

### Trident

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the United Kingdom's Trident missiles will be more accurate than the Polaris ones they replace.

**Mr. Hanley:** Yes.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the United Kingdom's Trident missiles will be independently targetable.

**Mr. Hanley:** Yes.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the total number of Trident missiles being purchased by the United Kingdom are to form part of a processing margin.

**Mr. Aitken:** On current plans, about 5 per cent. of the total number of United Kingdom's Trident missiles will form part of a processing margin.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he plans any demonstration that the Trident deployment will not involve any increase in strategic nuclear warheads above Polaris levels.

**Mr. Hanley:** In keeping with the practice of successive Governments, we do not make public the number of warheads actually deployed on our submarines. The question of verification does not arise.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he plans to deploy conventional warheads on the United Kingdom's Trident missiles.

**Mr. Hanley:** The Government have no such plans.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maximum number of warheads assumed to be carried by each United States Trident D5 missile under the terms of the strategic arms reduction treaties.

**Mr. Hanley:** The details of the START I and START II treaties are a matter for the parties to those treaties. Under the memorandum of understanding on the establishment of the data base relating to the treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms—START I—deployed United States Trident II ((D5) missiles are attributed with eight warheads. START II sets additional limits on the overall number of warheads attributed to deployed submarine-launched ballistic missiles and modifies the rules established under START I for reducing the number of warheads attributed to deployed missiles.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on revealing the number of missiles and warheads deployed on the United Kingdom's Trident submarines; and in what circumstances the policy is reconsidered.

**Mr. Aitken:** It is our policy to be as open about the United Kingdom's nuclear deterrent as is possible without revealing information which might diminish the effectiveness of the system. For that reason we do not make public the number of missiles or warheads actually deployed on our submarines.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will apply a maximum ceiling to the number of warheads carried on any individual Trident missile.

**Mr. Aitken:** No. Overall, each Trident submarine will deploy with no more than 96 warheads.

### Chevaline

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Chevaline has been fitted to every Polaris missile.

**Mr. Aitken:** All in-service United Kingdom Polaris missiles are fitted with the Chevaline modification.

### Submarines (Fishing Vessels)

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what representations he has received regarding a complete ban on the movement of submarines in designated fishing areas; and if he will make a statement; (2) what discussions he intends to initiate with appropriate organisations and Her Majesty's Navy following the recent incident involving a fishing vessel and HMS Valiant;

(3) what discussions he has had with the Royal Navy regarding the alleged breaching of guidelines on separation distances between submarines and fishing vessels;

(4) when he expects to receive the report of the Royal Navy inquiry into the incident involving HMS Valiant during naval exercise off Cape Wrath; and if he will make a statement on this incident.

**Mr. Hanley:** I have received no representations in the last 12 months regarding a complete ban on the movement of submarines in designated fishing areas.

I should, however, like to report that, during a training exercise off the coast of north-west Scotland on 8 November 1993, the submarine HMS Valiant's towed sonar array was lost after it apparently caught on the trawl of the fishing vessel Audacious. Communications were at once established with the fishing vessel, which reported that all was well.

A full investigation was immediately put in hand. This is not yet complete, but preliminary findings have concluded that HMS Valiant accidentally breached the 4,000 yard separation distance laid down in the submarine and fishing vessel code of practice. However, as soon as this was realised, HMS Valiant, in accordance with the requirements of the code, immediately reduced speed, returned to periscope depth and established communications to ensure the safety of other vessels. The towed array which HMS Valiant lost is a lightweight plastic tube and as such, presents no hazard to the other vessels.

I have instructed that the report be concluded as soon as possible and its findings made available to the members of the Department of Transport's Fishing Industry Safety Group sub-group on submarine and fishing vessel interaction, which includes representative of the fishermen's federations. It does appear that, while the code of practice was accidentally breached, its subsequent observance prevented a possibly more serious incident. Nonetheless, the issue of safety at sea is one which I take very seriously and I shall be considering what lessons might be learnt for the future.