

Safety blunders revealed in Antares sinking

EXCLUSIVE

By Steve Briggs and Bill Mackintosh

THE Devonport-based submarine HMS Trenchant ignored four naval standing instructions before and after the sinking of the fishing boat Antares in the Firth of Clyde three weeks ago, an investigation by *Scotland on Sunday* has revealed.

The Navy confirmed last night that despite the blunders, the trainee commander-in-charge when Trenchant became entangled in the fishing boat's gear who was in the final stages of the 21-week Perisher command examination, was judged to have been successful and passed the course. In normal circumstances the newly-qualified officer would be assigned to duty as second-in-command of a nuclear-powered submarine.

The submarine ignored standing instructions issued to commanders in May which say that, except when it is unavoidable for reasons of safety, submarines should not come within one nautical mile (2,000 yards) of fishing boats. When that is unavoidable, the orders say the submarine should normally rise to periscope depth to enable a visual appraisal of the hazards ahead.

After a suspected incident the submarine should immediately surface, firing white smoke candles as she rises to warn vessels of what she is doing. After surfacing, submarine commanders are told they must make contact with either the damaged vessel, or, if she cannot be identified, the nearest vessel.

On all these counts the Trenchant is believed to have

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failed to comply with the instructions, described in a covering letter as "mandatory standard operating procedure".

Last night, Labour's defence spokesman, Martin O'Neill MP, said that if the allegations were true they underlined the importance of following such instructions exactly.

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SCOTLAND ON SUNDAY 10/12/90

Safety proposals 'not the answer'

By Denny Macgee

AS investigations began last night into fresh allegations of an incident involving a submarine and a fishing vessel off Scotland's West coast, a Northern Ireland fishermen's leader cast doubts on a new safety arrangement between the Royal Navy and Clyde fishermen due to come into effect on Monday.

According to the arrangement, drawn up after the Antares tragedy three weeks ago in which four men died after their vessel was dragged to the bottom of the Firth of Clyde by HMS Trenchant, Clyde fishermen will be given advance notice of submarine movements in the area.

However, only hours after the latest claims, Dick James, chief executive of the Northern Ireland Fish Producers' Association, said that he was not convinced that the arrangements were the answer.

Financial pressures, he

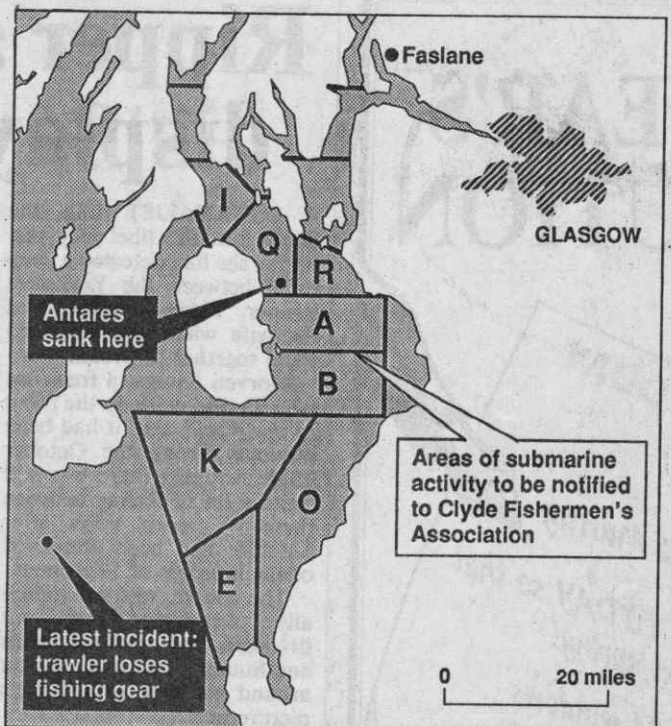
claimed, could mean skippers continuing to fish in an area rather than lift their gear even if notified of a submarine's presence.

The only answer he said, was "the cessation of submerged operations by submarines in areas of extensive fishing activity".

The NIFPA, he said, had been calling for that for many years.

Claims from the skipper of the Bangor-based fishing vessel the Green Eagle that his nets had been snagged by a US Navy submarine off the Mull of Kintyre late on Thursday night yesterday prompted Scottish MPs to call for the extension of the Clyde safety plan.

The Argyll and Bute Liberal Democrat MP, Ray Michie, and George Foulkes, Labour MP for the Ayrshire constituency of Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, both called for assurances that not only British, but American



The grid system devised by the Navy to inform fishermen of the location of submarine activities in the Firth of Clyde

and other NATO submarines would be covered by the agreement and that it should be extended to include all areas where fishing takes place around the Scottish coastline. Labour's fishing spokes-

man, Brian Wilson, echoed the call for an extension to the geographical area covered by the agreement.

"It makes no sense that such an agreement covers only the Firth of Clyde," he said.

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