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Exclusive - Documents Reveal Inadequate Contingency Plans

Documents recently leaked to Iberia News which were commissioned by outside experts as part of a consultative brief for a UK institute reveal very serious consequences in the case of a nuclear accident occurring.

The documents from an undisclosed source is based on an assessment of the emergency contingency plans if a "primary circuit coolant accident (LOCA) in the reactor compartment of a Royal Navy nuclear powered submarine when in the approaches to, manoeuvring within or berthed in the Dockyard basin" took place.

According to the document which extensively covers all aspects of a nuclear incident depending on the severity of the loss of coolant and the position of the breach in the primary circuit, the incident from initiation to rupture of the hull containment and release of radioactivity to the atmosphere could be completed in several minutes.

The document further indicates that in the extreme accident scenario it refers to the effectiveness of sheltering and iodine prophylactic measures would be swamped by the magnitude of the problem and the only option would be to evacuate the areas exposed.

For such a scenario to occur the document states that both the reactor primary circuit and the fuel cladding system of the nuclear fuel within the reactor core must fail, permitting the radioactivity to spread into the submarine reactor compartment.

The secondary containment area would also have to be breached to enable the radioactive gases and vapours to escape into the atmosphere. The secondary containment area is acknowledged to be robust enough, although evidence that damage by plant equipment has been known to provide for a radioactive release route.

The document concludes that under such an accident scenario UK contingency plans are not adequate enough since the deteriorating radiological situation could require evacuation within a short period of time.