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Wednesday, 22 November, 2000, 11:37 GMT

Gibraltar sub to be told to leave



HMS Tireless has been docked at Gibraltar since May. The government in Gibraltar is expected to ask Britain to withdraw the nuclear submarine HMS Tireless from its waters.

A statement is expected to be issued on Wednesday outlining why the authorities in the British colony feel the nuclear-powered vessel should not be repaired there.

The submarine has been docked at the British port in Gibraltar since May after problems were discovered with her cooling system.

All 12 of the Royal Navy's nuclear hunter killer submarines were taken out of service when cracks were discovered in Tireless's cooling system.

Since then only HMS Triumph has been able to return to normal service.

Concerns over the safety of the vessels have not diminished in Spain, despite assurances from Tony Blair and the Ministry of Defence.

Radiation leak

Local government representatives from Spanish towns near Gibraltar have all expressed anxiety about a possible radiation leak from the submarine.

The situation was inflamed on Sunday when the Sunday Times newspaper claimed Tireless had been minutes away from a "Chernobyl-style meltdown".

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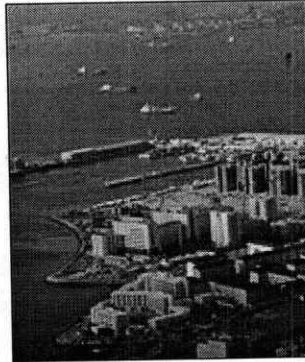
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Plans have been submitted for repairs to be carried out in Gibraltar, but they are opposed by anti-nuclear protestors and several politicians.



Repairs scheduled at Gibraltar docks

The Spanish and British Governments have already disagreed over the extent of the threat posed by *Tireless*.

Independent experts who visited the submarine are believed to have told the authorities in Gibraltar that repair work should not be done there.

As a British colony the Ministry of Defence can overrule any decision taken locally. But doing so would further inflame public opinion against Britain.

A spokesman for the Gibraltar Government said a statement is due to be issued on Wednesday.

The Ministry of Defence has refused to comment on the situation until it knows what Gibraltar has decided.

Already legal moves have begun to prevent the work being carried out in Gibraltar and local trade unions have threatened to boycott the port.

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