

# NUKE SCARE!



The Ark Royal - bombed by mistake

**T**HE aircraft carrier Ark Royal was carrying nuclear weapons when she was accidentally bombed off the west coast of Scotland.

The sensational allegation has been made by top defence sources to the Sunday Mail.

And last night the Royal Navy remained tight-lipped refusing to confirm or deny the claim.

But the Mail can reveal growing evidence that there were between one and five nuclear depth bombs on board at the time of the incident.

The accident happened on April 20 this year, when the Ark Royal was taking part in a routine bombing exercise conducted by one of its own Sea Harrier aircraft.

### SEA

Last October the then Defence Secretary Tom King told the Commons:

"In future neither nuclear depth bombs nor the free-fall nuclear bombs for our Harrier aircraft will, in normal circumstances, be deployed at sea."

But analysts point out that

King set no deadline.

The Defence Ministry has never formally admitted that its carriers have nuclear bombs on board.

The anti-submarine nuclear depth bombs are for Sea King helicopters and there are also free-fall bombs for its Harriers.

However, it is widely accepted that the Ark Royal normally carries between six and ten such warheads before the Government statement last October.

Anti-nuclear groups who

## Ark Royal bomb claim

### EXCLUSIVE

By ANGUS MACLEOD

constantly monitor the movement of atomic weapons around the country say only one of the heavily-armed convoys have visited the Ark Royal to remove warheads since the Government announcement.

It consisted of six trucks. One truck is a 'dummy' vehicle for security reasons and each of the other five is assigned one warhead for safety reasons.

### FIRE

So only five warheads could have been removed.

The five were taken to RAF Honington in Suffolk for storage, indicating they were the free-fall RAF weapons.

Navy sources say there may have been as many as five depth weapons still aboard when the rogue Harrier bomb struck.

Defence analyst Paul Rogers of Bradford University said:

"If the bomb had gone through into the internal flight deck and blown up a Sea King's fuel tank you would have had a major fire."

"That could have released fissile nuclear material downwind for several miles."

Last night the Royal Navy said: "What we can say is that the current situation is that it is no longer the practice to deploy nuclear weapons on board Royal Navy ships."

"It is a long-standing practice neither to confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons."

During the exercise which took place between Scotland and Northern Ireland the Ark Royal was towing a 'splash' target but the Harrier's bomb missed it and hit the ship.

Six ratings were injured.



'He did pretty well until we got to Strip-the-Willow!'

## Kirk wedding?

PRINCESS ANNE may be married in Scotland, it emerged last night.

For speculation was growing that she was set to wed navy Commander Tim Laurence in a Kirk service.

Members of the Royal Family will discuss the matter today at Balmoral.

And it is believed the Queen's domestic chaplain on the estate, the Rev Keith Angus, is involved in negotiations aimed at smoothing the

way for a wedding. Remarriage for divorced people is frowned upon in the Church of England.

But a senior Church of Scotland source said: "The laws of the Kirk allow it and it is up to the local minister to give the go ahead."

The Princess Royal's divorce from Captain Mark Phillips is due to be finalised next month.

This would clear the way for Commander Laurence to join the Royal Family



Anne



Tim

## Scots cops are

FROM PAGE ONE  
until the local police arrived.

They were detained in Wolverhampton.

The constables were alleged to have attacked 29-year-old Mr Kevin McAlyne in the George Hotel.

Mr McAlyne, of Carter Road, Dunstall, Wolverhampton, is detained in Wolverhampton's Royal Hospital with a fractured left arm.

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