

Submarine corps angry at lack of MoD support

By Severin Carrell

GROUPS of senior officers in the Royal Navy's submarine corps are angry at the apparent failure by defence ministers to defend the service publicly against a recent upsurge of critical reports.

The intense secrecy covering nuclear submarines is seen as unnecessarily preventing the corps from replying to a series of allegations about the state of Britain's nuclear fleet. Some officers believe they are being left undefended by Government ministers.

"It's a considerable concern for the submarine flotilla that no serious attempt is being made by the Ministry of Defence to make the sort of statement which would be informative and set this thing in context," one source said. "The submarine service is not being given the protection it deserves from Government and Whitehall."

The nuclear submarine service has been rocked by a series of damning reports and investigations claiming that several submarine fleets, particularly the ailing Polaris

nuclear missile squadron, are near collapse through nuclear reactor defects.

Recent reports by environmentalists at Greenpeace and television and newspaper journalists have highlighted a defect which could have catastrophic results.

But the Royal Navy's submarine engineers and senior officers are understood to be convinced that they have solved the problem and can cope with the extensive disruption of Polaris patrols which has followed the enforced programme of checks and repairs.

One source agreed, however, that the potentially deadly health risks from radiation exposure being faced by civilian engineers working on the nuclear reactors at both the Clyde Submarine Base at Faslane and Rosyth dockyard remained a central problem.

Radiation dose limits are being tightened under pressure from trade unions and health specialists, restricting the amount of work each engineer is allowed to do and

presenting defence officials with the difficult task of maintaining the pace of work.

But the intense secrecy the Government attaches to the status of nuclear submarines has left senior submarine officers at Faslane deeply frustrated at their inability to publicly discuss the matter and defend their service against the hostile reports.

In July the Tory-dominated defence select committee at the House of Commons rebuked the Government over secrecy.

Although stringent security over the fleet's operations is accepted, one experienced submariner said there was a growing suspicion that the Government was deliberately allowing the bad publicity to prosper largely undefended.

"You begin to wonder with the 25 per cent cut in the active submarine branch and the curtailment of the building programme, just how dedicated the MoD is to preserving the submarine arm," one analyst said.



Leaders of the pack: Lewis Morrison dancers Juliet Bennett and Alison I

Better deal for tenants urged

By David Scott, Local Government Editor

A BETTER deal is needed for tenants involved in plans to transfer their homes to other landlords, a conference in Glasgow will be told today.

The issue of housing transfers will be debated by delegates representing local authorities, housing associations and co-operatives, new towns, Scottish Homes and representatives of tenants' organisations.

The conference, organised by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and the Institute of Housing in Scotland, will be told that the transfer of housing stock from

backing of the tenants involved. Procedures must be developed which give tenants full control over the choice of alternative landlords."

Mr Alexander also emphasised that transfer of housing stock had to be backed by resources which would allow the housing stock to be upgraded in line with tenants' expectations. The SFHA was calling for a doubling of the resources available from the Government through Scottish Homes for investment in housing associations and co-operatives.

