

Putin Bestows Top State Honors on Sailors Killed in Submarine Fire

By [Reuters](#)

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Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday bestowed top state honors on 14 sailors killed in a fire on a secret nuclear submarine in recognition of what the Russian military has called their outstanding bravery.

The sailors were killed on Monday when a fire broke out while their deep-water research submarine was carrying out a survey of the sea floor near the Arctic, the Russian Defense Ministry has said.

Moscow's slow release of information about the incident has drawn comparisons with the opaque way the Soviet Union handled the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power station disaster, and another deadly submarine accident — the 2000 sinking of the nuclear-powered Kursk, which claimed 118 lives.

Putin, in a decree published on the Kremlin's website on Friday, gave four of the dead submariners Russia's highest state award — the title of Hero of Russia. He granted another top state award — the Order of Courage — to the 10 others.

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The awards underline the importance of the secretive work the men were carrying out and what the authorities say were their courageous efforts to fight the fire, something the Russian defense minister said had resulted in the vessel's nuclear reactor being safely contained.

Putin has said that the submarine was manned by an elite and senior crew, two of whom already held the Hero of Russia title before their deadly mission.

Russian servicemen held a memorial service in the port city of Kronstadt near St. Petersburg on Thursday to honor the dead submariners.

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