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## Nuclear graveyard fear as coolant on submarines fails

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SCOTLAND is in danger of becoming the Royal Navy's new "nuclear graveyard" if any of the seven hunter-killer submarines withdrawn from service last week because of problems with their reactor coolant systems are scrapped.

Scottish CND last night accused the Ministry of Defence of being caught out by its own flawed nuclear policy and claimed that Rosyth dockyard was the likely "garbage dump" for casualties of the crisis.

The Fife dockyard, formerly a major naval base and now under the private management of Babcock Defence, is already the last berth for seven decommissioned British nuclear boats, including all four of the obsolete Polaris missile submarines.

CND spokesman John Ainslie said: "The MoD announced in May that it was examining options for long-term disposal of the radioactive sections of RN boats no longer in service. There are seven hulks at Rosyth and four more at Devonport.

"The problem is that, in the rush to join the nuclear club in the 1960s, no one gave thought to what would happen when the boats reached the end of their service lives. The people of Fife and

Devonport are now condemned to live with the consequences of successive governments' obsession with nuclear power. Both areas already qualify as a nuclear graveyard and the probability is that the latest crisis will add to the bodies stored in them."

All 12 of the RN's nuclear-powered but conventionally-armed submarines were withdrawn from front-line duty last week amid fears of a common flaw in pipework leading from their reactors.

The emergency decision to cancel 25% of the RN's combat strength at a stroke followed inspection of HMS Tireless, a Trafalgar-class submarine stranded in Gibraltar since May. Complaints from Spain about the potential radiation hazard the boat posed to public safety reached prime ministerial level last week.

Only two of the boats called back to port in the UK were involved in operations.

Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon now says that five of the boats have passed an initial inspection, and that a "recovery programme" for the remaining seven would be in place by the end of this month.

CND and naval sources say it is unlikely that any of the seven submarines with problems will be back at sea before January and that three or more may be scrapped entirely because of the cost and difficulty of making repairs.