

Ainslie Archive

A Guide to Themes and Content

Archive Guide to Themes and Content

The Ainslie Archive contains a rich variety of documents on nuclear weapons and related issues spanning several decades. This user guide provides a thematic introduction to the archive to help readers navigate the main topics John Ainslie gathered information on. For each of the eleven areas below we have provided a selection of articles and documents to stimulate reader's interest in the many other items in the archive.

- **Themes**

1. **Top Secret**
2. **Scotland**
3. **Replacing Trident**
4. **The UK/US special nuclear relationship**
5. **Submarines**
6. **Picture files**
7. **Russia / the Soviet Union and the Cold War**
8. **Civil Defence**
9. **Activism and protest**
10. **Reports**
11. **Safety, health, environment**

1. Top Secret

- **Description**

The Ainslie Archive contains numerous, once top secret and since declassified, UK Government files on nuclear weapons from the National Archive. The files cover the crucial Cold War period between the 1960s and 1980s when the UK took key decisions to develop the Polaris and then the Trident nuclear weapon systems. In these documents high level decision makers in London and Washington discuss issues including: nuclear deterrence strategy, the procurement and exchange of nuclear materials and technology, military requirements for nuclear strikes (including the development of the Chevaline programme), relations between the UK and UA, and nuclear testing.

- **Explore Top Secret files**

- US Government, Secretary of State, '[Nuclear Consultation With The British,](#)' December 1970
- US Secretary of State, Telegram, Top Secret, '[Nuclear consultation with UK and use of Holy Loch by FMBS Poseidon Equipped,](#)' 5 May 1971
- UK Ministry of Defence, From Commodore JR Hill, Top Secret, '[Criteria for Deterrence,](#)' 21 February 1978
- UK Ministry of Defence, First Sea Lord, Top Secret, '[The Nuclear Deterrent,](#)' 25 May 1978
- UK Government, 'Secret UK Eyes Only, Prime Minister, British Nuclear Test Programme,' October 1978 [Part 1](#) / [Part 2](#) / [Part 3](#)
- UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, David Owen, '[Future of the British Deterrent, Top Secret,](#)' 19 December 1978
- UK Ministry of Defence, SAT Warren, '[UK SSBN PROGRAMME – SUCCESSOR SYSTEMS,](#)' April 1979
- UK Ministry of Defence, Sir John Hunt, Cabinet Office, '[The Strategic Deterrent,](#)' October 1979

- UK Government, Top Secret, From British Naval Attache Washington, [‘Letter from America, Public Opinion / Diego Garcia / Defence Budget,’](#) 10 December 1979
- UK Ministry of Defence, Michael Quinlan, [‘Polaris Replacement, Britain’s Strategic Nuclear Force: The Choice of a System to Succeed Polaris,’](#) 9 May 1980

2. Scotland

- **Description**

The archive contains many files on how the basing of UK and US nuclear-armed submarines in Scotland affected different elements of society. These range from considerations of safety, health and the environment to local and regional politics. The impact of nuclear submarine accidents and basing on local communities is documented in news articles, official reports and studies by pressure groups. For example, there are several documents on the case of the Antares fishing boat tragedy, which was the source of the recent BBC drama ‘Vigil’. There are also numerous pamphlets, petitions and publications from Scottish peace and disarmament groups, including Scottish CND.

- **Explore Scotland files**

- The Scotsman, [‘Scotland the official plans for war,’](#) 2 February 1981
- Daily Record, John Pilger, [‘The War Game,’](#) 5 March 1981
- Cremer and Warner, [‘An Environmental Impact Assessment, Royal Naval Armaments Depot Coulport, Trident Weapon System, Part Two, Specific report on hazard, Strathclyde Regional Council,’](#) May 1983
- Sunday Mail, [‘Four Poseidon subs dock in the Holy Loch at once,’](#) 15 April 1984
- East Central Scotland Planning Assumptions, [‘Civil Defence Planning Assumptions in Central Scotland,’](#) October 1989
- Glasgow Herald, Iain Gray, [‘Antares lifted to the surface,’](#) 11 December 1990
- Evening Times, [‘Give sub refits to Scots,’](#) no date
- Scottish CND, [‘Setting the Agenda for a Scottish Defence Diversification Agency,’](#) no date
- Scotland’s Secret Bunker, [‘Official Souvenir Guide to Scotland’s Best Kept Secret,’](#) no date
- Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, [‘So you think you can save 38.6 million people from sudden death?’](#) no date

3. Replacing Trident

- **Description**

The UK parliament agreed to replace the Trident nuclear weapons system in a series of votes between 2006 and 2016. The debate about whether the UK should rearm or disarm came at a time of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, with Prime Minister Tony Blair closely aligning the UK with US President George W. Bush’s military interventions. New Labour’s commitment to nuclear possession and participation in foreign wars were (and remain) highly controversial, leading to intense debate and public protest. The archive contains documents detailing the many issues involved in the Trident replacement decision, including cost, morality, legality, and democracy.

- **Explore Replacing Trident files**

- National Audit Office, MOD and Property Services Agency, [‘Control and Management of the Trident Programme,’](#) 1 July 1987
- Greenpeace, Nuclear free seas campaign, [‘The Rising Cost of Trident,’](#) April 1992

- Evening Times, '[Trident war of words](#)', 19 August 1993
- Tridenting it handbook, '[An open guide to Trident Ploughshares](#)', January 2001
- Greenpeace, '[Why Britain Should Stop Deploying Trident](#)', March 2006
- Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament '[What next for Aldermaston, Report](#),' June 2006.
- John Ainslie, Scottish CND, '[Trident Replacement Update](#),' 15 August 2007
- UK MOD FCO, '[The Future of the UK's Nuclear Deterrent, Fact Sheet](#),' December 2006
- The Guardian, Rob Edwards, '[Secret files from 70s reveal Trident strike needed "to kill 10m Russians"](#),' 26 December 2010.
- AWRE, '[Atomic Weapons Research Establishment](#),' no date

4. The UK/US special nuclear relationship

- **Description**

In his work, John Ainslie explored how the UK relies on US technological support and expertise to maintain its status as a nuclear power. The archive contains information on several of the key documents underpinning the special nuclear relationship, including the Polaris Sales Agreement and the Mutual Defence Agreement (MDA). The MDA is a formal treaty between the UK and US which was signed in 1958 and has been amended a number of times. Most recently the MDA has been renewed on a regular ten-year cycle which has allowed arrangements for the transfer of special nuclear materials and non-nuclear components of nuclear weapons. The MDA was last renewed in 2014 when it was extended until December 2024. Ainslie argued that British governments have pushed renewal of the Agreement through with minimal Parliamentary oversight, rather than allowing debate and discussion on the aims and consequences of renewing the treaty.

- **Explore US / UK nuclear relationship files**

- UK Government, '[Top Secret Atomic, Fissile and Other Materials, Barter Option, and Financial Arrangements](#),' 21 July 1961
- Greenpeace, '[The Special Relationship, UK Trident Programme](#),' May 1994
- Science and Global Security, John Harvey, '[Nuclear weapons safety the case of Trident](#),' 1994
- General Dynamics, '[Direct messaging system](#),' 18 April 2004
- Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, John Ainslie, '[Mutual Defence Agreement](#),' 24th June 2004
- UK Ministry of Defence, '[Joint US UK NATO Warfare Planning](#),' 2004
- US Government, Department of Energy, '[Transfers of material to and from the UK, Mutual Defense Agreement](#),' 26 August 2005
- The White House, Tony Blair, George W Bush, '[Modernizing Trident](#),' 7 December 2006
- US Department of Defence, Nuclear Operations and Targeting, '[Guidance for the sanitization and distribution of information pertaining to nuclear command and control to Supreme HQ Allied Powers Europe](#),' 12 August 2008
- Greenpeace, Brown and Root, '[The Track Record](#),' no date
- UK Government, '[Secret, UK / US Mutual Defence Agreement](#),' no date
- John Ainslie, UK-US 1958 Mutual Defence Agreement, '[Joint Working Groups, JOWOG](#),' no date

5. Submarines

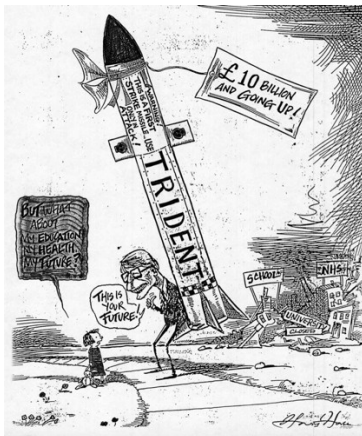
- **Description**

The UK first deployed nuclear armed submarines in 1968 and has significantly depended on US support to develop and maintain its fleet ever since. From 1998 the UK's nuclear weapon system has solely been submarine-based. The technical complexity of building (and safely dismantling) nuclear powered submarines raises far-reaching technical, cost and safety challenges for the UK. The archive contains numerous documents detailing the issues involved with keeping the UK in the nuclear submarine production and deployment business. Topics covered include: nuclear reactor problems; decommissioning; radiation leaks; worker safety; and the many other concerns of people living near submarine bases. The archive files thus cover a range of UK locations, including the Faslane and Clyde Naval Bases in Scotland, and the Devonport Naval Base in Southern England.

- **Explore Submarine files**

- UK MOD, [‘Beneath the Waves, The Royal Navy’s Submarine Service,’](#) April 1985
- Neptune papers, [‘Naval Accidents 1945-1988,’](#) William Arkin, June 1989
- William Peden, [‘Berths for Nuclear Powered Submarines in Scotland A Critique of Public Safety Schemes, Nuclear Transport Information Group,’](#) 1990
- Large and Associates, [‘Reactor System Defects in Royal Navy Nuclear Powered Submarines,’](#) Greenpeace, 4 December 1990
- Greenpeace, [‘Bring Polaris Home,’](#) May 1991
- Scotsman, [‘Secret cabinet papers defects submarines,’](#) 17 March 1997
- Southampton Coalition Against Nuclear Ships, [‘Letter to the Editor, Z berth,’](#) 26 June 2000
- UK Government / Ministry of Defence, [‘Declassified, Annex A to EC-14-08-02-01-04: Successor Submarine Project – Review Note,’](#) 24 November 2009
- Cogent, [‘Assurance Skills for Nuclear Defence,’](#) August 2011
- Clydescope, [‘A Splendid day out,’](#) no date

6. Picture files





FASLANE - SCOTLAND'S CHERNOBYL



- **Description**

The archive contains a number of striking images relating to Britain's experience of the nuclear age. Photography, graphic design, cartoons, maps and graphs were used by pro and anti-nuclear voices to explain the subject and argue their case. Communicating nuclear weapons issues has its own set of challenges, both because of the secrecy involved, the varying level of public awareness and interest, and the tendency to revert to clichéd images of missiles, submarines and explosions. In addition, the incredible power of modern nuclear weapons means that it is increasingly difficult to meaningfully convey the impact that even a limited nuclear war would have on people and society.

- **Explore Picture files**

- Glasgow Herald, Ian Sutherland, ['Last line of defence after the holocaust?'](#) 5 September 1989
- Glasgow Herald, Iain Gray, ['Antares lifted to the surface.'](#) 11 December 1990
- Greenpeace, ['The True Cost of Trident.'](#) 1992
- Poster, Scottish CND, ['Faslane Scotland's Chernobyl.'](#) no date
- Scottish CND, ['Hiroshima, Never Again.'](#) no date
- Trident cartoon, ['John Major, £10 billion and going up.'](#) no date
- Celtic League, ['End this carnage.'](#) no date

- Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, ['CND Petition: Andrew Ward, Civil Defence? photo.'](#) no date

7. Russia / the Soviet Union and the Cold War

- **Description**

The archive shows John Ainslie's close interest in the Cold War nuclear standoff between East and West. Several documents detail, in both Russian and English, the sites and infrastructure comprising Russia's nuclear weapons system. Ainslie's interest in this area stemmed from the fact that the UK's nuclear weapons were officially justified as being essential to deter the Soviet Union and, subsequently, Russia. Ainslie was also interested in the strategy and politics of the Russian bomb, leading him to collect news stories about the technical and resource challenges Russia's military faced at the end of the Cold War. The archive also includes a number of documents on the Kursk submarine tragedy, which led to 118 Russian naval personnel losing their lives in 2000.

- **Explore Russia files**

- Duncan Campbell, New Statesman, [‘Zircon Why MPs didn’t want to know,’](#) 11 December 1987
- Large and Associates, [‘The Sinking of the Soviet Mike Class Nuclear Powered Submarine,’](#) 12 April 1989
- Michael Quinlan, [‘Nuclear Weapons and the Abolition of War,’](#) April 1991
- Greenpeace Russia, [‘Facts and Problems related to dumping of radioactive waste in the seas surrounding the territory of the Russian Federation,’](#) April 1993
- Rolls Royce, [‘The Dramatic History of Soviet Nuclear Submarines,’](#) 6 September 1993
- E.V. Miasnikov, [‘The Future of Russia’s Strategic Nuclear Forces,’](#) 1995
- Sunday Herald, [‘Crisis exposes dire state of Russian fleet,’](#) 15 August 2000
- Daily Express, [‘Kursk was hit by US sub claim Russians,’](#) 5 September 2000
- Large & Associates Consulting Engineers, John Large, [‘Forensic Assessments of the Nuclear Propulsion Plants of the Submarines HMS Tireless and RF Northern Fleet Kursk,’](#) 2001
- Stephen Twigg and Len Scott, [‘The Other Missiles of October: The THOR IRBMs and the Cuban Missile Crisis,’](#) 22 February 2004
- WIRED Magazine, Nicholas Thompson, [‘Inside the Apocalyptic Soviet Doomsday Machine,’](#) 21 September 2009

8. Civil Defence

- **Description**

The threat of nuclear war was particularly high during the early 1980s, causing widespread public fear and an upsurge in protest against the bomb. In response, governments promoted civil defence measures, ostensibly to protect their population from nuclear strikes. The archive contains material concerning what would happen in the UK after the bomb dropped, including files on nuclear bunkers, emergency exercises and national and local plans for government. In response to such official plans, peace campaigners highlighted the futility of preparing for nuclear war and called for disarmament and diplomacy to lift the nuclear shadow.

- **Explore Civil Defence files**

- UK Government, [‘Police war duties manual,’](#) 1976
- Home Office, [‘Civil Defence, Why we need it,’](#) November 1981
- UK Home Office, [‘Domestic Nuclear Shelters,’](#) 1981
- Glasgow Herald, [‘Region reveals secrets of doomsday mansion,’](#) 3 October 1983
- Nature, [‘Double talk on civil defence,’](#) 6 October 1983
- Architects Journal, [‘Civil Offence,’](#) 30 July 1986
- Newspaper article, [‘Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in ‘Wargame’ demo,’](#) April 1986
- Observer Scotland, [‘Commons quiz on nuclear bunkers,’](#) 23 April 1989
- Keith Mothersson, [‘Form Geneva Circles for civilian defence,’](#) no date
- Ian Danson, [‘Chapter 20: Survival,’](#) no date

9. Activism and protest

- **Description**

Ever since the UK became a nuclear power in the 1950s there has been vibrant and vocal opposition to nuclear weapons from activists and campaigners. The archive contains material showing the strength of the movement against the bomb, documenting protests, strategy meetings, campaigning and parliamentary lobbying efforts to raise public awareness and political action in support of disarmament. Prominent in the archive are materials produced by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament—primarily from Scotland—but also the UK, as well as peace groups based in the US and beyond.

- **Explore Activism and protest files**

- Greenpeace, Nuclear free seas, '[Naval nuclear bases the costs to the Clyde](#)', July 1988
- CND Frontlines, '[New nuclear incidents spark protests](#)', July 1989
- William Peden, Speech to Cost of Trident conference, '[How widespread would contamination from a nuclear reactor accident be](#),' 10 June 1992
- Bob Aldridge, Pacific Life Research Center, '[Trident Resister's Handbook](#),' 1 January 1993
- Rae Street, People to people, '[Trident Resisters Handbook updates](#),' 6 December 1996
- Abolition 2000, International action against nuclear weapons, '[Citizens war crimes inspections action booklet](#),' September 1998
- Southampton Coalition Against Nuclear Ships, '[Letter to the Editor, Z berth](#),' 26 June 2000
- Scottish CND, Press Release, '[Legal moves to stop nuclear submarines](#),' 7 November 2000
- CND Briefing, No Trident Replacement, '[No Trident Replacement, No new nuclear weapons, No new nuclear arms race](#),' September 2006
- Faslane Peace Camp, '[Stop Trident](#),' no date

10. Reports

- **Description**

The UK has, for several decades, boasted a strong community of researchers and experts focused on exploring nuclear issues at a local, regional, national and international level. The archive contains a variety of governmental and non-governmental reports going back to the 1950s, which study legal, political and technical aspects of nuclear weapons. Topics of these studies include: arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation; the costs and resources involved in possessing nuclear weapons; the safety, health and environmental issues involved in nuclear weapons development and deployment; the social and environmental effects of nuclear detonation. Many of these documents, which have both historical value and provide important analysis for today, are not available elsewhere online.

- **Explore Report files**

- UK Ministry of Defence, '[Defence Outline of Future Policy](#),' April 1957
- Asides, David Greenwood, '[The Trident Programme](#),' June 1982
- Alternative Employment Study Group, '[Polaris and Trident Myths and Realities of Employment](#),' April 1985
- Alternative Employment Study Group, '[Future Imperfect Trident and the Clyde](#),' February 1988
- Bob Aldridge, Pacific Life Research Center, '[Trident Resister's Handbook](#),' 1 January 1993

- Network demilitarised, Wiltshire County Council, [‘The Conversion of Military Sites,’](#) May 1994
- Ian Goudie, [‘Arms Conversion Project, Diversification 1995,’](#) 1995
- CND, Eddie Goncalves, [‘Blueprint for a nuclear weapon free world,’](#) August 1996
- Tridenting it handbook, [‘An open guide to Trident Ploughshares,’](#) January 2001
- Abolition 2000, Blackaby Papers, [‘Nuclear weapons historical perspectives and modern dangers,’](#) April 2012
- AWRE, [‘Atomic Weapons Research Establishment,’](#) no date
- Nukewatch and nuclear warhead convoys, [‘It costs millions it kills millions,’](#) no date

11. Safety, health, environment

- **Description**

The costs and risks of nuclear weapons possession for the UK and the world are many and various. The most obvious danger the bomb presents is from nuclear detonation, which would have a devastating impact on life from blast, heat and radiation effects. In addition to the harms posed by nuclear use, John Ainslie was concerned with the impact that nuclear possession had for citizens of states living with the bomb. The archive therefore contains files relating to issues including: nuclear reactors on submarines; radiation leaks from nuclear submarines; nuclear testing; public and worker safety and medical provisions.

- **Explore Safety, Health and Environment files**

- Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, [‘Hard Luck report pack,’](#) 1982
- The Independent, [‘Defects hit nuclear fleet,’](#) 11 May 1991
- Glasgow Herald, [‘Polaris safety comes under fire,’](#) 2 June 1992
- Scottish CND, [‘Safety of Nuclear Operations, Letter to RNAD Coulport,’](#) 24 August 1992
- Helensburgh Advertiser, [‘Base goes public on safety issues,’](#) 25 June 1993
- Evening Times, [‘We need pills now nuclear tragedy,’](#) 16 October 1997
- Glasgow Herald, [‘Workers were exposed to radiation,’](#) 26 November 1998
- UK Ministry of Defence, [‘Nuclear Weapon Safety Criteria,’](#) March 2005
- William Peden, [‘An Analysis of Royal Navy Public Safety Schemes,’](#) no date
- National Radiological Protection Board, [‘Radiation protection, poster / graph,’](#) no date