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### **Trafalgar Class Submarine**

**Dr. Julian Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the state of seaworthiness is of each Trafalgar class submarine. [134918]

**Mr. Spellar:** HMS Torbay, HMS Trenchant and HMS Talent are currently undergoing refit and repair at Devonport. The initial phase of the inspection programme for Trafalgar class submarines has shown that, of these, HMS Trenchant is clear of the defect affecting HMS Tireless, which is being prepared for repair in Gibraltar. Of the remaining submarines, HMS Trafalgar and HMS Turbulent show early signs of the defect and are alongside at Devonport. HMS Triumph has been found to be clear of the defect and will return to operational duties shortly.

### **Nuclear Submarines (Gibraltar)**

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action his Department took to upgrade the Port of Gibraltar from category Z to category X for servicing nuclear submarines; and if he will make a statement. [136153]

**Mr. Spellar:** The category Z berth in Gibraltar Naval Base has not been upgraded to a category X berth.

To undertake the specific repair to the reactor coolant system of HMS Tireless, the Z berth in Gibraltar has been enhanced to the standard necessary to obtain approval from the regulatory authority to undertake the repair.

This included enhancing the management organisation in Gibraltar and providing the additional equipment needed for the repair. This equipment will be removed when the repair is completed. The temporary enhancement to the Z berth occupied by HMS Tireless does not involve structural work and there are no changes required to the existing emergency planning arrangements

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### **Nuclear Submarines**

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how often nuclear submarines are inspected for safety. [137215]

**Mr. Spellar:** Royal Navy nuclear submarines are subject to a rolling programme of planned inspection and maintenance. The periodicity of this work is designed to ensure the safety of the nuclear reactor and the submarine as a whole. For example, certain reactor protection systems are inspected every 24 hours, while some hull and support system components are examined every few months. In addition, there are major overhaul periods, which can take some two years to complete, when further inspections are made.

### **HMS Tireless**

**Mr. Simon Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what effect the cracks in the cooling system of HMS Tireless will have on the immediate environment; and if the cracks resulted from a design flaw in the nuclear submarines. [137212]

**Mr. Spellar:** Since her arrival in Gibraltar on 19 May, HMS Tireless has undergone routine radiation monitoring and has had no affect on the immediate environment. During her repair, no radioactive contamination of any kind will be released into the environment either within HMS Tireless or externally in Gibraltar. All nuclear waste arising from her repair will have extremely low levels of radioactivity and will be returned to the UK in specially constructed tanks.

At present there is no evidence to suggest that the defect found in some, but not all, hunter-killer submarines, has resulted from a design flaw. It is feasible that the defect could have arisen from the manufacturing process when the submarines were built or have some other origin. The analysis of the evidence collected so far is, as yet, inconclusive.