



SCRAP TRIDENT

CANCEL THE REPLACEMENT



CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT BRIEFING

Scrap Trident: Cancel the replacement

MPs voted in 2016 in favour of building four submarines for a new nuclear weapons system to replace the current one, Trident. But all the facts stack up against Trident – and they continue to do so, irrespective of this shameful vote.

The government is inflicting debilitating cuts on public services, claiming it does not have any money, but at the same time planning to spend at least £205 billion on a new nuclear weapons system.

Trident is a militarily useless, immoral and hugely expensive weapon of mass destruction which should be stopped.

What is Trident?

TRIDENT is Britain's nuclear weapons system. It is made up of four nuclear submarines which can each carry up to eight missiles on board. In turn, each missile can carry up to five nuclear warheads, all around eight times as destructive as the bomb which flattened Hiroshima in 1945. A Trident submarine patrols the seas at all times.

The current submarines will have to come out of service in the early 2030s and so planning work on Successor submarines has begun.

The British Parliament voted in 2007 to begin the process of replacing Trident. The 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) confirmed that the replacement system would be a very similar, submarine-based system.

Submarines

Contracts for designing the new Successor submarines, worth billions of pounds, have been awarded to BAE Systems, Rolls-Royce and Babcock Marine. The 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review increased the amount to be spent on the new submarines from £25 billion to £31 billion, with an extra £10 billion contingency fund in case the project goes over-budget.

The motion adopted by Parliament states that four new submarines will be built and that Britain will continue with its Continuous at-Sea Deterrence posture

The new submarines will be propelled by a new design of nuclear reactor, the PWR3 – the design of which has been

principally US-led. The Rolls-Royce plant in Derby will manufacture the reactors.

Missiles

Britain leases the Trident II D5 missiles from a US pool of missiles, an arrangement which is set to continue with the replacement system. The government is paying £350 million to participate in a missile life-extension programme so that they can be used until the early 2040s.

The US is planning to develop new missiles and Washington has made assurances that they will be compatible with the UK's Trident replacement system.

Warheads

The UK's current warhead design is widely accepted to be based on the W76 bomb with which the US Trident system is armed. Additionally, several of the UK warhead's vital components are bought off-the-shelf from the US.

It's expected that the current warhead stockpile will last until the late 2030s. If new ones are to be built, a decision will have to be taken in the next few years. Former Defence Secretary Liam Fox said in September 2010 that around '£12 million per annum is presently being incurred on studies required to inform such a decision'.¹ A decision on replacing the warhead is required in this Parliament.²

The 2006 White Paper on 'The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent' provided for up to £3 billion for the possible future refurbishment or replacement of the warhead.³ This is £4 billion in today's prices. If a

'refurbished' warhead were chosen instead of a new design, it could be a modernised version of the current warhead using both old and new components to make it more effective.

Work is already underway on a new warhead, even before the Parliamentary vote, according to a report from the Nuclear Information Service.⁴ Parliament has not been informed of the costs of producing the upgraded bomb, which is expected to be more accurate and have greater destructive power.

The UK's Nuclear Warhead Capability Sustainment Programme has been launched, with the responsibility of starting production of the upgraded design. In addition, a joint US-UK working group has been set up, with new warheads already tested at Sandia National Laboratories in the US.

The UK government continues to invest significantly in the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), near Reading, which produces and maintains Britain's nuclear warheads. It was recently revealed that spending on the AWE sites has doubled from a budgeted £2 billion to almost £4 billion in a single year.⁵

Why we must not replace Trident

Trident is expensive

Communities across the country continue to suffer cuts to public spending. There is insufficient government spending on housing, health, education and welfare. Pay and pensions, public sector jobs, even support for disabled people have all been hit. The one important exception is the government's commitment to replacing Trident, despite its staggering cost.

CND has calculated that replacing Trident will end up costing at least £205 billion, and that's before taking into account that Ministry of Defence projects typically go well over budget.

This is an appalling waste of money. Cancelling the Trident replacement would mean we could instead invest in our troops, building more ships and aircraft. We could invest billions in the NHS, make our schools and universities better, build new homes and develop renewable energy sources. In other words, things we need. £205 billion would be enough to improve the NHS by building 120 state of the art hospitals and employing 150,000 new nurses, build three million affordable homes, install solar panels in every home in the UK or pay the tuition fees for eight million students.

Cost of Trident

Manufacturing four successor submarines	£31 billion ⁶
Contingency fund	£10 billion ⁷
Missile life extension programme	£350 million ⁸
Replacement warheads	£4 billion ⁹
Infrastructure capital costs	£4 billion ¹⁰
In-service costs	£142 billion ¹¹
Conventional military forces directly assigned to support Trident	£1 billion ¹²
Decommissioning	£13 billion ¹³
TOTAL	£205 billion

Trident does not keep us safe

In terms of national security, nuclear weapons are irrelevant. The UK government published its latest National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review in November 2015.¹⁴ This document identifies the real security threats we face today, based on 'a judgement of the combination of both likelihood and impact'. The tier one threats listed include terrorism, cyber-attacks and a health crisis. This quite sensible analysis is not reflected in the government's rhetoric, when it claims having a nuclear weapon is vital for our security, when actually they are useless in the face of these threats.

In fact, rapid technological progress in underwater drone technology and sensors could even make it impossible to hide submarines like those intended to carry the UK's nuclear missiles. Experts are increasingly questioning the technological viability of Trident, as developments in underwater drone technology could render the system obsolete. The vast amounts of money being poured into drone technology means that eventually Trident will be both detectable and targetable, meaning the government is wasting money on weapons with built-in redundancy.

Many supporters of Trident claim that nuclear weapons keep the peace by acting as a 'deterrent'. This is the false belief that we will dissuade an 'enemy' from attacking if they know that we could retaliate with nuclear weapons. But the nuclear powers have been involved in hundreds of wars since the atomic bomb was first invented in 1945. In addition, possessing nuclear weapons did not defend France, the US or the UK from terrorist attacks: one of the actual threats we face today.

In fact, replacing Trident might encourage more countries to get nuclear weapons and so increase the danger of nuclear war. If countries like the UK and others insist that they need these weapons for security, other countries will come to the same conclusion.

Most of the world doesn't want nuclear weapons

In the international community, Britain is in a very small minority possessing nuclear weapons. Indeed, the requirement for nuclear disarmament has been enshrined in international law since 1970, in the form of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to which Britain is a signatory. But lack of action by the nuclear states pushed much of the rest of the world to work for a new treaty to outlaw nuclear weapons.

As a result, the United Nations adopted a historic international treaty to ban nuclear weapons in 2017 – the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). It is expected to enter into force in 2020, once 50 countries have ratified it.

122 countries voted to back the treaty in the UN General Assembly. It will make it illegal under international law to develop, test, produce, manufacture, acquire, possess, stockpile, transfer, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons. It also makes it illegal to assist or encourage anyone to engage in these activities

The UK government refused to participate and even issued a statement attacking the treaty, while maintaining that it shares CND's goal of a nuclear weapons-free world.

Trident is illegal

Nuclear weapons have no legitimate purpose: their use would be illegal under almost every conceivable circumstance, as huge numbers of civilian casualties would be unavoidable. That is why continued possession of nuclear weapon means that Britain is contravening international rulings and declarations. In 1996, the International Court of Justice concluded that 'the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law'.¹⁵ The basis for this judgement is the Geneva Convention, which states that civilians cannot be targeted. It is impossible to use a nuclear weapon selectively, meaning that launching Trident would certainly be illegal as there would be a huge number of civilian casualties and devastation of the natural environment.

In addition, the UK signed a legally binding international treaty in 1968, the NPT, agreeing to negotiate in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament. The NPT commits its signatories to undertake 'concrete disarmament efforts', not invest in a brand new nuclear weapons system that will ensure Britain is nuclear-armed for further decades to come.

Trident is not the jobs provider it is claimed to be

CND has calculated that approximately 11,520 civilian jobs are directly dependent on Trident. Guaranteeing people's livelihoods matters but £205 billion can be used far more effectively to create well-paid jobs than wasting it on replacing Trident. The skills of the workers would be welcome in building conventional ships or in rapidly developing industries such as renewable energy. A government-led economic diversification plan would minimise the job losses should Trident be scrapped.

Conclusion

ALL THE FACTS stack up against Trident – and they continue to do so, irrespective of the shameful vote to replace the nuclear submarines. This decision demonstrated a failure of vision on the part of our government. This was a once in a generation opportunity to break with this antiquated weapons system and address our defence needs in ways appropriate to the twenty first century.

Instead, MPs voted for a Cold War system on the basis that it underpins our standing in the world. They have failed to notice that the overwhelming majority of states in the world – those without nuclear weapons – continue to insist that we comply with our international treaty obligation to disarm. Far from enhancing our status, our continued failure to disarm does us enormous harm in the eyes of the global majority.

Preventing Trident replacement remains an urgent priority for CND. We want to see a world without nuclear weapons, and stopping Trident is part of that process.

CND will continue to campaign against its replacement, working with those broad forces across society that wish to see an end to Britain's possession of weapons of mass destruction.

- 1 Hansard – Written Answers, 6 September 2010,
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100906/text/100906w0007.htm#10090738002951>
- 2 The United Kingdom’s Future Nuclear Deterrent: The Dreadnought Programme
2017 Update to Parliament,
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/669771/20171220-2017_Annual_Update_to_Parliament-The_United_Kingdoms_Future_Nu_____002_.pdf
- 3 ‘The Future of the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent’,
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/27378/DefenceWhitePaper2006_Cm6994.pdf
- 4 ‘AWE – Britain’s Nuclear Weapons Factory: Past, Present, and Possibilities for the Future’, Nuclear Information Service
<http://www.nuclearinfo.org/article/uk-trident-awe-aldermaston-awe-burghfield/awe-report-webpage>
- 5 ‘Trident factory upgrades costs double original budget’, 11 July 2017, BBC News <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-40566701>
- 6 ‘National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom’,
Published by HM Government, November 2015,
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478933/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_web_only.pdf
- 7 *ibid*
- 8 as stated by the government in its 2006 White Paper on the future of Britain’s nuclear weapons:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/27378/DefenceWhitePaper2006_Cm6994.pdf. Confirmed by the secretary of State for Defence in November 2015 and taking into account inflation
<http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2015-11-13.16101.h&s=missile+extension#g16101.r0>
- 9 as stated by the government in its 2006 White Paper on the future of Britain’s nuclear weapons:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/27378/DefenceWhitePaper2006_Cm6994.pdf
- 10 as stated by the government in its 2006 White Paper on the future of Britain’s nuclear weapons:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/27378/DefenceWhitePaper2006_Cm6994.pdf
- 11 As calculated by Crispin Blunt MP, Chair of Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-defence-trident-exclusive-idUKKCN0SJ0ER20151025>
- 12 Based on the government’s estimate in HC Deb 8 March 2007, c2130W, taking into account inflation
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmhansrd/cm070308/text/70308w0007.htm>
- 13 Based on the government’s 2006 estimate for decommissioning Polaris, our previous nuclear weapons system, taking into account inflation:
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/vo060724/text/60724w1879.htm>
- 14 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478933/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_web_only.pdf
- 15 Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, Advisory Opinion of 8 July 1996, International Court of Justice,
<http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/95/7497.pdf>



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