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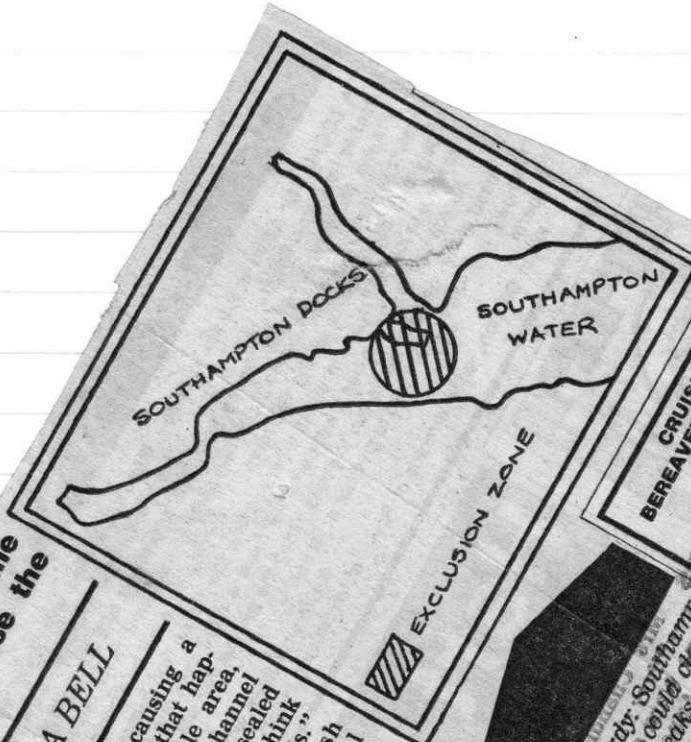
A MINOR accident on board the nuclear submarine docked in Southampton Water could jeopardise the port's entire commercial operations.

EXCLUSIVE by NICOLA BELL

So says an independent safety expert who has just written a report on the danger faced by Southampton citizens while the top secret sub HMS Churchill is berthed in the city.

According to Southampton-based William Peden, most of the commercial activities would have to be shut down if anything happens to the submarine. In the event of a radiation leak, minimum safety standards require an area stretching 50 metres from the centre of the accident and 5 metres deep to be cordoned off. The position of the submarine, in dock 38 at the head of the channel, would mean that the entire port area would be affected. And such an accident would mean that the port would be closed to shipping.

Mr Peden said: "Although the danger posed by sabotage is minimal, there is a very real danger of a collision, or of the coolant pumps cutting off access to the channel and effectively cutting off access to the port. But a spokesman admitted that sealing off the area would cut off the rest of the port and jeopardise commercial operations. HMS Churchill is due to leave Southampton Water this week.



**CRUISE
BEREAVEMENT CARE
AGM**
Wednesday 1 March
at 7.30 pm
Bedford House
Bedford Place

In jeopardy: Southampton Docks could close if radiation leaks