

Nuclear fears over Soviet break-up

By Colin Brown and Chris Bellamy

MINISTERS are worried that the break-up of the Soviet Union could bring about a "nuclear nightmare" of weapons being released to Muslim groups in the Middle East.

"We've already had Soviet soldiers selling their weapons on the black market in East Germany," one minister said. "Northern Ireland is always in my mind."

Ministers are worried that conventional arms from the Soviet Union could reach the terrorists in Ulster. But the IRA is known to have no shortage of weapons, having been supplied by Libya.

The nuclear problem could become an election issue. Ministers are planning to raise fears about nuclear proliferation and nuclear blackmail to defend their decision to go ahead with a new generation of nuclear "stand-off" weapons - tactical air-to-surface missiles (TASMs) - to replace the ageing British stockpile of WE-177 free-fall bombs.

This so-called "sub-strategic deterrent" is, in part, intended to dissuade smaller nuclear powers from attacking Britain. They might believe it would be used against them, but not believe that the full weight of Trident would be hurled at them. On the other hand, a mad leader or irresponsible government might not be deterred anyway.

Fears about the security of the Soviet nuclear stockpiles in the republics were discussed at length at last week's Nato Nuclear Planning Group. Nato ministers are planning to offer the West's assistance in securing the safety of Soviet weapons which are to be decommissioned as part of the deep cuts in nuclear arsenals agreed between President George Bush and President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Most strategic nuclear missiles are in the Russian republic but some, able to reach Britain, are in Kazakhstan and Ukraine. One minister said: "We are concerned about the security of the weapons in bases in the republics, about the transportation of the weapons - it's a frightening prospect."

Soviet leaders assured the West that the nuclear weapons would be transferred from the republics to the control of the union presidency in Russia, but ministers remain sceptical about the security around bases, and about the ability of the Russian republic to hold together.

British ministers have taken the decision in principle to deploy TASMs at the end of the decade. A decision has yet to be reached on whether TASMs will be bought from the US, bought from France or built in Britain - although the US has now stopped its SRAM-II and SRAM-T TASMs programme.

The decision to go ahead with TASMs is controversial in the wake of the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. However, ministers plan to argue that a number of threats remain.

Inquiry report into deaths of trawlermen on 'Antares' crash Collision submarine made

By James Cusick and Stephen Goodwin

A CATALOGUE of "human errors" by officers of the submarine which snagged the nets of a Scottish fishing boat and dragged its four-man crew to their deaths, were listed yesterday in a report.

The 53-page fatal accident inquiry determination, the Scots law equivalent of an inquest finding, by Sheriff Principal Robert Hay, criticised virtually all aspects of the operation of the nuclear submarine, HMS *Trenchant*.

After 12 days of evidence which ended on 18 September, Sheriff Principal Hay says: "It must be concluded that the accident was due to human error on board the submarine." However the report paints a picture of a nuclear submarine ignoring Royal Navy procedures and drills, and of officers having "a lack of positive and unequivocal command structure".

The report says that in the run-up to the collision with the *Antares's* nets on 22 November last year, those in charge of the submerged *Trenchant* had no clear picture of what was happening on the surface. The report says: "Surprisingly, the witnesses who were in the control room at the time state they do not remember what surface picture was displayed."

The submarine had just completed exercises with a Royal Navy frigate - a training test for future commanders called a "perishers" course. Three fishing vessels were in the area at the time, including the *Antares*. The report says the chance to feed information into *Trenchant's* computer when at periscope depth was "not taken".

Sheriff Principal Hay says that

during the exercise "the submarine was paying more attention to the frigate than other surface contacts identified by sonar". It should then have concentrated on the fishing vessels. "Unfortunately this was not done."

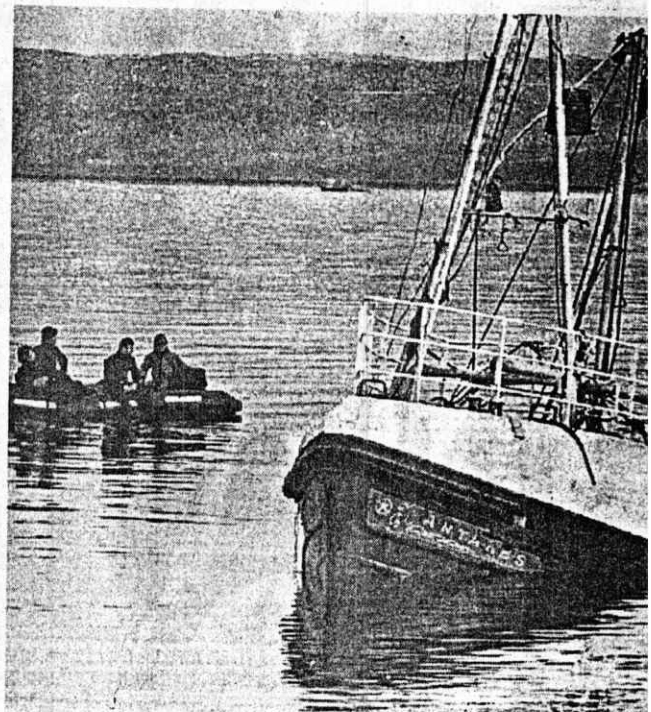
Standing orders that the submarine's commander should be notified if any fishing vessel came within 4,000 yards were breached. The report calls it a "serious procedural error".

It says: "It is apparent that very serious errors were made regarding the range of fishing vessels until they came within 500 yards." It has not been explained why vessels thought to be 7,000 yards away were in fact within one tenth of that distance.

Criticisms of the delay in bringing the *Trenchant* to the surface to carry out a detailed search after it had been acknowledged on board that a trawler's nets had been snagged, were heightened in the report by the possibility that two of the fishermen might have survived to reach the surface alive. The delay and "failure" to carry out the surface search "must therefore be a matter of serious concern," it says.

The evidence did not indicate that the *Trenchant* followed the Navy rules for collisions. "That this should happen in modern nuclear-powered submarine with a highly trained crew" must be "a matter of serious concern".

No individual on board the



The trawler *Antares* being raised by a salvage ship. Its crew of four died when it was d

Trenchant was singled out in the report. It will now be up to the Crown Office to decide if any legal disciplinary measures are taken. This is now thought unlikely. Christine Russell, 34, widow of

the *Antares's* skipper, Jamie Russell, blamed "the system, rather than the submarine. I think the men on this submarine are going to have to live with the deaths for the rest of their lives."

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Woman 'executed in field by former lover'

A MOTHER of three was marched across fields to her execution by a former lover who feared she would tell police about his criminal activities, an Old Bailey jury was told yesterday.

"She was deliberately, callously and cold-bloodedly shot in the head at close range with a double-barrelled sawn-off shotgun more than once," Graham Boal, for the prosecution, said.

The decomposed body of April Sheridan, 22, was found in a shallow grave in Hope Hill wood, Meopham, Kent, in September last year.

Her former lover, Michael Smithyman, 26, of no fixed address, denies murdering her on 6

January last year. He also denies conspiring with others to murder another woman, Kate Williamson, between November and December 1989.

Mr Boal said the only motive Smithyman had for murdering Mrs Sheridan "appears to have been his fear that she would inform on him to the police about his criminal activities, including a burglary that had been committed the day before."

"When interviewed by police, he admitted Mrs Sheridan was killed not only for that but also because she had discovered details of the proposed killing of Kate Williamson."

Mr Smithyman had accused Mrs Sheridan of being "a grass", and he and others had driven from London to Kent with her. "Once there, a shovel was fetched and April was marched off across fields to her own execution."

Mr Boal said her head was shattered by at least two shots. He said Mr Smithyman's involvement in the murder plot of Kate Williamson "can only be described as a proposed contract killing". "It is some reflection of this man's mentality that he described a contract to kill as 'just a day's work - better than going out robbing'."

The trial resumes today.



April Sheridan: 'Executed'

A tale of doubt and

THE STRANGE tale Mordechai Vanunu came to tell began with a man walking into a newspaper office. The man was Oscar Guerrero, sometime Colombian journalist, full-time opportunist. He met Vanunu when they worked together in Sydney, Australia.

Guerrero learnt Vanunu's story as they painted an Anglican church where Vanunu worshipped. Vanunu said he had worked as a technician inside the secret Israeli nuclear plant at Dimona in the Negev desert. It had long been suspected that Israel had nuclear bombs but no one had been able to prove it. If Vanunu was genuine it might be the first opportunity. He had photographs to back up his claims.

Guerrero tried unsuccessfully to sell the story to a number of newspapers before he approached *The Sunday Times*. The upshot of that walk-in was that Peter Hounam, a senior reporter, was sent to Australia to talk to Vanunu and take a measure of the man and his story.

Sceptics sensed a hoax. The newspaper was still licking its wounds following its publication of the fake "Hitler Diaries". However, Hounam's view was that Vanunu should be brought to England where the veracity of his story could be tested. The man selected to discover whether this was an elaborate hoax or staggering exclusive was Dr Frank Barnaby, a nuclear physicist who worked at Aldermaston, the British nuclear weapons research establishment.

Vanunu's "de-brief" lasted a month. Details of his claims and the photographs he took inside

David Connett traces Mordechai Vanunu painting a Sydney church to capture b

Dimona were shown to nuclear experts in Britain and America. His tale was convincing.

During this time Vanunu was moved from house to hotel to house in an effort to protect him from unwarranted attention from Israel or from rival publications. Guerrero and the paper had parted company through mutual distrust. Photographs he possessed of himself with such people as Pope John Paul II were spotted as fakes.

Guerrero did not sit back and

watch his chance tune fade.

He attempted Street spoiler. Robert Maxwell Quite why was *Sunday Times*, ploy in the w tion, although concern for seemed the lik

The *Sunday* Guerrero as a i ing cast doubt Vanunu had

Journalist at cent

NICK DAVIES, the journalist accused of having links with the Israeli intelligence service, was last night filing memos from Zimbabwe to his newspaper in London rejecting allegations that he is a Mossad agent.

Mr Davies, aged 52, who is in Harare to cover the Commonwealth conference, has had some lavish hobbies for a journalist; he owned three polo ponies and played polo frequently. He said he inherited money from his parents and owned a small company making underwater lights for the North Sea oil industry, which has gone out of business.

Mr Davies was born in Birmingham and educated at Belmont Abbey, a Catholic public

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school in Heref service he did nalists' traini the *Birmingham* the *Daily Mirror*

He is an af friendly face o circuit but is i with the crowd occasionally.

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