



Navy News

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Nuclear safety management under review

NUCLEAR safety in the Ministry of Defence is being reviewed by a study group set up with the agreement of Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon.

Sponsored by the Director General (Security and Safety), the group is due to report early next year and make recommendations for economic, efficient and effective management systems to ensure the safety of MOD's nuclear assets through life.

It is taking into account a range of issues, including current and emerging standards, codes of practice, MOD's duty of care to employees and the public and the need to harmonise processes, build on best practice, minimise bureaucracy and have a robust approach to future organisational change.

The study is looking, among other things, at storage, transport and processing, decommissioning and disposal, current separation of responsibilities and nuclear accident response plans.

It is under the direction of a Nuclear Safety Steering Panel at two-star level, including Rear Admirals Brian Perowne (Chief

Executive of the Naval Bases Supply Agency), Rees Ward (Equipment Capability), Robert Stevens (Flag Officer Submarines) and F. P. Scourse (Naval Weapons Security and Safety).

The study itself is being conducted by a working group including four RN captains specialising respectively in reactors, weapons, logistics and ordnance support.

Details are in General Defence Council Instruction 237/00.



'We have to integrate much better' – FOSM

THE RN Submarine Service centenary will be launched next month – appropriately with the keel laying of the first of its new class of nuclear-powered attack submarines, HMS Astute.

Also looking to the future, Flag Officer Submarines Rear Admiral Rob Stevens has said the covert, independent way of operating employed during the Cold War is no longer relevant to the current scene.

Speaking at the centennial conference at the University of Lancaster, he said the Service should now conform to the RN's new operational concept – the Maritime Contribution to Joint Operations – and make use of the full potential of the nuclear-powered attack submarine (SSN) across a wider range of tasks.

"The SSN should be indispensable to the joint commander – but to make that happen we have to integrate much better than we have in the past in order to provide the battlespace awareness that the joint commander or maritime component commander needs," he said.

"That means we're taking the Submarine Service out of its 'stovepipe' of operating entirely independently and making ground

Astute lays the way for centenary celebration

towards integrating it into the overall MCJO."

The key to this was to fit discrete communications fleetwide in the submarine flotilla.

"We must do this to break away from the 12-hour delay that conventional submarine broadcast imposes. Until we can do this we cannot take advantage of the infor-

mation technology revolution, and therefore we cannot make the submarine truly 'joint'."

Just after *Navy News* went to press at the end of October, all the Navy's 12 SSNs were removed from operations following the identification of a flaw in HMS Tireless's reactor cooling system.

Five were quickly found to have been clear of the defect and Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon said analysis of more detailed inspection would allow a recovery programme to be set in place for those that were affected. It was aimed to have this established by the end of last month.

Signs of the flaw were apparent in HMS Superb, Splendid, Trafalgar, Turbulent, Torbay, Talent and Tireless. In the clear were HMS Sovereign, Sceptre, Spartan, Trenchant and Triumph.

□ The Ministry of Defence is to canvas the direct views of the public to help identify the best options for future land storage of redundant nuclear submarines. Defence Under Secretary Lewis Moonie has announced. A MOD study concluded earlier this year that the current practice of storing submarines afloat at Devonport and Rosyth remained safe, but that lack of alternative afloat sites meant storing the radioactive components on land was the best option for the longer term.

Dr Moonie said the MOD would be seeking proposals from industry in order to identify the best storage method and site. There would be a full and open consultation over the next three years, the first stage due to be completed by the end of this month.



Diary of events

IN 1900 Britain was the only major maritime power not to have at least an embryonic submarine flotilla.

But despite vehement condemnation of the submarine as a means of waging war, wiser counsels prevailed. Holland 1 was launched in 1901 at Barrow in Furness and the Royal Navy Submarine Service was born.

2001 will see Britain's most Silent Service celebrate the outstanding heroism, professionalism and technological achievements of those who designed, built, supported and served in its submarines – and commemorate those who lost their lives in them.

Main events are as follows:

- January 31: HMS Astute keel laying ceremony, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria.
- April 10: Launch of Royal Mail special stamps.
- April 24: Submarine Race Day, Devon and Exeter Racecourse.
- May 4-7: Freedom of the Borough to be bestowed on the Submarine Service, Barrow-in-Furness.
- May 17: Opening of Holland 1 exhibit, Royal Navy Submarine Museum, Gosport, Hants.
- May 26-28: Chatham Historical Dockyard Navy Days, Chatham, Kent.
- May 28-June 5: Centenary celebrations, Civvie (to include visiting foreign submarines), HM Naval Base, Faslane.
- July 7: Centenary celebrations, Devonport, HM Naval Base, Devonport.
- July 21: Flag Officer Submarines Centenary Ball, Dorchester Hotel, London.
- August 24-27: International Festival of the Sea, HM Naval Base, Portsmouth.
- Late September: Corporation of London Lunch, Mansion House, London.
- October 5-7: Submarine Centenary Reunion, Fort Blockhouse, Gosport, Hants.
- November 2: Centenary Thanksgiving Service, Westminster Abbey.
- November 30: Centenary Party, HMS Neptune, Faslane.

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