



# Defence Committee

## Publication of Report

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**8 February 2007**

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### **THE NUCLEAR DETERRENT: GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES DEFENCE COMMITTEE CONCERNS OVER MANUFACTURING AND SKILLS BASE**

The Government accepts that decisions on the future of the UK's strategic nuclear deterrent need to be taken on the defence needs of the country, but that the public should be aware of the manufacturing and skills based issues which will need to be addressed in deciding whether to retain and renew Trident.

The statement forms part of the Government response to December's Defence Committee report on the Future of the UK's Strategic Nuclear Deterrent: the Manufacturing and Skills Base (published as the Defence Committee's Third Special Report of Session 2006–07, HC 304).

The Government response emphasises the importance of maintaining the UK's submarine design and manufacturing capability and recognises that specialist skills in industry must not be lost. It accepts that industry must collaborate more extensively to drive down and control costs and deliver an affordable submarine programme. And it acknowledges the MoD itself must have the in-house skills necessary to manage a project of the scale of a new nuclear deterrent submarine. The response also provides details on the Government's investment at the Atomic Weapons Establishment, Aldermaston – where the Trident warheads are manufactured and maintained.

Commenting on the Government Response, **Committee Chairman Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP** said, "I welcome the Government's prompt response to our report as an important contribution to the public debate on the future of the UK's nuclear deterrent. But it does not go far enough in explaining to the public why the UK must build submarines here in the UK. And it does not clarify with sufficient detail the future costs of Aldermaston and why the Government went ahead with such an extensive investment programme there in advance of decisions on the future of our strategic nuclear deterrent."

The Committee is in the process of completing its inquiry into the Government's White Paper on the strategic nuclear deterrent. This is looking at the timing of decision-making, the likely costs involved and the legal implications of the decision to renew Trident.

The final evidence session of this inquiry was with the Secretary of State for Defence on 6 February. The transcript of this session and the MoD's written evidence – which provides new information on costs and the timing of decision-making – is available on the Committee's website: <http://www.parliament.uk/defcom>.

The Committee intends to publish its final report at the beginning of March, in time for the debate and vote in the House of Commons.