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Report on Polaris warheads 'way out'

By Alan Dron

A NUCLEAR missiles specialist yesterday expressed considerable doubts about a report that Britain's nuclear deterrent had effectively been rendered useless by being kept at sea beyond the point at which the missile warheads and propellants began to degrade.

The report, in *Scotland on Sunday*, cited a nuclear engineer, John Large, who recently produced a report for the environmental group Greenpeace alleging that cracks had been discovered in Royal Navy submarine reactors, and saying that HMS Resolution had been forced to remain on patrol for 16 weeks due to problems in getting other Polaris vessels ready for sea.

He claimed that Resolution had spent the past two weeks of its voyage just outside the Firth of Clyde, out of its normal patrol area, waiting for its sister ship Revenge to be made ready for sea after repairs to cracks in the powerplant.

The article quoted him as saying that nuclear materials reached run-down point at three months at sea.

After that the article claimed, the weapons were useless with the submarine constantly in use.

The nuclear deterrent, therefore, was in name only for the extra weeks Resolution remained out.

But Duncan Lennox, the editor of *Jane's Strategic Weapons* yearbook, said yesterday he would disagree with Mr Large's conclusions,

Ironation between several Soviet republics and the central government over the union budget and plan for 1991 had been defused at a Kremlin meeting last week. Mr Gorbachev had said after the Thursday meeting, the first of his new Federation Council grouping senior officials from the centre and all 15 republics, that an economic agreement for the new year had been reached. Pessimism over the prospects for an economic break-