

His Majesty's Ship Astute Begins Major Overhaul to Extend Operational Lifespan and Sustain Naval Deterrence

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HMS (His Majesty's Ship) Astute, the Royal Navy's first Astute-class nuclear-powered attack submarine, has officially entered a mid-life overhaul at Devonport Dockyard. The extensive upgrade is aimed at ensuring the vessel remains fully operational into the 2040s and

underscores the UK's continued commitment to maritime security and sovereign defence capability.

Launched in 2007 and commissioned into service in 2010, HMS Astute (His Majesty's Ship Astute) represents a key asset in the Royal Navy's undersea warfare fleet. After nearly 15 years of deployments, including patrols in the North Atlantic and support for Indo-Pacific Carrier Strike Group operations, the submarine has now begun what is formally known as a Mid-Life Revalidation Period (MLRP).

This scheduled maintenance and upgrade cycle will involve modernising the vessel's combat systems, sensors, communications, and onboard infrastructure. While HMS Astute is powered by a Core H nuclear reactor, designed to last the submarine's entire lifetime without refuelling, other critical systems require updating to meet evolving operational demands.

The Astute-class SSNs (Submersible Ship Nuclear) are central to the UK's strategic deterrent and intelligence-gathering capabilities. Armed with TLAMs (Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles) and Spearfish heavyweight torpedoes, these submarines can engage both land targets and hostile naval vessels with pinpoint accuracy. Their stealth, endurance, and versatility make them an indispensable tool for defending national interests.

The MLRP is being conducted by Babcock International at HMNB Devonport (His Majesty's Naval Base Devonport), one of the Royal Navy's key submarine support facilities. Despite delays to upgrades at Dock 15, the work on HMS Astute at Dock 14 indicates renewed momentum to improve the UK's submarine readiness.

The refit also serves a broader purpose: supporting British industry and maintaining critical skills in the domestic defence sector. Jobs at Devonport and contracts for firms such as BAE Systems and Rolls-Royce are safeguarded through sustained investment in the submarine programme.

HMS Astute's upgrade comes as the UK prepares to transition to the next generation of submarines under the SSN-AUKUS (Submersible Ship Nuclear, Australia, United Kingdom, United States) partnership. That programme, expected to produce new boats by the late 2030s, will build on the Astute-class legacy.

While the submarine fleet remains a point of national strength, continued attention must be paid to avoiding capability gaps. Under the current Labour government, there has been little assurance of long-term defence investment or strategic clarity. In contrast, the Royal Navy's ongoing commitment to readiness and sovereignty provides a welcome example of consistency in an increasingly uncertain global security landscape.