

Beat: Local

18 sailors feared dead after fire sweeps through Indian submarine

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USPA News - Eighteen Indian sailors were presumed dead Wednesday when a fire swept through a conventionally-powered submarine docked in Mumbai, causing some of its weapons to detonate in two massive explosions, defense officials said. There were no reports of survivors.

The accident occurred shortly after midnight on Wednesday when a fire broke out on the INS Sindhurakshak, a Russian-made Kilo-class diesel-electric submarine of the Indian Navy. The fire caused some of the weapons on board the vessel to detonate, resulting in two massive explosions which sent huge fireballs into the night sky. Firefighters from the Naval Dockyard and the Mumbai Fire Brigade immediately responded to the scene and were able to extinguish the fire about two hours later. "However, due to as yet unknown damage suffered as a result of the explosion, the submarine has submerged at her berth with only a portion visible above the surface," the defense ministry said. Eighteen sailors were known to be on board the submarine at the time of the accident, but officials held out little hope to find any survivors. Divers were able to pry open the main hatch of the vessel some 12 hours after the accident, although the divers were unable to immediately enter due to the dark environment and muddy water. "Efforts are on to ascertain the safety of the personnel and salvage of the submarine," the ministry added. Indian Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Devendra Kumar Joshi said the Navy was prepared for the worst case scenario with no survivors, but noted there is a small possibility that sailors could still be alive inside an air pocket or using breathing apparatus.

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