DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE
4251 SUITLAND ROAD
WASHINGTON, DC 20395-2000

IN REPLY REFER TO
5720
Ser ONI-22/0010

JAN 22 2015

Mr. John Greenewald, Jr.
[redacted]

Department of Navy (DON) FOIA# DON-NAVY-2015-000271

Dear Mr. Greenewald:

This responds to your October 12, 2014 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request submitted through FOIA Online to the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). CNO transferred your request to the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) on December 15, 2014. Your request was for information on the sinking of the Russian submarine Kursk.

ONI's search for records identified the enclosed documents. Pursuant to Executive Order 13526, Section 1.4(c) portions of the documents are exempt from disclosure in accordance 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(1) and (b)(6). Exemption (b)(1) of the FOIA protects classified information that if released could reasonably be expected to result in damage to national security including disclosing information of foreign governments. Exemption (b)(6) protects information that is personal and private in nature and if released would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of privacy.

You are advised of your right to appeal ONI's partial denial of this information. To exercise this right, forward your appeal within 60 calendars days from the date of this letter to the Department of the Navy, Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, ATTN: FOIA APPEALS, 1322 Patterson Avenue SE, Suite 3000, Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5066. A copy of your original request and a copy of this letter must be included with your appeal.

I am the official denial authority for this request. There are no fees associated with processing your request. ONI's point of contact is Ms. Jeana Watson, FOIA Manager, who can be reached at 301-669-2048 or by email at jwatson@nmic.navy.mil.

R. S. ERICSON
By direction

Encls: Eight documents (totaling 15 pages)

[redacted] (b)(1)

[redacted]

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MARITIME INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Monday, 14 August 2000

(U) RUSSIA: OSCAR II Recoverability

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(C) If the report of the OSCAR [redacted] 60 degree starboard list is accurate, it is improbable that Russian Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicles (DSRV) will be used to recover the crew. ONI feels that a list [redacted] degrees or more precludes DSRV-assisted recovery. The acute list would also prevent the use of the escape chamber and makes the possibility of righting it using tow cables highly improbable. Recent open source reporting suggests that the submarine is laying on its keel, while another reference states that the list has shifted to port.

(b)(1)

(S//SI) [redacted]

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[redacted] (b)(1)

~~SECRET//REL TO USA,~~ [redacted] (b)(1)

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MARITIME INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Monday, 14 August 2000

(U) RUSSIA: OSCAR II Crew Survivability

(b)(1)

~~(S//REL TO USA,~~ [redacted] The maximum limit of crew survivability is approximately [redacted] days. The survivability boundary is likely to be in the 5 to 7 day range. The primary concerns for the crew at this stage is atmospheric and flooding. The accumulation of carbon dioxide (CO2 [redacted] will result in poisonous oxygen level of CO and CO2. While the use of salvage valves to deliver oxygen to the submarine is a possibility, the air exchange rate is not likely to be sufficient to overcome CO and CO2 build up without proper ventilation. The use of individual respirators could provide approximately [redacted] hours of relief. [redacted] fires may still occur. Both flooding and its reported significant starboard list will restrict mobility within the submarine. . [redacted]

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MARITIME INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Monday, 14 August 2000

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(U) RUSSIA: OSCAR II [redacted] INCIDENT

[redacted]

~~(U)~~ During the mid 0700 ZULU hours of 12 August, OSCAR II [redacted] KURSK Impacted the sea floor in the Southern Barents Sea, apparently unable to resurface. The submarine was participating in the Russian Navy's SUMMEREX 2000. The Russian General Staff has been quoted as saying that a crew of 166 was on board.

~~(S)~~ During mid 0700 ZULU hour of 12 August, at least two distinct acoustic events were detected in what is now known to be the casualty area.

~~(S)~~ [redacted]

~~(TS//SI)~~ In the 0600 ZULU hours of 13 August, the KURSK was located in approximately 100 meters of water roughly 85 miles off Severomorsk [redacted]

~~(S)~~ [redacted]

(U) Open source reports on the submarine's disposition on the sea floor, a major factor in the feasibility of a rescue operation, are conflicting. Some reports indicate that the Hull is lying on its keel, while others mention a starboard or port list. Likewise, the nature of the damage to [redacted] remains unconfirmed. Open source reporting indicates that the bow has been "seriously damaged"

and completely flooded. In the absence of a radio link, survivors in the submarine are apparently communicating with the surface by tapping on the Hull.

(U) As of 1800 ZULU on 14 August, weather conditions, which were previously cooperating with rescue efforts, began to turn inclement. Strong winds, current, and Sea State of 4 to 5 have been reported in the casualty area. Representatives from the Rubin Central Marine Design Bureau, builders of the OSCAR II class, are reportedly working with the General Staff to provide assistance.

(U) While reports in open press do not state the KURSK sunk following an explosive event, it has yet to be publicly ruled out. A decision on how to recover the crew will reportedly be made in the morning hours of 15 August [redacted]

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MARITIME INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Tuesday, 15 August 2000

(U) RUSSIA: Submersible Operations

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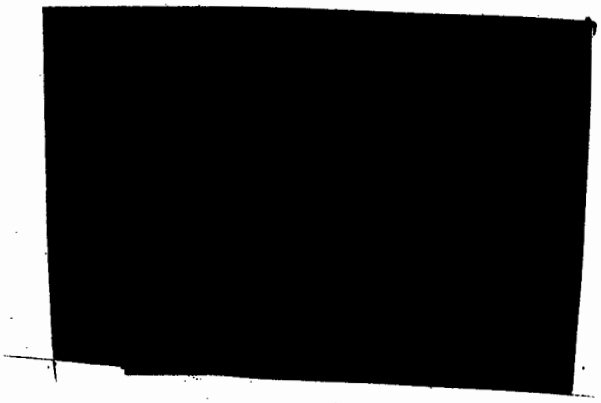
([redacted]) The MIKHAIL RUDNITSKIY Class ARS MIKHAIL RUDNITSKIY [redacted] has been operating over the disabled OSCAR II submarine, the KURSK since [redacted] August. The RUDNITSKIY is estimated to be carrying two submersible vehicles; one [redacted] meter Deep Submergence Vehicle (DSV) and a [redacted] meter Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicle (DSRV).



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[redacted] vehicle is a work vehicle first deployed in the early 1970's. The vehicle is equipped with manipulator arms for tool and object manipulation, multiple thrusters for precise maneuvering and a keel designed to allow for operations on the sea floor. The [redacted] DSV is not rescue capable, and its role in any Search and Rescue (SAR) operations would likely be limited to location, classification and possibly action as a communications relay platform.

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The [redacted] DSRV assessed to be deployed aboard the RUDNITSKIY is a third-generation rescue vehicle first observed at Sevastopol in 1986. This vehicle is equipped with tunnel thrusters for maneuvering and is assessed to be capable of performing dry personnel transfers down to a depth of 600 meters.

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(S//SI) The floating crane YD 7500 [redacted] as photographed carrying what is assessed to be the Russian 'BESTER' submersible.

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(U) DSRV onboard PK7500

(U) The "BESTER", like the [redacted] meter vehicles, was designed by the LAZURIT Central Design Bureau. This multi-purpose submersible was first observed in Severodvinsk in 1994, and was later noted in Severomorsk in 1996. The 'BESTER' is an approximately [redacted] meter DSRV capable of rescuing up to 18 people (per-trip, not including crew), at depths up to 500 meters. According to the manufacturer, the vehicle is designed to: search and survey underwater objects in an emergency using both sonar and visual means, provide life-support services in an emergency and assist in work involving the 'lifting' or salvage of a vessel.

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(S//SI) [redacted]

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(S//SI) [redacted] Press reporting suggests submersible operations began again around the new Zulu day, 16 August.

(U) In response to a 16 August request for assistance, the United Kingdoms Ministry of Defense, the LR-5 DSRV and her crew have forward-deployed to Trondheim, Norway, where they await sea-borne transportation to the SAR site. A ship is reportedly enroute, Trondheim, to pick up the team [redacted]

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MARITIME INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Tuesday, 15 August 2000

(U) RUSSIA: OSCAR II Casualty Update (15 August)

(U) Almost 80 hours after OSCAR II [redacted] estimated impact with the floor of the Southern Barents Sea, the submarine and crew remain trapped in approximately 100 meters of water. (b)(1)

(~~S//SI~~) [redacted] reported on two distinct seismic events that occurred in the Barents Sea on 12 AUG 00. The second of these events occurred at approximately 0730Z, and was of a magnitude equivalent to that of [redacted] ton explosion of TNT. [redacted] A smaller event, some [redacted] times smaller than the 0730Z event, was detected at 0728Z. According to [redacted] the two events were co-located. As of the early 0300Z hours on August 15, the possibility of an explosive event in the submarine's weapons stowage facility had not been ruled out by official Russian Navy sources in open press. (b)(1)

(U) Inclement weather continued to hinder rescue efforts throughout 14 AUG, with no attempts to evacuate the crew reported. One press report from the early 0400Z hours of 14 AUG suggested that plans to lower two diving bells to the submarine were abandoned. Russian CINC ADM Kuroyedov indicated that strong winds and current forced all the vessels with the exceptions of the PETR VELIKIY and ADMIRAL CHABANENKO from anchor overnight.

(U) Weather also reportedly interrupted communication between the KURSK and the surface rescue assets as of the mid-1000Z hours on 15 AUG 00. Apparently, noise associated with a force five storm prevented the surface ships from hearing the hull "tapping" previously used for communication.

(U) During this same period, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Klebanov, chairman of a government commission convened to investigate the KURSK incident, was quoted in Russian press as saying "there is not yet enough information for a meeting". The commission, which will "ascertain the causes and draw the necessary conclusions on the [KURSK incident]", is reportedly scheduled to meet on 17 AUG 00. Klebanov's statement could reflect a significant lack of information regarding the immediate causes of the incident on the part of the Russians.

(U) Igor Baranov, General Designer of the OSCAR II SSGN, also stated that a number of questions still surrounded the incident. He said it was not clear why the submarine's rescue buoy was not jettisoned, either manually or automatically; or why the escape chamber has not been

deployed.

(U) As of the early 1500Z hours of 15 AUG 00, rescue vessels were reportedly re-establishing their positions in the casualty zone. Press reports also cite NORFLT HQ sources as mentioning the possibility of chlorine gas accumulation resulting from battery flooding.ADM Kuroyedov stated that within two hours of 1516Z, a "rescue apparatus" would be lowered to the KURSK to attempt a rescue. Baranov also told a press conference that the "rescue bathyscaphs" used for evacuation could accommodate 15 crew. It is unclear whether he was referring to a diving bell or submersible. [redacted]

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MARITIME INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Wednesday, 16 August 2000

(U) RUSSIA: Survivability Update (Crew)

(U) Russian navy statements, including comments from CINC ADM Kuroyedov, indicate that the KURSK's oxygen supply will be exhausted on 18 AUG 00. Additionally, continued attempts to attach the KOLOKOL diving bell to the submarine have been unsuccessful due to strong underwater currents. Russian estimates that the crew will run out of oxygen on Friday, coupled with the inability to attach KOLOKOL, indicate that the submarine is not receiving any external life support. This information supports ONI's assessment of 5-7 days worth of oxygen supply. Continued reports of an acute starboard list suggest that KOLOKOL may have never been able to attach to the vessel in order to supply oxygen.

(U) Surviving crew members continue to communicate via 'tapping' on the hull, albeit with reduced frequency and strength. When asked about the fate of the crew on AUG 15, ADM Kuroyedov said: "I am not a pessimist, I am a realist."

(C) Medical concerns for the crew include nitrogen saturation (acts as an anesthetic) resulting from time spent at depth. Hypothermia is an issue based on possible temperatures within the submarine that could drop to as low as 3-4 C together with 100% humidity. In this case, much will depend on the protective garments available to the crew. Atmosphere remains the most important issue in terms of crew survivability: accumulation of [redacted] ~~flooding and/or~~ toxic fumes from electrical fires will reduce survivability further. (b)(1)

(U) Open source reporting suggests each round trip rescue dive will last 12 hours. Given a reported capacity of the rescue submersible/diving bell for up to 20 persons and a 48 hour time constraint, the maximum number of crew that could be rescued by a single escape apparatus by the Friday deadline is 80. This number will continue to fall dramatically as delays continue. Use of an additional rescue vessel could increase the crew's chances if a successful docking can be made.

(U) The first course of action after a successful docking attempt will be to pass critical life support equipment to the surviving crew, including blankets, medical supplies, food stuffs, batteries, carbon monoxide/dioxide scrubbers and individual breathing apparatuses. It is also very likely that a senior officer will be selected for rescue in order to provide details on the

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nature of the accident, status of the crew and remaining inhabitable spaces of the KURSK to rescue leaders on the surface. [redacted]

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MARITIME INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Friday, 18 August 2000

(S) RUSSIA: Seabed Orientation of OSCAR II [redacted]

(U) Since the early stages of the KURSK incident, speculative press reports have inconsistently described the submarine as having a significant list. Other open source intelligence (OSINT) suggests that KURSK is lying on an even keel.

(S) As the UK prepares to assist in rescue operations using the LR5 DSRV, the Russian Navy is reportedly being more forthcoming on the details on the submarine's orientation on the seabed to the British. [redacted]

(S) OSINT reports of a raised periscope on the downed submarine suggests that the KURSK was at or approaching periscope depth, [redacted] This would be consistent with assessed damage control procedures the crew may have been implementing [redacted]

(S) At approximately 0730Z, [redacted] a second explosive event was detected again by seismic sensors. This event is characterized as being significantly greater than the first. ONI believes this led to massive, unrecoverable flooding in the forward compartments, [redacted] analysis indicates that it would have taken KURSK approximately one to two minutes to make the 108m descent to the sea floor. According to OSINT, KURSK impacted the seabed on its keel, in the area of the second compartment. ONI believes this to be a likely scenario. Given the relatively shallow nature of the area, it is unlikely that the KURSK developed a large down angle before impacting the bottom.

(S) OSINT also states that the hull is resting on the bottom on an even keel, with a trim angle, and is subject to the local current causing the hull to sway. This type of movement has reportedly complicated Russian DSRV/diving bell operations significantly. OSINT indicates two to three knot currents in the casualty area. [redacted]

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MARITIME INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Monday, 28 August 2000

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~~(S)~~ RUSSIA: [redacted] Torpedo Possible Contributor to KURSK Sinking

(S) This report is an assessment on the plausibility of numerous recent reports involving a new torpedo associated with the KURSK incident. It is not intended to rule out other possible causes as indicated in earlier ONI reporting.

~~(FOUO)~~ Open source reporting speculates a new type of torpedo, fitted to the OSCAR II class submarine "KURSK" in 1998, contributed to the disaster that sank the submarine on 12 August 2000. This torpedo [redacted] reportedly was abandoned in the late 1980's amid safety concerns associated with the torpedo's thermal propulsion system, but recently was reportedly reintroduced to the Russian Fleet.

[redacted]

[redacted]

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(S) Aleksander Rutskoy, the Governor of the Kursk Region, stated KURSK was carrying "a new torpedo and two civilian engineers". Open source listings of the KURSK crew confirm at least one person identified as an "employee" assigned to the first compartment whereas all other crew are identified by rank. It is possible that the "civilian engineers / employee" were onboard the KURSK to monitor testing/implementation of a new torpedo.

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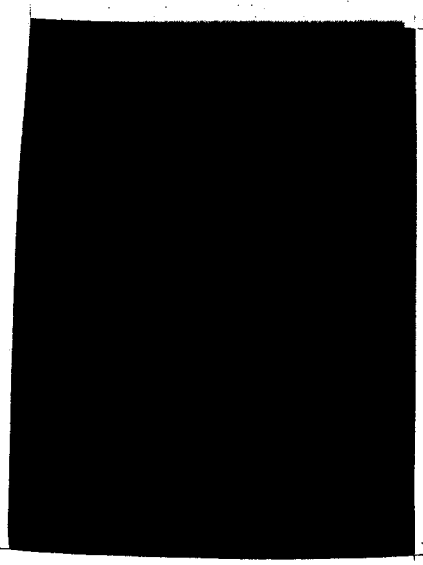
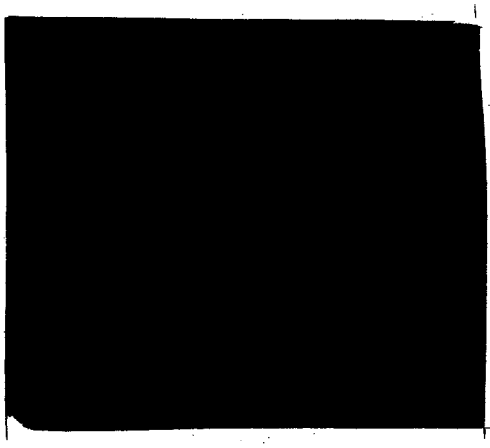
[redacted] A similar accident easily could have caused or led to the catastrophic event leading to the sinking of KURSK.

[redacted]

(S) [redacted] If the propulsion system had been initiated, the system possibly could have quickly overheated within the confines of the launch tube which may have led to an explosion.





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(U//FOUO) Open source reporting speculates that a live warshot test was conducted. Detonation of the warhead due to the reported arming modifications and/or propulsion hazards could have caused the catastrophic event leading to the sinking of the KURSK.

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