
Fishing vessels operating in submarine exercise areas

Notice to Owners, Skippers and Crew of Fishing Vessels

INTRODUCTION

1. This Marine Guidance Note describes measures implemented by the Royal Navy to minimise the risk to fishing vessels operating in areas of submarine activity. It also explains how to obtain information about submarine activity and what action fishing vessels skippers need to take when operating in areas of submarine activity, particularly in the event of motive power being lost.

SUBMARINE EXERCISE AREAS

2. All exercise areas around the United Kingdom that are permanently established and used for training by submarines are listed in the Admiralty List of Radio Signals (ALRS) Volume 3 (Figure 1) Part 1 (Figure 1) (ALRS 3-NP 283 (Figure 1)). Diagrams indicating these general areas can be seen at the Annex to this notice.

SUBFACTS BROADCASTS

3. Use of these exercise areas by submarines is promulgated to other marine users by SUBFACTS broadcasts. ALRS Volume 3 (Figure 1) gives details of the broadcast frequencies and their times. Notification of activity is outlined on the NAVTEX system and draws marine user's attention to the VHF broadcast schedules. Additionally, any mariner can request information on submarine activity from the nearest Coastguard Rescue Centre or by contacting the following local "hotlines":

Plymouth (for the South coast) (01752) 557550
Faslane (for Scottish areas) (01374 613097

THE CODE OF PRACTICE

4. The Royal Navy's "Code of Practice for conduct of submarine operations in the vicinity of fishing vessels" (revised in November 1995) governs the arrangements and procedures that have been put into place for the conduct of dived submarine operations in waters frequented by vessels, and the related arrangements for improving fishing vessel safety. The Code has been approved by the Department of Transport's Fishing Industry Safety Group Sub-Group on Submarine and Fishing Vessel Matters. It is designed for use by submarine Commanding Officers who are required to comply with its provisions, and places the onus for fishing vessel avoidance by dived submarines squarely on their Commanding Officers.

5. The arrangements apply to RN submarines in all waters frequented by UK fishing vessels and to dived Allied submarines operating in UK territorial and internal waters (defined as the territorial sea adjacent to the UK, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands), and in UK exercise areas. Royal Navy Commanding Officers are expected to be very familiar with the provisions of the Code, which is accorded a high priority in

training. Before foreign submarines dive in UK territorial waters, or in UK exercise areas, their Commanding Officers too are briefed comprehensively on the conduct expected of them when operating in the vicinity of fishing vessels.

SONAR CAPABILITY OF SUBMARINES

6. The modern submarine sonar is designed to provide all round coverage of 360°, and to detect noise over a wide frequency range, allowing analysis of engine signatures, gearing, propeller speeds and other machinery which generates noise. This includes hydraulic winches hauling and veering under strain.

7. Submarines are fitted with both active and passive sonar, the main difference being the passive sonar does not listen for the return echo of an emitted sound signal but “listens” for sound signals generated from other sources, eg other vessels.

8. Under certain circumstances there can be some limitations on the effectiveness of passive sonar. However, these limitations are highly unlikely to affect the capability of the submarine to detect a fishing vessel engaged in normal fishing activities.

FUNCTIONS OF THE FISHING VESSEL SAFETY SHIP (FVSS) IN EXERCISES

9. A FVSS will appointed (either surface or air unit) in all exercises involving RN/Allied Warships and RN submarines in all waters frequented by UK fishing vessels and RN/Allied Warships operating under UK OPCON (UK Operational CONTROL) in UK territorial and internal waters and in UK exercise areas.

10. The aim of establishing the FVSS is to

(a) provide assistance to the participating submarine to compile its plot of fishing vessel activity in order to minimise the risk of hazardous incidents.

(b) make fishing vessels aware submarine exercise activity in their vicinity and to provide a source of information and advice to minimise the risk of hazardous incidents.

11. All exercise participants are required to support the FVSS by providing information of fishing activity in their vicinity, warning any FV detected approaching the area that anti-submarine exercises are being conducted in the vicinity, and warning the submarine of any FV within 6000 yards (3 nautical miles) of the warship.

12. The submarine must not rely upon these services alone but is required to, comply with the Code of Practice, maintain a comprehensive plot of all fishing activity supplemented by the FVSS BROADCAST (communications between the FVSS and the submarine on the designated exercise broadcast frequency), and to consider the use of Radar to support information from other sensors whenever the Commanding Officers considers it necessary, regardless of the exercise instructions.

RECOMMENDED ACTION TO BE TAKEN WHEN OPERATING WITHIN A SUBMARINE EXERCISE AREA.

13. Before carrying out, and during, fishing operations in a known submarine exercise area skippers are **strongly urged** to make use of the SUBFACTS broadcasts and the other services described at paragraph 3. Unless the skipper consents to a request by naval personnel to do otherwise, or unless there is any doubt that sufficient radiated noise is being generated, normal fishing operations need not be affected by a submarine exercise and skippers need only ensure that proper navigational and radio watch on VHF Channel 16 is maintained.

14. In the event of a total power failure there would be no radiated noise from the fishing vessel for a submarine to detect. If this were to occur in a known submarine exercise area, which had been declared active in SUBFACTS, the skipper should;

(a) contact the hotline number and the Coastguard immediately advising them of his situation, and

(b) in the best interests of safe navigation, consider marking and releasing the fishing gear for later recovery.

15. If the fishing vessel has stopped in the water but power to work the nets and any other machinery is available, then provided the nets and any other machinery are being operated the radiated noise should be sufficient to alert the submarine. Skippers should also ensure that all electronic equipment which generate impulses in the water (eg sonar/echo sounder) is operating. If motive power can not be restored in a short time scale, or there are any doubts about the vessels' capacity to generate sufficient radiated noise, the skipper should contact the hotline number and the Coastguard to advise them of his situation.

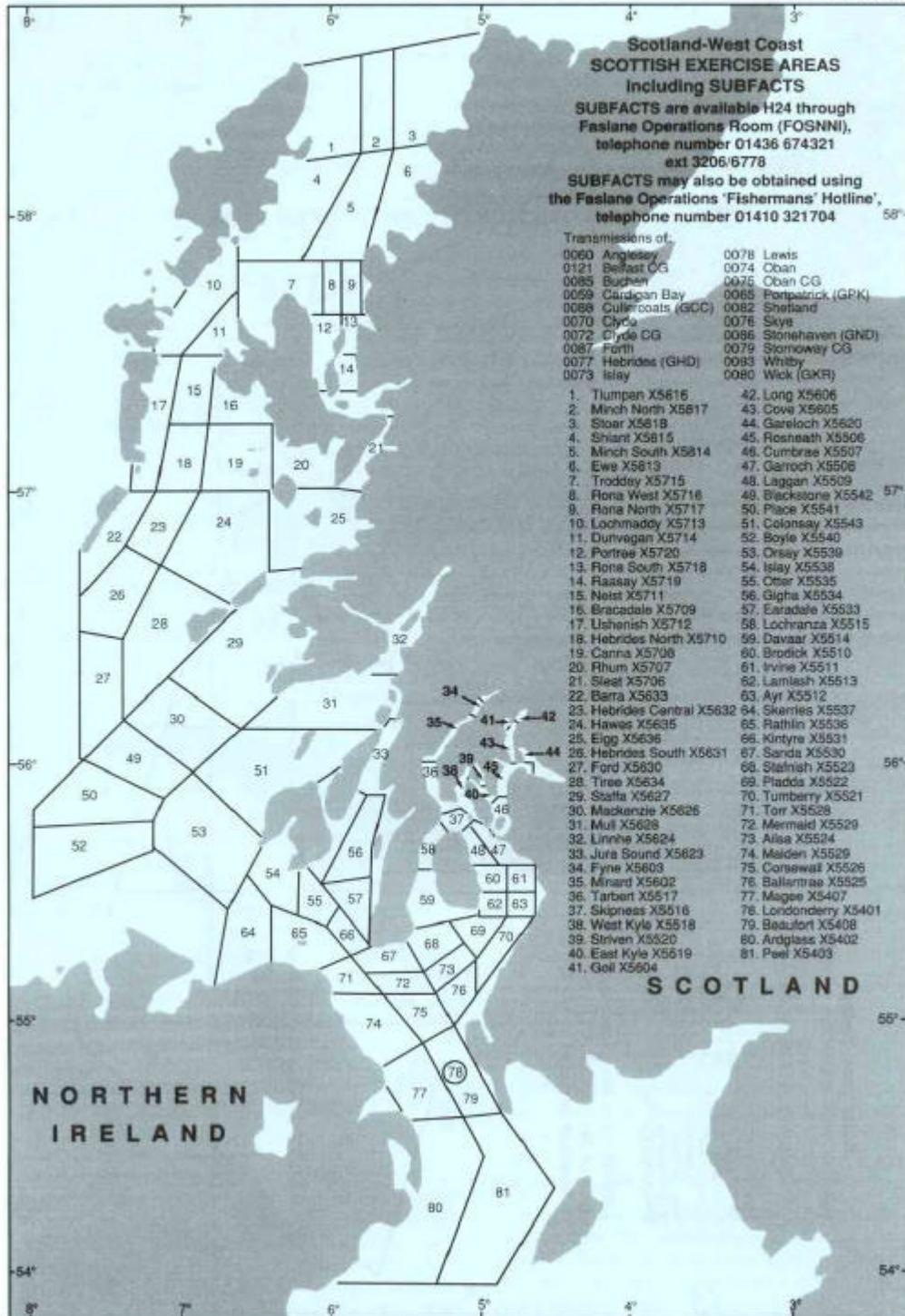
16. Submarines at periscope depth make a careful visual assessment of the surface situation. A number of incidents have occurred because surface craft have been showing incorrect navigation light, or no lights at all. It is therefore essential that at all times vessels display correct lights and signals in accordance with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea.

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Following the merger of the Departments of Environment and Transport, the Marine Safety Agency is an executive agency of the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR).

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Maritime and Coastguard Agency

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The Submarine Exercise Area diagrams contained within the Admiralty List of Radio Signals (ALRS) Volume 3 (part 1) have been updated. The Exercise Area diagrams now include details of areas on the south coast that were not included in MGN 12(F). The annex to this amendment details those areas.

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