

29 June

Aldermaston

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the planned expenditure on hydrodynamic testing at the Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Establishment is in each of the next three years. [78952]

Des Browne: It is planned to spend in the order of £5 million on hydrodynamic testing at the Atomic Weapons Establishment this year, rising to around £6 million by the end of 2007-08. The precise budget beyond that has not been finalised.

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the projected capital costs are for the construction of the centralised Explosive Handling Facility at the Atomic Weapons Establishment, Aldermaston. [79093]

Des Browne: Mature costings are not available and disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice commercial interests.

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the projected capital costs are for the construction of new Material Science facilities at the Atomic Weapons Establishment sites at Aldermaston and Burghfield. [79094]

Des Browne: Mature costings are not available and disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice commercial interests.

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are to introduce a petaflop computing capability at the UK Atomic Weapons Establishment. [79095]

Des Browne: Petaflop technology is not expected to be available before the end of the decade.

3 July

Atomic Weapons Establishment

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff have been recruited to the Atomic Weapons Establishment sites at Aldermaston and Burghfield since July 2005, broken down by employment area; what plans there are for future recruitment in each such area; and if he will make a statement. [79948]

Mr. Ingram: In the period July 2005 to end March 2006, a total of 504 staff (including 180 to replace natural wastage) were recruited to the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston and Burghfield in the following areas:

	<i>Number</i>
Science	99
Engineering	250
Technical Support	57
Business Services	98
Total	504

A further 46 staff were recruited up to 31 May 2006. In the two financial years ending 31 March 2008, AWE plc plans to recruit a total of around 700 personnel in broadly the same proportions as the categories described above. The company has not formulated any firm plans for recruitment beyond this period.

4 July

Nuclear Deterrent

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is his policy to retain a strategic nuclear deterrent in the long-term. [81534]

Des Browne: The Labour party manifesto at the 2005 general election committed the Government to retaining the United Kingdom's independent nuclear deterrent. We have previously made clear that this commitment effectively applies for the life of the current system. No decisions, either in principle or detail, have yet been taken on the position beyond that point. But as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear in the House on 28 June, these decisions will be taken later this year.

5 July

Aldermaston

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which proposed new facilities and refurbishment projects at Atomic Weapons Establishment, Aldermaston are funded from the £1,050 million allocation announced on 19 July 2005. [79091]

Des Browne: The programme of extra investment at the Atomic Weapons Establishment, embraces a range of activity necessary to sustain Trident for its remaining in-service life. Investment will be made in essential accommodation improvements, business communications, infrastructure, laser physics, hydrodynamics, materials science, high performance computing, uranium component manufacture, fissile and special materials handling, explosives handling, and assembly/disassembly. In the absence of the ability to undertake live nuclear testing in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty era, this investment is necessary to provide assurance that the existing Trident warhead stockpile remains safe and reliable.

Nuclear Deterrent

Dr. Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he was informed of the proposed content relating to retention of the nuclear deterrent in the long-term of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Mansion House speech prior to its delivery. [81533]

Des Browne [*holding answer 4 July 2006*]: I have regular discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on a range of issues.

5 July 2006 : Column 1108W

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the time scale is for (a) a national debate, (b) a White Paper and (c) a decision to be made for the replacement of the UK's nuclear deterrent. [82421]

Des Browne: Decisions on the future of the UK's nuclear deterrent will be taken this year. We expect to publish a White Paper once decisions have been taken and, as the Prime Minister made clear on 28 June 2006, *Official Report*, column 253, the means of consultation will be made clear when we publish the White Paper.

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what structures exist within the Government to provide a framework for formulation of policy on the future of the UK's nuclear deterrent; [82422]

(2) what consideration Ministers have given to detailed policy on the future of the UK's nuclear deterrent. [82423]

Des Browne: Work is under way by officials in a number of Departments to prepare for decisions on the future of the United Kingdom's nuclear deterrent. Ministers have been briefed by officials on some of the relevant issues and have requested that further work be undertaken.

It remains the case that no decisions have yet been taken, either in principle or in detail although, as the Prime Minister said on 28 June 2006, *Official Report*, column 253 decisions will be taken this year.

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with Ministers in other Departments about the future of the UK's nuclear deterrent. [82424]

Des Browne: I have regular discussions with my Cabinet colleagues and other Ministers on a wide range of issues.

6 July

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department has spent on the development of a replacement Arming, Fuzing and Firing system for the Trident warhead; and when the system will enter service. [80013]

Des Browne: It is not our practice to comment on the details of UK warhead design. I am withholding the information requested because it relates to national security and defence in the UK.]

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research his Department has carried out to verify the integrity of Trident targeting and fire control software created and tested in the US and from which US-eyes only items have been removed. [82406]

Des Browne: Each new release of Trident fire control software is certified by the US Government under the terms of the Polaris Sales Agreement (as amended for Trident). Under the agreement, the UK has the capability to validate the software models for software performance and verify that the findings are correct. This is undertaken and independently verified by UK experts to ensure the software meets our requirements before being issued to Royal Navy submarines.

John Thurso: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the (a) officer and (b) rating complement is of the Trident fleet (i) at full strength and (ii) currently. [82866]

Mr. Ingram: The Royal Navy Trident Fleet consists of four Vanguard-class Ballistic Missile Submarines (SSBNs).

The full complement of a Vanguard-class submarine in a sea-going role is 160 men, consisting of 19 officers and 141 ratings. Of these, 140 go to sea.

Six crews are provided to man the four boats; a total requirement of 114 officers and 846 ratings. The current trained strength is 110 officers and 840 ratings.

Current policy is to ensure that any submarine is 100 per cent. manned at sea, with priority given to the SSBN force.

John Thurso: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the training requirements of the Trident fleet crew; and if he will make a statement. [82867]

Mr. Ingram: The Trident fleet consists of four Vanguard-class Ballistic Missile Submarines (SSBNs). Training requirements of the Trident fleet crew are subject to continual review and assessment. This process ensures that training remains up to date, and provides highly capable and well trained personnel onboard Trident submarines.

13 July

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the (a) range and (b) circular area probability are of the (i) Trident missile system, (ii) Polaris Chevaline missile system and (iii) Polaris missile system. [84025]

Des Browne: The range of the Trident D5 missile is some 6,000 nautical miles. Both Polaris Chevaline and Polaris missiles had a range of up to 2,500 nautical miles.

I am withholding the information on circular error probable, which indicates the accuracy of the missile, as this could enable deductions to be made that could be prejudicial to national security and international relations.

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies are being carried out into whether to reuse or replace the Trident warhead pit; and when a decision on pit reuse or replacement is likely to be made. [79089]

Des Browne: The Atomic Weapons Establishment undertakes a range of studies as part of a warhead assurance programme designed to ensure the safety, effectiveness and durability of the UK nuclear warhead stockpile. This process is designed to enable regular assessments of the service life of any particular pit, and ensure that essential capability continues to be maintained at all times.

There is currently no requirement for any replacement warhead; nor is there any programme to develop one.

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department has allocated for US contract N00178-04-D-4042 to EG and G, a Trident software support contract for K Development at the Naval Surface Warfare Centre Dahlgren, for the development and testing of (a) UK targeting, (b) reference and simulation models and (c) verifying the removal of US-eyes only items from Trident targeting and fire control software. [82405]

Des Browne: The Ministry of Defence does not allocate funding for individual US Government contracts. Arrangements for support of the UK Fire Control Software and related matters are agreed between the US and UK Governments under the Polaris Sales Agreement (as amended for Trident).

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 5 June 2006, *Official Report*, column 35W, on Trident, whether he makes a distinction between designing and developing in the context of work on a new warhead for use in Trident missiles. [82426]

Des Browne: We do not draw a distinction between "designing" or "developing" in the context of nuclear warheads. As we said in the 1998 Strategic Defence Review ("supporting essay 5 paragraph 14"), we maintain a minimum capability at the Atomic Weapons Establishment to design and produce a replacement for the current Trident warhead, should that prove necessary.

There is no programme at the Atomic Weapons Establishment to either develop or design a new nuclear warhead as we currently have no requirement for a new warhead.

18 July

Nuclear Deterrent

Mr. Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what expenditure his Department has (a) incurred and (b) approved in respect of the upgrading or replacement of the UK's nuclear deterrent; and if he will make a statement. [83969]

Des Browne [*holding answer 12 July 2006*]: It is not practicable, except at disproportionate cost, to assess historic expenditure on upgrading or replacing the UK's nuclear deterrent since its inception in the 1950s.

We routinely undertake work to maintain the capability of our existing nuclear deterrent system over its current planned design life. The cost of this work is included within the overall running costs of the Trident system, which have varied between three and 4.5 per cent. of the defence budget since it came into service, up to and including 2005-06.

In terms of expenditure in support of the possible retention by the UK of a nuclear deterrent capability beyond the planned life of the current system, I refer the hon.

Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Twickenham (Dr. Cable) on 22 May 2006, *Official Report*, column 1322W. In addition to the expenditure referred to in that answer, we have previously spent a total of around £9 million.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what expenditure has been incurred on research into a new generation of nuclear warheads in each of the last five years. [85534]

Des Browne: There is no programme to develop a new United Kingdom nuclear warhead. As was stated in the 1998 Strategic Defence Review, we retain a minimum capability to design and manufacture a new warhead, should one be required. It is not possible precisely to distinguish between expenditure to support retention of that capability and that required to support the current warhead.

20 July

Submarines

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the cost of the decommissioning of the Vanguard Class submarines. [86874]

Des Browne: Decommissioning of the Vanguard Class submarines is still some way off. Officials are investigating decommissioning costs as part of the work to prepare for decisions, which will be taken later this year, on the future of the United Kingdom's nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Astute Class submarines have been considered as the launch platform for the next generation of Trident missiles. [86942]

Des Browne: Work is now under way to prepare for decisions on the future of the United Kingdom's nuclear deterrent, which will be taken later this year. Ministers have been briefed by officials on some of the relevant issues and have requested that further work be undertaken. It is too early to rule in or out any particular option.

Trident

Mr. Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the annual maintenance cost of the Trident weapons system is expected to be in 2006-07; and what the cost was in each of the last five years. [86875]

20 July 2006 : Column 597W

Des Browne: The annual expenditure for capital and running costs of the Trident nuclear deterrent, including costs for the Atomic Weapons Establishment, is expected to be between 5 and 5.5 per cent. of the Defence budget in 2006-07. For the costs in the last five years, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Lynne Featherstone) on 3 July 2006, *Official Report*, column 713W.

24 July

16. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how long it takes to target Trident missiles when at sea. [87200]

Des Browne: All the United Kingdom's Trident missiles have been de-targeted since 1994. The missiles can be targeted in sufficient time to meet any foreseeable requirement.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civil servants listed are working on Trident and nuclear weapons policy, broken down by grade. [86696]

Des Browne [*holding answer 20 July 2006*]: There are nine full-time civil servants in the Ministry of Defence working on Trident and nuclear weapons policy: 1 x Senior Civil Servant, 3 x Band B1s, 2 x Band B2s, 2 x Band Cs and 1 x Band E. They consult and engage others, as necessary.

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reason a discussion of a replacement for the Trident nuclear system was not included in the section on future capabilities of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts for 2005-06, HC 1394. [86924]

Des Browne: The Annual Report and Accounts 2005-06 is a retrospective document accounting for the Department's use of the resources Parliament authorised for Defence against the performance baseline in the Departmental Plan 2005-09 reflecting the outcome of the 2004 Spending Review.

As we said in paragraph 18 of the report, work has now started to prepare for decisions on the future of the UK's nuclear deterrent beyond the planned life of the current system. The section of the Annual Report and Accounts on future capabilities deals with major equipment projects which have passed the Main Gate investment approval point. It did not deal with any replacement of Trident, as no decisions on that have yet been taken in detail or principle, and hence there was and still is no project in that respect.

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research work has been carried out to improve the (a) reliability, (b) performance, (c) longevity and (d) safety of the UK's Trident nuclear warhead. [87169]

Des Browne: Since the introduction into service of the current Trident warhead in 1994, no research has been undertaken to improve its performance. Work continues, however, under the stockpile stewardship programme at AWE to underwrite the continued reliability, longevity, and safety of our Trident warheads.

24 July

Nuclear Deterrent

15. **Dr. Murrison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is the Government's policy to maintain the nuclear deterrent in the long-term. [87199]

Des Browne: We made it clear in our manifesto at the 2005 General Election that we are committed to retaining the United Kingdom's independent nuclear deterrent. The Prime Minister has made clear that this commitment applies for the planned life of the current system. Decisions on the position beyond that point will be made later this year.

Trident

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