



ON THE ALERT... the U.S. Navy base on the Holy Loch

MUKE SUBS CHECK AFTER AGGIDENTS

THE US nuclear submarine base at the Holy Loch is on a 48-hour safety alert as part of a world wide stand-down following a spate of accidents.

By FIONA MONTGOMERY

the unprecedented action involves sailors in checking everything from safety in their homes to safety on board nuclear submarines.

Local MP John McFall praised the openness of the US Navy and said he welcomed the safety review.

Scottish CND said it was "progress" that the Navy was taking action after all the accidents.

The spate of accidents included a fire on board the helicopter landing ship Incheon in Virginia, a collision between the US destroyer Kincaid and a merchant ship off Malaysia and a US warplane accidentally dropping a bomb on an American cruiser.

All routine air, sea and shore operations have been halted for every aspect of safety to be reviewed with the aim of "learning lessons" for the future.

At the Holy Loch, on the Clyde,

Last week a US Navy fighter-jet exploded and crashed into a block of flats while trying to land near Atlanta and on October 29 a trainer jet crashed on the flight deck of the carrier USS Lexington in the Gulf of Mexico killing five people.

Lieutenant Steven Lowry, at the Holy Loch, said: "This is the first nationwide safety stand-down."

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"The occurrence of these unrelated accidents prompted the Chief of Naval Operations and the Secretary of the Navy to order a full review of our safety procedures."

He said the review would involve simple things like checking life lines and harnesses as well as electrical safety on board nuclear subs.

Lt Lowry added that the stand-

down would not affect the Navy's 'readiness for war'.

Mr McFall, MP for Dumbarton, said: "I welcome this. It must indicate, given the dramatic and comprehensive nature of the stand-down, that serious matters have to be addressed."

"It seems as if it is a public acknowledgement that things aren't going as they should be. It would be nice to think that the Royal Navy would be as frank and as open as that."

"But if I ask them a question about safety I'd be told that it is always looked at all the time and they have no problem."

He said it was an indication of the greater concern the Americans have about the environmental impact of their bases and suggested the Royal

Navy should follow their example of deciding not to release contaminated radioactive coolant into the waters of the Clyde.

Nancy Dangerfield, of Scottish CND, added: "We are particularly pleased about this given this week's accident off the West Coast of Scotland when a trawler was dragged along by a submarine."

"That was a British sub but there have been incidents, including one earlier this year, involving US submarines."

"And of course in 1981 there was the horrific accident at the Holy Loch when a Poseidon missile was dropped as it was being unloaded."

A Ministry of Defence spokeswoman said the safety review had nothing to do with them and would not affect any Mod. exercises.