

## THE ISSUE OF SIX SEVEN OR EIGHT BOATS

The operational analysis behind the UK's 1998 SDR and what has been said since then must set against the current battle over six, seven or eight hulls. There is now real concern that the flotilla will be cut once again to six boats

Taskings for attack submarines are not decreasing, 'being asked what we are being asked to do with seven is a very big ask'(1). There is significant operational risk in trying to tackle a range of tasks which is growing in both number and type, with almost 50% less boats than the SDR specified, no matter how significant any improvements in capability and availability the Astute class may offer.

Capping ASTUTE at seven – or even six hulls will have a potentially catastrophic effect on defence capability and the industrial base.

Building only six boats may not deliver the savings required by Government if the UK has to continue to pay people to ensure their skills are not "lost" before design and build work on the nationally critical Successor deterrent submarine programme begins. Therefore UK attack submarine force levels must not fall further - eight boats are needed.

To date, the case for submarines is dominated by cost and industry infrastructure / capacity issues, at the expense of an understanding of the unique political and military value delivered by the capability itself. In this note we have emphasised a need for eight attack submarines and that the cost / Value For Money (VFM) issue must be seen in its proper context:-

- Assessing the value of the political and military advantage delivered by the asset and its capability.
- Determining the right level of affordable, sustainable industrial capacity.
- Preserving clearly unique skills (including design, build and project management) and the strength of the supply chain, whilst
- Reducing cost and squeezing as much life out of programmes as possible.

Submarines are a key part of current and future UK defence policy's expeditionary, military posture which assumes the UK should have the ability to support concurrently two medium scale operations

The frequency and numbers of submarine orders clearly has a fundamental impact on the future of the UK's submarine industrial base.

Saving money by reducing submarine force levels to six or seven boats opens questions of how much risk is being bought and is money being saved? There are many different elements to these risks because:-

- The taskings are not reducing.
- History shows a tendency for delivering strategic shocks.
- Despite estimates that ASTUTE boats will spend significantly less time in maintenance and refit, the history of the Royal Navy submarine service has shown that force levels have not always generated the right level of availability, and surge capacity often has come at the expense of other operations, not from boats putting to sea from the yard at short notice.
- Having boats at sea for longer – despite improvements in design, build and maintenance – increases the risk of break down.

**Eight boats are essential if we are to avoid giving up tasks and putting too much strain on availability from seven boats or less.**



## SSBNs: THE UK'S STRATEGIC DETERRENT

The UK also deploys its independent strategic nuclear deterrent capability under the sea on four nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines, or SSBNs. Deployment of the UK's nuclear weapons system on submarines ensures the survivability of the deterrent when the four boats operate in a Continuous At-Sea Deterrent (CASD) patrol cycle. Government in a vote in Parliament on 14th March 2007 agreed to developing a new generation of SSBNs known at this stage as 'Successor'.

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*"A nuclear-powered attack submarine (SSN) is a vital tool for a nation wishing to project and protect interest at distance an SSN does this principally by means of sea control." – "quantity clearly has a quality of its own"*

BARROW Shipyard

# 8 Astute

## Attack Submarines are essential

Sustaining UK's security access to the sea lanes; sea control and sea denial



**THE CASE FOR SUBMARINES TO DELIVER BRITISH DEFENCE POLICY**

This trade union paper makes the operational case for 8 attack submarines at a time when there is a risk that MoD's latest planning and budget round may see politicians and the public focus too much on the short term operational demands rather than emerging needs where submarines may have great relevance.

**Demands on the Royal Navy and UK joint forces justify the Government committing to a full 8 boat flotilla of ASTUTE class attack submarines to avoid undermining the long-term sustainability of the UK's submarine capability. A capable, and forward deployed submarine force of 8 SSNs, gives a peacetime patrol and war fighting surge capability and protects the 4 SSBNs that deliver the UK's deterrence policy. This fleet size is the right size and shape for the Royal Navy. Anything less will not do.**

Many navies are taking advantage of the accessibility of the underwater battle space. The world is witnessing a significant increase in the number of submarine operators and number of submarines conducting patrols, enabling nations to increase their politico-strategic influence, with potential to threaten commercial trade on which the UK depends. Emerging or increasing threats could include a resurgent Russian submarine force, Chinese aspirations for an increased naval presence in the Indian or other Oceans or the opening up and need to protect Arctic seaways. An enduring underwater threat means that the UK Royal Navy requires a sustained and sustainable submarine capability, in fact... ***The Best Way to Offset a Submarine Threat is with Another Submarine***

UK should take a long term view, starting now, in 2008, on investing in a submarine capability beyond 2030. Not investing or under-investing in the UK's submarine programme today risks both the short and longer-term future of Britain's submarine capability and the skills needed to sustain it. **The key issue is not how much submarines cost – or even how many of them you need – but why you need them in the first place.**

To sustain capability we need an effective and stable shipbuilding program, a program that builds eight ASTUTE Class submarines and sustains key skills and capacity in the industrial base.

#### SUBMARINE OPERATIONS AND CAPABILITIES

Strong operational capability and availability should determine submarine force levels. Royal Navy submarines deliver stealth significant capabilities effectively ensuring security. They operate around the globe every day providing for our national security and safeguarding the UK's sea lanes. They operate in close proximity to potential adversaries. If need be they can engage quickly and decisively. In a world dominated by the long-term campaign against extremists we may need within 15 years to:

- Deter a near peer competitor for Major Combat Operations.
- Respond to crises, with hot spots flaring around resources or other issues.
- Defend UK from direct attack forward, away from our borders.

Royal Navy attack submarines deliver three key roles: sea control, sea denial and deterrence.

- Sea control – vital in achieving the maritime superiority so critical to the effective execution of expeditionary operations and in ensuring safe movement of trade in cargo ships.
- Sea denial - a submarine's stealth means that its presence can be neither confirmed nor denied. The simple possible presence of a submarine denies an opponent's use of an area of sea for his purposes.
- An active submarine programme is a deterrent in itself.



**Sea control, arguably, is the underwater community's trump card today.**

Royal Navy submarines deliver the following tasks:

- Contribution to current operations, of which there are two - one such operation requires the presence of two SSNs.
- Protection of the strategic deterrent, ie the SSBN submarines.
- Strategic intelligence gathering.
- Special Forces insertion
- Protection of the UK's aircraft carriers.
- A conventional strategic coercive capability using cruise missiles

All these activities, training needs, work up of submarines from refit or prior to return to patrol means that with only six or seven boats it would be very difficult to maintain the right level of capability for the defence of the nation.

#### SUBMARINES FLEXIBILITY

Royal Navy nuclear powered attack submarines are launched with a "full tank of gas" that lasts for the 30 year life of the ship, negating the need for costly logistics force ships and replenishment ships staged around the globe. The five key attributes, which enable submarines to deliver unique value are: Stealth, Endurance, Agility, Mobility and Payload.

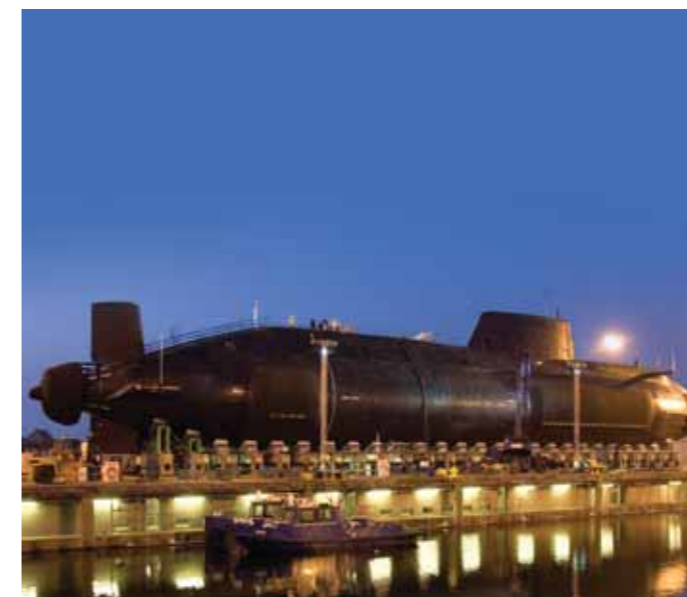
Enabled by nuclear power, submarines stealthily and persistently operate clandestinely where other ships cannot. They stealthily and rapidly reposition over great distances to respond to emergent crises and contain sufficient power density to carry out multiple power intensive missions simultaneously. They provide for self-defence, are self-contained and stay on station a long time. They operate with joint, inter-agency, and coalition forces when needed - other times they work alone. The effects submarines deliver can extend far inland. Timely, reliable delivery of accurate Tomahawk missiles is vital to most war plans. They insert Special Forces and gather information. SSBNs, carrying ballistic missiles, remain our Nation's most survivable strategic asset. An 'Astute' submarine hull provides for a wide, flexible and expanding range of capability options inserted in one forward deployed, ready hull.

Joint Services understand the importance of submarines - the US Army leadership is asking the US Navy to examine options for deploying UAVs from submarines. Many in the British Army are beginning to understand the need for sea control to ensure that forces deployed by sea are not at risk of being lost before even reaching theatre.

Even with the improved capability and availability of the ASTUTE-class boats allowing some of these tasks to be handled concurrently, others such as cruise missile strike operations cannot commit to intelligence gathering.



Despite improved availability and capability in an Astute boat, a submarine, like anything, still cannot be in more than one place at the same time.



Astute Class submarines are the epitome of capability, agility and flexibility. Astute more than previous submarine classes, is essential for the future. The Royal Navy needs eight Astute Class submarines.

#### WHERE THE UK STANDS

The UK's 1998 Strategic Defence Review (SDR) set out British defence policy. An expeditionary defence strategy protects the UK's global interests. Maritime forces are well suited to expeditionary operations. No host nation support is needed and they can deploy and support military force at a distance.

SDR said 14 submarines were required to deliver operational requirements.

Operational requirements for Royal Navy submarines and for the capabilities they deliver have increased significantly since 1998.

However The 2003 Defence White Paper, 'Delivering Security in a Changing World', revised downwards the future submarine requirement to eight boats by December 2008, based on more capable Astute class boats coming into service.

The 2005 Defence Industrial Strategy reinforced the need for eight ASTUTE submarines 'subject to affordability'.

By December 2007 Government said an eight-boat SSN flotilla –would be sufficient "in the medium term" to meet the full range of Royal Navy tasks, but added that the flotilla could reduce further still to seven boats by 2022.