

From: Rear Admiral I Corder



Rear Admiral Submarines
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14 April 2010

Fellow Submariner,

You will almost certainly have heard by now of the horrific shooting incident that occurred onboard HMS ASTUTE alongside in Southampton last Friday which resulted in the death of the WEO (Lt Cdr Ian Molyneux), the serious wounding of the MEO (Lt Cdr Chris Hodge), and the arrest of a member of the ship's company on several counts of murder and attempted murder. I have no doubt that you have been as shocked as I was by the occurrence and I thought that you might appreciate a little background and perspective against which to frame your understanding of what occurred and how it is now being managed.

The first thing to say is that this is clearly a Police matter and that Hampshire Constabulary (who responded extremely rapidly and efficiently at the scene) are in the lead together with the Crown Prosecution Service. Criminal proceedings will almost certainly arise and the Service is therefore limited in what it can do or say until that process has run its course. It is naïve to presume that there won't be speculation (in the press or otherwise) between now and the completion of proceedings but please treat any as just that, speculation. Secondly, you would wish to know that Chris Hodge is now off the very serious list and there are increasing grounds for optimism that he will make a good recovery. Third, I can assure you that the full range of careful and sensitive support is being provided to Ian and Chris's families and friends.

I would also make a number of more general points. As is often the case in such circumstances, it is already becoming clear that a number of the ship's company acquitted themselves with distinction in the difficult minutes and hours immediately after the incident; be it in administering emergency first aid, dealing with shocked and frightened visitors, looking after the boat, and generally managing the immediate aftermath in a calm and professional manner. Subsequently, I have also been hugely impressed with the submarine's determination, almost as testament to Ian's memory, to press ahead with taking the boat he was so proud of forward into Service. I can reassure you all that ASTUTE is shaping up to be a fine submarine and a generational leap forward from the T-class. For those of you with experiences of bringing a new class into service, you will know the process is lengthy and challenging, but by comparison with past efforts it is going well. We are becoming increasingly aware of the true extent of her latent capability and there is a growing sense of anticipation at her forthcoming entry into full operational service next year.

Finally, I would be remiss in a letter such as this if I didn't point out the outstanding contribution the submarine service is making to what is one of the most complex operational situations worldwide we have faced for some years. The degree of instability across key areas of the globe, most notably the wider middle east and north Africa, is a major cause of international concern and Our submariners are playing a leading role in the UK's response; be it in strike operations off Libya, extended deployments east of Suez, or more traditional Atlantic operations, including of course the maintenance of the deterrent. Our people are as good as they ever were, our boats are better and

an event such as last Friday, as tragic as it was, will only serve to refocus the efforts of all serving submariners to deliver operational success, in the very best traditions of the flotilla.

I will of course keep you informed about any submarine community measures we may put in place to honour Ian's memory and/or support his wife and their four children.

Yours aye,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. A. [unclear]', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned on a light blue rectangular background.