

Greenpeace claims to have halted nuclear sub

By Alan Dron

THE environment group, Greenpeace, last night claimed to have stopped a Polaris nuclear submarine from leaving the Royal Navy's Faslane submarine base on the Clyde.

But a Ministry of Defence spokesman said: "Greenpeace has not stopped the boat from leaving." The submarine, HMS Revenge, was moored last night near the Faslane complex.

Seven banner-carrying protesters in three inflatable boats had circled the submarine as she attempted to leave the base, Greenpeace claimed.

"As far as we could tell it was fitted with all its equipment and all its missiles," said a spokeswoman. "It was on its way out, and they don't normally do that for a Sunday afternoon joy-ride."

The pressure group's campaign ship, MV Greenpeace, a former ocean-going tug, is due to arrive in the Clyde today in an attempt to stop those submarines which Greenpeace claims have cracks in their reactors from putting to sea.

But a Greenpeace advance party arrived on the Clyde yesterday and later claimed to have prevented HMS Revenge from leaving.

The Greenpeace protest is specifically targeted against HMS Revenge, which it claims is one of the Royal Navy nuclear submarines to be affected by cracks in its reactor coolant pipes.

Meanwhile, fishermen from Northern Ireland say they are prepared to join their Scottish counterparts in any blockade of the base at Faslane in protest over the sinking of the trawler Antares.

Two fishing boats are due to set off

from Gourock this morning to reconnoitre the approaches to the base before a possible blockade.

Trawler crews are angry at the continuation of underwater operations in the area after the disappearance of the Campbelltown-registered Antares, apparently dragged under after its gear was snagged by a submerged submarine.

The secretary of the Clyde Fishermen's Association, Patrick Stewart, said yesterday he presumed the reconnaissance would be looking at the Rhu Narrows, probably the most easily blockable section of the fiirth. If there were insufficient local boats to block the area, he had heard that Ulster fishermen had offered their support and could be mobilised quickly.

Making clear that the fishermen's action was their initiative, rather than

the association's, he said he understood they had been talking about barring the movement of United States submarines from the Holy Loch base, as well as British ones from Faslane.

A navy spokesman at the base was cautious yesterday about any response to a blockade, which would depend on events and where they happened.

He said that the salvage of the Antares had been delayed by a technical malfunction on the underwater robot vehicle Scorpio, which was being used to cut debris from around the fishing boat in preparation for its being towed underwater to shallows off Arran, where divers could search it for the bodies of the missing crew.

A sister craft to the Scorpio was en route from the navy's Kyle of Lochalsh underwater test centre and it was hoped that salvage work would be able to restart last night.

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