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Captain Zateyev knew that if he headed his damaged ship toward her home port, 1500 miles away on the Kola Peninsula, everyone on board would likely die en route. He also realized the contaminated ship was very close to the Norwegian island of Jan Mayen. (Follow the 180 longitude line to the place where it intersects with latitude 70. You will immediately see the island's location.)

Many of his men wanted the captain to set course for the NATO base on that island. Zateyev refused and ordered nearly all firearms on the ship to be dumped overboard—just in case anyone decided to question his authority.

Before the naval exercises, Zateyev had noticed a chart he wasn't supposed to see. It referenced a group of Soviet diesel subs that would take part in the exercises. They were scheduled to be at the Iceland-Faeroe Gap. What if those subs were still there? If so, they would be able to rescue the men onboard *K-19*. But Zateyev knew, if he tried to find those ships and failed, he would lose precious time:

*I remembered that during my pre-exercise briefing by the fleet commander, I'd happened to notice that his chart showed a screen of opposing diesel subs at the Iceland-Faeroe Gap. (I wasn't really supposed to know about them, since our *K-19* was on the "Blue" side, while the screen of diesel subs was "Red.") If those boats are still there, I thought (and I didn't know their exact coordinates), then we might still have a chance. But what if they'd been repositioned or even withdrawn altogether? (*K-19*, page 132.)*

With her primary communications system also non-functioning, the stricken sub steamed south for ten hours, on the surface of the North Atlantic. (Follow the North Pole longitude line—180—to its intersection with the Arctic Circle latitude line. You will then see where *K-19* was headed.) The crew saw no other ships.

Zateyev thought he had made a mistake:

*According to my figures, by now we should have been in the diesel submarines' operating area. But no one had responded to our signals. Had I bet wrong? With a heavy heart I ordered the helm to reverse our course and then withdrew to my cabin. Yet not two minutes later I heard a report: "Silhouette bearing 270 degrees!" (*K-19*, page 135.)*

The "silhouette" was *S-270*, a Soviet diesel ("Project 613 - Whiskey Class") submarine commanded by Captain Third Rank Jan Sverbilov. At two hundred yards away, however, the rescue ship's instruments detected increasing levels of radiation. When the eight most seriously injured men were transferred to *S-270*, radiation levels rose to 9 roentgens per hour. Even after their contaminated clothes were thrown overboard, the radiation levels still read 0.5 roentgen per hour.

The injured men had become radioactive themselves.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/SAVING-THE-K-19-CREW-K19-Widowmaker>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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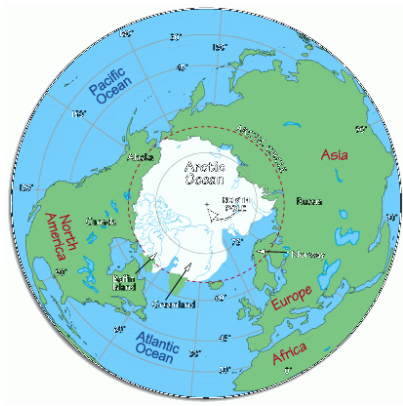


Map of Kola Peninsula

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