



# YOU

---

## Purpose of short sermon

Madam,

**REGARDING** the letters in last week's Advertiser criticising the validity of Exercise short Sermon 97, I would like to point out that Government policy requires operators of nuclear facilities to have an emergency plan in the extremely unlikely event that an accident involving a radioactive release occurs.

Clearly there is little point in such a plan if not tested by way of exercise.

Short Sermon 97 was the boldest and most far-reaching exercise of its type ever conducted and broke new ground in being continuous for three days, and successfully tested base evacuation as well as the procedures for civilian evacuation with Strathclyde Police and post-accident remediation measures with Argyll and Bute Council.

The exercise was as realistic as it could be without involving public evacuation, which would have caused disruption which could not be justified when set against the limited value of proving that evacuation could take place.

It should also be noted that if such an accident occurred for real, public evacuation may not be appropriate and if it were, might only be required out to 2km in the downwind sector.

the comment about planning for a year is also unfair – players had no inkling of the direction in which the unfolding events within the exercise were going. (I was a player and can personally assure readers of the stress participants faced in dealing with the real-time issues involved.)

Using a large number of media undergraduates from far and wide created one of the most realistic elements.

Far from 'clamping up', the RN and other bodies issued 30 press releases (the first within minutes of being alerted) and held about a dozen press conferences and briefings to keep the "media" as fully informed as possible.

the "press pack" did not pussy-foot with the authorities, but hungrily demanded, at times to the point of aggression, information to meet their deadlines.

There was therefore no news blackout within the

exercise and the Base held a real press conference at the Clyde Off-Site Centre before it began.

Essentially, we must not forget that the reason for the exercise, one of about 12 conducted each year throughout Scotland and Northern England, is public safety.

In 35 years of continuous reactor operations there has never been an accident involving a release of radioactivity and we aim to maintain that standard in the future.

Independent authorities observed the exercise and concluded that the MOD's plans were extremely robust and held public safety factors paramount throughout.

Yours etc., S.J. Willmot, Public Relations Office, HM Naval Base Clyde, Faslane, Helensburgh, G84 8HL.