



Defence Committee

Publication of Report

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Attn: [News Desks / Forward Planning /
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MPs CALL FOR FULL AND OPEN PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE FUTURE OF THE UK'S STRATEGIC NUCLEAR DETERRENT

The Government's promise of a free and open public debate on the future of the UK's strategic nuclear deterrent is to be welcomed, but it is essential that it delivers on that commitment, says a report published today by the House of Commons Defence Committee (Eighth Report of the Defence Committee, *The Future of the UK's Strategic Nuclear Deterrent: The Strategic Context*, HC 986).

The MPs express their "surprise and disappointment" at the refusal of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to participate in their inquiry – the first in a series of inquiries the Committee will hold on the future of the deterrent over the course of the current Parliament – and state that a meaningful debate is only possible with the MoD's active participation.

No major investment decisions on any potential Trident successor system should be taken before a full and open debate, MPs conclude. The public need to know what decisions are required, when they must be taken and implemented, and what is driving consideration of the issue now.

The Committee believes a public debate should:

- address the relevance and purpose of nuclear deterrence now and over the lifetime of any potential Trident successor;
- consider the extent to which possession of a strategic nuclear deterrent enhances the UK's international influence and status;
- examine the differing concepts of independence adopted by the UK and France in the acquisition and operation of their respective nuclear deterrents; and
- clarify precisely the nature and timing of the decisions required on the future on the deterrent.

Commenting on the report, Committee Chairman Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP said "Decisions on the future of the UK's strategic nuclear deterrent are, quite rightly, matters of widespread public interest. The Government has undertaken to hold a free and open debate on the future of the deterrent and we look forward with great interest

to the publication of its promised White Paper. We need a full discussion of the role and purpose of the nuclear deterrent and the changing strategic environment. This needs to happen before decisions are made or significant investment committed. We hope the publication of our first report on the future of the deterrent will stimulate an informed and comprehensive debate and that the Government will participate fully in our forthcoming inquiries.”

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Committee Membership is as follows: Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP (Chairman), Mr David S Borrow MP, Mr David Crausby MP, Linda Gilroy MP, Mr David Hamilton MP, Mr Mike Hancock MP, Mr Dai Havard MP, Mr Adam Holloway MP, Mr Brian Jenkins MP, Mr Kevan Jones MP, Robert Key MP, Mr Mark Lancaster MP, Willie Rennie MP, John Smith MP
2. News Release: No. 54

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