

# Submarine knew it had hit gear, says Antares report

By Graeme Stewart

THE SUBMARINE involved in the sinking of the fishing vessel Antares realised it had struck fishing gear, but believed it belonged to another trawler which was safe, an interim report into the tragedy has revealed.

However, the submarine operating in the Firth of Clyde and commanded by a Submarine Command School duty captain under assessment, was unable to raise other fishing vessels in the area by radio to confirm the situation.

It was not until seven hours after the incident on 22 November that it was realised the Carradale-based Antares and her four-man crew were missing, the report discloses.

The details of the sinking, including several previously unknown facts, have been revealed in the interim report by the Marine Accident Investigation Branch, one of three investigations.

Last night, a Scottish fishermen's leader said the details raised important questions which demanded answers.

Patrick Stewart, secretary of the Clyde Fishermen's Association, said: "It seems that the system under which submarines are operating is not sufficiently developed to have taught commanding officers of submarines the range of options which were available if they snagged fishing gear," he said.

The report explains how the Trenchant was on a Submarine Command School assessment course known as a "Perisher" when the tragedy occurred.

The report says that one

exercise ended at 2am, when the submarine's captain and the teacher retired to the wardroom to discuss the performance of the duty captain, who had just finished his assessment exercise.

At 2:17am a report was received that the submarine's forward sonar equipment had made contact with something, and the duty captain ordered a turn to port. Soon after that, the crew inside the submarine



Patrick Stewart: turning may have been fatal mistake

heard noises indicating they had made contact with steel objects.

The submarine then was taken to periscope depth and two fishing boats were seen at about 02:38.

The report goes on: "Trenchant then surfaced and a length of wire rope and some chain was discovered caught round the fore part of a small dome on the forward casing. The port section of wire, with considerable weight on it, led aft into the water."

Assessing the report, Mr

Stewart suggested the fatal mistake could have been the duty captain's decision to turn his submarine to port after it had come into contact with an unknown object.

"The significance of that is, of course, that the fishing vessel had all that gear behind her and if you turn a submarine to the left when a fishing vessel is turning right, you go straight into the gear."

But, he said, the most remarkable fact was that the submarine thought it had sighted the fishing vessel involved and that it was satisfied it was safe, although it had been unable to contact the fishing vessel.

The report reveals that the Faslane submarine base informed Clyde coastguard at 4:10 that morning that a submarine had snagged a trawl.

It was not until 8:47am that the Clyde Fishermen's Association realised there was cause for concern and almost an hour later before it was reported that the Antares appeared to be missing.

The four men who died were Jamie Russell, 33, skipper, and Douglas Campbell, 20, both of Carradale on Kintyre, Stewart Campbell, 29, of Campbeltown, and William Martindale, 24, of Carradale, whose body has still not been recovered.

□ A memorial service for the six crewmen lost in the Premier tragedy off Shetland will take place next Friday in Hopeman Parish Church. The bereaved relatives decided a service should be held after a decision was taken not to salvage the Premier to attempt to retrieve any bodies still inside.

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