

From: DENNIS CANAVAN M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Tel: 0171-219 4127

Fax: 0171-219 2513

Our ref:-DC/AT

25 September 1997

Mr Tony Southall
Joint Secretary
Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
15 Barrland Street
Glasgow G41 1QH

Dear Tony

Thank you for your letter of 18 September.

I share the concern about the matter outlined in your letter and I have, therefore, taken it up with George Robertson, Secretary of State for Defence.

I shall contact you again when I receive a reply.

With best wishes

Dennis Canavan

Dennis Canavan MP



From: DENNIS CANAVAN M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Tel: 0171-219 4127

Fax: 0171-219 2513

Our ref:- DC/AT

31 October 1997

Mr Tony Southall
Joint Secretary
Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
15 Barrland Street
Glasgow G41 1QH

Dear Tony

Further to our previous correspondence, I enclose a reply which I have received from John Reid, Minister of State for the Armed Forces.

I realise that, like me, you will probably be dissatisfied with the contents of the Minister's letter but it seems that a firm decision has been taken to go ahead with Exercise Short Sermon.

I am sorry that my representations have not met with a more positive response but you can count on my continuing support for total nuclear disarmament which would obviate the need for such exercises.

With best wishes

Dennis Canavan

Dennis Canavan MP

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/3821/97/M

25^a October 1997

Dear Dennis,

Thank you for your letter of 25 September (reference: DC/AT) 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.

I covered a number of general issues relating to the exercise in my recent letter but I will in addition, address the specific points put by Scottish CND in this letter.

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, (ie 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.

Dennis Canavan Esq MP



Recycled Paper



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 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 this helps to explain the position.

Kind Regards

DR JOHN REID MP

