

Solent Coalition Against Nuclear Ships

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PRESS RELEASE

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Nuclear submarine to use Southampton Docks again

Date: FRIDAY 5TH DECEMBER 2008

Time: Around 12 noon

Location: BERTH 38. DOCK GATE 4

A nuclear powered submarine, HMS Trafalgar is due into Southampton Docks on Friday morning, before the Sotonsafe Nuclear Safety Plan is due to be tested on 14th January 2009. All emergency services and the City Council are on standby in case there is a problem with this 27 year-old submarine. The 5-day Public Relations Exercise and recruitment drive will be undermined by Trafalgar's recent nuclear accident at Devonport Dockyard in Plymouth and the difficulty in protecting people in the Southampton area and beyond in the event of a nuclear accident.

Last month, the Navy tested its efficiency in delivering Potassium Iodate Tablets (PITS) in Hythe, in preparation for this PR Operation. The tablets are supposed to be taken before exposure in order to block the thyroid gland from absorbing radiation. The Exercise by Naval Ratings escorted by Council Monitors was observed by SCANS who report:

“Based on this exercise, SCANS considers it highly unlikely that everyone down-wind of the submarine would be reached by PITS distribution teams in the event of a real radiation emergency, when neither SCC staff or the police would accompany the naval ratings.”

“The distribution of preventative medication has medical implications and should not be delivered by sailors. This charade is a waste of council

resources of time, energy and money.”

SCANS Report on Hythe Exercise Nov.08 ^

Trafalgar in worst nuclear leak since 80s

The most serious leak of radioactive liquid for 23 years into the River Tamar in Plymouth from HMS Trafalgar was eventually reported four days after the event on 7th November when more than 61 gallons (280 litres) of toxic coolant poured into the River Tamar from a burst hose. Secrecy and bland reassurances are the hallmark of the MoD, leaving the public wondering what they haven't been told and what may go wrong next.

See: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/politics/defence/3441505/Submarine-in-worst-nuclear-leak-since-80s.html>

Background

Use of the Docks by nuclear submarines was stopped in 2000 but resumed in 2006 despite repeated objections to the Royal Navy by Southampton City Council and SCANS.

HMS Trafalgar, which will be decommissioned next year after 25 years service, was involved in another safety incident in 2002 when it ran aground off the Isle of Skye. Two years later 11 crewmen refused to sail over safety fears in the boat's nuclear reactor and safety equipment. The Navy is also experiencing a worrying shortfall of submariners able to run a nuclear reactor.

This year the Navy abandoned the term “Z Berth” for nuclear submarine berths. This was a quick way to indicate to everyone, particularly the emergency services that a Berth was a nuclear risk site. The innocuous term “operational submarine berth” has been adopted, presumably to make it less alarming, but giving less warning to everyone.

Safety Regulation

UK submarines are based on an American design and covered by the 1958 US/UK Mutual Defence Agreement on secrecy preventing the HSE nuclear regulators or anyone else from knowing the relevant data of the submarine reactors and pipework. The condition of the actual reactor of each boat is also secret. The amount of radiation that could be released is based on the amount of spent fuel in the reactor and that depends on the speed, depth and distance travelled by the submarine. Without this information,

the exercise cannot be accurately accessed - only notionally so.

*“The 2006 Exercise was a shambles. Over 60 problems were identified, some of them serious. The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of the HSE reported that there was a problem distinguishing between people who should be evacuated and those who should take shelter. There is no need to put this incredibly busy commercial dock and the public at risk, when naval bases at Portsmouth and Plymouth are near at hand for nuclear submarines.”*David Hoadley, Chair of Solent Coalition Against Nuclear Ships

^ SCANS Report available. Please email di@nuclearinfo.org

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