

Russia Marks 12 Years Since Kursk Tragedy

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A monument commemorating the Kursk disaster outside Moscow's Central Armed Forces Museum.

Exactly 12 years after the Kursk nuclear submarine sank to the floor of the Barents Sea with 118 crew members on board, Russia marked the sailors' passing with commemorative events across the country.

All Navy divisions organized remembrance services to honor the dead Sunday, raising their flags to half-mast and holding a minute's silence for their fellow seamen, RBC reported.

The Northern Fleet, which the Oscar-class Kursk joined after its commissioning in 1994, laid on additional religious services, organized rallies and laid wreaths by plaques to those who died in the disaster, according to RIA-Novosti.

As of Sunday afternoon, neither President Vladimir Putin nor Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev had offered their condolences to families who lost loved ones in the tragedy.

Sunday's anniversary follows a late July ceremony, when relatives dropped a two-meter Russian Orthodox cross and capsule of earth from the Kiev Pechersk Monastery to the position on the sea bed where the Kursk lay after a series of explosions ripped through its hull during a training exercise.

Experts believe that one of the Kursk's hydrogen peroxide-fueled practice torpedoes was to blame for the blast, which occurred when the submarine was practicing firing at the Kirov-class battle cruiser Pyotr Veliky on the morning of Aug. 12, 2000.

The Kursk disaster was a major embarrassment for the Russian armed forces, especially since Russia initially declined rescue offers from the British and Norwegian fleets.

It was also a sore point for Putin, then newly elected president, who was on vacation when news broke that the Kursk was in trouble and returned to work only five days after the incident.

On Sept. 8, 2000, Putin made a now-notorious comment on "Larry King Live," answering a question about what happened to the submarine with the curt remark, "It sunk."

The Prosecutor General's Office ruled in 2002 that the Kursk incident was caused by the torpedo blast, but did not say why it exploded. No one was ever charged over the incident, despite navy officials speculating that Russian rescue teams' slow response led to the deaths of roughly 20 sailors who had escaped the initial blasts and remained trapped in the Kursk's back compartment for up to three days.

In 2010, when Russia marked the 10th anniversary of the tragedy, both Putin and then-President Medvedev ignored commemorative ceremonies held around Russia.

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