

Scotland on Sunday Submarines to

run gauntlet

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THE international environmental action group, Greenpeace, is threatening to prevent nuclear submarines sailing from Scotland this week to highlight the alleged dangers of cracks discovered in reactors.

The group's campaigning ship, MV Greenpeace, is on its way from Amsterdam to the Clyde and is expected to arrive at Gourrock tomorrow morning.

The move comes as Scottish fishermen, angry at the loss ten days ago of the trawler Antares with its four-man crew, said last night they were also preparing for a blockade of the Royal Navy's Faslane submarine base on the Clyde.

Two fishing boats will leave Gourrock tomorrow for a "reconnaissance" of the base. The blockade will take place if the Ministry of Defence continues to resist fishermen's appeals for a halt to submerged operations in the Clyde, fishermen's leaders said.

The Antares sank off the Isle of Arran, in an area known by fishermen as Submarine Alley and the Navy later admitted the submarine HMS Trenchant was thought to have hit trawl gear in the area at the time of the tragedy. The Navy began its operation to lift the wreck and recover the bodies yesterday.

Greenpeace's 190-foot former ocean-going tug, with a multinational crew of 16 and four inflatable, is planning to harass the submarine bases at Faslane and nearby Coullport.

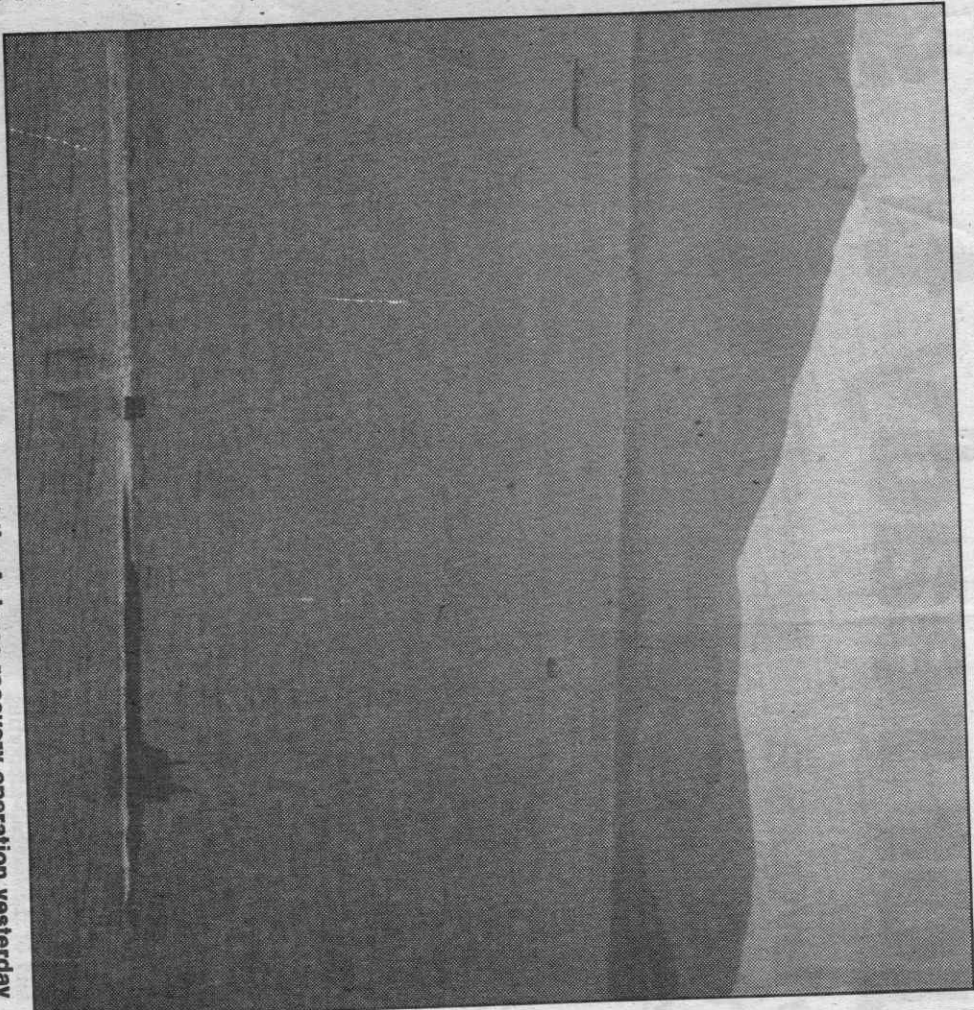
"It will be observing submarine movements on the Clyde," said nuclear-free-seas campaigner, Janet Convery, yesterday. "If a Polaris submarine attempts to go out on patrol while we are present, we will try and stop it."

She hoped that the ship would be around the Clyde for at least a week. "We really want to highlight the dangers of the cracked reactors."

Scotland on Sunday reported two weeks ago that Britain's four ageing Polaris submarines had been crippled by cracks in their reactors and would have to be scrapped. The Labour MP John McFall, a member of the House of Commons Select Committee on Defence, said that the country had been without an "effective deterrent" for two years as a result.

The MP, who represents Dumbarton, had received authoritative information that a crack had been discovered on HMS Revenge earlier this year.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Defence last night said: "They are entitled to make their protest, but people are not permitted to interfere with ships going to sea and the authorities like the police would have to deal with that."



Troubled waters: a submarine sails past the Antares recovery operation yesterday