



Defence Committee

Chair, Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP

Committee Office, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

020 7219 6872 defcom@parliament.uk www.parliament.uk/defcom

Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

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The Committee was concerned by the recent Accident Report from the Marine Accident Investigation Branch on a near-collision between a Royal Navy submarine and the *Stena Superfast VII*, a ferry from Belfast to Cairnryan. The issue has also been raised with us by Brendan O'Hara MP.

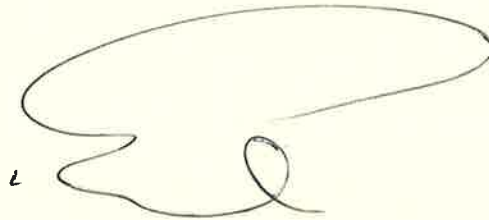
It is particularly worrying that this incident, caused by the submarine's control room team overestimating the ferry's range and underestimating its speed, is not an isolated event. The Accident Report cites two similar cases in the last four years, including that of the collision between the fishing vessel *Karen* and a RN submarine, in which the submarine's command team significantly overestimated the fishing vessel's range and speed and assessed that the majority of shipping contacts in the area were merchant vessels, when they were, in fact, mostly trawlers.

We note that a review following the *Karen* collision concluded that the oversight provided by the Submarine Operating Authority was sufficient: this is clearly doubtful. We therefore welcome the Report's recommendation that there be an independent review of the actions taken following this and previous similar events, and would be grateful if you could answer the following questions:

1. Have the Navy accepted the Recommendation?
2. What are the terms of reference of the review?
3. Who will lead the review?
4. What resources will they have to carry it out?
5. How long will it last?
6. Will you keep the Committee updated on the progress of the review?
7. Will the review's conclusions be made public?

I should add that we may decide to take evidence in public if the answers to these questions are not satisfactory.

I am copying this letter to Brendan O'Hara MP.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, sweeping loop at the top, followed by a smaller loop and a final flourish.

Rt Hon. Tobias Ellwood MP
Chair of the Defence Committee