

On CND report:

A Scottish Government spokeswoman said:

"The Scottish Government welcome the Scottish CND report 'Disarming Trident' – we are firmly committed to the earliest possible withdrawal of Trident from Scotland, to the pursuit of a world which is free from nuclear weapons, and to the development and diversification of HMNB Clyde as a vibrant and sustainable conventional naval base in an independent Scotland.

"The suggested timetable is a welcome indication of how quickly Trident could be removed once Scotland has the powers to decide its own defence and security policy, and we note that various international experts have highlighted a credible timetable.

"Independence is the only constitutional option which gives Scotland the powers to have Trident removed from Scottish waters. A normal country with the power to decide its own defence and security policy would never be pushed into spending billions of pounds of taxpayer's money on unwanted nuclear weapons. Scotland must have independence to determine our own priorities.

"The majority of Scottish opinion, our churches, the Scottish Trade Union Congress and civic society, all oppose Trident – and the Scottish Parliament has voted against its replacement – yet the UK Government wants to use Scottish taxpayers' money to pay for these weapons of mass destruction, whilst the numbers of military personnel in Scotland continue to be reduced and Scotland's regimental traditions remain under threat from the UK Government's strategic defence review."

Dear Rob,

The timetable rests on solid evidence and is highly credible. It accurately describes the essential steps needed to remove Trident submarines from alert status, de-activate the weapons systems, and remove them from Scottish territory. If anything, the timetable is somewhat conservative. My studies have determined that many of the steps could be taken at a pace that is nearly twice as fast, though the more leisurely pace in the CND timetable ensures a completely safe process of dismantlement.

A comprehensive detailed manual for dismantling Trident would include some additional steps, such as removing the electronic inverters from the missile tubes -- the inverters convert DC to AC to deliver a high-voltage charge to the pyrotechnics of the steam generators that when fired, propel the missiles out of the their tubes under pressurized steam. These electrical boxes are always removed from the tubes and stored in a special compartment at the end of a U.S. Trident patrol as a safeguard against accidental or unauthorized launch. It would take about two days to remove all of the inverters from operationally deployed submarines.

(FYI, my latest analysis of de-alerting measures such as this one is Bruce G. Blair, "De-alerting Strategic Forces", pp. 47-105 in George P. Shultz et. al., Reykjavik Revisited: Steps Toward a World Free of Nuclear Weapons, Hoover, 2008.)

I hope these comments are helpful.

Best regards,

Bruce

(yes, I am of Scottish ancestry and am a co-founder of Global Zero)

Meanwhile I asked William Wallker what he thought of your timetable, and he said it was "intuitively reasonable". He forwarded it to Frank von Hippel who said it was "not unreasonable". Hippel forwarded it to Richard Garwin who said:

"I don't want to be misquoted or quoted only in part, but I have no problem providing a full answer.

1. The question is not whether this could be accomplished within two or four years, but whether one wants to do it.
2. Why argue about 7 or 8 days at the beginning? The whole thing needs to be planned, so it might take a month to begin.
3. Yes, the removal and shipping and storage and/or dismantling could be done within four years."

Thank you for the report.

I don't want to say it is a credible timetable. I do say that the missiles and nuclear weapons can be disabled within weeks and removed within two years and dismantled within four years, if that were judged to be desirable and the decision made to do so.

Note the several places in the report where the authors state,

"Additional preparation and training may be required prior to conducting unloading on the scale required. "

and

"As an alternative, it might be possible to dismantle Trident missiles at Coulport and then to destroy the components. However this would require the construction of new facilities on the site. "

Planning, designing and building new facilities could, in itself, take 5 years. I don't know whether the D5 lease contract permits destruction of the missiles, other than by test firing or use in war.

So, yes, one could remove all the nuclear weapons and missiles from Scotland within two years.

Richard L. Garwin, Scarsdale, New York, USA