacific, about 750 miles north west of the island of Oahu, Hawaii, killing all aboard. In 1974, the CIA attempts to raise the submarine. The effort is known as "Project Jennifer". The CIA is only partially successful.

1968 - An unidentified nuclear-powered submarine (probably Charlie class) apparently suffers a propulsion failure and sinks off the Kola Peninsula. It remains trapped on the bottom for 30 days or more and the entire crew of 90 perish.

September 8, 1967 - The November-class nuclear powered attack submarine K-3 is again involved in a serious accident when she suffers a fire in her hydraulic system. Although able to return to port under her own power, 39 crewmen are killed.

June, 1962 - The Soviet Union's first nuclear powered submarine, the November-class attack submarine K-3 suffers a fire which severely damages her reactors. The submarine must be towed back to base, and the reactor compartment must be cut out to be replaced.

July 4, 1961 - The Hotel-class nuclear powered ballistic missile submarine K-19 suffers a major leak in the coolant system of its nuclear reactor. The contamination is so severe that the crew must be evacuated, and the K-19 towed home. The damaged reactors must be removed and replaced, taking K-19 out of service for two years. 8 men die of acute radiation poisoning.

Sources

<http://www.subsim.com/radioroom/archive/index.php/t-84383.html> 'Kapitan'
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recent_Submarine_Accidents

Updates

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