

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence (Lord Astor of Hever):** My Lords, I am sure the whole House will wish to join me in offering sincere condolences to the family and friends of Marine Nigel Mead from 42 Commando Royal Marines, who was killed in Afghanistan on Sunday 15 May. My thoughts are also with the wounded, and I pay tribute to the courage and fortitude with which they face their rehabilitation.

With the leave of the House I will now repeat a Statement made in the other place by my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Defence:

"Mr Speaker, with permission, I would like to make a Statement on our nuclear deterrent programme. The House will be aware that we have been considering the next stage of investment, called initial gate, in the programme to deliver a successor to our current nuclear deterrent. This is the point in the MoD's procurement cycle at which we decide on broad design parameters, set our plans for detailed system assessment and order any long-lead items that might be required. Taking this action enables us to be sure that we will take the right decisions at the key investment stage, the main gate, which for this submarine programme will be in 2016. I am announcing today that we have approved the initial-gate investment and selected a submarine design that will be powered by a new generation of nuclear propulsion system-the Pressurised Water Reactor 3-that will allow our submarines to deliver our deterrent capability well into the 2060s if required.

At this milestone in the project it is useful for me to remind the House of this Government's policy on the nuclear deterrent. The first duty of any Government is to ensure the security of their people. The nuclear deterrent provides the ultimate guarantee of our national security, and for the past 42 years the Royal Navy has successfully operated continuous deterrent patrols to ensure just that. I pay tribute to the crews and support

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staff who ensure the continued success of deterrent operations, and I extend that tribute to the families of all those personnel, many of whom are regularly away from home for long periods.

// We assess that no state currently has both the intent and the capability to threaten the independence or integrity of the UK, but we cannot dismiss the possibility that a major direct nuclear threat to the UK might re-emerge. We simply do not know how the international environment will change in the next few years, let alone the next 50 years. And, as this House concluded in 2007 when it voted on whether the UK should start a programme to renew the deterrent, the time is simply not right to unilaterally do away with it. This is not to say that, if the time is right, we will not move away from nuclear weapons. Our long-term goal remains a world without them and we are doing all we can to counter proliferation, make progress on multilateral disarmament and build trust and confidence with nations across the globe.

In this spirit, as part of the value-for-money study, we reviewed carefully how we manage our deterrent programme, and concluded that we could take significant steps to demonstrate our commitment to disarmament by reducing the number of warheads from no more than 48 to no more than 40 carried on each deterrent submarine, consequently to reduce our overall stockpile of nuclear weapons from no more than 225 to no more than 180 in due course, and giving a stronger assurance to non-nuclear weapon states in compliance with the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. The value-for-money study delivered £3 billion of savings and deferrals over the next 10 years.

The coalition agreement reflected both parties' commitment to a minimum credible nuclear deterrent, but also the desire of the Liberal Democrats to make the case for alternatives. As Secretary of State for Defence, I am absolutely clear that a minimum nuclear deterrent based on the Trident missile delivery system and continuous at-sea deterrence is right for the United Kingdom and that it should be maintained, and that remains government policy. But to assist the Liberal Democrats in making the case for alternatives, I am also announcing today the initiation of a study to review the costs, feasibility and credibility of alternative systems and postures. The study will be led by officials in the Cabinet Office, overseen by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. A copy of the terms of reference of the study will be placed in the House of Commons Library.

As I have said, the Government have approved the initial gate for the nuclear deterrent successor programme. We have now agreed the broad outline design of the submarine, made some of the design choices, including the propulsion system and the common US/UK missile compartment, and developed the programme of work we need to be ready to start building the first submarine after 2016. We have also agreed the amount of material and parts that we will need to buy in advance of the main investment decision.

We expect the next phase of work to cost in the region of £3 billion. This is a significant sum of money, but I am confident that it represents value for

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money for the taxpayer as every aspect of the programme has been carefully reviewed by the MoD, the Treasury and Cabinet Office officials. It will fund the programme we need to conduct to make sure that we can bring the submarines into service on time. Overall, we assess that the submarine element of the programme will still be within the £11 billion to £14 billion estimate set out in the 2006 White Paper. These figures were quoted at 2006 prices and did not account for inflation; the equivalent today is £20 billion to £25 billion at outturn, but it is important the House recognises that there has been no cost growth in the programme since the House first considered the findings of the White Paper.

Between now and main gate we expect to spend around 15 per cent of the total value of the programme. This is entirely consistent with defence procurement guidance. The cost of long-lead items is expected to amount to around £500 million, but it is not true to say that large parts of the build programme will have been completed by main gate. Although we are ordering some of the specialist components, this does not mean that we are locked into any particular strategy before main gate in 2016.

I focus for a moment on the matter of nuclear safety. There has been some ill informed comment suggesting that our nuclear propulsion systems are not safe. That is simply not true. All our nuclear propulsion plants meet the stringent safety standards set out by the defence nuclear safety regulator and the Health and Safety Executive. However, given that we are developing a new design of submarine, it is right that we take advantage of the opportunity that affords to advance our policy of seeking continual improvement of nuclear safety. A new propulsion plant allows us to do this, while giving us the opportunity to improve the availability of propulsion systems and lower through-life support costs.

I have announced a major step forward in this programme. We have some of the finest submarine-builders in the world, and the approval of the next phase of work in the programme will secure the jobs of the highly skilled and professional workforce already involved in the programme, as well as providing further opportunities for the engineers and apprentices of the future. However, both my



department and industry have much to do to deliver the programme to ensure that we continue to maintain the sustainability of the submarine industry, that we improve performance and that we drive down costs through more efficient and inclusive working. I am confident that all sides will respond to that challenge.

This is a programme of great national importance so, today, I am placing in the Library of the House a report that sets out in detail the work that has been completed so far, the key decisions that I have presented to the House today, and the work required over the coming months and years.

I believe that the decisions we have taken on our nuclear deterrent programme in initial gate are the right decisions for the country and that, as a result, future generations will continue to benefit from the security we have been so fortunate to enjoy".

My Lords, I commend the Statement to the House.

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**4.17 pm**

**Lord Rosser:** My Lords, we on this side of the House associate ourselves with the condolences expressed by the noble Lord to the families and friends of Marine Nigel Mead, from 42 Commando Royal Marines. Tragically, we often find ourselves expressing condolences to families and friends of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of our country. I hope that the frequency with which we need to say these words does not appear to detract in any way from the heartfelt sincerity with which they are said from all sides of your Lordships' House. We also associate ourselves with the tribute which the Minister paid to those who have been wounded.

I thank the Minister for the early sight of the Statement and of the initial-gate parliamentary report. We endorse what he said in tribute to the crews and support staff who ensure the continued success of deterrent operations, and to their families.

In December 2006, the then Government published a White Paper entitled *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent*. The issue was debated in Parliament and a vote taken in favour of renewing the deterrent with a successor class of ballistic missile submarines. Since then, the Ministry of Defence has been undertaking work to assess potential submarine designs and propulsion systems. The Minister has now announced the Government's decision on an outline submarine design to be powered by a new-generation nuclear propulsion system, which will, in the words of the initial-gate parliamentary report,

"ensure our future nuclear armed submarines have the performance required to deliver our minimum credible nuclear deterrent out until the 2060s".

It is our view that, in today's world, as long as there are other countries with such capability, it is right that United Kingdom retains an independent nuclear deterrent.

I have already referred to the December 2006 White Paper. The previous Government met their commitment in that White Paper to reduce the number of operationally available warheads to fewer than 160, meaning that the United Kingdom has now reduced the UK nuclear arsenal by 75 per cent since the end of the Cold War. We thus welcome the Government's announcement in the strategic defence and security review to reduce operationally available warheads and to reduce the overall weapons stockpile. We will continue strongly to advocate the nuclear non-proliferation treaty since non-proliferation, disarmament and the right peacefully to use civil nuclear power provide the framework around which we should base our policy.

We face potential nuclear threats today from unilateral armament, specifically from North Korea, which we know has a nuclear capability, and Iran, which we know has nuclear ambitions. We cannot ignore the present possibility that other countries may join the list. The appropriate response to these threats is for the United Kingdom to remain committed to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and to be an active disarmer alongside our allies and other nuclear-weapon states. We want a world free of nuclear weapons and need a multilateral process to achieve that. Maintaining our own independent deterrent as part of the international

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non-proliferation efforts is therefore vital in enabling us to combat the threats we face at home and to sustaining regional and global security.

I should like to raise some specific points. In the Statement the Minister said,

"that a minimum nuclear deterrent based on the Trident missile delivery system and Continuous At Sea Deterrence is right for the UK and that it should be maintained, and that remains Government policy".

In the next breath, though, the Minister said:

"But to assist the Liberal Democrats in making the case for alternatives I am also announcing today the initiation of a study to review the costs, feasibility and credibility of alternative systems and postures".

First, what does "postures" mean? Secondly, since the Statement says that:

"Continuous At Sea Deterrence ... remains Government policy",

is that-in the light of the study now being made,

"to assist the Liberal Democrats"-

a government policy that is now under review? That is literally one sentence after it was confirmed. Or is the policy of continuous at-sea deterrence not something that is within the remit of the study just announced on "alternative systems and postures"?

Will the review look at international co-operation over nuclear policy, including deeper co-operation with France above and beyond the agreements made in the UK-France defence co-operation treaty? Will the review look at the Government's procurement policy in this Parliament for successor submarines? Will the study conclusions be published? What will be the cost of the review being



undertaken-by inference, I think it is not because the Secretary of State thinks it necessary but to "assist the Liberal Democrats"? Can the Minister give an assurance that the study will be evidence-based and in the interests of national security, and not be driven by the dynamic-or lack of it-between the coalition parties? The strategic defence and security review stated that the Government would reduce the costs of the successor programme by a total of £3.2 billion over the next 10 years. What part of that sum is savings and how much is deferrals? Can the Minister say whether that £3.2 billion takes into account the £1.2 billion to £1.4 billion additional costs of extending the life of the Vanguard-class submarines in service until 2028?

Finally, will the Minister say what the total cost of the replacement programme will be and over what period, and confirm what I think he said-that the figures are still in line with those indicated in the 2006 White Paper? We have made it clear that we will support the Government when we believe what they are doing is in the national interest. We therefore welcome the Statement made today on the minimum credible nuclear deterrent programme.

4.25 pm

**Lord Astor of Hever:** My Lords, I thank the noble Lord for his broad support for the Statement. I am grateful for the Opposition's continued support for the maintenance of Britain's nuclear deterrent and, indeed, the reduction in the number of warheads and in the stockpile.

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The noble Lord was very interested in the study that was announced today. I am sure that this is genuine interest rather than an attempt to drive a wedge which does not exist between the coalition, and I shall try to answer his questions as best I can. The purpose of the study is to help to fulfil the coalition's *Programme for Government*, which states:

"We will maintain Britain's nuclear deterrent, and have agreed that the renewal of Trident should be scrutinised to ensure value for money. Liberal Democrats will continue to make the case for alternatives".

This study will help the Liberal Democrats to make the case for alternatives.

The noble Lord asked whether the study will be published. The final document will be an internal Cabinet Office paper. Given the highly classified nature of the study, there are no plans to publish it but a decision will be taken nearer the time about publishing a statement of the conclusions. The work will be led by the National Security Secretariat in the Cabinet Office with oversight from the Minister for the Armed Forces. It will report jointly to the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister. Initial scoping work has already started taking place. The study will begin in earnest next month and we hope that it will take about 18 months to complete. → Nov 2012

The study involves no additional costs. All the costs will be met from within existing departmental budgets. So far as concerns the resources allocated, the study will have two staff within the Cabinet Office-a dedicated project manager and a lead official providing oversight of the work. It will commission relevant work from our government departments.

The noble Lord asked whether this was a concession to the Liberal Democrats. It is not. Agreement was reached on the scope of this work in March and the study simply represents the implementation of the coalition agreement.

The noble Lord asked me about international co-operation, particularly with France. We announced in the SDSR that we could minimise costs by co-operating with the French on our research programme and that we would develop a joint test facility. The United Kingdom and France have agreed to construct and operate jointly a new hydrodynamics facility at Valduc in France and a technology development centre at the Atomic Weapons Establishment in the United Kingdom. The facilities will be operational from 2015. This programme, named Teutates-my French is not perfect-will assist both countries in underwriting the safety and reliability of their respective nuclear weapons stockpiles in a secure environment and will improve expertise in countering nuclear terrorism. The facilities will enable each country to undertake hydrodynamic experiments in a secure environment and will enable us to model the performance and safety of the nuclear weapons in our stockpile without undertaking nuclear explosive tests. The programme will not involve the sharing of any operational nuclear deterrent capability, such as submarine patrols; nor will it involve the physical movement or transfer of nuclear warheads. This country and France will each retain an independent nuclear deterrent.

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The noble Lord asked me about the continuous at-sea deterrent. It is the policy of this Government to continue with the CASD. Obviously we cannot hold any Government to that after the 2015 elections, but it is our policy to continue with it. Our continuous at-sea deterrence posture removes the incentive to attack our country with nuclear weapons or our nuclear forces pre-emptively. Further, the assuredness of the capability provided by the submarine on patrol is a key component of the credibility of our deterrent. This enables us to keep a minimum deterrent. Obviously, this whole issue will be looked at in the review, but I am confident that it has been looked at so often in the past that we will come back to the CASD.

Finally, the noble Lord asked how the cost has increased from £14 billion to £25 billion. The costs have not increased. In the 2006 White Paper, we estimated the costs of the programme to be £11 billion to £14 billion at 2006-07 prices. This provided an understandable way of maintaining the costs at a constant price-base. We will continue to provide a comparison against the White Paper estimate. Our most recent estimate is that we will still deliver the programme within the White Paper estimate. However, MoD approvals are usually given on an outturn basis which includes inflation. This is how the £25 billion was arrived at.

I will look at *Hansard* and if I see that I have not answered all the noble Lord's questions, I will write to him.

**4.30 pm**

**Lord King of Bridgwater:** My Lords, the Minister will recognise that the Statement he has repeated today is a major one, not least on the cost issue. In the more dangerous world in which many of us feel we now exist, it must be right to ensure that we maintain our deterrent. However, it is noticeable that the £25 billion as the outturn cost of a submarine takes no account of any additional costs that may come from any upgrading of the missile in the D5 Trident system, which is being deferred until the 2040s, or of any work done on the warhead, which is being deferred until the 2030s. There is also reference to the infrastructure. I certainly hope that any design work will ensure that the extremely expensive infrastructure work in which we got involved at Faslane will as far as possible remain usable by any new submarine.

I have reservations as regards one area. I recognise the awesome power that is represented by the warheads that we are intending to maintain. I also recognise the different world in which we are



now living, compared with the Cold War period with its detailed targeting plans and requirements assessed against the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. Therefore, in this different world, I do not believe that there is not room for improvement and a further reduction in the number of warheads that we are seeking to maintain in our national stock.

I am pleased to read in the Statement that, echoing the call of President Obama, the long-term goal remains a world free of nuclear weapons—a world that we would like to see. Obviously, it is not a realistic possibility in the short term, but I believe that we could give even more of a lead to non-nuclear powers by showing our determination to maintain the absolute minimum number of warheads needed for our national defence.

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**Lord Astor of Hever:** My Lords, my noble friend makes a good point in recognising that we live in a totally different world. I agree with him that the policy of the coalition Government is the long-term goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. We will do all that we can to work towards that goal. We will constantly keep under review the number of warheads that we require. As my noble friend said, it is a dangerous world and I do not see our long-term goal happening in the near future.

**Lord Gilbert:** Perhaps I may make it absolutely clear at the beginning that there is at least one Member of this House who has no desire to live in a world without nuclear weapons—no, it's not funny. I believe that nuclear weapons are a deterrent and I never want to see another battle of the Somme, or of Stalingrad, or of Okinawa, or an invasion of any other country. I therefore want us to keep nuclear weapons and I welcome the Government's Statement as another step forward in the maintenance of our nuclear deterrent.

However, I found one thing in the Minister's Statement absolutely deplorable. He did not say a word about whether, in the context of the reduction in our existing stock, he has made any agreement with any other nuclear state that it should reduce its weapons stock in exchange for the reduction in ours, or whether he has attempted to. My experience is that we have, as my noble friend pointed out, reduced our weapons stock by something like 75 per cent and have not negotiated a single reduction in any other country's weapons stock, nor tried to do so. This Government, like the previous Government, are simply following the policies of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

**Lord Astor of Hever:** My Lords, I agree with the noble Lord that we live in a very dangerous world. That is why we are renewing our nuclear deterrent. I very much welcome the noble Lord's support for what we are doing. In response to his last question, obviously we will keep this under review and do all we can.

**Baroness Falkner of Margravine:** My Lords, I welcome the Statement and in particular the emphasis on nuclear disarmament, with concrete actions beginning here and now. It shows the strength of purpose in delivering on the coalition agreement. I am also extremely pleased to see the establishment of the Trident alternative study. Will my noble friend tell us whether external expertise will be involved? I recognise the need for high-level security clearance, because these are sensitive matters. However, I emphasise that the inclusion of experts would make the study far more valuable, despite the competence that exists in the Cabinet Office.

I turn to the issue of continuous at-sea deterrence. The noble Lord, Lord Rosser, was not clear about alternative nuclear postures. Will my noble friend confirm that point 3 of the terms of reference is quite clear? Are there alternative, non-CASD nuclear postures that would maintain credibility? Will

my noble friend give an assurance that, should the review conclude that there are alternatives, they will be seriously considered?

**Lord Astor of Hever:** My Lords, in answer to the noble Baroness's first question, I suggest that she has a word with her honourable friend the Member for

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North Devon, who will be keeping oversight on this. We will do all that we can to help him with this study. I am not sure who he and the Cabinet Office will call in to give advice.

We feel that submarines are the most cost-effective way of delivering a credible deterrent. Their invulnerability to detection makes it impossible for a potential aggressor to launch a pre-emptive strike. Trying to achieve this level of capability with other platforms is either not possible or would require an enormous number of platforms. Obviously if the review comes up with an alternative, it must be considered. The matter has been looked at over and over again and I am confident that there is no improvement on the submarine system.

**Lord Boyce:** My Lords, first I apologise to the Minister for not being here at the beginning of his Statement. I declare an interest as a non-executive director of Atkins. I welcome the government Statement. However, perhaps I may ask the Minister to confirm that we would not have a credible nuclear deterrent were it not for the people who man our submarines. As we are launching this study—which I happen to believe will be a complete waste of time—it is very important that there is no irresponsible talk or conjecture by responsible people about the importance of the role that our submarines currently carry out in exercising their duty, as they have done for the past 42 years, in order that the operational commitment of our sailors conducting their continuous at-sea deterrence on submarines is not undermined.

**Lord Astor of Hever:** My Lords, I agree entirely with the noble and gallant Lord. The Statement paid tribute to the sailors on submarines who are very often away from home for very long periods, and also to their families. I agree entirely with that.

**Lord Trefgarne:** My Lords, I had the privilege of serving in the Ministry of Defence for six years towards the end of the 1980s when the Polaris system was coming towards the end of its time. I think I must have been responsible for a great many of the second-order decisions relating to the start of the Trident programme. I was therefore pretty fully briefed on those issues at the time. That was, of course, a great many years ago. I must confess to having listened to the Statement made by my noble friend with some considerable concern. I have to be honest: my view is a lot nearer that of the noble Lord, Lord Gilbert, and other noble Lords who have spoken this afternoon. Will my noble friend now please answer one of the questions put by the noble Lord, Lord Gilbert, about how many other nuclear nations are reducing their warhead stock as we have announced today? In my day, the watchwords for disarmament were "balanced" and "verifiable". Do those words still apply?

**Lord Astor of Hever:** My Lords, this is being negotiated, as I understand it. Certainly the United States and Russia have reduced their number of warheads. As I said earlier, this is an area that we constantly want to improve, and we will do all we can.

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**The Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells:** My Lords, may I from these Benches express our condolences to the family of Marine Nigel Mead of 42 Commando and to those who have been injured in this most recent incident in Afghanistan. I welcome the Minister's long-term goal remaining a world without nuclear weapons. I note that much has been said about the present danger that we face in our world and our need to anticipate future dangers. In the light of that, what would the criteria be that would lead us to a position where we could safely say that we could disarm our nuclear deterrent with the long-term goal as its objective?

**Lord Astor of Hever:** My Lords, I fear that that is a very long way away. Although it is our goal, I cannot see it happening for a long time ahead.

**Lord Selkirk of Douglas:** Will my noble friend accept that for an effective nuclear deterrent to remain effective, it has to retain its credibility? Will he confirm that his Statement today has fulfilled that purpose in every respect?

**Lord Astor of Hever:** My Lords, I can confirm that.

**The Earl of Mar and Kellie:** My Lords, in the context of possible Scottish political independence, may I ask my noble friend two questions? First, is the life expectancy of the bases at Faslane and Coulport dependent on particular types of submarine and, secondly, has his department begun to consider the possibility of those two bases becoming a treaty port, as occurred at four Irish ports under the 1921 treaty with Ireland?

**Lord Astor of Hever:** My Lords, that is a hypothetical question. I cannot believe that the Scottish people would vote for independence, so I do not think this will arise.

**Lord Davies of Stamford:** My Lords, I apologise for coming in to the Statement a little late. First, I disagree very strongly with the suggestion by the noble Lord, Lord King, that we should further reduce the number of our warheads to what he calls the necessary minimum. The trouble with that is that you never know what the necessary minimum is. The world is far too unpredictable for that, and you therefore always need to have a reasonable margin of error. Without it, you do not have an effective deterrent.

I welcome the Government's general decision. It is the first time I have been able to say with enthusiasm that the Government have done something right in defence procurement since the election. I also welcome the decision to go for the new reactor, which has great advantages, as the noble Lord knows well. Can I put it to him that it is absolutely essential if we are going to maintain continuous at-sea deterrence that we continue to have four boats? Anybody who has looked at this closely, as I have going through it with all the experts many times, always ends up completely convinced that with fewer than four boats we will not have continuous at-sea deterrence, and without continuous at-sea deterrence-if you think you can take a holiday from deterrence at any one point-you do not have deterrence at all.

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**Lord Astor of Hever:** My Lords, I agree with the noble Lord, Lord Davies, on both issues. We require a reasonable margin of error, so to make continuous at-sea deterrence work we need four boats. Obviously this is an issue that the review will look at but, as I said earlier, I am confident that this will be what is agreed.

**Lord Marlesford:** My Lords, can my noble friend help me to understand the cost figures he gave? He quoted the figures from the 2006 White Paper as £11 billion to £14 billion. He said that those figures, quoted at 2006 prices, do not account for inflation and that the equivalent today is £20 billion to £25 billion at outturn. That is an increase of 78 to 82 per cent in cash terms. The inflation rate from January 2006 up to May 2011 is 22 per cent. How does the rate of 22 per cent tie in with the 80 per cent increase in the figures he has given?

**Lord Astor of Hever:** My Lords, the figures of £11 billion to £14 billion are quotations at 2006-07 prices, and therefore do not include inflation. This equates to £20 billion to £25 billion at outturn prices. It is a very complicated issue and I would be happy to write to my noble friend in order to set it out clearly.

**Lord Cormack:** My Lords, I listened with some concern to what my noble friend said about the alternative study. Can he give the House an absolute and unequivocal assurance that the policy will be in no sense on hold while that study is completed? Can he also give the House an assurance that if the study results in the sort of outcome that he forecasts and which I would forecast, our Liberal Democrat colleagues in the coalition will then withdraw their opposition to the nuclear deterrent?

**Lord Astor of Hever:** My Lords, I can confirm that nothing is on hold at the moment. We are spending money to make our policy good, but we are in a coalition. We have made an agreement with our coalition partners and we have to stick by it.

**Lord Ramsbotham:** My Lords, 2015 is an important year in terms of defence because it is the year during which we will have to examine the economic situation and see whether it is possible to continue with the intent set out in the announced SDSR. The costs of the new deterrent submarine announced or at least hinted at today are, of course, going to run on over that time. Can the Minister confirm that in the study, the question of the affordability of the future defence of the country will be taken into account, bearing in mind that we have now added a given which was not there before in quite such stark terms? I notice that that the study is going to take on only Liberal Democrats and not others. Perhaps it may be sensible to widen the people participating in this study to include more than merely Liberal Democrats.

**Lord Astor of Hever:** My Lords, this is what we have agreed and we will stick to the agreement. It will be as has been set out in the Statement. However, I take the point made by the noble Lord about the difficult financial environment in which we are working. However, we do have this in hand.

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**Lord Stirrup:** My Lords, does the Minister agree that the only sensible alternatives in this case are the minimum credible nuclear deterrent or no nuclear deterrent at all, not something that falls between the two? Credibility is in the eye of the beholder, so proposed savings around the margins of the nuclear deterrent programme -in themselves, they may be quite large sums but they are necessarily only a small percentage of the total programme-then put at risk the effectiveness of that programme. They do not represent value for money.

**Lord Astor of Hever:** My Lords, I thank the noble and gallant Lord for his question. He has used the word "credibility" which is very important. That is why I am so grateful for the support of the Opposition on this issue, because it strengthens enormously the credibility of our policy.



**Lord Jopling:** My Lords, the Minister has given an undertaking that the programme is not on hold until the committee he has announced comes up with its conclusions. But that is not quite the same thing as giving us an assurance that it is not proceeding at a slower pace than it otherwise would have done if that committee was not going to be set up.

**Lord Astor of Hever:** My Lords, the fact that the review committee has been set up is not going to affect in any way the amount of money that we will spend up until 2016.