

FOREIGN NEWS

# 10 dead on atomic sub

FOREIGN SERVICE

FRANCE last night recalled its nuclear submarine fleet after an underwater explosion killed 10 sailors.

The 2,400-ton Emeraude was limping back to port after the accident in the Mediterranean.

The blast happened as the submarine took part in exercises with surface ships between Toulon naval base and Corsica.

The Emeraude, in service since September 1988, carries 18 torpedoes and anti-ship Exocet missiles or mines. It is not nuclear armed. The submarine's captain was among the victims who died from

## France recalls fleet in explosion riddle

burns or asphyxiation. Their bodies were flown to Toulon. The accident was confined to the Emeraude's turbo alternator compartment which produces steam-powered electricity, said Defence Ministry spokesman Captain Olivier Lajous. He said the explosion did not affect the



CRIPPLED: The Rubis-class nuclear submarine Emeraude

Emeraude's nuclear engine and there was no risk of radiation. "One of the two turbo alternators exploded while the submarine was off the coast. We don't know why," said Capt. Lajous. Rear-Admiral Philippe Roy said the other submarines were being called back to port

because of unanswered questions about the accident on the Rubis-class Emeraude. He said the blast killed everyone in the turbine compartment. The Defence Ministry said: "This accident in no way affects the vessel's nuclear safety." Capt. Lajous said the submarine had sur-

facted and was making its way to Toulon unassisted. Admiral Roy said two of the nuclear submarines being recalled were in the Mediterranean and one was in the Atlantic. It was the third incident in less than a year involving one of France's six Rubis-class submarines, which are based in Toulon.

Between two and four of them are constantly on patrol, armed with Exocet missiles. On March 2, the nuclear submarine Amethyste hit the bottom of the Mediterranean at low speed, damaging its bow. There were no injuries. The navy sacked the commander of another which hit a super-tanker as it surfaced last August. It ripped a gash in the ship's hull and caused an oil spill in the Mediterranean.

## Worker killed by plant blast

ONE man was killed and at least 61 people were injured yesterday when a heating and air-conditioning plant exploded on the edge of Paris.

The early-morning blast, which was sparked by a gas leak, demolished the giant Climadef plant near La Defense business district. Thousands of office windows were blown out and the massive La Grande Arche was damaged.

The dead man was a plant worker. Among the injured was a six-year-old girl who was in a critical condition after being pulled from the wreckage of her home.