

On these pages we show US nuclear subs being serviced in the Holy Loch . . . revealing, on the right, a nuclear danger that officially doesn't happen.

That photograph shows four Poseidon submarines being serviced at the same time—in a situation which is totally banned at bases in the United States. And shouldn't be happening here!

According to the US Department of Defense, when four submarines are docked, a safety zone of 9000 feet (1 3/4 miles) around the base should be clear of civilians in case of an accidental explosion.

But as our map clearly shows, people living in Sandbank and north Dunoon are well within the danger zone.

US government documents which I obtained when researching for a book, reveal that American Pentagon planners look on the Holy Loch as "remotely located"—meaning that they regard the area as virtually uninhabited!

US missile-explosion safety rules are stricter for the United States than for their bases in other countries.

Our picture taken three months ago at the Holy Loch confirms reports—usually denied—that four submarines do arrive



By DUNCAN CAMPBELL

The New Statesman investigative journalist

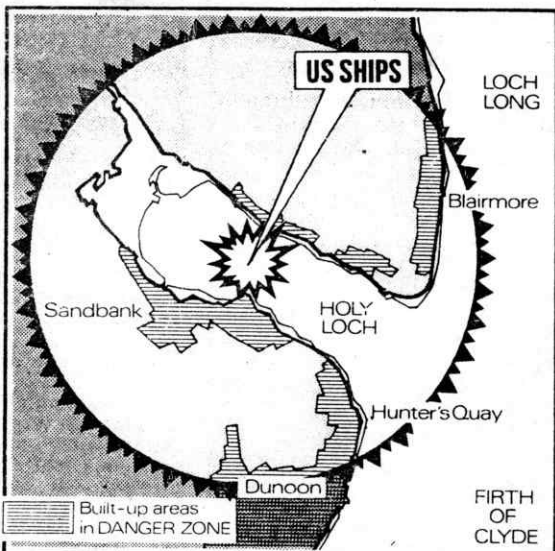
simultaneously in the loch, creating the extra hazard.

The dangers of having submarines together were first revealed by US admirals in reports to the military construction subcommittee of the US Congress in 1977 and 1978.

TOWNS

The committee was considering where to put new Trident and Poseidon missile submarine bases in the United States.

Admiral Kelln of the US Department of Defense told the committee that "the blast safety zone required around a tender with four Poseidon sub-



The four-Poseidon blast zone extends for 1 3/4 miles. No civilians should be in an area like this.

APR 84

marines alongside is in excess of 9000 feet."

Missile submarine bases could not be sited near towns or industrial areas—in the United States.

There, 55 out of 60 possible sites were rejected as too built-up.

In Scotland, however, the rules are different. Many settlements and a part of Dunoon are well within the "blast zone."

Another committee hearing was told that the Pentagon required a submarine's 16 nuclear missiles to be unloaded before it could safely enter a US naval shipyard.

CHEAP

But this rule "does not apply to sites abroad, which are remotely located."

The committee, which was considering closing down the Holy Loch, was told that it was quicker and cheaper to use the overseas sites to refit submarines because the irksome safety requirements did not apply abroad.

In the late 1970s, there were three ballistic

missile submarine bases overseas—in the Pacific, in Spain, and in the Holy Loch.

Now only the Holy Loch is still in operation.

In the event of an explosion destroying the nuclear reactors or warheads of a submarine, the result would be a deadly radioactive fallout, carried on the wind.

A US Congress report warned that such an accident might create a "cigar-shaped cloud extending for about 28 miles, with a maximum width of 2.5 miles."

Given the prevailing wind, an accident

would create a massive radioactive disaster area in much of Glasgow and across all of the lower Clyde.

A Clyde local liaison committee has been set up to deal with nuclear reactor accidents. It includes officials from Strathclyde Council.

ADVANCE

But the committee's functions consist almost entirely of rubber-stamping official proposals. The committee does not even get details of radiation levels in the Clyde area.

But a special manual, called the Clyde Public Safety Scheme, defines the tasks of the local committee, in case of an accident.

And an official warning announcement for such an occasion has already been written in advance, and copies given to BBC Scotland and STV.

The announcement says:

We have been asked to make the following urgent announcement. There has been a slight accident in

the atomic reactor of a nuclear submarine which is at present resulting in a small release of radioactive products. There is no hazard of an atomic explosion. A few people may be asked to move... Until further notice no food, which was not in tins or sealed air-tight containers, should be eaten and no smoking should take place... in the following areas...

Cynics might wonder how the Navy can be so sure of its facts in advance!

OVER TO THE PENTAGON..

By NICK HUNTER

GETTING reaction to the "blast-zone danger" was easier said than done—despite the American Freedom of Information Act.

We first called the US Navy public affairs department in London.

There, Commander Ery Sharp said: "Why are you calling me? We have people up there. I'm not

very happy to speak to the Sunday Mail after the way you've been badgering our people up there."

At the Holy Loch base the telephone operator twice managed to lose the Sunday Mail connection with the Press office.

So it was back to Commander Sharp. When we asked him about the US regulations and their relevance to "remote locations" like the Holy Loch, he said: "If

you want to speak about policy matters that the US Navy has, you must address this to the Department of Defense."

At the Department of Defense in the Pentagon, Lieutenant Commander Jim Leader said: "These questions will have to go through channels in writing. If you care to call back next week our Navy Desk may have the answers for you."

We'll be calling, Commander.