

PREPARE FOR A CLYDE DISASTER

THE Clyde submarine base at Faslane is to prepare for a full-scale nuclear disaster.

In a massive exercise involving the Armed Forces and emergency services, military planners have created a Doomsday scenario.

They will be asked to tackle a fully armed nuclear sub which has a reactor facing meltdown. And they will be warned that any resulting explosion would put millions of people in the West of Scotland at risk.

The immediate task facing the emergency team is to evacuate 5000 people from Faslane. They then

By JIM McLEAN

have three days to cool the reactor or face disaster.

Military planners have described the November 17 exercise as "one of the biggest ever".

Local and national government, including the Cabinet, will be fully

informed. Top Scottish Office politicians and George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, are expected to monitor the rescue and recovery operations.

Fire chief Stuart MacDonald, Divisional Officer with North Com-mand, based in Clydebank,

said: "God forbid if it ever did happen."

Local services around the base face total disruption as nearby communities of Rhu and Helensburgh become focal points for rescuers. It's believed there are contingency plans to evacuate residents from some areas.

Sharpen

A spokeswoman for the MOD at Faslane said realism plays an important part in the exercises, which are designed to sharpen reflexes in case the real thing should ever happen.

"The scenario involves a submarine's nuclear reactor. Part of the exercise will be to evacuate the base, which has about 5000 people in it and people on board ships."

Protesters from the Faslane Peace Camp may prove to be a thorn in the side of the exercise, should they retaliate against eviction orders with a policy of non co-operation.

Local Argyll and Bute councillor Andrew MacNicol, of Dunoon, said "There were always fears of a real disaster."

"I remember hearing an alarm go off at the base at 2pm. Regular tests are made around 10am. It turned out that one of the subs had nearly suffered a reactor meltdown and it was a for real situation."

"I didn't know what to do. Luckily that situation was fixed. But it's a fear we have to live with" Councillor MacNicol added.

FAE David Henderson

JAM

FROM SCOTTISH CND

MORE people are desperately needed to join in the campaign to improve facilities in Helensburgh for the under sixes and their parents.

The Helensburgh Link-up group are hoping to recruit new members at their AGM in Helensburgh's Clyde Street Community Centre.

The group has been established for several years and has been involved in improving facilities for young families in the town.

A free creche is being provided and refreshments will be available. The meeting on November 10 starts at 10am.

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23 Oct 99

MoD CHIEFS at Faslane have denied claims that the Base could be the next Chernobyl.

As HM Naval Base Clyde prepares for the country's biggest ever nuclear accident exercise, CND campaigners have accused officials of: "Not living in the real world."

And they say that the planned exercise will not simulate the worst possible accident that could hit our shores.

Exercise 'Short Sermon' will swing into action at Faslane in November.

It has been designed to simulate a limited nuclear accident that would release radioactive material into the area within a two-mile downwind radius.

But protesters claim the fall-out area has not been

claims

extended far enough.

A spokesperson on behalf of of CND said: "Garelochhead, Shandon and parts of the Rosneath Peninsula are within 2kms of Faslane but a lot of vulnerable people, especially young children and babies are not being taken into account."

"They don't want to simulate a worst case scenario as they don't want people to know the full extent of what could happen."

Mr Andy Moore, Assistant Director of the Nuclear Accident Response Centre in London, told the Advertiser: "The reactors in the Navy submarines are much, much smaller than anything in Chernobyl and are simply not comparable."

"And although we haven't ever had an accident in over 30 years we are by no means complacent."

"We have a detailed plan on the probability of an

unlikely ever

emergency."
Short Sermon on November 1 for two days.

By Paul Batters

DUNBARTONSHIRE ENTERPRISE BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Would you like to help create jobs and prosperity in Dunbartonshire?

Dunbartonshire Enterprise, part of the Scottish Enterprise Network, is looking for enthusiastic business people to join the Board as non-executive directors.

You should hold a senior position in a business located within the Dunbartonshire Enterprise area, which includes the Local Authority areas of East and West Dunbartonshire, as well as the eastern part of Argyll and Bute around Helensburgh and the Rosneath Peninsula.

The challenge is to help us drive the local economy forward into the next century.

Dunbartonshire Enterprise:

- Helps develop businesses
- Encourages new ventures
- Increases the skills base and trains unemployed people
- Promotes exporting and inward investment
- Provides property assistance and helps regenerate disadvantaged communities

We work closely with a wide range of public and private sector organisations.

The Board meets once a month. Non-executive directors provide direction for the work of the company, helping us develop our strategy, formulate policy and evaluate projects.

Our existing members come from a wide variety of public and private sector backgrounds. The positions are not remunerated but specific expenses are covered.

If you think you're up to the challenge of joining the team - or you'd like to know more please write to:

Alan Thornton M.B.E.
Chairman
Dunbartonshire Enterprise, Spectrum House
Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2DR



accident and how to respond based upon European directives that are required by law.

"The submarine reactors are very complicated but, in the highly unlikely event that they did fail, we have studied exhaustively ways to contain a leak."

A spokesperson from the base added: "If there was a leak of radiation and it got out, minute particles of radiation would only be carried a short distance."

But CND protesters are angry that potentially life-saving anti-radiation pills have not already been issued locally.

The spokesperson said: "This is a tragedy waiting to happen on our doorstep."

"The tablets - potassium iodate are cheap and can save lives but they must be taken within two hours of a disaster."

Mr Moore responded: "The tablets are still effective several hours after an accident and people would still benefit from taking them."

"The distribution of tablets would begin ahead of any radiation release as we would always get advanced warning if something was to go wrong."

Exercise Short Sermon will involve all staff at the Base, Argyll and Bute Council and Argyll and Clyde Health Board, but not members of the public.

The spokesperson from Faslane said: "The general public will not be involved and will not be evacuated. "We have sent out thousands of information leaflets over the years as a standard safety procedure which clearly states what would happen in the

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Chapman Nov 97

HAPPENS IF I ALL GOES HORRIBLY WRONG?!

THAT'S the question commonly asked by anyone just told of all the painstaking efforts made to ensure nuclear safety.

You may mention the years of operator training, the millions spent on safe operating systems, or our excellent record in this respect. After that you may be greeted by a wry knowing smile that just mouths "ah yes, but...!"

It is not enough these days to simply rely on past achievements or the methods that make our systems so safe.

We have to justify to the public, through an independent series of regulators, that we can be trusted

to operate safely because we know how to deal with things should they indeed 'go wrong.'

That is the purpose of the Nuclear Accident Response Organisation, or as the Navy prefers acronyms, the NARO.

The Clyde NARO is part of a national tri-service organisation headed by a separate department within the Ministry of Defence and has strong links with the civil nuclear power industry.

The base, through FOSNNI, is responsible not only for Faslane and Coulport but for a large number of other locations at which submarines may berth.

In the UK this ranges from Liverpool up to the Shetlands and takes in those two remote Scottish Islands, the Falklands and Bermuda.

Responsibility for maintaining a

credible NARO lies with the Base Nuclear Safety Organisation, led by the Chief Staff Officer (Nuclear), Cdr Tim Hutchinson. Within BNSO there is a small NARO group under the

by Lt Iain Dell

Base Radiation Protection Advisor, Lt Cdr Ray

Edwards who oversees all aspects of radiation safety on the base. Working for him are two officers who put the NARO into practice. Lt Iain Dell, as the Nuclear Emergency Planning Officer, oversees all aspects of NARO readiness and is the officer responsible for the seemingly endless series of exercises and all the documents that arise from

them. Lt Martin Howells leads the Naval Emergency Monitoring Team, consisting of four senior and thirteen junior rates tasked with finding out just

what the hazards are after an accident.

He is also responsible for the intensive NARO training carried out in the base.

Should an accident occur, actions within the base are directed from the Nuclear Accident Headquarters behind the Sportsrome or from the Depot Emergency Headquarters at Coulport.

Actions outside the base are directed from the Clyde Off Site Centre, on the site of the ex-army

depot on the waterfront at Rhul under the co-ordination of Strathclyde Police.

Bringing senior representatives from all civil and military authorities under one roof, the COSC marks a departure from previous practice and is highly regarded nationally as setting new standards in disaster response. It has even been visited from as far afield as Australia.

Shiny new facilities apart, the NARO is primarily concerned with safety. Everyone has a role to play in it, even if that just means knowing what to do and where to go.

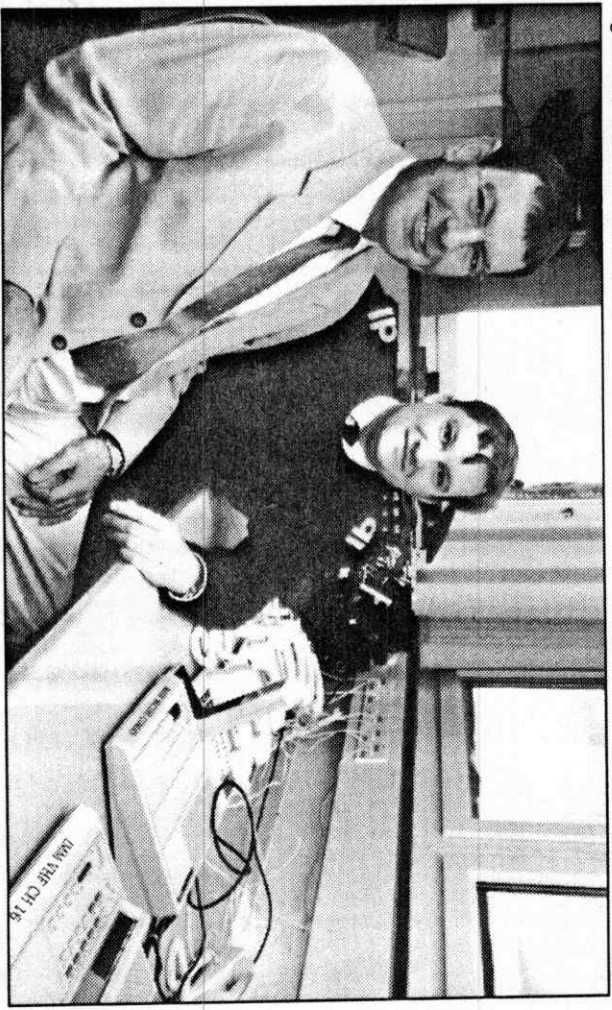
Unless we can demonstrate our ability to protect not only our own people but those members of the public living or working close by, we may be forced to stop operating nuclear facilities, a

serious and embarrassing consequence for Europe's nuclear base.

Although the frequency and extent of our exercises comes in for some stick from around the local bazaars, they are essential if we are to prove our case. To that end, we will be holding perhaps the most intense exercise ever held by the NARO in November this year, Exercise Short Sermon.

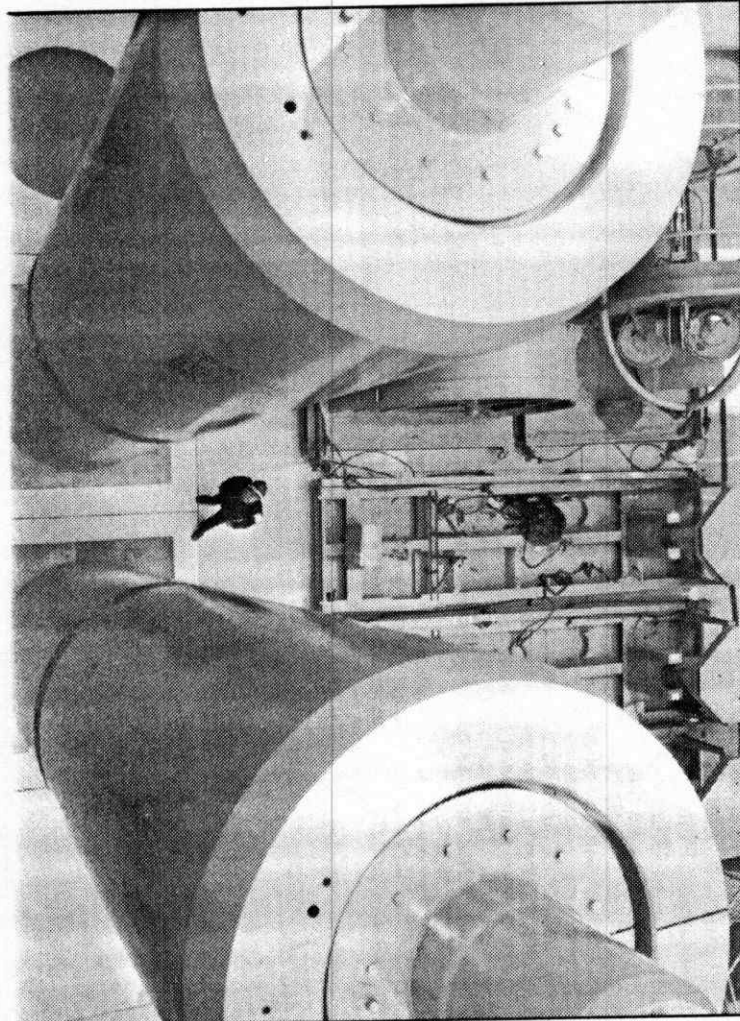
All departments, lodger units, ships and submarines alongside will be affected by it. Play within the base will be total, with few if any exceptions granted. So now is the time for those documents to be taken down from the shelf and read, before someone comes along and asks

... and what happens if it all goes horribly wrong?!



He saved my life

A POLICEMAN has paid tribute to a Naval officer whose rapid response to an SOS helped save his



MoD tests its plan for a doomsday scenario

JIM MCBETH

THE unthinkable has happened. In hushed, air-conditioned surroundings in a Scottish village, men and women are gathering around a blueprint for disaster.

It is the worst-case scenario - the steel tomb housing the nuclear reactor of a submarine at the Clyde Naval Base Faslane has fractured; the deadliest substance in history is in the atmosphere.

The task is to evacuate 4,000 Royal Navy personnel and protect a civilian population from a cloud of radioactive particles.

The wind from the west may push that cloud toward the UK's second largest conurbation.

Civilians around the base face the risk of exposure from radioactive "shine", water and food may be contaminated and animals may ingest the "dust".

Within minutes, radio stations are primed to make public safety announcements and civilians are told to stay in shelter. Within two hours many of the civilian population may be issued with potassium iodate (PITS), a medication which counters the effects of radioactive iodine, a contaminant from the reactor.

The doomsday scenario, the unthinkable nuclear accident, is only a Ministry of Defence exercise. But it mirrors exactly the real disaster situation that would result from a radiation accident involving a nuclear submarine.

The operation - exercise Short Sermon 97 - will cover 72 hours of next week from 18 to 20 November - and involves teams of scientists, the military, the "blue light" emergency services, hospitals, doctors and civil authorities.

Four hundred miles south of the "war room" at Rhu, in Dunbartonshire, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, will monitor Short Sermon, Britain's biggest ever rehearsal of a nuclear accident, from the Cabinet office.

At Rhu, Dr John Reid, the minister for the armed services; an assistant chief constable and the navy's top brass will field questions from 100 people masquerading as the press, who will be primed to ask the toughest questions on why Scots face the threat of radiation poisoning. The real media have been refused access to the session.

Lessons learned next week will form the barrier between disaster or safety.

"In 40 years we have never had an accident," said Commodore Eric Thompson, the director of Naval Base Clyde. A huge "but" lies in parenthesis.

He went on: "We can't say it couldn't happen, and if it does we want to be ready."

"It's the old story of insurance. You don't buy it expecting your home to burn down, but you're covered."

"We are the responsible owners of a hazardous industry and we must exercise that responsibility to ensure safety is paramount."

Twelve months in the planning. Short Sermon will involve 5,000 people. "It is a huge exercise," said Captain Howard McFadyen, the nuclear safety officer. Civilians will not be involved in the exercise, but pre-planned measures are in place in the event of a real disaster.

Capt McFadyen added: "We are rehearsing for full release to atmosphere. It has to be managed and we don't want unnecessary public panic in the event of a real incident."

"If we think about the situation in circular zones; the immediate area around the submarine is the exclusion zone. We would immediately evacuate and decontaminate."

"Outwith that is the automatic counter-measure zone running to 550 metres, which would include the whole base."

"We would evacuate that area and administer PITS. Next week, we will evacuate 4,000 personnel. The next circle radiates to 2km, where it's considered there may be a threat in the down-wind area. There is the possibility of evacuation."

"The extended zone runs out to 10km. The chance of problems in that area is remote, nonetheless we have plans if it were ever needed."

Strathclyde's Assistant Chief Constable Peter Gibson, the force's top planner for dealing with disaster, said: "We must work effectively to well trained disciplines."

A spokesman for the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament said: "This is the largest ever nuclear accident exercise, but we don't believe it is the worst type of accident that could happen."

"The risk of accident is not confined to the Clyde. Submarines are in transit and all around the Scottish coast."

"Plans for how to respond to an incident elsewhere in Scottish waters are inadequate."



George Hunter only realised the farmhouse was occupied just before one of his workers bulldozed through the front of the house.

"We were all set to bring it down when we heard the barking. I peered in through what was left of one of the windows. I saw a movement through a hole in the floor. We realised there was a dog living under the floorboards."

"It was absolutely terrified of humans and wouldn't let us go near it for days. Eventually we had to call in the SSPCA and they managed to trap it in a cage."

The dog's owner, William Strang, farmed the land around East Bedcow for most of his life, before ill health forced him to retire and the farmhouse became run down. When he went into hospital six months ago he thought a relative was caring for Rascal.

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victim not a 'grass', say police

Detective Inspector Corrigan

its plan for a doomsday scenario

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EXCLUSIVE



HMS Turbulent

Nuclear leak on West sub

MORE than 130 sailors have taken emergency tests after a nuclear scare on board a West Country-based submarine.

The men were trapped on HMS Turbulent when radioactive coolant started leaking, writes James Wickham.

The crew, carrying out post-refit trials in the North Atlantic, were able to bring the fault under control and keep the reactor running as they returned to Devonport Docks.

A Royal Navy spokesman said: 'They have done various tests to personnel and some of the people went up to Derriford Hospital.

'Of course anything like this is going to be of concern. The safety of the people on board is vitally important.'

All tests on Royal Navy personnel came back negative. The leak was

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Nuclear leak

From page one

contained within a specially designed unmanned area. The seven workers from DML, which carried out the refuel and refit before the ship went to sea, are all said to be safe.

Reg Shields, head of corporate affairs for DML, said: 'The problem with the reactor is still being investigated before they can fix it. The MOD are running that program.'

The Royal Navy spokesman said people in Plymouth had nothing to fear from the faulty submarine, part of The Second Submarine Squadron based in Devonport.

But nuclear engineer John Large, who advises Friends of the Earth, said the Royal Navy might be playing the incident down: 'As soon as the primary coolant circuit goes wrong alarm bells start to ring. It can be pretty uncomfortable in there

at that time. The problem with a submarine is that you have nowhere to go. It sounds like a serious incident, but until the MOD release details, which they won't, we won't know.'

Steven Lemin, Labour councillor for Plymouth's Keyham ward, was disturbed that the public had not been informed.

Damaging

'They said people were safe in the Gulf War, but now we find out they were given damaging drugs by their own people.'

'They said people were safe in the Pacific when they tested the H-Bomb. Now they are dying of cancer. This proves what we've been saying - nuclear submarines need to be abandoned altogether or treated with more openness.'

The Royal Navy said there had been no leakage into the atmosphere, and no need to inform the public.

● WESTERN MORNING NEWS ● MONDAY NOVEMBER 17 1997

Secrecy claim after nuclear sub leak

THE MINISTRY of Defence was last night under pressure to reveal details of a radioactive leak on a Westcountry-based nuclear submarine.

More than 130 sailors from HMS Turbulent underwent emergency medical tests after an onboard reactor leaked radioactive coolant.

The vessel returned to its Devonport base from the North Atlantic, where it had been carrying out post-refit sea trials.

Some of the crew were taken to Derriford Hospital, Plymouth, but all tests were found to be negative.

The leak was contained in a special unmanned area, and an inquiry is now under way into what went wrong.

Seven workers from Devonport Management Limited, who carried out the refuel and refit before the ship went to sea, are all believed to be safe.

Despite MoD assurances that there was no risk to personnel or the public, city councillors and anti-nuclear groups yesterday called for the Ministry to come clean on the incident.

The Turbulent is part of the Second Submarine Squadron, based at Devonport.

Kevin Owen, of the Devonport Information Group (DIG), said: 'We accept that Devonport is a refit base and that is not going to change. Because it is so close to a residential area with thousands of people, there are concerns every time there is a scare.'

'We did hear a rumour that there was a leak, but that it was in the dock. The secrecy that the MoD practises makes those sort of rumours, even when they are untrue, spread more easily.'

'Until we know what kind of radiation was involved, we won't know how serious this was. And we won't know, unless the MoD releases the details.'

Michael Sheaff, Plymouth city councillor for Keyham ward, said: 'Openness about safety is essential if local people are to be reassured.'

Reg Shields, head of corporate affairs at DML, said: 'The problem with the reactor is still being investigated.'

The MoD said: 'There was no risk to the crew or the public at any time, but we took the precaution of carrying out tests on crew members. There was no leak into the atmosphere.'

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