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# Polaris fleet down to two subs, says Greenpeace

By Severin Carrell

ONE of Britain's Polaris nuclear submarines based at Faslane has been refused an operations certificate following the discovery of crippling reactor defects.

As a result, the Atlantic nuclear patrols may now be relying on just two seaworthy vessels.

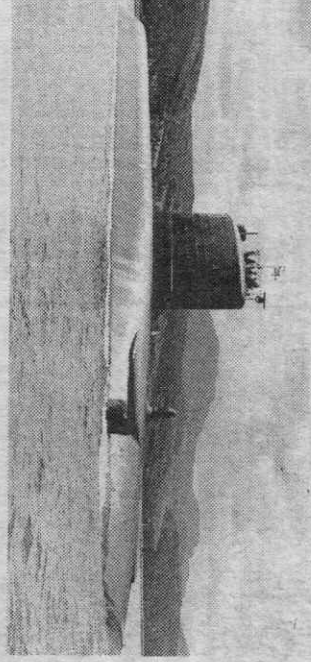
A submarine which has been berthed on the Clyde for nearly two years failed to win the necessary clearance from the Naval Nuclear Technical Safety Panel, a well-placed source told *The Scotsman* yesterday.

With HMS Repulse tied up after completing just one four-week patrol in 16 months, only two submarines are available to maintain Britain's constant Polaris patrols of the north Atlantic. But according to a report released today, the Royal Navy has been struggling to maintain a constant presence at sea.

In a report based on parliamentary documents, internal navy reports and defence sources, the environmental organisation Greenpeace says a catalogue of technical failures seriously undermines the credibility of Britain's nuclear deterrent.

It has previously been confirmed that one vessel, HMS Revenge, suffers serious "stress corrosion" cracks in the reactor coolant system, similar to problems which dogged HMS Repulse. The other, HMS Resolution, is more than 18 months late for a complete overhaul and Greenpeace says this poses a serious health risk to personnel.

Last night one Labour MP said that attempts to raise parliamentary questions over problems apparently plaguing the submarines' nuclear reactors, which have extended vital equipment refitting times, were suddenly blocked by the Government last week.



HMS Repulse which has had only one patrol in 16 months

Andrew Bennett, MP for Denton & Reddish, said the block came when the Government decided to classify any information covering the refitting programme, which has left one Polaris submarine, HMS Renown, overrunning initial repair schedules at Rosyth by nearly two years.

Calling for the complete withdrawal of Polaris submarines, the Greenpeace report, *Bring Polaris Home*, claims to present a full operational history of Britain's four

between 19 and 23 years after being launched. Three of the submarines have been scrapped, with the last two remaining berthed at Faslane.

"The Polaris fleet share exactly the same P1 nuclear reactor as the Valiant/Churchill class and are at risk of, or have extant, the same defect," Greenpeace says.

passed the safety tests required by the nuclear warships safety committee and was securely undertaking operations.

Janet Convery, Greenpeace's Nuclear Free Seas campaigner, said: "Polaris submarine operations are grinding to a halt. The Government are struggling to keep the fleet afloat and in doing so are willing to put the health of crews, workers and the environment at risk. The dangers involved are completely unacceptable — the time has come to bring Polaris home."

Polaris submarines detailing increasingly long periods during which the Resolution Class submarines have been out from service.

Launched about 24 years ago, Britain's Polaris Resolution Class submarines are versions of Valiant/Churchill class submarines, stretched to accept Polaris missiles.

Last year, all five Valiant/Churchill submarines were withdrawn after a major defect in the reactor coolant system was uncovered

With an examination of repair schedules showing a timelag of three and a half years in vital refitting schedules, Greenpeace believed inherent reactor system problems could lead to a serious nuclear accident.

One Royal Navy source said, however, that unlike Repulse, Resolution had hit the Navy's new £140 million submarine, HMS Upholder, which is to undergo major modifications to rectify a firing fault in her torpedo mechanism, it was confirmed by the Ministry of Defence yesterday.

*Bring Polaris Home, Greenpeace UK, Canonbury Villas, London N1 2PN. £2.50*