

# THE CLYDE ECHO

FREE

15TH NOVEMBER 1997

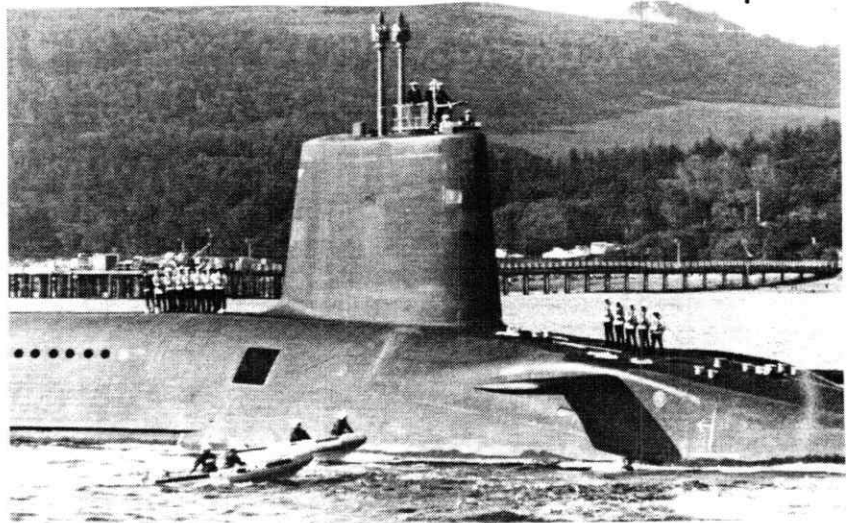
## CHAOS AS RADIATION CLOUD COVERS HELENSBURGH

Argyll and Bute officials, assisted by the military are evacuating the few remaining residents of the Clydeside town of Helensburgh. Most of the population fled yesterday as news of the disaster onboard a Trident submarine spread by word of mouth before the official emergency plans could be put into practice.

As fire raged through HMS Vainglorious shortly after berthing at Faslane the crew were evacuated. It is not known exactly what happened next, but it is thought that the abandoned reactor, with no operators left and all the safety mechanisms destroyed by the fire, overheated to the point where it exploded.

As the Royal Navy began to come to terms with the seriousness of the situation and initiated the first stages of the Clyde Public Safety Scheme, Argyll and Bute's Emergency Planning Officer was already being alerted to the unfolding disaster by the Health Physics Department at Hunterston. Their automatic monitors around the civil nuclear plant were giving high readings which they couldn't account for. At the time of the incident a strong wind was blowing in the direction of Helensburgh, which meant that the Off-site centre at Rhu where emergency plans are supposed to be controlled from was also evacuated.

Fortunately for some, the wind has now dropped preventing the contamination spreading any further. However, for Helensburgh and the surrounding area the radioactive cloud which is hovering over the town and beginning to fall as drizzle may mean a long wait before residents can return to their homes.



### ROADS JAMMED AS BURGH RESIDENTS FLEE

Although under orders not to use the phone, base personnel called home to tell their families to get out of the area. Taxi drivers who witnessed the escalating panic at the base gates also spread the word. As the news was passed throughout the population by word of mouth people began packing up their cars and heading out of town. There was confusion outside many of the local schools as worried parents demanded to collect their children. The two main roads out of Helensburgh quickly became jammed with slow moving traffic and emergency services found it difficult to make their way to Faslane.

Anxious families trying to find out what had happened to relatives at Faslane found both the base and Strathclyde Police switchboards jammed.

Locals without cars packed into Helensburgh Station, but trains were at a standstill after a West Highland line train which passed alongside Faslane at the peak of the radioactive release was halted by Transport police at Dalmuir and cordoned off until decontamination could be arranged.

# Blowing in the wind ??

The reactor incident overleaf has not yet happened, although on January 26th 1988 the Polaris submarine HMS Resolution did suffer an electrical malfunction while docked at Faslane. Reports in the Observer newspaper at the time claimed that the malfunction shut down the primary coolant pumps, almost leading to a core meltdown. Who knows how many times we have come close to a Scottish Chernobyl on the Clyde ?

On Tuesday 18th November the MoD will attempt to convince themselves that they can contain such a disaster under the exercise "Short Sermon". Most of the base personnel will be evacuated, but not of the public will be effected. None of the plans contained within the Clyde Public Safety Scheme (CLYDEPUBSAFE) such as

asking people to take shelter or distributing Potassium Iodate Tablets will be tested other than as a paper exercise.

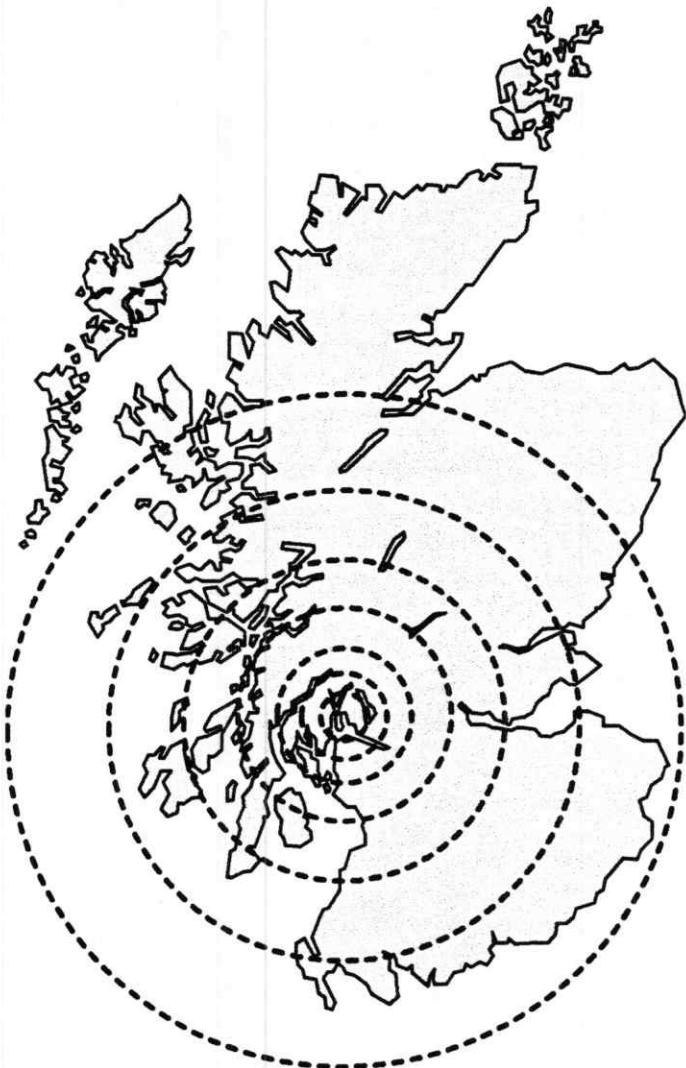
Once radioactive dust and gases are in the atmosphere they are outwith the Navy's or anyone else's control. Their 2 km limit for the spread of contamination is totally unrealistic. Remember Chernobyl ... the radiation from that reached us and that is a distance of 1,500 miles

## Why no Potassium Iodate tablets for Helensburgh ?

At least 500 children living in Eastern Europe have suffered from thyroid cancer because of the accident at Chernobyl. Young children are particularly sensitive to the effects of radiation. Potassium Iodate Tablets if taken before or shortly after exposure to radioactive iodine does give significant protection against cancer of the thyroid, which is a gland in the neck.

Health Board hold stocks of Potassium Iodate tablets, and the current plan is that if there is an accident, then they would be distributed. But by then it would be too late. At a minimum these tablets should be distributed in advance to schools and nursery schools within 2 kms of anywhere that submarines sail. There is also a case for wider distribution of them to all households.

At the Navy's other submarine base, Devonport, there has been widespread distribution of Potassium Iodate to households and currently seventeen local schools hold stocks of them. None have been pre-distributed around Faslane. WHY NOT ??



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Why don't the MoD want people in Scotland to prepare for or even think about the effects of a nuclear accident with one of our submarines ?

Perhaps if we all knew the truth we might decide that it is not worth the risk. If enough people actively join the campaign to make Scotland nuclear free then the nightmare scenario overleaf will never happen.

If you want find out more about exercise Short Sermon then write to:

Scottish CND, 15 Barrland St, Glasgow,  
G41 1QH. Tel 0141 423 1222.  
<http://ds.dial.pipex.com/cndscot/>

**BROADCAST ANNOUNCEMENT (RADIO & TV)**

**For use in the event of a nuclear submarine reactor accident**

We have been asked to make the following urgent announcement by the Royal Navy.

An accident has occurred in the reactor plant of a nuclear powered warship berthed at Clyde Submarine Base, Faslane near Helensburgh which has resulted in the release of a small quantity of radioactive products. There is no possibility of a nuclear explosion occurring. Precautions are being taken in certain areas to protect persons against any risk to their health arising from the release.

The area affected is Garelochhead

Members of the general public in this area may be asked to take some protective measures.

Do not move unless requested to do by the Police. The Police will be acting on the advice of health experts who are already at work assessing the areas affected. In these areas the following precautions should be observed.

Stay indoors as far as possible.

Close all doors and windows.

Do not eat any produce from the garden.

It is perfectly safe to consume any food which is sealed or unsealed food which was inside a building before the morning of 18 November 1997.

As a further precaution persons in the affected area will be offered special tablets to reduce the effects of breathing contaminated air. These tablets are completely harmless and may be taken by children and babies. Full information on how to take them will be supplied with the tablets, which are now being distributed.

**FOR MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES USE ONLY:** If you require further information please contact the Media Briefing Centre at Rhu on 01436 821266 /821268 /821130

