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MOD refuses information on Trident replacement

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On September 13th 2005, in an interview with the Guardian newspaper, Defence Secretary John Reid, promised 'an open debate in the country, parliamentary party and parliament' on whether the UK should build a new nuclear weapons system to replace Trident.

However, information is needed, in order to have a debate, or on which to base a decision. For instance, what is the government's opinion on the role of UK nuclear weapons in the post Cold War world? How does the development of new nuclear weapons square with the UK's international commitments to disarm? How would it affect the UK's attempts to prevent countries like Iraq developing their own nuclear weapons? And what is the likely financial cost to be?

A more convincing argument is required, than the one given by John Reid in his Guardian article. He argues that we need new nuclear weapons in case some threat emerges somewhere, at some point, in the future.

It's because of this need for information that Greenpeace earlier this year requested, under the Freedom of Information Act, that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) release copies of all studies undertaken on the issue of Trident replacement, including:

- studies assessing potential and/or existing threats which may or may not be deterred by the various options for replacing Trident;
- studies on the financial costs of the various

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options to replace

or not replace Trident;

- studies on the implications Trident's replacement or non-replacement would have on UK Foreign Policy, economic policy and military policy.
- details of any contacts with US officials, UK defence companies and overseas defence companies regarding the replacement of Trident.
- details of studies on diversification measures to protect workers' jobs in the event of the Trident renewal programme not going ahead.

On September 26th, Greenpeace received a series of letters from the MoD stating that despite the "strong public interest" in the issue, and despite the fact they held part of the information requested, this information would not be made public.

Greenpeace is not satisfied with this reply. How can an open and democratic discussion be held on the future of British nuclear weapons, if the information needed to make this discussion possible is withheld?

What credible reason can there be for withholding this information, as it does not concern operational matters?

Is this suppression of information happening because the UK government doesn't really want a debate, as it knows that with the Cold War over, it is difficult to justify a new British bomb as "there is today no direct military threat to the United Kingdom or Western Europe. Nor do we foresee the re-emergence of such a threat." (1998 - Labour's Strategic Defence Review).

Is the real motivation behind government support for building a replacement for trident that the government doesn't want to upset its partnership with the US government, by exposing US failure to disarm their nuclear weapons, as well as plans to build more?

These remain key questions and that's why Greenpeace will be appealing against the MoD's decision not to release these documents and urges you to write to your MPs, asking them to take up the issue with the government.

Download the letters sent by the MoD:

[On details of studies on the financial costs of the various options to replace or not replace Trident »](#)

[On the implications of Trident replacement or non-replacement on UK Foreign Policy, economic policy and military policy »](#)

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