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Monday, October 16, 2000



Concerned Parents Voice Their Disapproval Over Report

Following the publication of the Safety report on HMS Tireless by the Gibraltar Government, the Concerned Parents have issued strongly worded statement to the Gibraltar Government in response to the findings in the report.

The following is the statement issued by the Concerned Parents:-

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STATEMENT FROM CONCERNED PARENTS DATED 15TH OCTOBER 2000

EL UNICO SITIO DONDE PUEDES HABLAR LIBREMENTE!!

THE ONLY PLACE YOU CAN TALK FREELY!!

DIGANOS QUE PIENSAS GIVE US YOUR OPINION



Although we are reluctant to simply condemn the safety report immediately it is published, we are extremely concerned that various factors have been apparently ignored or conveniently glossed over. This has been achieved in a very smooth and professional manner but, we believe, continues to underestimate the potential threat to Gibraltar, the environment and her people. It is difficult here, to detail each and every point in the safety report which needs addressing, but we shall focus on some of the main issues.

- Firstly we would like to complain formally to the Govt. for not having made public this report in the matter of days it said it would publish.

- We are shocked to learn that the independent nuclear panel of experts has not been anywhere near the submarine, reactor, or for that matter the berth and facilities admitted in the report. That they have based their expert opinion primarily on documents produced by the MoD to satisfy their own regulatory panel.

- There is no-one on the Panel with emergency response planning background

- The GibPubsafe Document has been shown to be based on the DevPubSafe which has been roundly criticised by independent experts.

- Regarding the use of a Z berth for repairs to a nuclear submarine we discover in the report that the MoD are citing a classified regulatory document, (Ref 33), which allows them to carry out repairs if sanctioned by the Naval Nuclear Regulatory Panel. The Gibraltar Public Safety Scheme (ref 29) does not include the possibility of such repairs and this discrepancy is picked up by the

of such repairs and this discrepancy is picked up by the Panel. It makes a farce of the MoD's policy on berth designation - It is also of concern that any miscalculation of the damage incurred by Tireless and repairs required will also add further delay and a longer stay by the submarine in Gibraltar. We are also advised by the experts that the approximated total stay of Tireless without any delays will be about 200 days, and will absorb the entire quota of recreational sub visits for one year!! Whether this means we shall be able to turn away further visiting recreational submarines for the next 12 months, as they try and enter our harbour, will remain to be seen!

- The experts believe that without having seen the precise nature of the crack, or verified the suitability of the berth and effectiveness of the safety plans, there is no greater risk posed to Gibraltar than that posed by the visiting subs. We cannot understand how they arrive at these convenient conclusions. While we respect their experience and knowledge, we also see inconsistencies in what we are being told. The fact that Tireless was in a major refit just a few months ago and had 200 million pounds spent on her, and she still suffered a problem, the underlying cause of which has still not been diagnosed, is not very reassuring. The admission by the MoD this weekend that their initial view on the size and position of the crack was "wrong", can only reinforce the sense that further problems and potential hazards still remain a distinct possibility, particularly when the reactor is started up again and undergoes power range testing.

We have been separately informed by nuclear experts that this is the most hazardous stage of the operation and while every precaution will no doubt be taken by the MoD at every stage of repair on the weld, the fact remains that Tireless suffered an accident after a meticulous and expensive overhaul which failed before even six months was up!!

There are several questionable areas in the report which we shall be commenting on and requesting answers to by the MoD and our Govt. and the panel of experts.

Basically the issue of a potential explosion aboard Tireless has not been explored and commented on. Instead the issue has been excluded from detailed comment on grounds of high improbability. However, the public of Gibraltar have a right to know what would happen if an explosion were to occur, and how the contingency plans would kick into motion, as they are certainly not covered by the GibPubSafe.

The Panel has noted that the Mod risk assessments for HMS Tireless were based on studies originally prepared for the environment of the Naval Base at Devonport, but is satisfied that they can reasonably be applied to Gibraltar. How can two such different environments be catered for in the same reasonable way? Who is gauging the amount of reasonable risk we should be

gauging the amount of reasonable risk we should be exposed to? It appears that the moving of the submarine would be most hazardous, to the submarine we assume. They also comment that the sub could become stranded on the European coast. It is at this very moment!! The Panel agreed that a wrecked submarine would pose a significantly greater threat to the environment and local population than one berthed at Gibraltar. However, the panel also noted that the MoD had not quantified the risks to submarine and crew and possibly the European coastal communities in moving the sub back to the UK.

We conclude by stating that while we appreciate that the Mod have satisfied our govt. and the panel of experts with the information they have provided, they have not succeeded in proving to us, the ordinary Gibraltarian, of the prevailing risks while these repairs are being carried out. We shall be writing to our Govt. and the Panel with questions we expect to be answered and we shall not rest until we get the information we want and a full and workable emergency response plan in place. Does anyone, for instance, know what the Naval Dockyard siren sounds like??

for concerned parents

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