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## U.S. sonar tapes support Kursk torpedo theory-paper

August 29, 2000  
Web posted at: 8:02 a.m. EDT (1202 GMT)

NEW YORK (Reuters) -- U.S. officials say acoustical tapes made by the American submarine USS Memphis in the Barents Sea support the theory that a faulty torpedo caused the explosion that sank the Russian submarine Kursk, Tuesday's New York Times reports.

Sonar tapes and other recordings that captured sounds of two explosions believed to have sunk the Kursk on August 12, killing all 118 people on board, contain the strongest evidence of the U.S. theory of a torpedo explosion, The Times said, quoting unnamed senior intelligence officials and senior Navy officers.

U.S. officials believe a rocket-propelled torpedo being loaded or launched as part of an exercise misfired, its engine or its fuel exploding. After two minutes and 15 seconds, a powerful explosion of the torpedo's warhead tore a gaping hole in the submarine's bow, killing most if not all of the crew instantly, the paper said.

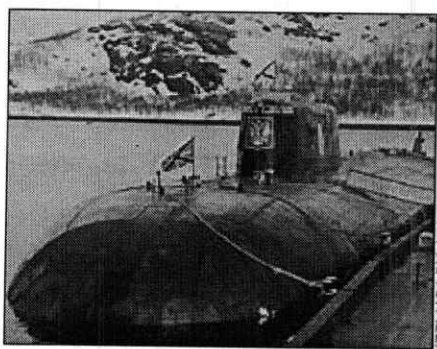
Sonar tapes from the Memphis, one of two American submarines that were spying on the Russian naval exercise when disaster struck the Kursk, are being analyzed at the National Maritime Intelligence Center near Washington.

"We have subs that hear everything that goes on," the paper quoted a senior officer in Washington as saying. "It's pretty clear to us what happened."

Russian officials have given several theories to explain why the Kursk sank, including a collision with a foreign submarine and striking a World War Two mine.

The U.S. has dismissed suggestions that one of its subs collided with the Kursk.

A Norwegian seismic institute also reported recording two explosions and Norwegian officials have said the data matched theories of a blast aboard the nuclear-powered vessel, perhaps in a torpedo that may have triggered



The Russian nuclear submarine Kursk, which sank on August 12 is shown at a Russian naval facility in Vidyayevo, in this May 2000 photo

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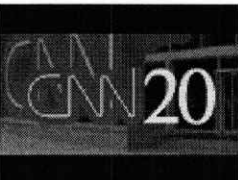
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