

SUB SCARE CLAIMS DISMISSED BY MOD

THE Ministry of Defence this week dismissed claims of a link between the arrival of a nuclear submarine at Faslane and an alleged radioactive "cloud" over the Midlands.

An environmental group says their equipment recorded nine times the normal level of atmospheric radiation as the "cloud" passed over the towns of Southport and Wigan in Lancashire.

And the Nuclear Transport Information Group went on to speculate that the cause of the unusual readings was reactor problems aboard a nuclear submarine which later docked on the Clyde.

Group spokesman William Peden, a former Faslane peace camper, said: "Our radiation monitoring equipment started to pick up an increase in the radiation content of the atmosphere over Southport on October 28. We used six machines in all to ensure there was no equipment fault.

"One of the theories put forward to explain the existence of the cloud is that a reactor inside one of the nuclear subs in the Irish Sea overheated.

"To take pressure off the system the sub's captain could have let steam out of the cooling system and created a cloud which then drifted over the North of England, carried by the west wind from the Irish Sea.

"We telephoned the Ministry of Defence in London and were told that no American submarines were on patrol in the Irish Sea.

"But two days after the nuclear cloud was picked up, the USS Phoenix put in at Faslane, escorted by police, a US tug and a Royal Navy tug. We think the Phoenix may have been radioactive.

Regulations

"And we believe that British workers at Faslane would be used to handle high levels of radioactivity because they are not governed by the same regulations as US personnel at places like Dunoon.

"The Phoenix then left Faslane on November 9 — the day the story of the cloud broke in the national papers."

A spokesman at the Clyde Submarine Base said there were limits on what information he could give about the operational movements of submarines.

But he confirmed that the American hunter-killer submarine USS Phoenix had

put in to Faslane.

He added: "I can also say categorically that the purpose of the visit was for R and R (rest and recreation), and no repairs were carried out on the vessel."

Another MoD source said that the radiation monitoring group were guilty of "adding two and two and getting five hundred and five."

Mishap

He claimed that no NATO submarine had suffered the kind of mishap they were speculating about in UK territorial waters.

If such a mishap had taken place, he said, any discharge would have gone into the water. Even supposing a discharge into the atmosphere had taken place, he said, it would not have created a "cloud" drifting over the Midlands.

"We are talking about a submarine," he said, "not a nuclear power station."

He added that no-one apart from the radiation monitoring group had detected anything unusual.

"It is, therefore," he added, "questionable whether this so-called cloud ever existed in the first place. So it is speculative in the extreme to link it with a visit to Faslane by an American submarine."