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SUBMISSION TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY CONSULTATION

This submission is in response to the FCO Inquiry:

Global Security: Non-Proliferation (*referenced*).

1. A definition of Security

“Over recent decades, our view of national security has broadened to include threats to individual citizens and to our way of life.” (1.5)

- 1.1 A permanent threat to 'individual citizens and our way of life' is the risk of a nuclear accident associated with the production, transport, handling and storage of nuclear warheads. This risk is unjustifiable and fails the justification test because the benefit of having weapons that cannot be used is a myth, as most other countries have recognised.
- 1.2 The additional risk of terrorist attack on AWE Aldermaston or (less likely) a warhead convoy, is a further risk to national security. Whilst this threat will remain until the current warhead stockpile is decommissioned, and whilst nuclear materials and waste remain at AWE, the threat to live work at AWE Burghfield can be relieved by completing the decommissioning process and de-licensing the Burghfield site as soon as practicable.
- 1.3 Security requires a high level of nuclear safety. UK Nuclear weapons production no longer meets modern standards of safety and should be abandoned for this, if for no other reason.

2. Disarmament

“we oppose all proliferation, as undermining our objectives of de-escalation and multilateral disarmament, and increasing the risk of instability in the international system and ultimately the risk of nuclear confrontation.” (3.10)

- 2.1 The key objective of the Security Strategy is to achieve de-escalation and multilateral disarmament; proliferation is identified as an impediment to

disarmament and as a cause of instability that risks nuclear confrontation. This concern has been at the heart of every NPT conference, and will be so in 2010.

2.2 A definition of proliferation is 'increase' and 'spread'. In the context of nuclear weapons, we have to go further and define what it is that must not increase. For example: numbers, dimensions and fire-power are less relevant than delivery miniaturisation, increasing accuracy and reliability. If the capacity of the nuclear weapons states (NWS) is increased in this way, the result is vertical proliferation. The possible spread of nuclear weapons to newly capable states (horizontal proliferation), is the other element to be addressed. These two aspects of proliferation are inextricably linked by cause and effect. At NPT summits, we have seen that there is no confidence in the good faith of the negotiating position of NWS whilst they persist in only addressing horizontal proliferation. The UK is in a strong position to be taken seriously as a key advocate of non-proliferation, if only it would put its own house in order.

2.3 The new order requires the UK to refrain from building a new generation of SSBNs and nuclear warheads. Despite government explanations for its current developments at AWE Aldermaston and submarine design contracts at Barrow, no-one interested in nuclear disarmament is convinced that these projects are necessary to retain the current level of nuclear capability. To do that, it would merely be necessary to ensure that existing facilities for warhead management were in good order and that the existing submarines reduce their sea operations to enable them to stay in service for another 22 years. Unless a stop is put to the current UK direction, there is no real incentive to achieve disarmament.

2.4 *Proliferation*

UK proliferation includes upgrading the existing system and building a new Trident system, both submarines and warheads. The reduction in warhead numbers as a non-proliferation plus is massively outweighed by the proposals to build new SSBNs and a new warhead. In particular, the MoD's recent Annual Report message is destabilising, and bodes ill for proliferation for the 2010 NPT Conference:

“the major rebuilding and development programmes at both Aldermaston and Burghfield [is] gathering pace.”

(MoD annual report for 2007-8)

2.5 *De-escalation*

Opportunities for de-escalation abound. However, the reduction of UK warheads to a more manageable number below 140 appears to reflect the poor state of the infrastructure to support them at AWE Burghfield rather than political de-escalation. What is needed now, is a reduction in sea patrols, removal of warheads to storage at RNAD Coulport and a steady programme of warhead disassembly. Serious problems at AWE concerning the lack of disassembly capacity should not have been allowed to develop. But we are where we are, and practical solutions can be

found, albeit at a slower pace than would have been necessary had the plant been properly maintained.

3. The link between nuclear proliferation and regional conflict

“the link between nuclear proliferation and regional conflict .”(3.53)

- 3.1 The two issues of 'access to nuclear materials' and 'nuclear weapons or nuclear technology' should not be packed in the same 'nuclear proliferation' bag. Control of nuclear materials is a matter for the IAEA. The challenge for the NPT Conference is to support this practical task by agreeing de-escalation for all NWS. Only when NPT ambassadors can trust the NWS not to say one thing and do another, can their focus be shifted to dealing with problems of materials proliferation.
- 3.2 In terms of nuclear weapons, there are plenty of regional conflicts that are not related to proliferation. If this fact is confused with the materials problem, it implies that the NWS cannot de-escalate for fear of destabilizing regional security. On the contrary, nuclear de-escalation would be beneficial in key areas, but in most cases, would have no effect.

4. UK lead to accelerate disarmament

“In the run up to the 2010 NPT review conference, we will lead international effort to accelerate disarmament among possessor states” (4.19)

- 4.1 The UK is well placed to accelerate disarmament, but this will require a real UK disarmament offer on the table. Verification, as in other treaties, requires something to verify. Technical means without concrete disarmament steps to measure will not achieve disarmament. (See 5. below).

5. Verification Technical Conference

“in pursuit of our objective of a negotiated elimination of all nuclear weapons. We have offered to host a technical conference for the five NPT Nuclear Weapons States on the verification of nuclear (4.19)

- 5.1 The UK's unique offer to host a conference on the technical means of verification is an opportunity to prepare the ground for a workable disarmament convention. But if it is to be a serious initiative, participants will need to be confident that the UK seeks no technical advantage. How are they to be sure that the UK is genuine in its commitment to verifying disarmament, rather than seeking insight into their nuclear warheads? As things stand, this commitment is not clear. Transparency of intent can only

be achieved by a policy commitment at NPT level. Exchange of verification techniques is suspect without an end to UK submarine and warhead development. The possibility of moving towards disarmament verification will be wasted unless it is undertaken in parallel with disarmament. Time-wasting at this level would indeed be criminal, and could be subject to challenge.

- 5.2 The value of Citizen Verification should be valued. For example, developments at the Iran nuclear site would not have come to light at an early stage unless the information had been reported by civil society. In the UK, safety issues at AWE and road transport incidents have been reported by NIS, Nukwatch and others.

6. 2010 NPT Review Conference

“achieving a positive outcome from the 2010 NPT Review Conference.” (4.23)

- 6.1 Any further delay in progress at the NPT will be disastrous. Unless the NWS take a risk for peace by 2010, it might be too late by 2015. Negotiating positions at the Conference on Disarmament need to change in 2009 and work must be redoubled in order to achieve a nuclear turn around by 2010. And that would only be the start!
- 6.2 The UK has the opportunity to lead. Its good faith credentials could be restored by a change of nuclear policy to wind-down if the current wind-up policies and contracts were to be cancelled. The alternative is for there to be no positive NPT Review outcome; no concentration on real security; no control of proliferation; no disarmament; no de-escalation; nothing to verify and a continuing build-up of an increasingly threatening nuclear order.

7. Deterrence Theory

“We decided to maintain our independent nuclear deterrent because, while we are strongly committed to multilateral nuclear disarmament and to the global elimination of nuclear weapons, we cannot rule out a threat to the United Kingdom involving nuclear weapons re-emerging over the next 50 years.”(4.67)

- 7.1 The familiar contradiction in this statement is unworthy of serious political justification in 2008. Clearly, for disarmament commitments to be worthy of attention, they must be backed by disarmament measures, not by re-armament.
- 7.2 All are agreed that there is no current foreign military threat to the UK and that no such threat is foreseeable. Should such a threat occur, it is inconceivable that it would be resolved by nuclear weapons.

- 7.3 Deterrence policy is based on a belief system. The theory is essentially flawed because there is no way of demonstrating that it has worked. There is absolutely no evidence to support the view that if we had not possessed nuclear weapons we would have been invaded, attacked or in any other way violated as a nation state.
- 7.4 UK nuclear weapons present a complex of risks to the British people every day. The risk of a criticality event at the substandard warhead assembly/disassembly facilities at AWE Burghfield and the transport of warheads by road to name but two. These risks are unjustifiable since there is no tangible benefit.
- 7.5 The argument that a future threat might demand nuclear weapons is also flawed, since there is no conceivable threat that could be resolved to the UK's advantage by a nuclear exchange. The nuclear power base is discredited and must now be de-constructed with the UK taking a lead.

8. Vital Interests

“Sea and air approaches, [its] information and communications systems, and [its] other vital interests, including our Overseas Territories.” (4.63)

- 8.1 The interpretation of 'vital interests' will vary according to the government of the day, but no interpretation could justify a nuclear attack by the UK. How could a UK nuclear attack on any state, agent or individual be justified in response to a threat to our overseas interests? While the FCO is charged with avoiding such a threat, the MoD can also contribute by advocating restraint and diplomatic solutions.
- 8.2 The idea that a nuclear threat could 'protect' UK assets from attack is not accepted on two grounds: i) it is an idle threat, and would be interpreted as such, or ii) it is not an idle threat and if carried out, would change the world into an unpredictable nuclear jungle, with the original provocation being quickly forgotten.
- 8.3 Climate change and energy resources are the real vital interests we have to address in the foreseeable future. The FCO should advocate massive investment at home in renewable energy to avoid the calamity that is foreseen in a recent speech by a government spokesman linking energy security with national sovereignty:

....an international battle for energy security is emerging as one of the most significant threats to both UK competitiveness and national sovereignty.

*John Hutton, Government Business Secretary
Labour Party Conference 2008*

9. Missile Defence

To help mitigate the threat of weapons of mass destruction, we welcome US plans to place further missile defence assets in Europe to provide cover for allies. (4.68)

- 9.1 Support for the US plans to deploy missile defence is to support a de-stabilising experiment in technology and politics. The new 2009 USA administration will need sound advice from a European member it is willing to listen to on this subject. Too much is at stake for Europe to be a platform for a dominant US presence. The UK government should learn from the damning effect of US Cruise Missile on European relations in the 1980s.

10. Future Security Structures

“Future priorities include: • consulting on a joint Parliamentary National Security Committee • strengthening the work of horizon scanning • creating a national security forum • publishing the National Risk Register” (5.8)

- 10.1 These proposals to widen consultation on foreign and defence policy are valuable democratic initiatives that should be established as soon as possible. However, each will bring difficulties, and unless the FCO and MoD are prepared to work with ground rules accepted by all participants, they will be reduced to time-wasting exercises. If openness, transparency, respect, consistency and patience are enshrined in the process to bring together the skills and perceptions of a wide range of people, then democracy will be well-served. The resulting decisions could shape wise UK policy and actions through cooperative national and international relations in an uncertain future.

11. Ultimate responsibility for our national security lies with the UK

“some areas of policy covered in this document are the responsibility of devolved administrations and legislatures. In these cases decisions will ultimately be for the devolved institutions concerned.” Endnote.

- 11.1 The Endnote comment that national security ultimately lies with the UK is a timely reminder that the current status quo of the Union may change in the coming years, and that change requires considered management. The Scottish people may decide to be an independent state. A mature democracy welcomes inevitable change as an opportunity not a threat. Citizens and politicians must meet the challenge with wisdom and self-confidence.

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29th September 2008