



# Trident and Scottish independence



## Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

### How many nuclear bombs are in Scotland?

All British nuclear weapons are based on the Clyde. There are over 200 nuclear bombs in Scotland. Most of these are on Trident submarines which operate from Faslane, 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the centre of Glasgow. Spare bombs are stored nearby at Coulport on Loch Long.

### What are the UK government's plans for Trident?

In December 2006 Tony Blair decided that Trident should be replaced with a new nuclear weapon system. The Tory/LibDem Coalition government are implementing this project. The plan is that a new fleet of nuclear-armed submarines would enter service in 2028, a new design of nuclear bomb would be operational in the 2030s, and a new missile in 2040. They intend to base this new nuclear weapon system in Scotland until 2067.

### How much will this cost?

In 2007 the Ministry of Defence said building a replacement for Trident would cost £20 billion and the running costs would be £1.5 billion a year for

30 years. This does not include the huge costs of rebuilding the Aldermaston nuclear bomb factory and running the current Trident system. Total expenditure on the nuclear weapons' programme from 2013 to 2067 will be in the region of £100 billion, on current plans.

The amount spent each year on nuclear bombs has doubled from £1 billion in 2005 to £2 billion in 2012. It is due to rise towards £3 billion a year over the next decade.

### Do Scots want Trident?

No. A poll by TNS BMRB for Scottish CND in March 2013 found that 25% of those questioned were uncommitted, but of those who expressed a preference, 81% were opposed to Trident replacement, with only 19% supporting the plan. Amongst those who had not decided how they will vote in 2014, only 8% said they supported Trident replacement. A wide range of organisations in civic Scotland (including the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Catholic Church and the STUC) supports nuclear disarmament.



On 13 April 2013 people from across Scotland and beyond gathered in Glasgow to say "Scrap Trident"

## **What does the Scottish Parliament say about Trident?**

The Scottish Parliament is opposed to Trident and its replacement. In June 2007 the Scottish Parliament voted to oppose the UK government's plan to replace Trident. On 20 March 2013 the Scottish Parliament agreed a motion which "calls on the UK Government to acknowledge the opposition of the Scottish Parliament to nuclear weapons and to the presence of Trident in Scotland, and further calls on the UK Government to explore options for the removal of Trident ahead of the so-called main gate decision in 2016".

## **What do "Yes Scotland" and "Better Together" say about Trident?**

The Yes Scotland campaign argues that one advantage of independence is that Scotland would no longer have to waste millions of pounds every year on nuclear weapons.

When the Scottish Parliament was debating nuclear weapons, in March 2013, the Better Together campaign circulated a briefing to MSPs which shows that Better Together support Trident and Trident replacement. The briefing describes Trident as "the ultimate guarantee of our national security".

A consultation by the STUC in 2012 concluded with a question to the Better Together campaign – "Given that Scottish trade unionists appear to strongly support the removal of Trident, the question of the 'Better Together' parties is how else can Scotland and the UK be freed of Trident other than through a vote for independence?"

## **Would Scottish independence make any difference?**

Yes. A sovereign Scottish government will have the right to insist that nuclear bombs must be removed as swiftly as possible. The SNP have said that the constitution of an independent Scotland should include an ban on nuclear weapons. An independent Scotland would be expected to sign the nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty as a Non Nuclear Weapon State.

**Because there is no viable alternative site for Trident, Scottish independence would result in there being no nuclear weapons in Britain. This would be welcomed by all those around the world who seek disarmament, and it could encourage other countries to follow suit.**



*Scottish Parliament*

## **Can Trident be moved to England or Wales?**

No. In 1963 the government considered a number of possible sites for its nuclear-armed submarines. The record of these discussions shows that there are major problems with all of the possible options in England and Wales. The existing submarine base at Devonport is unsuitable because it is in the middle of a city of 250,000 people. Building a new submarine base and a new nuclear bomb depot on a Greenfield site would be hugely controversial and expensive. A Greenfield site was ruled out in 1981 as unrealistic. A detailed study of the options, by Scottish CND, concluded that none of them are really viable.

It took the Ministry of Defence 14 years to adapt the existing bases at Faslane and Coulport for Trident. In the unlikely event that a site could be found, it would take at least 20 years before Trident could be moved.

## **Could Trident be based abroad?**

No. In 1981 the Thatcher government considered and rejected the idea of basing the British Trident fleet in the United States. This would make the British force transparently dependent on American support. It would raise issues about compliance with the nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty. The French nuclear submarine base in Brittany is too small to accommodate Trident. The UK government have admitted that basing Trident in the US or France was unlikely to be feasible.

## **What is Scottish CND's view on independence?**

At its annual conference in November 2012 the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament agreed to support Yes Scotland as the most immediate and effective way of getting rid of Trident. In doing so, the conference recognised that individual members have loyalty to a range of political parties.

## **Would an independent Scotland ban nuclear weapons?**

The SNP are drafting a model constitution for an independent Scotland. In March 2013 the SNP conference agreed that this constitution will include an explicit ban on nuclear weapons. The Philippines and Austria have constitutions which prohibit nuclear weapons. There are large parts of the world, encompassing 138 of the world's 193 countries, which are designated as Nuclear-Weapons Free Zones. Scotland could join them.

## **How long will it take to disarm Trident?**

If Scotland was independent, Trident could be deactivated within 7 days, preventing any of the missiles from being launched. Within 2 years all nuclear bombs could be removed from Scotland. After a further 2 years, all the bombs could be dismantled. This timetable was published by Scottish CND in "Disarming Trident", June 2012. It has been described as realistic by senior American nuclear weapons' experts, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Affairs Committee in the House of Commons.

## **What would be the international response to a nuclear-weapons free independent Scotland?**

In March 2013 delegates from 132 nations met in Oslo to discuss the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons. The conference was boycotted by the UK, US, Russia, France and China. But this was the start of a new initiative to tackle the global problem of nuclear weapons. These nations would welcome a move to make Scotland free of nuclear weapons. They would object to any attempt by London to bully, coerce or bribe Scotland into retaining Trident.



*If Scotland was independent, all nuclear weapons could be removed within two years.*

## **Who has questioned the plan to replace Trident?**

The current plan for Trident replacement has been criticised, not just by CND, but by a wide range of unusual suspects. This includes Lord Browne, who proposed the project when he was Tony Blair's defence minister. Lord Browne said Britain should abandon the practice of keeping one submarine at sea (Continuous At Sea Deterrence) which lies at the heart of the Trident programme. He argued that "[nuclear weapons] offer less of an insurance policy against the challenges we will face in the future. .... Are we telling the countries of the rest of the world that we cannot feel secure without nuclear weapons on continuous at sea deployment while at the same time telling the vast majority of them that they must forgo indefinitely any nuclear option for their own security?" Writing in the Telegraph, Lord Browne said that nuclear deterrence is "decreasingly effective" and "increasingly risky".

Lord King, Margaret Thatcher's Defence Minister, supported Browne, saying "It is certainly not obvious to me that there is any longer a need for a major nuclear system based on 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week availability". He argued that contributing to peacekeeping forces would be a more effective way for Britain to retain its place in the world, rather than through nuclear weapons.

Former Tory Defence Minister, Michael Portillo, was asked "Should Trident be renewed?" He replied "No, I think it is all nonsense". In response to the question "Should we have any kind of nuclear deterrent?" Portillo said, "No, it's completely past its sell by date. It's neither independent, because we couldn't possibly use it without the Americans, neither is it any sort of deterrent ... It's a tremendous waste of money. It's done entirely for reasons of national prestige and at the margins it is proliferation".

Former Liberal Democrat armed forces minister Nick Harvey said, "Continuous at-sea deterrence is, it must be said, complete insanity ... The costs of continuous at-sea deterrence are also extreme – a vast financial premium." Danny Alexander, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, has said that the current plan for a like-for-like replacement for Trident is not affordable. Defence Minister Philip Hammond has argued that welfare expenditure should be cut to sustain the MOD's budget. In response Vince Cable, the Liberal Democrat Minister, said that it is Trident that should be cut, not welfare benefits.



## What is Trident for?

In October 2012 Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg revealed that the objective of Trident has remained unchanged since the Cold War. It is “to flatten Moscow at the press of a button”. In February 2013 Scottish CND published a report which showed that if the missiles on one submarine were fired at the most likely targets, in and around Moscow, then there would be 5.4 million fatalities in the short-term. This is equivalent to the population of Scotland.

## Is Trident British?

Trident is an American system. The missiles are leased from the US Navy. All of the equipment required to launch the missiles, and the computer software to target them, is purchased from the United States. Britain only holds 12 months supply of spare parts. The nuclear bombs are built in Britain, but they contain key components which are purchased from the United States. The proposed replacement for Trident would also be bought from America.

## What about Iran and North Korea?

There is a danger that more countries in the world, like Iran, might try to acquire nuclear bombs. But Britain’s possession of these weapons makes this more, not less likely. If Britain gave up its nuclear bombs, this would encourage other countries to do the same. We should be working towards a situation where it is unacceptable for any country to have nuclear bombs. Today Britain is one of the few nations in the world which has these weapons. We should join the far larger number who can live safely without them. Scotland can take the lead in bringing this about.

## How many jobs in Scotland depend on Trident?

In October 2012 the Ministry of Defence said, in response to a Freedom of Information request from Scottish CND, that there were 520 jobs at Faslane and Coulport that rely directly on the Trident programme. Most of Trident jobs are in England - at Aldermaston and Burghfield (where nuclear bombs are built), at Barrow (where submarines are built), and at Devonport (which refits submarines).

Trident is a very inefficient way to create jobs. For example, the government are spending £350 million a year to sustain 1,200 jobs in the Trident replacement programme. This amounts to almost £300,000 per job per year. If the same taxpayers’ money was used for anything else, far more jobs would be created. Continuing to spend billions on Trident is depriving people of the large number of jobs that would be created if the same money was reallocated.



## What you can do

Join the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: [banthebomb.org](http://banthebomb.org)

Add your pin to the online map to say “no nuclear weapons here!” [naenuclear.org](http://naenuclear.org)

Tell your MPs and MSPs what you think

Take part in local and national anti-nuclear activities. Details on [banthebomb.org](http://banthebomb.org)

## Further reading

Scottish CND has produced three reports: “Disarming Trident” (June 2012), “If Britain fired Trident” (February 2013) and “Trident: Nowhere to Go” (March 2013). These are available at [banthebomb.org](http://banthebomb.org) (select publications/reports) or from the Scottish CND office.

## Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

77 Southpark Avenue, Glasgow, G12 8LE

0141 357 1529 [scnd@banthebomb.org](mailto:scnd@banthebomb.org)

Twitter: @ScottishCND Facebook: Scottish CND

