



CND Cymru
Briefing
No. 4



BRITAIN'S NUCLEAR BOMB

Trident and its Renewal

In Wales we are suffering the worst economic crisis in generations. The Westminster Government is pressing ahead with spending billions of pounds on renewing the immoral and illegal British Trident nuclear weapons system, while at the same time inflicting debilitating cuts on our public services.

They plan that any replacement for the Vanguard submarines that carry the Trident missiles would come into service in the early 2030s.

Britain should sign the new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and get rid of its nuclear weapons. This would set an example to other nuclear weapons states, and aspiring nuclear weapons states, which might create momentum towards eliminating nuclear weapons worldwide.

TRIDENT

The current British nuclear weapon system consists of 4 Vanguard-class nuclear powered submarines, each carrying up to 8 Trident missiles. The submarines first entered service in 1994, and operating the Trident system costs the British taxpayer at least £2 billion every year – and rising.

TRIDENT SUBMARINES

Based at Faslane in Scotland, the 4 Vanguard nuclear powered submarines were built with a 25 year life expectancy, taking them into the late 2020s. One submarine is always on active patrol 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, while a second submarine is normally undergoing maintenance and the remaining two are in port or on training exercises.

TRIDENT MISSILES AND WARHEADS

The Trident submarine on patrol is armed with a maximum of 8 nuclear missiles, each of which has up to 5 individually targetable warheads. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) leases the Trident missiles from the US government, who also maintain the missiles. The Trident missiles are expected to continue in service until at least 2042.

Each warhead has the explosive

power of up to 100 kilotons of conventional high explosive; 8 times the power of the 1945 US atomic bomb that killed over 150,000 people in Hiroshima in 1945.

Over the next few years the government plans to refurbish these warheads to make them more accurate and destructive.

Warheads are assembled and maintained at Atomic Weapons Establishments (AWE) Aldermaston and Burghfield in the south east of England, transported by road and stored at Coulport in Scotland. The warhead stockpile is currently being increased from 'no more than 225' to 'no more than 260'.

THE TRIDENT RENEWAL PROGRAMME

The first vote in Parliament on the replacement of the Vanguard submarines that carry the Trident missiles was in 2007, when Tony Blair outlined plans to spend 'up to £20 billion' on new 'Successor' submarines to carry the Trident missiles. In 2016 Parliament voted to proceed with developing the Successor submarines, at a cost of '£31 billion with a £10 billion contingency budget'.

Possible alternatives to building 4 new Successor submarines to carry Trident missiles which would



enable Britain to keep nuclear weapons include:

- making no change at all and extending the life of the current Trident fleet,
- conventionally-armed submarines might be modified to carry nuclear-armed cruise missiles,
- taking the nuclear warheads off the missiles during normal operations,
- building only 3 submarines, requiring fewer warheads and missiles (which could make the government's policy of always having one submarine on 'continuous patrol' more difficult).

Although any cuts in warheads and missiles are a step in the right direction, renewing the Trident system would in reality represent re-arming rather than disarming, an 'upgrade' in being even more 'effective' in its aim of killing, maiming and causing devastation

on a colossal scale.

The majority of people in Britain favour scrapping British nuclear weapons altogether.

IS TRIDENT INDEPENDENT?

In theory, the decision to fire the nuclear armed missiles could only be made by the Prime Minister. However:

- key non-nuclear warhead components are produced in the USA,
- the UK warhead designs are tested in US laboratory facilities,
- the Trident missiles are leased from the USA, and serviced by the USA,
- highly enriched uranium for the submarines' nuclear reactors is supplied by the United States, and
- tritium for the nuclear warheads is supplied by the United States.

In his memoir 'A Journey', Tony

Blair stated that it was 'frankly inconceivable' that the UK could ever use Trident without the approval of the USA. Without the active involvement of the USA, Trident could not be operated – our use of Trident is so dependent on the USA that it is a fiction to believe that it is independent.

WHO WILL PROFIT?

British companies expecting to profit from any decision to replace Trident are BAE Systems, Rolls Royce, Babcock Marine and Serco (working at AWE Aldermaston).

US companies expecting to profit from replacing Trident are Lockheed Martin (a main partner in the trio of companies which run Aldermaston AWE) and Jacobs Engineering (also at Aldermaston).

LEGALITY

In 1970, Britain signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Article VI of which committed us to negotiate a nuclear weapons ban treaty:

Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

In 1996, the International Court of Justice handed down an Advisory Opinion that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would in most cases violate international law, including the Geneva Conventions, the Hague Conventions, the UN Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In 2005 Rabinder Singh QC and Professor Christine Chinkin, handed down a legal opinion which argued that: 'The use of the Trident system would breach customary international law, in particular because it would infringe the principle that a distinction must be drawn between combatants and non-combatants.' The legal opinion also judged that 'The replacement of Trident is likely to constitute a breach of Article VI of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty'.

Britain refused to take part in the negotiations that led to the creation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, agreed by 122 countries in July 2017, and which countries can start signing from September 2017.

Indeed, former Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon gave the government view in Parliament: '*The UK will never sign, ratify or become party to the treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons.*'

SCOTLAND

For over 50 years Westminster Governments have used Scotland as a base for these most dangerous and morally repugnant weapons.

The majority of Scottish MPs and MSPs have voted against replacing Trident, supported by the majority of Scottish churches, trade unions, and civic society. The Scottish Affairs Committee has pointed out that Scottish independence could lead to nuclear disarmament for Britain and agrees that Scottish CND's timetable for potentially disarming Trident within days and removing all nuclear warheads within two years is realistic.

There is nowhere else in Britain for Trident to go.

AN INSURANCE POLICY?

The government often says that British nuclear weapons are an insurance policy for an uncertain future. But it is a very odd insurance policy that actually increases the dangers against which it is supposed to provide protection! Every time the British government insists that our security depends

on nuclear weapons, then other countries can argue the same and thus "justify" acquiring nuclear weapons. As the number of countries with nuclear weapons increases, the risk of accidental or deliberate use of nuclear weapons increases.

Security against nuclear weapons will only come through an international treaty banning nuclear weapons worldwide.

BRITAIN'S ROLE IN THE WORLD

A Britain free of nuclear weapons would be in a position to take a lead in negotiating



‘North Korea seem to think possessing a nuclear weapon makes them safe. In fact it’s the opposite. Having a nuclear weapon makes them a target.’

**Former Defence Secretary Philip Hammond MP.
Strange that ‘our’ nuclear weapons make us safe,
but ‘their’ nuclear weapons make them a target !**

an international ban on nuclear weapons. In an increasingly environmentally fragile world, we could then play a part in peacefully mediating international conflict and creating a more just world for all.

Britain is a permanent member of the United Nations’ Security Council, but this isn’t because we’ve got nuclear weapons; we were made a permanent member years before we had nuclear weapons. So becoming a non-nuclear weapon state should not necessarily mean that we lose our seat on the UN Security Council. And the 160+ countries without nuclear weapons, who want to see nuclear weapons banned, are unlikely to agree to Britain being “punished” in this way for becoming a non-nuclear weapon state like them !

COST

Government estimates of the costs of renewing the Trident system have continually risen, from £11-14 billion in 2006, to £25 billion in 2014, to £31 billion in 2015. The ‘Independent’

reported on 25th October 2015 that, according to Reuters news agency, the overall lifetime cost of renewing the Trident system will be £167 billion – 6% of the defence budget over the lifetime of the system.

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament believes that the true cost will now be about £205 billion.

£205 billion would be enough money to

- fully fund A&E services for 48 years, or
- build 120 new state-of-the-art hospitals, or
- employ 150,000 new nurses and teachers every year for the next 30 years, or
- build 3 million affordable homes, or
- pay for solar panels to be fitted to every household in the country, or
- invest an extra £5 billion a year in renewable energy (eight times the current budget) for the next 40 years, or
- scrap student tuition fees for 8 million students.

TRIDENT AND ITS REPLACEMENT

If Trident is replaced, Britain could have nuclear weapons for the next 50 years despite these facts:

THE ENORMOUS COST

- * Buying, operating and maintaining a new nuclear weapons system will cost at least £167 billion.

MOST PEOPLE OPPOSE NUCLEAR WEAPONS

- * Polls show that most British people are in favour of a global treaty banning nuclear weapons, just as chemical and biological weapons are banned.
- * Internationally, the majority of governments and people are in favour of a global nuclear weapons ban, just as chemical and biological weapons are banned. 122 governments worldwide voted to create the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which countries can sign up to from September 2017.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS MAKE US LESS SECURE

- * Many senior military officers have declared that nuclear weapons are militarily useless, especially in the face of international terrorism.
- * The MoD itself identifies the main threats to Britain as being terrorism and cyber-attacks. Nuclear weapons cannot defend



anyone against these threats, let alone the other real threats that everyone faces: environmental degradation, climate change, financial collapse or pandemic diseases.

- * By possessing nuclear weapons Britain is encouraging other states to have them. If nuclear weapons are "necessary" to defend Britain then surely any other country can claim that nuclear weapons are necessary for their defence ?

INTERNATIONALLY ILLEGAL

- * In 1970 Britain signed the international nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which commits signatories to negotiate in good faith general and complete nuclear disarmament.
- * In 1996, the International Court of Justice judged that is generally illegal to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons.

What can you do to help stop Trident and its replacement?

- * Join CND Cymru - keep up to date with and support the campaign.
- * Follow CND Cymru on Facebook
- * Get more copies of this Briefing for family, friends and work colleagues email: info@cndcymru.org
- * Write to the newspapers and to your MP and AMs
- * Wear the CND Cymru badge
- * Talk about the issue to your friends and family
- * Support your local CND and/or peace group - see www.cndcymru.org



CND Cymru Briefing: 4 Trident-Britain's Nuclear Bomb

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Printed by Redkite Print

Published by CND Cymru

February 2022

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CND Cymru is the Wales Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

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