

# Alex Falconer

Member of the European Parliament

Mid Scotland and Fife



Tony Southall,  
Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament,  
15 Barrland Street,  
Glasgow G41 1QH.

29 October 1997

Dear Tony,

Please find enclosed a copy of the letter I received today from the Ministry of Defence. If you have further comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

*Vicky Stephenson*

*for* Alex Falconer

Enc.



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB  
Telephone 0171-218 2216 (Direct Dialling)  
0171-218 9000 (Switchboard)

MINISTER OF STATE FOR  
THE ARMED FORCES

D/Min(AF)/JR/3838/97/M

26<sup>th</sup> October 1997

Dear Alex,

Thank you for your letter of 24 September to George Robertson enclosing one from Mr Tony Southall, Joint Secretary of Scottish CND, who has asked you for details regarding Exercise **SHORT SERMON**. I have been asked to reply, in view of my responsibilities for these matters.

Exercise **SHORT SERMON**, which will be held in the Faslane area between 18 to 20 November 1997, is being designed to test the response of the MoD and Royal Navy, in dealing with an accident involving the reactor of a nuclear powered submarine berthed in the Clyde Naval Base. A key aspect of the exercise will be the coordination of activities between MoD and other agencies. The response will be based on the plan described in the Clyde Public Safety Scheme.

Legislation on nuclear safety and accident response requires that an estimate is made of the probability of accidents occurring. We expend considerable effort in studying this issue, and our work is overseen by the Department's Nuclear Powered Warships Safety Committee. Discussions are also held with the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate. Our contingency plans are based, in accordance with the legislation, on responding to the effects of reasonably foreseeable accidents, (i.e. those with estimated probability greater than 1 in 100,000) but they can also be adapted to cope with even less likely events which might have more significant consequences.

It is planned that potassium iodate tablets would be distributed before any release of radioactive material had occurred at a time determined by monitoring the condition of the reactor. Medical advice is that these tablets should be taken as early as possible, but there is still benefit even if they are

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taken several hours after exposure to radioactive iodine. We are confident that the plans for the distribution of potassium iodate tablets would be adequate in the extremely unlikely event of a nuclear submarine reactor accident.

Plans for responding to defence nuclear accidents are derived in full consultation with all relevant government departments, agencies, and in particular with the emergency services and local authorities in the area concerned. The joint plan for responding to a submarine reactor accident at Faslane is, as Mr Southall has demonstrated, a publicly available document. Furthermore, the public in the immediate area, who might be advised to take action, are sent leaflets under the provisions of the Public Information for Radiological Emergencies Regulations.

Finally, I should say that there has never been an accident involving a nuclear powered submarine reactor which has led to, or come anywhere near leading to, any release of radioactive contamination to the environment. We are confident that the continued application of stringent safety procedures will continue to prove effective in preventing any such accident.

I hope you will find the above both helpful and reassuring.

*Kind Regards*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Reid'.

DR JOHN REID MP



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Tony Southall  
Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament  
15 Barrland St  
Glasgow G41 1QH

25 September 1997

Dear Tony

Please find enclosed a copy of the letter sent to George Robertson at the M.O.D

I will contact you when I receive a reply to my letter.

Yours sincerely



Alex Falconer.

Constituency Office: 25 Church Street, Inverkeithing, Fife KY11 1LH UK  
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Rt. Hon. Mr George Robertson M.P.  
Secretary of State  
Ministry of Defence  
Main Buildings  
Whitehall  
London SW1A 2HB

24 September 1997

Dear Minister

*Exercise Short Sermon Faslane 17-19 November 1997*

*Please find enclosed a copy of the letter I received from Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament of which I am a member, on the above matter.*

*I also express the same concerns contained in the letter and would appreciate details about the arrangements for protecting the public in the event of a nuclear submarine accident.*

Yours sincerely

Alex Falconer