

EA95434



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**LEAK: Reactor problem may mean months in Gibraltar**

# Sub faces long wait for repairs

DEVONPORT submariners might be stranded in Gibraltar for months, the Ministry of Defence has admitted.

Stricken nuclear-powered submarine HMS Tireless has been alongside in the Mediterranean port since mid-May, when she pulled out of exercises after it was found a small amount of radioactive coolant had leaked into the sea.

Today the MoD said it was unable to tell waiting Plymouth families when their loved ones would be home.

A team of staff and engineers from the Devonport-based Second Submarine Squadron are in Gibraltar working on the submarine's reactor, but no timescale for the repair work has been made public.

An MoD spokesman said: "A decision was made to carry out the work in Gibraltar.

"There was an option to bring her back and fix her in Devonport, but for op-

by **SUSIE BONIFACE**  
Defence Reporter

erational reasons it was decided it would be better to repair her there."

The spokesman added it was normal practice for submarine crews to be put up in local hotels when in port if there was no military accommodation available.

She said: "It was recognised that fixing the boat in Gibraltar might be marginally more expensive, and that expense was predominantly going to be on the cost of providing hotel accommodation for the crew, because of the cramped conditions on board.

### Benefits

"There were significant operational benefits to doing the work in Gibraltar but I can't tell you what they are because we don't disclose operational matters when we're talking about submarines." Tireless had been taking part in the

Navy's global deployment Naval Task Group 2000 when her problems were discovered.

Five of the seven Devonport-based nuclear submarines are in their home port undergoing refits and updates. Tireless' leak means only HMS Triumph, which was exercising in the Arabian Gulf in March, is operational.

The MoD did not ask DML, which runs Devonport Royal Dockyard, to send out a team to help fix the submarine nor quote for doing the work at Plymouth.

Spokesman Reg Shield said: "The only way Tireless could come back is in a surface transit under tow or under diesel power, which would be a very uncomfortable journey."

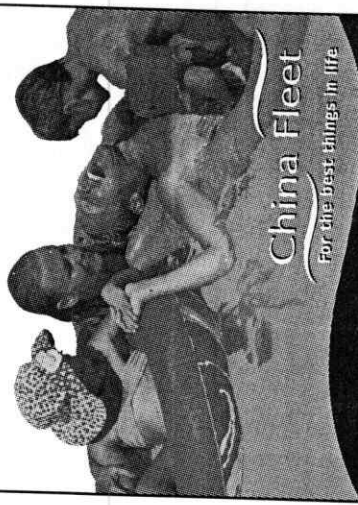
"I can quite see there would be operational reasons why the Navy wanted to get the boat repaired and back on patrol as soon as possible.

"On this occasion our engineers have not been asked to go out and help, but that's not a surprise."

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