

Photos: First Images of the Lost Russian Cruiser Moskva Emerge

Purported image of Moskva on her final day afloat. Analysts suggest that the image is consistent with the vessel's configuration and Ukrainian accounts of the strike (Unknown source)

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The first images believed to be of the damaged cruiser *Moskva* began circulating on social media on Sunday, and open-source intelligence analysts suggest that the photos appear to be authentic. They match closely with previous images of *Moskva*, and the details of the scene align closely with one of the two competing accounts of the vessel's demise.

Moskva was the flagship of the Black Sea Fleet, and she was the largest surface combatant lost in action since the end of the Second World War. The Russian Navy has released very little information about the circumstances of her sinking. According to official accounts carried by Russian state media, the *Moskva* was badly damaged by an accidental fire and a magazine explosion, and later went down in rough weather while under tow. No official casualty numbers have been released.

The government of Ukraine has claimed that it hit the *Moskva* with two domestically-produced Neptune anti-ship missiles from a coastal defense battery. The Pentagon has [confirmed](#) Ukraine's account of the casualty.

After the attack (Source unknown)

If verified, the photos appear consistent with an anti-ship missile strike, according to independent open-source analysts. The most detailed image (top) appears to show two holes amidships at the waterline, just below the stacks on the port side. Significant fire damage is visible above decks, and the ship has a pronounced list to port. Black smoke marks at multiple hull penetrations near the main deck level are consistent with an internal fire running aft of the site of impact, according to analysts.

According to analyst H.I. Sutton and others, the two streams of water visible behind the cruiser may be from the monitors of a firefighting tug, which may be hidden from view by the *Moskva*'s hangar structure aft.

The weather and surface conditions appear to be mild, contrary to official Russian accounts of the loss, and the cruiser does not appear to be making way under tow. Her life rafts are missing, suggesting an evacuation had already been conducted at the time the images were taken.

Moskva's port side (Russian Navy file photo)

While the attack raises questions about the viability of Soviet-era air defense systems like those aboard *Moskva*, multiple naval analysts say that



regardless of initial cause, the vessel's ultimate sinking may reflect the preparedness of Russian Navy crews to respond to damage control scenarios.

In recent decades, U.S. Navy sailors have saved several warships that suffered similar hull damage (or potentially worse), including the USS *Cole*, USS *Stark*, USS *Samuel B. Roberts*, USS *Fitzgerald* and USS *John S. McCain*.

Casualty estimates

The extent of the casualties sustained aboard *Moskva* is not publicly known, and the Russian government has yet to release figures. However, anecdotal information suggests that the losses were not trivial. The ship had a crew complement of 510, but a recognition ceremony held (reportedly) after the vessel's loss showed a far smaller group, with analyst estimates falling in the range of 100-250 personnel present.

The video was produced by Russian state media, and its legitimacy has not been verified.

Separately, Russian language outlet Novaya Gazeta reported on a conversation with the mother of a crewmember who survived the attack. The mother [relayed](#) a story of heavy damage and loss of life, including an estimated 40 dead, a large number of severely wounded crewmembers and many more missing.

In addition, U.S.-funded publication Radio Liberty contacted the wife of a deceased crewmember, electrician Ivan Vakhrushev. She confirmed his death and said that an estimated 27 crewmembers were listed as missing.

The commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Adm. Igor Osipov, was detained by Russian state security services after the sinking, according to Ukrainian intelligence.