

Beat: Miscellaneous

Warship sinks off N. Korea's east coast, killing scores of sailors

-, 04.11.2013, 16:23 Time

USPA News - Scores of people were killed last month when at least one naval vessel sank off the eastern coast of North Korea, state-run media acknowledged on Monday. It is believed the toll could be as high as 30, but no official figures were released.

The incident happened in mid-October when submarine chaser No. 233, belonging to Korean People's Army (KPA) Navy Unit 790, sank off the country's eastern coast. It is believed the ship sank northeast of the port city of Wonsan in Kangwon province, but the exact location has not been disclosed. The state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said leader Kim Jong Un last week visited a monument for the victims of the sinking near where the unit is stationed, which is just east of Hamhung in South Hamgyong province. Photos released by the agency showed Kim and other officials laying white roses at the foot of the monument. The government did not disclose what caused the sinking last month and only said "commanding officers and sailors" of the vessel were killed. But photos of a portion of the monument showed nine clearly visible grave stones with the names and faces of the casualties, but partially visible grave stones suggest the death could be at least 30 or higher. "After receiving a report that commanding officers and sailors of submarine chaser No. 233 died while performing their combat duties in mid-October, Kim took a measure to recover all their bodies and hold a solemn funeral for them," the news agency said in a dispatch, suggesting a high death toll. The South Korean newspaper Chosun Ilbo, citing a South Korean military source, claimed not one but two naval vessels had sunk during a drill last month. It said the accidents happened days apart and added that South Korean military authorities had spotted attempts by the North's navy to salvage to ships. KCNA said Kim had instructed officials on how to create the monument, which is located in a quiet area and overlooks the sea. He also asked to be the "owner" of each grave and ordered his name to be carved on the grave stones of all those who died. "I will feel relieved a bit only when my name is carved on them," he was quoted as saying. Kim was said to be "heartbroken" for the casualties, noting the grieving parents and the women who were waiting for their husbands to come home. "He noted that he could hardly go to sleep when thinking they died at such young ages, though the defense of the country is accompanied by sacrifices," the report said. One photo showed the leader bowing in respect in front of the monument, and state-run media said all officials present observed a moment of silence for the casualties. Other photos showed Kim inspecting the monument while surrounded by about a dozen officers and military officials. "Saying that the martyrs are his comrades-in-arms and comrades, he stressed that although they died before realizing the lifetime desires of the great Generalissimos under the leadership of the supreme commander, they showed all service personnel how a soldier should carry out the order of the country through their heroic deaths," KCNA said.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1561/warship-sinks-off-n-koreas-east-coast-killing-scores-of-sailors.html>

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619