

Swedes blamed for sub collision

From Gill Dwyer in Stockholm

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Soviet officials have blamed Sweden for the collision between the Swedish surveillance vessel, Orion, and a Soviet minesweeper east of the island of Gotland last week.

Before the incident, Orion was monitoring and filming the first Baltic exercise of a Soviet Kilo class submarine from a distance of 800 to 900 yards. It ignored warning flags on the minesweeper, the Swedish marine attache was informed in Moscow on Friday.

The Orion commander, Mr Bjorn Eklund, maintained that the signals were confusing. Sweden might protest to Moscow.

The revelation that one of the Soviet Union's six Kilo submarines has made a debut in the Baltic has awakened interest in military circles. The others are stationed in the Pacific and Arctic oceans. These large submarines are believed

to be potential carriers of nuclear-tipped cruise missiles apparently being developed by the Soviet Union.

These missiles could be directed at Britain, Norway or Denmark, according to Mr Alan Din, a researcher at the Stockholm International Police Research Institute. It is thought that Moscow allowed the exercise to be discovered to provoke public opposition to the cruise missile arms race.

An advantage of basin-cruise missiles in the Baltic is that the submarines could be hidden in the Swedish archipelago in time of crisis. Of further concern to Sweden is that Soviet cruise missile would probably cross Swedish air space and, according to Swedish neutrality policy would have to be shot down.

The first Kilo submarines observed in 1982, appeared to be fitted for launching mini-submarines. These are believed to have intruded into Swedish waters.

Nuclear sub sinking kept secret, says MP

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A SOVIET nuclear submarine sank off the Faroe Islands just over 15 years ago, yet no British Government has acknowledged the fact, an MP claimed yesterday.

Mr Tam Dalyell, Labour member for Linlithgow and a member of the party's national executive, has written to Mr George Younger, Defence Secretary, about the accident, which is recorded in an obscure table in the May issue this year of the authoritative journal, Navy International.

He said the submarine

apparently had an internal fire in April or May, 1970, and was scuttled by the crew to prevent the fire from reaching the reactor compartment.

Mr Dalyell has asked Mr Younger whether the Ministry of Defence accepts that such an accident took place, why no reference was made to it, what steps are being taken to monitor radiation, either from reactors or sunken weapons, whether the exact location of the scuttled ship is known, and what information is being made public about radiation.

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"We will be raising the question of adherence by naval personnel to these instructions, whether or not they all have to be obeyed to the letter," O'Neill said.

The Clyde Fishermen's Association secretary, Patrick Stewart, said last night that his organisation did not wish to prejudge the outcome of the three inquiries into the sinking, but maintained that his members would require a full explanation of whether the Trenchant had breached the navy's rules.

"Apart from those questions, the most important matter to be resolved is why the commanding officer of the submarine, the Royal Navy and the coastguard did not make the assumption that a fishing vessel had been lost as a result of the snagging," Stewart said.

A secret naval board of inquiry is underway, a Department of Transport investiga-

tion is to be held and eventually a Fatal Accident Inquiry will take place. The results of the navy's investigation are expected before Christmas.

Meanwhile, new rules governing operations of submerged submarines in the Clyde come into operation tomorrow. Thrashed out at a meeting between the navy and the Clyde fishermen at the Faslane submarine base eight days ago, the rules have been designed to minimise the dangers to fishing vessels.

They mark a breakthrough in relations between the two parties, providing for fishermen to be warned when submerged submarines are passing through the Clyde. They also instruct that as a submarine passes from one sector of the firth to another, it must surface and broadcast where it is, where it is going and how long it expects to take.

There are doubts, however, that the agreement goes far enough. Last night the Celtic League, a pressure group that monitors the loss of boats in strange circumstances, said the

new code of conduct was nothing new. Assistant secretary Bernard Moffatt called on the Navy to end the use of designated submarine exercise areas in the Clyde approaches and the Irish Sea.

The fears have been fueled by the loss last Thursday of fishing gear by the Northern Irish boat, the Green Eagle, which was fishing five miles south-west of the Mull of Kintyre — an area excluded from the new rules.

After the Green Eagle lost its gear, the crew saw a US submarine on the surface heading into the distance. The skipper, Preston Scott, maintains that the submarine was around 400 yards from his boat but the US navy is adamant that the two came no closer than 2,000 yards and the submarine could not have been responsible for snagging the fishing gear.

A US Navy spokesman said yesterday that the Green Eagle's nets were snagged at the bottom, so could not have been damaged by the submarine, which had kept to the surface.

its Holy Loch base, the authorities have undertaken a full inquiry.

Also, Scottish Labour George Foulkes has demanded the sacking of the armed forces minister, Archie Hamilton, who said on Friday, that the funeral of one of the 12 crewmen, that fisher blamed submarines for an unexplained incident.

● SNP leader Alex Salmond has accused the Scottish Secretary Ian Lang of supporting a scheme which, claims he would place fishermen in danger.

He has written to Lang asking for clarification on whether the government backs or opposes a proposal to conserve fish stocks by forcing boats to tie up for 10 days in a row each month.

Fishermen have argued that the proposals could lead to boats being tied up during favourable weather and then forced out in inclement conditions.