

# US submarine torpedoes Iranian warship in Indian Ocean, 80 killed

Attack marks first US sinking of an enemy ship by torpedo since World War II



GALLE: An injured Iranian sailor receives treatment at the Karapitiya hospital in Galle on March 4, 2026 after his frigate, IRIS Dena sank off Sri Lanka's coast. — AFP

WASHINGTON: A US submarine sank an Iranian warship in the Indian Ocean, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Wednesday, touting the strike as evidence of America's global reach in its war on Iran. "An American submarine sunk an Iranian warship that thought it was safe in international waters. Instead, it was sunk by a torpedo," Hegseth told reporters. Sri Lankan authorities said they had rescued 32 crew members from the frigate IRIS Dena but that 148 other sailors were missing, with hopes low that any more would be found. Sri Lanka's deputy foreign minister said at least 80 people were killed in the attack on the frigate, which was heading back to Iran from an eastern Indian port.

Hegseth called the attack "quiet death" and the first US sinking of an enemy ship by torpedo since

World War II. "Like in that war," he said, "we are fighting to win." The Iranian vessel had taken part in a naval exercise held in the Bay of Bengal from a February 18 to 25, according to the drill's website.

The Pentagon says one of the main aims of the US-Zionist entity war against Iran, launched Saturday, is to wipe out the country's navy. Sri Lanka's foreign minister, Vijitha Herath, told parliament that the rescued Iranians were rushed to the main hospital in the island's south while two navy craft and a plane were deployed to search for others.

The frigate issued a distress call at dawn on Wednesday and within less than an hour a rescue vessel reached the area about 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of the southern port of Galle, the minister said. The frigate had completely sunk and only an



A US Navy submarine fires on and sinks an Iranian warship in the Indian Ocean in this frame grab from a video by the US Department of Defense.

oil patch remained when the navy rescue boats approached. "We are keeping up a search, but we don't know yet what happened to the rest of the crew," a Sri Lankan defense official told AFP.

Sri Lankan navy spokesman Buddhika Sampath said their operation was in line with Sri Lanka's maritime obligations. "We responded to the distress call under our international obligations, as this is within our search and rescue area in the Indian Ocean," Sampath told AFP. "We have found a few bodies from the area where the ship had gone down," Sampath said.

Sampath said boats that reached the location observed only an oil slick, adding that the incident took place outside Sri Lankan waters but Colombo was still committed to providing support. "We are

hopeful we can rescue more people and will continue (operations) until we are sure," Sampath said.

Sri Lanka has remained neutral and repeatedly urged dialogue to resolve the conflict in the Middle East. Just over a million Sri Lankans are employed in the Middle East and they are a key source of foreign exchange for the country emerging from its worst economic meltdown in 2022. Both Sri Lanka's navy and the air force said they were not releasing footage of the rescue because it involved the military of another state. Police stepped up security outside the Galle hospital as the wounded Iranians were brought there by the local navy. The Iranian Ambassador in Colombo, Alireza Delkhosh, was not immediately available for comment. — Agencies