



Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

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Rt Hon Bruce George MP
House of Commons
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24th June 2004

Mutual Defence Agreement

I am writing to ask you to urge the Defence Committee to hold an inquiry into the renewal of the Mutual Defence Agreement (MDA) and to encourage the House of Commons to hold a debate on this.

The MDA is the mechanism under which information and materials related to nuclear weapon are exchanged between the US and Britain. An Agreement to renew the MDA has been placed before Parliament in Command Paper 6261. The Government have indicated that they would provide the opportunity for a debate if there were to be a request from the Defence Committee.

Costs of renewal

The explanatory memorandum on the MDA from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office says that "there are no financial implications for the UK in extending the application of Article III of the 1958 Agreement" (FCO website). However the history of Anglo-American nuclear co-operation has been that the flow of information from the US has been dependent on Britain maintaining a substantial research programme of its own. Today the main focus of nuclear weapons development is the design of computer simulations. It is likely that Aldermaston will be expected to make progress in this area, at considerable expense, as the price of ongoing support from the United States. The Director of Computing at Aldermaston has indicated that he would like to see a substantial increase in computing power at AWE, beyond the new Blue Oak system. The construction of new experimental facilities, such as the Orion laser, is likely to also be related to further US assistance.

Non Proliferation Treaty

Renewing the MDA until 2014 will not be compatible with the Britain's commitments under the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In the House of Lords on 22nd June Lord Bach said "Movements under the MDA do not involve nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices." However they do involve key components of weapons. Sandia National Laboratory have said that they are supplying the MC4380A neutron generators for British Trident warheads. Tritium is filled into reservoirs for use in British warheads at the Savannah River Site. The transfer of these components and the exchange of design information are contrary to the principles of the NPT. Government secrecy over the details is a sign of their appreciation of this.

A detailed briefing on the MDA is available from the British American Security Information Council at www.basicint.org

Yours sincerely,

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Coordinator

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