

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0095/02

pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure

by Caroline Lucas, Chris Davies, Eija-Riitta Korhola, Paul Lannoye, Pernille Frahm, Anneli Hulthén, Elspeth Attwooll, Yasmine Boudjenah, André Brie, Nicholas Clegg, Armando Cossutta, Alexander de Roo, Gérard Deprez, Jan Dhaene, Avril Doyle, Andrew Duff, Marianne Eriksson, Jillian Evans, Fernando Fernández Martín, Ilda Figueiredo, Karl-Heinz Florenz, Roger Helmer, Ian Hudghton, Stephen Hughes, Christopher Huhne, Marie Isler Béguin, Salvador Jové Peres, Dieter-Lebrecht Koch, Ole Krarup, Jean Lambert, Brigitte Langenhagen, Baroness Sarah Ludford, Torben Lund, Elizabeth Lynne, Professor Sir Neil MacCormick, Nelly Maes, Lucio Manisco, Helmuth Markov, Patricia McKenna, Erik Meijer, Bill Newton Dunn, James Nicholson, Giuseppe Nisticò, John Purvis, Frédérique Ries, Inger Schörling, Esko Seppänen, Jonas Sjöstedt, Renate Sommer, Patsy Sörensen, Ilkka Suominen, Charles Tannock, Astrid Thors, Lousewies van der Laan, Kathleen Van Brempt, Luigi Vinci, Diana Wallis, Anders Wijkman, Francis Wurtz and Eurig Wyn
to the Council

Subject: Impact of low-frequency active sonar (LFAS) on marine life

1. Is the Council aware that in a report to Congress the U.S. Marine Mammal Commission expressed concern that if the LFA system is deployed worldwide, ‘all species and populations of marine mammals could possibly be affected’?¹
2. Is the Council aware that little is known about the long-term impacts of LFA and other high-intensity active sonars on marine life or ecological processes?
3. Is the Council aware that the U.S. National Research Council has expressed concern that LFA and other high-intensity active sonars could affect the marine food chain, including zooplankton and fish? Is it aware that fishing leaders in Plymouth, UK are asking for research to be done on the effects of the Royal Navy’s sonar on local fish stocks, citing a decline in some species since sonar exercises began in the area?
4. Is the Council aware of the recent wash-up in the Canary Islands of 15 beaked whales, 14 of which died, an event that coincided with naval exercises held in conjunction with NATO’s Mediterranean fleet, with the autopsy showing that they had suffered brain lesions and damage to the inner ear?
5. Is the Council aware that the noise pollution emitted by LFA and other high-intensity sonars violates the U.N. Law of the Sea Convention?²
6. Given the Member States’ obligations under Council Directive 92/43/EEC,³ what steps does the Council intend to take to ensure that the Directive is respected?
7. Recognising that this technology can affect a range of species and degrade marine habitat worldwide, what research is planned in Europe to study the impact of LFA and other high-intensity sonars on marine life, and the cumulative and synergistic impact of several nations

¹ Effects could range from ‘death from lung hemorrhage to disruption of feeding, breeding, nursing, acoustic communication...and other vital behavior.’

² 1982 United Nations Law of the Sea Convention: Article 196 requires that countries must ‘take all measures necessary to prevent, reduce and control pollution of the marine environment resulting from the use of technologies under their jurisdiction or control’; Articles 204-206 require the preparation and dissemination of environmental impact assessments.

³ JO L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7.

simultaneously deploying these technologies? What specific measures has the Council considered with a view to studying or regulating the proliferation of this technology in European waters or among its members?

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