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Britain offers Russia sub rescue equipment

The British Royal Navy has offered rescue equipment to the Russians battling to save 116 sailors entombed in the stricken nuclear submarine Kursk.

The equipment, including a mini submarine and a remote controlled vehicle, is available for immediate deployment.

"We have made the Russians aware of our facilities and are prepared to assist if they would like help," Ministry of Defence spokesman Jim Jenkin said. "We await their request and will deploy immediately."

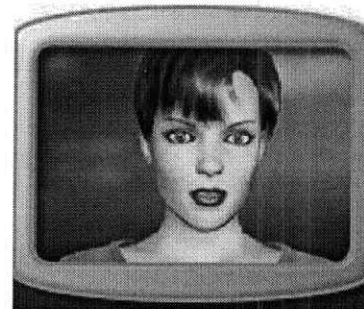
The main item of equipment available to the Russians is the LR5 rescue submarine.

It is capable of transporting up to 16 people at a time and works by docking onto a stricken vessel and forming a watertight seal over the hatch so crew can be ferried to safety.

The Russian navy lacks sophisticated submarine rescue equipment but the government has ruled out seeking foreign assistance to rescue the crew.

The British offer comes after frantic efforts to reach the nuclear submarine trapped at the bottom of the Barents Sea failed. The chances of rescuing the sailors are increasingly bleak, navy officials say.

Efforts to connect air and power lines have not worked despite



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Efforts to connect air and power lines have not worked despite earlier reports of success and there is no contact with the submarine, said spokesman Captain Igor Babenko.

Conditions inside the vessel, including how much air it has left, are not known.

Navy officials have said that casualties on the submarine cannot be "ruled out," the Interfax news agency reports.

Rescue efforts are being hampered by increasingly bad weather and several rescue ships have been forced to move because of strong winds, officials say.

Last updated: 10:40 Tuesday 15th August 2000.

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