

## New nuclear 'incidents' spark protests

Two separate 'incidents' on US nuclear powered submarines were reported in May. On May 19 the USS Helene suffered 'propulsion problems' in the Pacific, 500 miles west of Midway Island, where it surfaced and returned to Pearl Harbour using its auxiliary propulsion.

This was followed on May 25 by a second incident on the USS Gunard, which ran aground off San Diego during a military exercise before returning to base for repairs. According to the US Navy report no damage to the reactors or radioactive leakages occurred.

In a related development, evidence released in May has confirmed that in December 1965, during the Vietnam war, a Skyhawk jet carrying nuclear weapons accidentally fell overboard the aircraft carrier USS Ticonderoga. The plane sank to the sea bed 16,000 feet below – 80 miles west of a small Japanese Island – leaking radioactivity in the surrounding area.

The news prompted a 10,000-strong anti-nuclear demonstration on the nearby island of Okinawa.

Although the accident raises questions concerning why the ship carried nuclear weapons, the US authorities assured Japan that there would have been 'no environmental impact'.

A further blow to the safety record of naval nuclear weapons came on May 25 when US Admiral Eugene Carroll (retired) revealed that a serious fire had occurred on board the USS Belknap during a military exercise off Sicily on November 22, 1975. The fire spread to within feet of the ships 60 'Terrier' nuclear missiles after the Belknap collided with the nuclear armed aircraft carrier, USS Kennedy.

The US Navy admitted the accident had killed eight but refused to 'confirm or deny' the presence of nuclear weapons. US Greenpeace campaigner William Arkin said, 'The US Navy is

lying about its nuclear accident record to cover up the presence of nuclear weapons that are routinely placed aboard ships that visit foreign ports.'

These reports should come as no surprise in Britain following the Government's admission to Joan Ruddock, MP that 542 naval military 'incidents' have been officially recorded in the last 10 years – an average of *one per week*.

● **Michael Szabo**

◆◆ 'Disarm the Seas Week' from May 27 to June 4 has been accounted a success.

Protest this year included:

- public meetings and group letter-writing
- a speaking tour by members of the Faslane Peace Camp,
- beach theatre at Shanklin on the Isle of Wight on theme of NATO and dinosaurs
- the launching of Brighton Sea Action and their two boats, named after the Pacific islands of Belau and Murorua
- leafletting in Southampton and Torbay warning of the nuclear sub facilities
- Sea Action protest in Portsmouth, where boats met the HMS Ark Royal, HMS Coventry and HMS Brace on their return from Hamburg.

Other successful protests elsewhere in the world included Manhattan, NY, where thousands demonstrated against the planned homeport for the battleship USS Iowa. Two days later, 45 people, including several prominent clergy were arrested for attempting to deliver a statement calling upon the city to suspend funding for construction of the nuclear-capable base.

Stockholm witnessed a boat demonstration linked on land by a human chain to the City Hall in protest at their government's compliance in allowing nuclear-capable ships into their ports.

● **Kate Cameron-Daum**

## Bob banner aloft

REFLEX



CND Vice-chair Bob Cole has been flying the flag for CND in his own unique way. Bob (but a speck on this photo) raised this particular banner on a scaffold in Trafalgar Square in May.