

NUKEWATCH

www.nukewatch.org.uk

Warhead convoy movements summary 2011

The log below is based principally on observations by Nukewatchers, but complemented by deduction as to the purpose of each convoy journey and whether or not warheads were carried.

Nukewatch considers that during 2011 at least three loaded convoys travelled between the Coulport nuclear arms depot and the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) at Burghfield. Our best guess is that between three and eight nuclear warheads were dispatched to AWE.

There appears to be a discrepancy in our observations between the numbers of loaded convoys transporting warheads from Coulport to the Atomic Weapons Establishment and the number of loaded return journeys to Coulport. This may indicate that the programme for reducing the number of UK nuclear warheads which was announced in the Strategic Defence and Security Review (see <http://bit.ly/KMzCiD>) has commenced. Assuming that between one and four warheads were returned to Coulport following servicing / surveillance at AWE (undetected by Nukewatch), then a balance of between two to four warheads has been retained at AWE for decommissioning. This would be consistent with a programme for decommissioning around three warheads per year between 2011 and 2025 to bring the total warhead stockpile down from around 225 warheads to around 180 warheads, and also with the announcement in the UK's statement to the 2012 Non Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee that: "We have already started the implementation of these measures, and have started to reduce our warhead numbers 15 years ahead of schedule" (<http://bit.ly/JhKS7D>). Sustained monitoring over a period of a further 2-3 years will be needed to confirm whether a gradual annual reduction in warhead numbers is indeed taking place.

It must be stressed that this is an estimate and that convoy journeys will have taken place that Nukewatch was unable to monitor. The overall picture of convoy movements during the year represents a relatively low level of activity, consisting of the baseline necessary to allow the movement of nuclear weapons for maintenance and surveillance purposes and a minimal return of warheads to AWE for decommissioning.

Convoy training activities are also thought to have taken place in January, July, and December.

Convoy movements continued during the period of military action by UK forces in Libya from 19 March to 31 October. Other periods of serious conflict involving UK military forces over recent years, such as the Kosovo intervention and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, have seen a suspension of convoy movements.

Special Nuclear Materials convoys

Nukewatch also observed movements of Special Nuclear Materials (SNM) convoys with High Security Vehicles. A movement from AWE Aldermaston to Rolls Royce Nuclear at Raynesway, Derby took place in July (Tuesday 12th), transporting enriched uranium from AWE for the manufacture of reactor fuel modules for new Astute class submarines. A movement of assembled fuel modules from Derby to BAE Systems at Barrow-in-Furness took place in March (Monday 28th) for fitting into a submarine under construction (probably HMS Ambush).

SNM convoys were also observed in the Burghfield area in July (Tuesday 5th) and September (Wednesday 19th), believed to be carrying nuclear materials or warhead components between AWE sites. Further SNM convoys which Nukewatch was unable to monitor would also have made journeys over the year.

IF YOU SEE A CONVOY PLEASE RING ONE OF THESE NUKEWATCH NUMBERS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE:

Di:	0845 45 88 364	or	07880 557035
Jane:	0845 45 88 367	or	07778 267833
Roz and Mark:	0845 45 88 365	or	07972 096499

We need to know what you saw, when you saw it, where, and what direction the convoy vehicles were travelling in.

For more information please see the Nukewatch website at www.nukewatch.org.uk

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2011 Truck Cargo Heavy Duty (TCHD) Warhead Convoy Log

Trip purpose	Date Out	Date In	From	To	Load	No trucks	Route
Exercise	Sat 05.03.11	?	RNAD Coulport	AWE Aldermaston?	Unladen	3? ¹	M74
1 Return Trident	?	Wed 20.04.11	RNAD Coulport?	AWE Burghfield	Loaded	3 ¹	
	Thurs 21.04.11		AWE Burghfield	AWE Aldermaston?	Unladen	3	
	Sun 24.07.11		AWE Aldermaston?	AWE Burghfield	Unladen	3	
Exercise	Mon 25.07.11	?	AWE Burghfield	? ²	Unladen	3	M6
	Thurs 28.07.11	Fri 29.07.11	?	AWE Burghfield	Unladen	3	
	Mon 01.08.11		AWE Burghfield	AWE Aldermaston	Unladen	3	
2 Return Trident	?	Sat 24.09.11	RNAD Coulport?	AWE Burghfield	Loaded	3 ¹	M6
	Wed 28.09.11		AWE Burghfield	AWE Aldermaston	Unladen	3 ³	
	?	Fri 30.09.11	AWE Aldermaston?	RNAD Coulport?	Unladen	3?	
1 Return Trident	?	Tues 04.10.11	RNAD Coulport?	AWE Burghfield	Loaded	3?	M1 ⁴
	Fri 07.10.11		AWE Burghfield	AWE Aldermaston?	Unladen	3?	
Exercise	?	Thurs 15.12.11	?	AWE Burghfield	Unladen	3 ¹	
	Fri 16.12.11		AWE Burghfield	AWE Aldermaston	Unladen	3	

Notes:

¹ No information available on outward trip, which was unobserved by Nukewatch.

² Travelled at least as far as Preston.

³ One warhead carrier may have left earlier on Monday 26 September.

⁴ Sighting reported by member of the public but not corroborated by Nukewatch.