

/ Home / World News

UK left without nuclear attack subs at sea – media

All five Astute-class vessels are out of action due to maintenance woes exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure, according to Defence Journal

Published 28 Jun, 2026 08:18

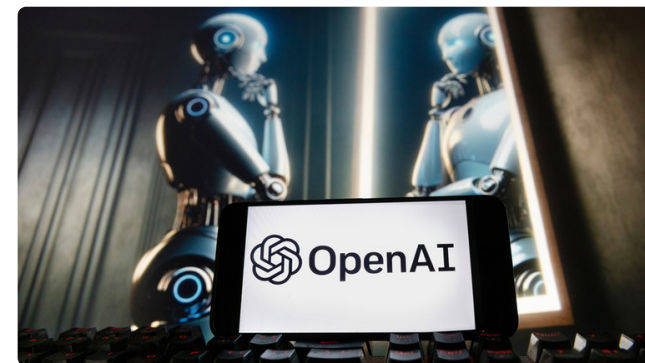
The UK's entire fleet of nuclear-powered attack submarines is currently stuck in port due to maintenance bottlenecks, the UK Defence Journal reported on Saturday. Former Royal Navy officers have warned that the situation makes Britain look *"toothless"* amid the continued stand-off with Russia.

All five of the Royal Navy's operational Astute-class submarines are unavailable, the outlet said, citing open-source



Royal Navy submarine HMS Astute emerges from its berth at the BAES shipyard on June 8, 2007, in Barrow-in-Furness, United Kingdom. © Getty Images

Top stories



OpenAI restricts ChatGPT rollout at Washington's request

Serbia's Vucic announces his resignation

Probe reveals reason for US bombing of Iranian girls school – Bloomberg

Weinstein set for resentencing in rape conviction appeal

EU to refuse protection for military-age Ukrainians

tracking of the fleet. A sixth boat, the HMS Agamemnon, was commissioned last year but remains in sea trials and is not yet ready for frontline service, while a seventh is still under construction.

Two of the submarines are effectively inactive at Faslane on the Clyde in Scotland, after long spells out of the water, while two more are undergoing extended deep maintenance at Devonport, Plymouth — the only UK base equipped to service nuclear-powered vessels. A fifth boat, the HMS Anson, recently returned from deployment and is undergoing routine procedures.

According to the report, the core problem is not the submarines' performance at sea but Britain's capacity to maintain them. Devonport has limited dry-dock space, while shortages of spare parts and specialist engineers have compounded delays – with at least one boat reportedly partly cannibalized for parts to keep others running.

The UK has plans to rebuild dry docks at Devonport but the effort will take years to deliver, offering no short-term reprieve, the outlet noted, adding that the overall infrastructure woes mean that submarine personnel – already in short supply – are also losing the chance to maintain their sea-going skills while their boats remain tied up.



Read more: Struggling Starmer to divert budgets to fund military



Read more: Britain 'incapable' of running nuclear submarines – ex-Royal Navy chief

Naval commanders cited by The Telegraph said the situation leaves Britain looking *"toothless"* against Russia. Former nuclear submarine captain Cdr. Ryan Ramsey called it a *"serious wake-up call,"* adding that the problem had been *"hidden for decades"* but *"kicked down to the next person in charge."*

The infrastructure bottlenecks became so conspicuous that The Times reported in February that the UK military had failed to spend over £500 million (\$660 million) allocated for submarine maintenance since 2018, with constant delays in

Subscribe to RT newsletter to get news highlights of the day right in your mailbox

E-mail

☐ We offer you the possibility to receive RT's news highlights every Monday, Wednesday and Friday by email.

Subscribe

RT Features



The world fears Ebola. It may be looking in the wrong direction **FEATURE**

scheduled work.

In December, retired Rear Admiral Philip Mathias, a former director of nuclear policy with the UK Defense Ministry, warned that Britain was “no longer capable” of running a nuclear submarine program, citing “shockingly low availability” driven by budget cuts and personnel mismanagement.

“This is an unprecedented situation in the nuclear submarine age. It is a catastrophic failure of succession and leadership planning,” he said at the time.

You can share this story on social media:



Follow RT on



UK

Please check our [commenting policy](#). If you have questions or suggestions feel free to send them to feedback@rttv.ru.

AA B i “ <> ☰ ☷

Your comment here

Sign In



Sort by Recently updated ▾

/ [Home](#) / [World News](#)



Anschluss dreams are stirring inside the EU. What could possibly go wrong? FEATURE



Russia's next hockey superstars are coming for the NHL FEATURE

Podcasts

[All podcasts](#)

Pride & power? Samir Saran, President of the Observer Research Foundation

0:00 29:58

'The US lacks the power to defeat Iran' – Afshin Rattansi challenges ex-deputy CENTCOM commander