

# Navy starts giving locations of submarines to fishermen

By Christine Cessford

THE Royal Navy breaks its silence on submarine activities in the Clyde for the first time today, when safety procedures to protect fishing boats come into force.

Fishermen will be told where submerged submarine operations are taking place after talks earlier this month between representatives from the navy and Clyde Fishermen's Association.

The location of submerged submarine operations during a 12-hour period will be relayed from the naval base at Faslane to the coastguard, who will broadcast the information to fishermen every four hours.

Sea areas in the Firth, including Loch Long, Loch Fyne and Holy Loch, have been subdivided into sectors to implement the notification scheme. A navy spokesman said fishermen had been supplied with maps explaining the sectors.

The safety procedures were agreed between fishermen's representatives and the armed forces minister, Archie

Hamilton, after the nets of the trawler Antares were snagged by the hunter-killer submarine HMS Trenchant. The incident claimed the lives of the four-man crew of the Antares.

The secretary of the fishermen's association, Patrick Stewart, said yesterday it had been a rush to get everything in place and notify fishermen of the arrangements.

With only one more week of fishing before the break for the festive season, and the navy preparing to reduce submarine activities up to Christmas, the week would be a useful trial period and enable fine tuning of the safety measures to take place.

As part of the agreement with the fishermen, the navy last week began testing an electronic device, or pinger, which would alert a submerged submarine to a trawler's fishing gear.

A River-class minesweeper, HMS Ribble, a fleet tender and a submarine similar to the

Trenchant were used in the two-day trials to ensure the pinger's signal could be picked up at every angle. The results were being analysed, and while it was too early to know the outcome, it was understood the submarine picked up the signal five miles away, said a spokesman.

Meanwhile, the navy responded yesterday to allegations in the *Scotland on Sunday* newspaper that four standing instructions were disregarded by the trainee commander-in-charge of the Trenchant at the time of the Antares incident.

The spokesman said of the article: "Unless *Scotland on Sunday* are running their own board of inquiry, I don't know how they have quite got it."

A naval board of inquiry would investigate if the regulations were breached, recommend ways of tightening them up if necessary and "start pointing the finger to recommend court martial or otherwise," said the spokesman.

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