US admits sub broke fishing guidelines

By Denny Macgee

A US submarine commander and a senior officer have been disciplined after an incident last year in which a fishing vessel was almost dragged under when her net was snagged by a submerged submarine.

The US navy yesterday admitted that the submarine, the USS Sturgeon, had not complied with the Royal Navy's fishing vessel policy at the time of the incident.

The policy, which includes a 4,000-yard exclusion zone between fishing vessels and submerged submarines, was brought in after the Antares tragedy. Four fishermen died when their vessel was dragged down by the nuclear submarine HMS Trenchant off Arran.

The US navy had held a full-scale inquiry into the incident in which the nuclear powered submarine snagged the fishing gear of the Ulster fishing vessel Lupina C last September.

The Lupina C almost sank as she was dragged backwards in the North Channel between Scotland and Northern Ireland for eight minutes. Her crew said they were saved only when her fishing gear snapped and the vessel, which was almost submerged, sprang to the surface.

A US navy statement said that though the submarine had been operating in an area of the Irish Sea consigned to her, preparations to operate there had been insufficient.

It added that it was also apparent that the Sturgeon "did not operate in a prudent manner" in that she did not comply with the special requirements of the Royal Navy's fishing vessel policy.

The US navy had agreed to pay £64,386 in settlement of the claim for damage and the loss of fishing profits by the owners of the Lupina C.

The statement said that "appropriate disciplinary action" had been imposed on the commanding officer of the submarine and the officer of the deck.

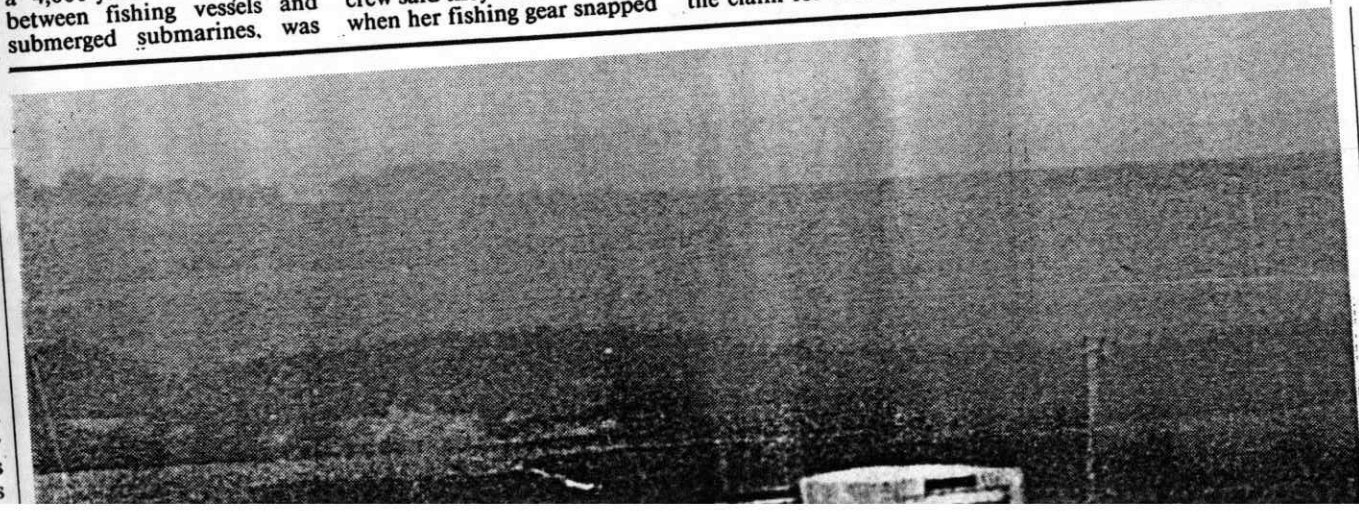
In the interest of the safety of submarines and fishing vessels, the findings of the inquiry would be shared with the Marine Accident Investigation Branch of the United Kingdom Ministry of Transport.

At the time of the incident last year, Cmdre John Trewby, commander of the Faslane submarine base on the Clyde, said he believed some of the guidelines brought in to prevent such incidents appeared not to have been followed.

The findings of the US navy inquiry vindicate those comments, which caused some surprise in naval circles at the time.

A Royal Navy spokesman at Faslane welcomed the fact that their US counterparts had been candid about the matter.

It showed that the rules which had been introduced after the Antares tragedy were good ones and it was a breach of them which caused the near tragedy involving the Lupina C.



Mother Teresa greeted by 2,000

MOTHER Teresa of Calcutta made an emotional visit to one of Northern Ireland's most deprived areas yesterday and told 2,000 people who gathered to see her that she prayed every day for peace in the province.

The frail 83-year-old Nobel Peace Prize winner was

NEWS DIGEST

Shell adds 9p to price of a gallon

SHELL last night increased its petrol prices by about 9p a gallon on most grades of fuel, **writes Frank Frazer.**

The company said that its maximum selling price for four-star petrol would increase from 249.6p to 258.7p while unleaded fuel would rise from 226.9p to 236p a gallon.

Shell expects that the prices will match those already charged by competitors in most areas. David Pittet, general manager of the firm's retail division, said it had held the 13.6p a gallon cut made earlier in the year to give motorists as low a price as possible during two bank holiday weekends, but in a tough market place, the time was now right to increase prices.

Police find man's teeth in ashes

TEETH found among human remains in the ashes of a huge bonfire yesterday gave murder squad detectives a breakthrough in the hunt for a couple who vanished five