

War of words over N-sub safety claim

A DOCUMENTARY programme to be shown on TV tonight (Thursday) will make the shock claim that submarines based at Faslane have been banned from visiting foreign ports because of the danger of a nuclear accident.

An accident is "less likely," it is claimed, to happen at the submarine base in Faslane.

The Ministry of Defence has vigorously denied the allegations, saying that submarines from Faslane have visited foreign ports recently and are due to go to America soon.

But the Thames Television programme *This Week*, due to go out at 8.30 pm to-night, is to carry an interview with a top civil servant who claims that a ban exists.

He says it was imposed by the government's nuclear warships safety committee after cracks were found in the nuclear reactors of Polaris and nuclear powered hunter-killer submarines.

Dumbarton MP John McFall, who appears on the programme, is to raise the issue at the all-party defence select committee.

He says if the claims are

true then they are extremely serious and bizarre.

He added: "I am concerned for the safety of submariners, workers at the submarine base, and my constituents."

Mr McFall first raised the issue of cracks in the cooling system of the reactors of the ageing Polaris fleet last November.

The MoD has admitted the existence of cracks but has given little information on

By MARY CULLEN

the extent of the problem.

The committee called in June for more information from the MoD in the light of widespread public concern, but with little success.

Mr McFall said: "I have been pursuing the matter vigorously and it has been a frustrating experience. The MoD says nothing unless it has to."

The programme will claim that the Polaris subs and four older nuclear-powered hunter killers are literally cracking up.

It is widely believed that of the four Polaris boats, which the MoD insists will remain operational until Trident submarines arrive in the mid 1990s, only Resolution is fully operational — with a temporary safety certificate.

Renown is believed to be undergoing repair on cracks in its reactor which will take another year, Repulse has not been on patrol for 15 months, and Revenge is overdue for repair.

The programme says the boats have been banned from foreign ports because of the embarrassment a nuclear reactor accident would cause.

Claims are also made that an accident is "less likely" to happen at Faslane because the reactors are not run up to full power there.

An MoD spokesperson refused on Tuesday to comment on the allegations and denied suggestions that the MoD would try to stop the programme being shown.

At their weekend conference Scottish CND condemned the government for continuing to use the submarines when reactors are known to be faulty.

They want the boats recalled, their reactors shut down, and a decommissioning process begun.

CND spokesperson Adrian Rennie: "There should now be a full public

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