

SCOTSMAN 24/11/90

Row rages over sinking of fishing boat

By Wendy Scott and Joanne Robertson

A ROW was raging last night over the deaths of four fishermen lost when their boat was dragged beneath the waves by a nuclear-powered submarine.

A Labour MP George Foulkes angrily attacked as "ignorant and complacent" the armed forces minister Archie Hamilton's description of the tragedy as a freak accident.

Grieving fishermen and their families were asking how submerged submarines could be unaware of the presence of fishing boats and their trawl gear.

The Carradale-based Antares is believed to have been dragged under when her nets were snagged by the hunter-killer submarine HMS Trenchant in the early hours of Thursday morning.

The wreck of the fishing boat was found on the seabed three miles south of Bute yesterday, but there was no sign

of her four-man crew who are missing, presumed dead.

They are Jamie Russell, 33, William Marindale, 24, Douglas Campbell, 20, all of Carradale, Argyll, and Stuart Campbell, 29, from Campbeltown.

It was not clear last night whether the Royal Navy would try to recover any bodies from the wreckage which is lying in more than 450ft of water.

The navy said it could only search the wreck at the request of the Coastguard, and the Coastguard would make no comment on the issue.

Mr Foulkes, a long-time campaigner for safety at sea, said Labour would step up the campaign for "bleepers" to be fitted to fishing boats so submarines knew of their presence.

The Labour MP for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley criticised the Government's decision not to suspend sub-



Jamie Russell



William Marindale

marine operations, Mr Hamilton's use of the words "freak accident", and the lack of warning devices which, he said, could be fitted to the west coast fishing fleet for just £150,000.

"The refusal to halt submerged operations is disgraceful, an insult to the families of the people involved, and a worry for those still continuing to fish in the area," said Mr Foulkes. Labour's Scottish affairs spokesman, Brian Wilson, ac-

cusced the Ministry of Defence of refusing to take responsibility for the problem and he demanded that navy submarines should be prevented from operating off the west coast of Scotland.

He commented: "Never again must fishermen, diligently working away in flat calm, lose their lives in such circumstances."

Mr Hamilton said two inquiries, by the navy and the Department of Transport, were under way into the sink-

ing but added that the movement of submarines in the Firth of Clyde would not be banned.

In his statement, Mr Hamilton said the Trenchant had been submerged in the area around 2:40 am on Thursday morning when the crew heard unexplained sounds on the starboard side which the commanding officer suspected could have resulted from the submarine snagging fishing gear.

The Trenchant surfaced 15 minutes later and recovered a length of trawl cable. It then unsuccessfully tried to contact two nearby fishing boats.

The navy contacted the Coastguard who were also unable to contact the two boats and the Trenchant remained on the surface for around two and a half hours but as the fishing boats did not appear to be in any difficulty, the submarine completed its operation.

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