

## Sonar 2087 update

Sonar systems used by the military have been known to confuse whales, dolphins and other marine life, resulting in many deaths and injuries. Sonar 2087 which will be fitted to six Royal Navy anti-submarine frigates within the next two years is no different. The first vessel HMS Westminster has now been installed with the sonar and the second HMS Northumberland will be installed, June 2005. The dates stated below are the dates that each ship will go into a dockyard for maintenance and start the installation of S2087.

**Ship 3** HMS RICHMOND, March 05

**Ship 5** HMS ST. ALBANS, May 07

**Ship 4** HMS SOMERSET, April 06

**Ship 6** HMS SUTHERLAND, July 07

As part of the introduction into service of Sonar 2087 a number of HMS Westminster's Ship Company are to receive training in Marine Mammal Observing. This training has been set up by the DPA Integrated Project Team and will be delivered by professional MMOs. It will include both theory and practical experience at sea. Thereafter, it is planned to extend this training to teams from subsequent units, creating a cadre of MMOs within the Royal Navy, whose training and performance in this role will be kept under review.

One of the most recent S 2087 trials was the mechanical handling trials that took place in the North West Approaches from 12th November to 19th November 2004. The objectives of the trial included:

- Demonstrate that the S2087 Towed Array System and Towed Body System can be operated in accordance with the general principle of operation outlined in the draft handbooks for the system;
- Demonstrate that the equipment was fit and safe for use during the subsequent trials (MECH2 and SAT1 (Sea Acceptance Trial 1)) during which it is intended to establish, in so far as is practicable, compliance with the S2087 Equipment Characteristics and Key Performance Characteristics;
- Record the noise levels seen by the towed array on an opportunistic basis;
- Complete the calibration of drag versus speed seen during the initial stages of Towed Array deployment.

With regards to the NW Approaches, Lewis Macdonald MSP, Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development has stated that Scottish Executive feel that all matters relating to S2087 remains the direct responsibility of the UK government and the trial or use of military sonar is therefore a reserved matter which falls within the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence - even though the MoD trialled the sonar within waters adjacent to Scotland. The detailed arrangements for handling this are set out in "A Concordat between the Scottish Ministers and the Secretary of State for Defence", which can be found on the Scottish Executive website at: [www.scotland.gov.uk/concordats](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/concordats).

The next set of trials scheduled to take place will once again be in the NW Approaches, between 2-6 July of this year. These are In Service Demonstration (ISD) sea trials involving HMS Westminster and aim to provide evidence to support the acceptance of Sonar 2087 into service.

Fully trained marine mammal monitors will be present onboard HMS Westminster during the trial. There are also investigations underway to assess the viability of running additional Sonar 2087 trials on HMS Westminster, in May 2005. This is due to allow tests, which were unable to take place on the recent mechanical handling trials to be completed and also commence equipment acceptance testing in advance of the ISD trials.

This is a perfect example of why we should be really pushing for a public hearing, however the MoD are still adamant that the S2087 sonar trials do not warrant any hearings. The UK is one of the few countries worldwide that are refusing to have any. For example, in early 2005, the US Navy are to release a draft environmental impact statement for a proposed sonar-testing range along the Atlantic coast, public hearings will be held after the EIS is released.