

Russia offers to save sub stuck in Gibraltar

By **Stephen Naysmith**

THE confusion over the future of the UK's damaged nuclear submarine, HMS Tireless, which is currently berthed in Gibraltar, has taken a new twist with an offer of help from a Russian-owned salvage company.

The MoD, under pressure from residents of Gibraltar who have demonstrated against plans to repair Tireless on the rock, has been offered a way out by Belgium-based salvage company Dockwise, who have offered to transport the crippled submarine back to Britain for repair.

Spokesman Mario Kessens told the Sunday Herald that the Russian vessel, Trans-shelf, which Dockwise represents, could transport Tireless and get the MoD off the hook.

"The Trans-shelf arrives in Gibraltar this week for refuelling," he said. "It has been suggested the MoD could use this ship to transport HMS Tireless and we believe it is possible.

"The MoD are well aware of our capabilities. We can do it.

We are waiting to hear back from them."

He said the Russian involvement was timely given British involvement in attempts to rescue sailors on the doomed Kursk nuclear submarine. "Since the English helped out the Russians with their sub, this might be a chance to reciprocate the favour."

The MoD are meeting with experts appointed by the Gibraltar government in a bid to convince Gibraltar's chief minister that repairs could take place there safely, but denies any discussions are taking place with Dockwise about alternative arrangements.

But, John Ainslie, spokesman for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, said there was still deep concern about the risks of repair in Gibraltar.

"The Trans-shelf plan looks feasible. Putting it on this ship would appear to be something the MoD should at least have looked at," he said.

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