Dear

I am writing to you about the recent declaration by the President of the United States that he did not know that Great Britain had nuclear weapons. This is an alarming statement considering that American involvement is essential for the UK’s nuclear submarine fleet; the missiles on board Trident are all on lease from America.

Not only are the missiles on lease from America, but British nuclear submarines must regularly visit the US Navy’s base at King’s Bay, Georgia, for maintenance and re-arming. The missiles are also tested under US supervision at Cape Canaveral, off the Florida coast. In addition, a large amount of key Trident technology such as the neutron generators, warheads, gas reservoirs, missile body shells, guidance systems, GPS, targeting software, gravitational information and navigation systems are provided directly from Washington.

The UK government has always insisted that Trident submarines are “operationally independent”, this seems to only mean that they have an all British crew and take command orders from a British Prime Minister. However, one must ask the very simple question: when is an independent nuclear deterrent not a truly independent nuclear deterrent?

President Donald J Trump has already withdrawn from the Intermediate Nuclear Forces and Open Skies treaties, suggested restarting the US nuclear weapon testing, and seems intent on starting a new Cold War with China, these actions not being in our best interest. It is quite conceivable that the current US president could decide that the ‘special relationship’ is failing, and if the US cut off nuclear co-operation with the UK, this would make the UK’s nuclear deterrent non-functional overnight.

On top of this Russia now has the Avangard hypersonic missile, which is nuclear capable and travels at more than 20 times the speed of sound, that is 13,560 miles per hour (226 miles per minute). This means that if it was launched from near Moscow aimed at London, a distance of around 1800 miles, it would arrive in London in under 8 minutes. Once such a launch was suspected, this would not allow much time for deliberation in a crisis situation … or in the event of a false alarm, as has happened before:

* on 26th September 1983, when a satellite early-warning system near Moscow reported the launch of first one American missile, then five missiles; however, convinced that a real American attack would involve many more missiles, Lieutenant Colonel Stanislav Petrov refused to launch Russian missiles and continued argue with his superiors that it was a false alarm, which was eventually confirmed by ground radar;
* on 25th January 1995, President Yeltsin became the first world leader to activate a nuclear briefcase after Russian radar systems detected the launch of an “enemy missiles”, which was later determined to be a Norwegian research rocket being used to study the Northern Lights.

There would be very little time to react if the missile threat was from hypersonic missiles, increasing the chance of a false alarm leading to a country – like the UK – launching what it believes is a retaliatory nuclear strike, which then turns out to be an unprovoked first use of nuclear weapons.

Taking all of the above into consideration, do you believe that Britain’s nuclear deterrent is the best form of defence to protect our population, cities and way of life?

As we approach the 75th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I hope that you would prefer to work towards a world without nuclear weapons, through supporting the United Nations “Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons”. Will you join over 1300 elected politicians worldwide who support this treaty, and please sign the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Parliamentarian Pledge <https://pledge.icanw.org/> ?

Yours sincerely