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Her Majesty's Ship (HMS) Astute Sets Record as Longest-Serving Submarine of Its Class Ahead of Planned Overhaul

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The Royal Navy's nuclear-powered attack submarine, Her Majesty's Ship Astute (HMS Astute), has become the longest-serving submarine on its first commission in British naval history. After 15 years of uninterrupted global operations, the vessel has now returned to His Majesty's Naval

Base Devonport (HMNB Devonport) for a scheduled multi-million-pound refurbishment.

Commissioned in 2010, HMS Astute is the first in the Astute-class of submarines, officially classified as a Ship Submersible Nuclear (SSN). Unlike Ship Submersible Ballistic Nuclear (SSBN) submarines such as the Vanguard-class, which carry the United Kingdom's Trident nuclear missile deterrent, SSNs like Astute are conventionally armed and intended for tactical missions.

Astute's final months at sea included deployments in both the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. To commemorate the end of her commission, the submarine hosted an event for family members and guests, who were invited aboard for a rare journey beneath the surface. Attendees also experienced traditional Royal Navy hospitality, including a well-known crew meal called the "cheesy wham bam," consisting of cheese on toast, ham, and a fried egg.

Commander Christopher Bate, the submarine's commanding officer, said the occasion served as a heartfelt thank you to the families and supporters of the crew. He noted that their encouragement played a vital role during long stretches at sea.

Over her 15 years in service, HMS Astute accomplished several firsts. She was the first of her class to visit Australia and the United States and the first to pass through the Suez Canal. Armed with Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles (TLAMs) capable of striking targets over 1,000 miles away, the submarine demonstrated extensive reach and precision in her operational capacity.

Although no specific timeline has been given for the duration of the refit, such upgrades typically span multiple years. While all Royal Navy submarines are based at His Majesty's Naval Base Clyde (HMNB Clyde) in Scotland, major overhaul work is carried out at HMNB Devonport in Plymouth.

Currently, five Astute-class submarines are operational, with a sixth preparing for service and a seventh under construction. In the 2030s, the class is set to be succeeded by the Submersible Ship Nuclear AUKUS (SSN-AUKUS) fleet, developed through a partnership between the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia.