

Southampton Coalition Against Nuclear Ships

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SOUTHAMPTON COULD FACE GIBRALTAR SUBMARINE PROBLEM

A damaged nuclear submarine HMS Tireless limped into Gibraltar with a leaking radioactive coolant problem in May this year. The British Navy want to repair the reactor in Gibraltar, but is under pressure to tow the submarine home to Devonport Dockyard where it can be examined in purpose built facilities.

Southampton Docks could easily be the centre of a similar dilemma, warn SCANS, the Southampton Coalition Against Nuclear Ships. It sees the recent spate of nuclear-powered submarine visits to Southampton as more than a public relations exercise and that the real reason is to keep open the possibility of using the docks as a bolt-hole in a nuclear emergency.

“ A submarine might need to be towed into the special Z Berth in Southampton Docks if its reactor was leaking, as in the case in Gibraltar. Or a leak might be discovered during routine checks while a visiting boat was berthed here”.

said Mike Waugh for SCANS

HMS Tireless in Southampton Z Berth

In March 1988 Alan Whitehead MP, the then Labour Leader of the Council “extended a full civic welcome” to HMS Tireless into Southampton Docks amid local protest. The civic welcome was in the end scaled down according to (Echo) archives of the time. A similar situation arose this year in April and July when HMS Splendid came into the docks.

Legal Action

A coalition of environment and peace groups (SCANS) decided in May this year to challenge the decision to bring submarines with nuclear reactors into the City. They also challenge the lack of dissemination of information to the public. A case is being prepared to seek a judicial review of the decisions of both Southampton City Council and the Royal Navy.

“ We believe Southampton people are really concerned about the risks of a nuclear release in the docks from a submarine reactor. It is not good enough to say there is only a small risk and that potassium iodate tablets can be distributed if there is an accident. We have received support to the tune of £1,000 which we have already put into court as a gesture of our seriousness in pursuing the case.”

said Mike Waugh

Notes to Editors

Further information is available from The Daily Echo (Southampton)