

MR BRIAN HAWTIN, MR NIGEL PAREN, CDRE IAN GARNETT RN,  
 CAPT PAUL THOMAS RN, CAPT JOHN GOZZARD RN,  
 28 November 1990] MR PATRICK ROTHERAM, MR CHARLES BETTS,  
 MR RICHARD WILLIAMS, CAPT V H LUCAS RN and CAPT F B MUNGO RN

[Continued

[Chairman contd]

269. Are you ready to answer the question?

270. It has also been reported that there are doubts about the future of the first two SWIFTSURE submarines, SWIFTSURE and SOVEREIGN. Have the same two faults been found on them?

(Mr Hawtin) I do not think I can go into any great detail on individual boats.

271. Hang on, you told us all the inspections were complete.

(Mr Hawtin) No, we said, Mr Chairman, that the inspection process is continuing and further inspections are being carried out.

272. When SWIFTSURE and SOVEREIGN had their first inspection was anything found?

(Captain Mungo) I have not seen those reports, Mr Chairman.

274. Are their futures in doubt, those two submarines?

(Captain Gozzard) I think you are confusing two aspects there. One is the Options for Change and the other is the defect.

275. There is no defect problem which is putting a question mark over the future of those two submarines?

(Captain Gozzard)

Chairman: Options for Change we understand.

Mr McFall

not that your answer does not reassure me but the situation does not reassure me. On the safety aspect could I ask you in terms of safety you would not, or could not, send the ship out until the Nuclear Powered Warship Safety Committee deliberates and gives you the go ahead?

(Captain Thomas) That is not strictly true, but so far as the handling of this particular issue is concerned and generally speaking that is true. The Nuclear Powered Warship Safety Committee technically are advisers to the Secretary of State for Defence. I can confirm certainly in this case and in other cases for all those submarines we have taken

the safety cases in detail to the Nuclear Powered Warship Safety Committee where they have discussed and endorsed the Ministry's view it is safe on each of those occasions to operate those submarines.

(Mr Hawtin) We have only gone to them when we think there is a justifiable case for doing so, and in all cases, as Captain Thomas has said, they have endorsed that judgement.

(Captain Thomas) I hope you did not think I was prevaricating. Safety is the Ministry's responsibility, the Secretary of State calls upon the Nuclear Powered Warship Safety Committee as his expert advisory committee and they have endorsed each and every one of those safety submissions.

277. On the issue of Polaris perhaps we cannot go further even in secret session but I will ask it anyway. In terms of the public comment you made about one deterrent being at sea it is conceivable that can be done with two, as I mentioned in the public submission, and two are laid up. Is it the case that there are problems with two and the other two could be overworked as a result?

(Mr Hawtin) I do not think that is a fair deduction.

278. Has a crack been found in the Polaris submarine as mentioned in the Daily Telegraph on Monday 19 November?

(Mr Hawtin) I do not think we wish to comment further on the Polaris.

Chairman

279. Not even in private?

is the same situation present in the Trident boats?

(Mr Hawtin) We are considering the implications for the Trident boats,

we are confident there will be no effect on the in service date of Trident.

(Mr Hawtin) We will be taking whatever action we consider appropriate. We have not yet taken a view but we are confident we can take whatever action we need.

282. But it is potentially there?

(Mr Hawtin)

Chairman: Okay. Thank you very much indeed.

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