



2004 ANNUAL REPORT

CHAIR'S REPORT

It is very gratifying for the Board to note the degree of trust that users of NIS's services now place on the organisation. This trust is a valuable asset which has been built up over the years by careful attention to the accuracy of information given out, and to avoidance of exaggeration and propaganda.

A substantial number of ordinary citizens and citizen groups now rely on NIS to stay informed of what is happening at Aldermaston and of any opportunities for public response. Over time this, together with the work of other groups, has resulted in growing interest from the media, local and national government, so that it is fair to say that Aldermaston is no longer able to operate under a veil of total secrecy in the way it used to. The STRAND programme is proving to be well-used and appreciated, and we record our thanks to its funder, the JCRT.

In-depth links with citizen groups NAG, NUKE-WATCH and SCANS have continued; NIS has been able to provide practical support to all these groups, augmenting their effectiveness. Fruitful links have also continued with NGO's BASIC, the Acronym Institute, INLAP and Peacerights, each of which works in one of the areas covered by NIS's terms of reference.

NIS international

It has been good to see NIS spread its wings into the international arena. Di McDonald represented us at the preparatory conference for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, spreading the concept of citizen

verification. NIS is engaged in this work in its own corner of the planet, and we believe that if this idea really took off it could make a significant contribution to making nuclear weapons obsolete! The NPT itself (May 2005, New York), may well be the last chance to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons:

"In the near future, we will either have true disarmament or have a plethora of new nuclear weapon states"

Dr Mohammed El Baradei, Director General of the U.N.'s International Atomic Agency.

Verification – key to a nuclear-free future

Di's visit to China raised the subject of verification. At NIS, we hold the view that verification is a major key to a nuclear-free future – we come back to the theme of trust.

Furthermore, the development of verification technology by AWE Aldermaston instead of new weapons technology would in our view present a better prospect for its long-term future as well as a more constructive use of the expertise and experience held at Aldermaston.

The NIS office is usually a bustling and happy place. During the later part of this year personal tragedy has cast a deep shadow, and our thoughts have been very much with Di during this difficult time.

Evelyn Parker

Strategic Tracking of New Developments at AWE (STRAND)

During the year NIS published bimonthly Updates on AWE's site development plans. Detailed information was circulated about the MoD's Notices of Planning Developments submitted to West Berkshire Council for AWE in April and December.

The key information people needed was the deadline date for Objections, together with suggested grounds on which the plans could be challenged at the local Planning Committee. Following serious objections to the Outline Orion Laser application in 2003, a surprise announcement came in February when the MoD reported its withdrawal of a plan approved in December 2003. It was re-submit with further environmental information and eventually approved at the second time of asking in June. By this time, it had attracted a good deal of parliamentary interest. We were pleased to provide **Lord Stoddart of Swindon** with information for his pertinent questions reported in Hansard on 12th July:

To ask Her Majesty's Government:

Whether the proposed replacement laser facility at the Atomic Weapons Establishment, Aldermaston, will be capable of testing and certifying a new generation of nuclear warhead; and, if so, whether this complies with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.[HL3554]

Lord Bach (reply): The purpose of the proposed ORION facility is to contribute towards ensuring that the United Kingdom nuclear warhead capability remains safe and reliable. The use of such technology with respect to nuclear warheads and nuclear material does not contravene the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Lord Stoddart :

Whether they will call in the planning application to build a replacement laser facility at the Atomic Weapons Establishment, Aldermaston. [HL3555]

Lord Bach: There is no need to do so.

By the end of the year, no Full Application for the AWE Laser had been submitted [or up to this Report's publication date. Ed.] However, two Full Applications were submitted in December, crossing over the Christmas period and involving NIS is a good deal of work at the close of the year. The Plans were for a new accommodation block and IT buildings – all part of the new developments' infrastructure.

CALL FOR A PUBLIC INQUIRY

Information enabling individuals and groups to make representations to the MoD and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for A Public Inquiry to examine the Orion Laser and other developments at AWE continued to be circulated in 2004.

Positive Alternatives for AWE

In February, NIS circulated the following "500 words on Aldermaston":

All Britain's nuclear warheads are built at Aldermaston. Currently AWE is slowly servicing the 180 or so Trident warheads and decommissioning old warheads and production plant. These decommissioning skills are essential to the practical process of nuclear disarmament and there is no question of closing the plant in the short to medium term. In the long-term, Verification Technology is AWE's positive contribution to the international inspection requirements of disarmament and Treaty compliance. Jobs and contracts with the management consortium of BNFL, Lockheed Martin and Serco could remain secure for many years, even if no new warheads were built. NIS proposes that the AWE site be re-branded as a nuclear weapons Decommissioning and Verification Agency (DeVA). By abandoning funding new developments at Aldermaston, the British government would be able to press on with the less costly but more valuable work of verification and decommissioning.

LAW

This year the UK-USA Mutual Defence Agreement went through its ten-yearly senate and parliamentary scrutiny ready for renewal by 23 Dec 2004.

The Agreement commits the parties to "Co-operation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes", "considering that their mutual security and defense require that they be prepared to meet the contingencies of atomic warfare". The Agreement dates from 1958 and is a highly sensitive arrangement as it enables all US exchanges with AWE, the US bases to function in the UK and Trident to use US targeting data.

As a member of the Nuclear Issues Working Group, NIS proposed that we seek a legal opinion on the Treaty and approached Peacerights to do this. BASIC, the Acronym Institute and Peacerights then prepared a Question for barristers Rabinder Singh QC and Professor Christine Chinkin:

"Would a renewed US-UK Mutual Defence Agreement be a breach of obligations under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty."

The 20-page Legal Opinion, published on 20th July, concluded:

"In our view, for the reasons set out below, it is strongly arguable that the renewal of the MDA is in breach of the NPT".

The MDA Legal Opinion can be found at:
<http://www.basicint.org/nuclear/MDAlegal.htm>

Inquiry into the Legality of Nuclear Weapons

NIS, together with others, proposed that Peacerights commission an Inquiry into the legality of Trident and its possible replacement. The resulting three-day Inquiry took place at Kings College, London in November before a panel of international legal experts: Professor Louise Doswald-Beck, Ambassador Miguel Marin-Bosch, Dr Gerry Simpson and Christopher G. Weeramantry.

The Panel were asked to

- ✂✂ Formulate legal principles applicable to the current Trident nuclear weapons system
- ✂✂ Determine whether those principles are transferable to any other nuclear weapons system
- ✂✂ Determine whether a decision to replace Trident with another nuclear weapons system would violate the Article VI of the NPT
- ✂✂ Determine whether the extension of Article III bis of the Mutual Defence Agreement violates the NPT

Written and oral evidence was presented by five expert witnesses chosen for their specialist knowledge on: the military and political aspects of British nuclear forces and defence policy, the technology of nuclear weapons, new developments in nuclear weapons, the health and environmental effects of nuclear weapons, new developments at



Photo left to right: Professor Nick Grief, Counsel to the Inquiry, Ambassador Miguel Marin-Bosch, Christopher G Weeramantry, Professor Louise Doswald-Beck and Dr Gerry Simpson. The panel of judges at the Inquiry into the Legality of Nuclear Weapons

Aldermaston and the Mutual Defence Agreement. Counsel and members of the panel had the opportunity to question the witnesses and were impressed by the depth of their knowledge.

NIS assisted in calling witnesses and gathering evidence. We also helped with practical arrangements at the Inquiry. The full report is available on our website under 'Legal'.

NPT PrepCom. New York, May 2004

Di McDonald represented NIS at the NPT conference in New York and presented over a hundred copies of her report, "The Failure of Trident", based on Nukewatch evidence. The Report showed that values claimed by democracies are being sacrificed on the nuclear altar concluding:

IN ORDER FOR BRITAIN TO BUILD A HUMANE, LEGAL, SUSTAINABLE, RELIABLE SECURITY STRUCTURE IT MUST:

- i. RENOUNCE THE THREAT AND USE OF TRIDENT
- ii. REMOVE NUCLEAR WARHEADS FROM SUBMARINES
- iii. RETURN TRIDENT MISSILES TO THE USA
- iv. SYSTEMATICALLY DECOMMISSION WARHEADS AND SUBMARINES
- v. DECOMMISSION PRODUCTION PLANT AT AWE ALDERMASTON
- vi. CLOSE AWE BURGHFIELD ASSEMBLY PLANT
- vii. COMMISSION FURTHER RESEARCH ON DECOMMISSIONING, SAFE STORAGE AND VERIFICATION AT AWE ALDERMASTON

Verification was the subject of a presentation by AWE Aldermaston at the PrepCom. Di prepared a sheet of questions for AWE that the audience of states delegates and NGOs might like to ask. We learnt that the UK has no collaboration with the USA on verification techniques.

Shortly afterwards, Di visited China where she was able to follow up issues with the Chinese government concerning her proposed bilateral agreement with the UK to reduce warheads by half and a bilateral surrogate on-site verification exercise with the UK. The exercise was proposed in view of the MOD's announcement that its Verification Project is independent of the USA. Zhang Jun from the Arms Control and Disarmament Department of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed interest in this later proposal and Di agreed to put the idea to the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. Unfortunately no further work was possible on negotiating this proposal as Di was on compassionate leave during the summer.

NIS was grateful to Fran Tessa, a member of the Womens International League for Peace and Freedom, for her generous hospitality and real support in her relaxing apartment in Manhattan.



NGO Delegates presenting papers to the UN NPT PrepCom. in New York April 2004

NUCLEAR SUBMARINE BERTHS (Z Berths)

In December, NIS assisted the Southampton-based Solent Coalition Against Nuclear Ships, (SCANS) to prepare a presentation to the Local Liaison Committee planning a nuclear accident exercise of the Sotonsafe Plan.

The Committee of seven naval officers and thirteen emergency service personnel from the health service, fire, ambulance and police heard the case for the liaison committee to admit SCANS members to its meetings and as observers in the exercise planned for February 2006.

In a real emergency, Potassium Iodate Tablets (PITS) will have to be distributed, people will need to

be evacuated, schools closed, road traffic into the city halted, hospital appointments cancelled and wards emptied for radiation casualties and so on.

SCANS has successfully persuaded both a Labour and now a Lib Dem City Council to press the Navy not to seek to use Southampton Docks for nuclear submarines. However, the administration considers it has a legal obligation to organise the Foxwater06 Exercise in conjunction with the Navy.

NUCLEAR TRANSPORT

Continuous Running Warhead Convoys

The MoD, through its contractor AWE ML, has changed a policy of always running nuclear warhead convoys on British roads during daylight hours.

For 50 years long-distance convoys have not run at night or without an overnight stop. This policy served the security and safety requirements of delivering warheads from the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Aldermaston and Burghfield to the Service base that operated them. In December 2003, the MoD began exercising for its 'continuous running project (CRP)' by training double crews to keep the convoy running continuously, between AWE and RNAD Coulport in one day. Nukewatch's twelve-year experience of daylight runs suggests that the stress on crew engaged in this nuclear transport operation is significant, especially when a breakdown occurs and the journey time is extended.

Special Nuclear Materials Convoys

Road transport of weapons' materials continued throughout the year but less frequently than in previous years.



SNM Nuclear convoy travelling north on the A34 through Botley in Oxford on June 14th 2004. Picture Rene Gill.

Financial Report

	Income	Expenditure
2003	£41,405	£39,047
2004	£42,232	£40,703

NIS is grateful to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Foundation for funding our charitable work and for the kindness and support of its staff during a difficult year for our personnel. We wish to thank INLAP, Southampton UNA and individual donors for generous travel grants to support our NPT work.

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