

Glasgow Herald 2nd Nov 91

# Navy opts to update safety plan for Clyde

By IAN BRUCE,  
Defence Correspondent

THE Royal Navy is to update the Clyde Area Public Safety Plan, the scheme for coping with a nuclear disaster at the Faslane submarine base, as a result of a two-day exercise held earlier this week.

However, the environmental watchdog body Greenpeace last night claimed that the exercise had been deliberately limited in scope, and that a real disaster could stretch resources to breaking point and endanger tens of thousands of people in the Clyde Valley.

The base was sealed off on Tuesday after the simulated crash of a civilian jet on a nuclear hunter-killer boat. The explosion fractured pipes and released radiation into the water and a plume of fall-out into the air.

Monitoring teams were flown from Portsmouth and Plymouth as the navy began the evacuation of Faslane and began to record contamination in the area. Dumbarton District Council, Strathclyde Region, police and ambulance services were put on immediate alert.

Officials from the Scottish Office and local authority emergency planning officers were rushed to the navy's monitoring headquarters at Rhu, and 20 casualties, including five dead, were removed from the crash site.

Naval planners running the exercise built in "natural malice" factors which included a valve which leaked radioactive material into the water, and an engine room hatch which the crew of the submarine were not permitted to close properly.

Captain Eric Thompson, the base's chief staff officer, said: "Safety is a paramount consideration. Even knowing it was an exercise, some of our sailors almost came to blows with umpires because they would never, in any circumstance, abandon ship without closing all

hatches to avoid the release of radioactive debris."

The umpires also forbade them to stop the leakage of contamination until the following morning.

The specialist monitoring teams, equipped with Land Rovers, were flown to Glasgow by the RAF and checked air, soil and water samples downwind of the accident within six hours of the first alert. Civil teams from Scottish Nuclear, had meanwhile, started their own checks out to 15 kilometres beyond the accident site.

Commodore Tom Blackburn, the commander at Faslane, said: "We learned a number of lessons, although much of the exercise was designed to test communications and reaction times. That covered every level from the teams at the crash site to Cabinet level in London.

"The local authorities had their own officials with us at our Rhu headquarters, and the ambulance and other public service organisations also played a major role."

Janet Convery of Greenpeace said: "The Ministry of Defence chose to practice their response to a limited accident. The emergency planning headquarters at Rhu was set up even before the exercise began, giving the participants a head start.

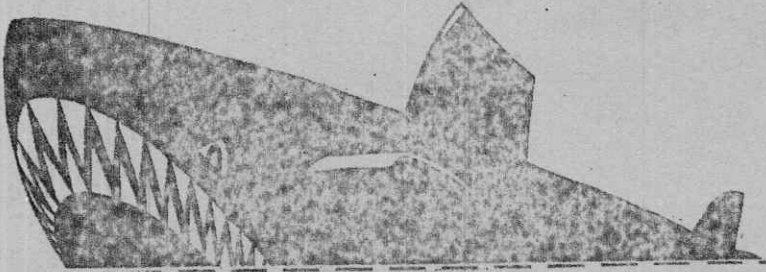
"The lack of involvement of the general public was inexcusable, and makes any set of findings from the exercise meaningless. There is also evidence of base and monitoring personnel showing negligence by not wearing masks and protective clothing."

Commodore Blackburn said: "Protective gear was worn in the area deemed to be contaminated. That was a very limited area within the base itself. The monitoring teams in the surrounding area did not have to do so because there was little or no risk, and also because it would have been potentially alarming for civilians who might not have been aware that it was an exercise."

# C A M P A I G N F O R N U C L E A R D I S A R M A M E N T

162 Holloway Road · London N7 8DQ

Tel 071 700 2393 · Fax 071 700 2357



BE PREPARED! TRIDENT LAUNCH COULD BE ANYTIME THIS SUMMER

Dear Activists,

Trident is due to be launched anytime now. We will receive very little notice so it is important that you plan your protests as soon as possible. We must not let Trident be launched without some protest. May we suggest:

## COME TO BARROW

There will be an all day vigil starting at 10 a.m. All who come are asked to bring a banner. 50 demonstrators may seem a handful but 50 banners is a forest!

There will also be NVDA; a blockade of the two main entrances.

We will not know the details of the launch until a few days before it happens so we will not be able to lay detailed plans until then. To find out what is going to happen:

**EITHER:** Ring one of the following numbers as soon as you hear that the launch is on.

Barrow CND, 0229 835652

Swansea Sea Action 0792 830330

Brighton Peace Centre Action Line 0273 620125 Faslane (Jane) 0436 79194

National CND, ActionLine 071 700 2349, Laurie, 071 700 2393.

**OR:** (Better) Write to Andy Pritchard, West Midlands CND, 54 Allison St, Birmingham, B5. **RIGHT AWAY!**  
Say that you would like information sent to you as soon as launch protests are planned.

## LOCAL PROTESTS

For these wishing to protest in their own localities:

**LEAFLETS:** We will have a new leaflet available from start of June. Why not lay in a stock?

**POSTCARD.** We also have postcards to be sent to the PM on the day of the launch. Again, be prepared, lay in a supply.

**PROTEST PHONECALLS.** VSEL's phone number is 0229 823366; give them a call, ask for Mike Smith, Public Relations Officer and register your protest.

**LETTERS.** Don't forget a letter to the local press which will be read by thousands.

With best wishes,

Laurie Gibson (Trident Launch Grp)

