

8 May 2007 Trident

Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the Mk 4A arming, fusing and firing system for Trident to enter service; what estimate he has made of the cost of the *(a)* development and *(b)* production of this system; and what impact he expects this procurement to have on the decision whether to refurbish or replace the Trident warhead. [132845]

Des Browne: The Mk 4A arming, fusing and firing system is a non-nuclear component being introduced into the UK warhead to overcome obsolescence and ensure the existing warhead can remain in service until the 2020s. It will enter service over the course of the next decade. The overall cost to the UK of procuring the component is included in the estimated future costs of the Atomic Weapons Establishment set out in Chapter 5 of the White Paper "The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent" (Cmd 6994), published in December 2006.

This procurement will not impact directly on any future decision whether to refurbish or replace the existing warhead.

Mr. Caton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the United States Administration has sought any *(a)* technical and *(b)* diplomatic reassurance that Trident D5 nuclear missiles provided under a leasing contract by the US Navy to the UK could never be targeted at United States assets. [134984]

Des Browne: As long standing allies with mutual defence obligations under the terms of the North Atlantic treaty, the United States Administration has not sought any technical or diplomatic reassurances that UK Trident D5 missiles would never be targeted against United States assets.