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'US sub didn't sink Kursk'

Tokyo - US Defenne Secretary William Cohen on Friday strongly denied Russian suggestions that a collision with a US submarine may have caused the sinking of the Russian nuclear submarine Kursk last month.

Russia's defence ministry last week said the collision theory was bolstered by Cohen's rejection of a Moscow request to inspect two US submarines that were in the area at the time - the USS Toledo and USS Memphis.

"I know all our ships are operational and could not be involved in any kind of a contact with the Russian submarine," Cohen told a news conference in Tokyo as he wrapped up a six-nation East Asian tour.

"So frankly there is no need for an inspection since ours are completely operational," he said. "There was no contact whatsoever with the Kursk."

Asked about the cause of the August 12 sinking in the Barents Sea, Cohen said: "All I can do is speculate at this point that they were internal blasts that led to the loss of that ship and the fine men aboard."

Russian officials are investigating the cause of two explosions that tore through the Kursk, flooding it with the loss of all 118 hands.

The British submarine Splendid was also in the area at the time, but London has firmly denied that it may have been involved. - Sapa-AFP

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