NO to Trident Replacement
YES to a Nuclear Weapons Convention

Postponement of Trident Initial Gate? • Afghanistan: the unwinnable war
ICAN ban the bomb • Obituaries • Wobbling on Trident • Letter from America • CND groups: Hiroshima Day 2009 • Accident risks at Faslane
Confusing signals on Trident

The government is sending mixed signals on Trident replacement. In July journalists were briefed that the decision on the ‘Initial Gate’ for the Trident project (the start of the detailed design phase) had been postponed from September this year to after the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in May 2010. Since then MoD officials have denied that there has been any change in the timetable.

This could a deliberate ploy to keep us all guessing. But more likely it suggests deep divisions on Trident within the Brown government. Either way the mixed messages signal the first sign of movement or indecision by the Government on the issue of Trident replacement. There is little doubt that the economic crisis has been concentrating the minds of the government and the MoD. Trident is increasingly regarded as unaffordable. And if such a delay were confirmed, it is no small victory for the peace movement and the 160 MPs who demanded postponement of the Initial gate decision and a full parliamentary debate. Delaying the project would be, of course, a welcome start, but it needs to be followed up by cancelling the programme altogether.

Afghanistan: the unwinnable war

Meanwhile Britain’s foreign policy lurches from crisis to crisis. Our troops have recently made an inglorious exit from Iraq and now find themselves increasingly bogged down in Afghanistan. President Obama has committed to sending another 14,000 US troops and wants Britain to do likewise. There are already almost 9,000 UK troops in Helmand province who maintain the illusion of dominance from a series of fortified outposts. With every increase in UK and US troop numbers the Taliban gets stronger, the war spreads and the casualty numbers increase. The recent election in that country should give further cause for concern. There have been thousands of complaints about ballot box stuffing and electoral register fraud. Our troops are supporting a corrupt government which denies basic human rights and lacks any democratic legitimacy.

After 8 years of war the security situation in Afghanistan is worse than ever. Sending more troops will not change that. Nor will the provision of better armoured vehicles, more helicopters or more heavy lift capacity. With virtually no reconstruction or statebuilding going on, rocket attacks from unmanned aerial vehicles and high altitude bombers are not likely to change minds on the ground. Moreover, recent opinion polls show that the war is increasingly unpopular in Britain and the US. And the resignation of defence aide Eric Joyce over UK policy in Afghanistan, is a sign of haemorrhaging support for the war within Labour ranks.

Foreign troops are the problem not the solution. As in Iraq, our intervention has been an unmitigated disaster from the beginning with massive destruction and loss of life. We owe it to the Afghan people and our own troops to call a halt to this useless slaughter, withdraw our forces and arrange for post-war reparations to help rebuild what we destroyed.

Hard choices

The war in Afghanistan illustrates exactly what is wrong with UK foreign and defence policy. Our armed forces are increasingly being restructured and re-equipped with every increase in US and UK troop numbers the Taliban gets stronger

‘With every increase in US and UK troop numbers the Taliban gets stronger’
A report from the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has shown that Britain cannot afford much of the defence equipment it plans to buy. It calls for slashing the defence procurement programme by up to £24 billion. The report questions all the 'big ticket' items including the 2 huge aircraft carriers, the joint strike aircraft (F-35) that are intended to fly from them, the six Type-45 destroyers, and the seven Astute-class submarines. The MoD's wish list items have one thing in common. They are all about fighting wars overseas, not about defending Britain. The government has announced a review of its defence policy and will publish a Green Paper on this in early 2010. There will also be a Strategic Defence Review early in the next parliament.

Strangely, it intends to exclude from the government review and the Green paper the most expensive item on its defence wish-list - the Trident Replacement programme. And yet this is the item about which there has been most controversy in recent months.

Intense lobbying campaign

In opinion poll after opinion poll, we are now the clear majority. After years of campaigning 'in the wilderness', we represent the hopes and aspirations of today's generation for a peaceful future. Our job now is to make that majority count. And since the next crop of Tory MPs could be more Thatcherite than the last, we may not have time on our side.

We need to ensure an intense lobbying campaign of sitting MPs and candidates, bombarding them with letters from constituents, surgery visits and well argued papers highlighting the changing international climate and, above all, the cost of Trident. In the next decade we could be spending around £3 billion a year on Trident just at the time when debt repayments and budgets for health, education and welfare are under greatest pressure. We will be buying use-
Here in Scotland we find ourselves in the strange position of being citizens of a country where the Government, churches, trade unions and the majority of its people are implacably opposed to nuclear weapons, and yet we host all the UK’s nuclear arsenal. The UK government reserves control over legislation relating to national defence, or control of weapons of mass destruction. What does that mean, and what can we do? You will find a leaflet included in your magazine about ICAN, which sets out the case for a Nuclear Weapons Convention, which would outlaw these weapons anywhere on the planet.

His Excellency Judge Christopher Weeramantry, who was Vice President of the International Court of Justice in 1996, earlier this year in Scotland stated:

“When Jenghiz Khan was engaged on his blood-drenched career of world conquest, he is said to have proclaimed a policy that any cities which defied him would be razed to the ground with not a hut standing and not a whimper of life remaining. Not even a dog or mouse would survive; leave alone the humans who would be exterminated with no exceptions. The powerful nations, even in the early 20th century liked to describe themselves in international documents as ‘civilized nations’. Yet the successors of these nations are prepared, even in the 21st century to manufacture, stockpile and undertake research on weapons which can in fact outdo such primitive brutality. Indeed they claim the right to use a weapon that can exterminate all life in the target city down to the last microbe. Its use would automatically pollute the environment not only of the victim state but of all surrounding neutral states and cause damage that lasts for over twenty thousand years. ... One of the strange contradictions of our contemporary world is that there are nation states pledged to the maintenance of civilised values that at the same time cherish and preserve this power despite the fact that it reeks so heavily of barbarism at its worst.”

He continued, providing us with a humane and clear overview of international law and the obligations it puts upon us all. He confirmed that global citizens have a right to try in every nonviolent manner they can think of to try to stop the deployment and use of nuclear weapons.

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) is calling for all countries to press for a Nuclear Weapons Convention, a treaty to ban nuclear weapons and ensure their elimination. A draft treaty has been modelled on similar conventions which have succeeded in outlawing chemical weapons, biological weapons and antipersonnel landmines. This would complement and strengthen existing nuclear weapons treaties, such as the NonProliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

If the Scottish Parliament took a strong position supporting such a convention, it would not be acting outside its devolved responsibilities. A parliament does not need to have legislative control over nuclear weapons to support their being outlawed internationally. We would be in the company of some hundred and twenty seven countries who have said yes to a Nuclear Weapons Convention. We would be in the company of countries who host nuclear weapons; China, India and Pakistan are signed up; and small European countries; Ireland Malta and Morocco are spending their budgets in more peaceful ways. At this time only twenty seven countries say no, including the U.S., France and the UK.
Despite the spiral of conflict, fear and distrust that has accelerated across the turn of the century there has never been more appetite for global nuclear disarmament. With diminishing resources, and urgent action required to avoid environmental catastrophe, action is needed now. For Scotland to support the Convention on Nuclear Weapons and request that the UK Government follows suit and rejects the idea of replacing Trident, we need to press our politicians, informing them that we want them to act in our name and within their competence. Please give your MSP your leaflet after you have read it, or better still, give it to a friend and go to your MSP’s surgery and ask them to act on the Nuclear Weapons Convention.

“The bright day now revealed the frightful picture that had partly been concealed by the darkness. Where the city had stood, everything as far as the eye could reach was a waste of ashes and ruin...The destruction of life was so great that it will never be possible to know how many were killed.”

Janet Fenton

*HE Judge Christopher Weeramantry address to the Edinburgh Conference, Trident and International Law: Scotland’s Obligations, at Dynamic Earth Feb 2009


Nuclear Free Scotland
Tribute to Duncan Ainslie

As midday led to evening light,
My shadow grew,
Stretched out beyond my own true height.
One pace ahead, one pace behind,
We walked, swam, sailed through life
Together.

Sitting in a corner,
As we met to make the world a better place.
Marching at the front for peace.

Yet he was not a shadow,
But a friend,
His own boy, man,
Not reserved but engaging,
Good natured and playful
With young and old alike.
Showing that human touch
And eager conversation
Are worth more than anything.

Far from a shadow, a star
At the centre of one small family
The sparkle of a community.

Gone are the chili and honey dressing,
The specks of lavender hidden in the salad,
The flair for presentation,
The colour from our diet,
And our lives.

Time, Why do you still march on?
Hold still the hour hand,
That it shall not move,
And push it back,
To memories more alive
To wipe away our sadness.

Smiling as his dinghy slices through the waves,
Whooping with delight at the pressing wind,
Enjoying the gale,
Laughing at those less strong,
As they capsize in the gust,
While he remains upright.

Yet ill at ease when becalmed,
Restless in the Doldrums,
Ill-tempered even,
Cursing the winds that will not blow.

Always full of energy, noise and bustle,
Patient – No; but ever stimulating,
Questioning, probing, caring and seeking a response.

And now the whirlwind has gone,
And we are still,
Yet full of inner turmoil in the calm.

Comforted by the ripples
Spreading far across the loch
Tracing the path of a life
Overflowing with hope and love
Always and forever young.

John Ainslie
Nancy Dangerfield

Nancy Dangerfield, who in 1986 became Scotland’s first woman chair, has died aged 74 after a long and typically courageous fight against cancer.

Nancy first joined the peace movement in the mid 1970s, determined to somehow halt the Carter administration’s deployment of the neutron bomb - a weapon that could kill people while leaving property intact. Quickly finding herself in agreement with CND’s wider aims too, and very much liking her fellow campaigners, she threw herself into petitioning and other forms of street campaigning like the born activist she was. Then, having finally laid hands on a copy of ‘The War Game’ in the face of many difficulties, and having shown it at a wildly successful local meeting, she was inspired to set up Scottish CND’s Film and Videos Section, which she ran for many years, facilitating meetings that recruited huge numbers for the cause.

She served on the National Council of British CND, was a formidable and energetic parliamentary monitor, represented Scottish CND at the World Assembly for Peace and Life held in Prague in 1983, and at the UN Special Session on Disarmament in New York in 1988. As chair she spoke at major demonstrations and rallies alongside all the leading figures of the day, but also - and for her more rewardingly - at small meetings of local groups all over the country, never refusing an invitation and inspiring others to greater activism wherever she went. Her commitment was such that she even resigned as chair and took a substantial pay cut to work full time as CND’s Scottish Organiser in the early 1990s.

However, it was as a campaigner that she was most at home, hanging out with the peace campers at Faslane, or risking arrest at a demo, or banging a tambourine in the SCND buskers’ group, or, above all, petitioning in the streets, engaging delightedly with the Glasgow punters she loved, often winning them over by the sheer force of her own vivacity.

It was during Nancy’s twenty years at its heart that CND grew exponentially from a few isolated groups into a huge mass movement, a true phenomenon that changed the world. And that was no coincidence.

Majority say Scrap Trident - save money

A poll published by the Independent on 8th September shows a clear majority of people in Britain want to scrap Trident to save money.

The poll by Comres asked if people supported the statement: "Given the state of the country’s finances, the Government should scrap the Trident nuclear missile system". 58% agreed, 35% disagreed and 7% responded "don’t know". The survey also found that a clear majority wanted spending on health and education to increase. This follows another recent poll in the Sunday Times which found that 61% of Scots were opposed to replacing Trident while only 24% supported the proposal.

In a recent speech in Cardiff the Chancellor Alistair Darling said - "We will look at every corner of public spending, and allocate money to those areas where it will make the most positive difference to people’s lives. We will need to make tough choices".

But he failed to say anything about the multi-billion pound plan to replace Trident with a new nuclear weapon system.
Is New Labour Wobbling on Trident?

Over the summer there has been extensive questioning of the wisdom of proceeding with spending billions on a new submarine-launched ballistic missile system. There is a growing consensus, across the political spectrum, that we should abandon the original plan to replace Trident which Tony Blair laid out in December 2006.

A key decision, the Initial Gate of the Trident Replacement programme, was due to be taken in September. Following lobbying from CND members, 160 MPs supported an Early Day Motion calling for this milestone to be postponed. On 13 July the Defence Minister Bob Ainsworth told the House of Commons that the Initial Gate would be “later this year”. Three days later journalists at a Foreign Office briefing were told that the decision had been postponed until after the Non-Proliferation Treaty Conference in May 2010. Since then letters from the MoD to CND members have indicated that the Initial gate is still planned for later this year.

There are signs of a change of heart within the Labour Government. On 29 June the Guardian quoted a senior Labour source as saying that the replacement of Trident in its current form was “an inflated policy”. In July, on the eve of his departure from the Foreign Office, Lord Malloch Brown told the Daily Telegraph that the plan to upgrade Trident should be scrapped.

Former Defence Minister George Robertson suggested that the replacement could be postponed, arguing that “there is room for operating the current submarines for longer”. He was also a member of a commission set up by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR). They published a report on 30 June which argued that there should be a review of whether Britain needed nuclear weapons, the best and most cost-effective way of providing them, and the opportunity costs for the rest of the Defence budget. This Commission also included Paddy Ashdown, Jeremy Greenstock and General Lord Guthrie.

The Chancellor Alistair Darling has said the Government will need to make “tough choices” to reduce the nation’s deficit. But he has refused to answer any questions about the future of Trident. The Shadow Chancellor, George Osborne, has said that any future Conservative Government would also have to make “difficult decisions” about major public spending projects such as Trident Replacement.

Senior Tory David Davis has spoken out against the planned replacement saying “what we have now is more than enough and certainly does not require an upgrade”. Malcolm Rifkind has said that Britain should integrate its military capabilities with other European countries. He suggested that the Royal Navy could build three submarines rather than four, and could conduct alternate nuclear patrols with the French Navy.

The SNP have retained their strong opposition to nuclear weapons and have highlighted the costs of Trident. The Liberal Democrats have become

Musicians performing at Aldermaston in 2008

Cardinal Keith O’Brien - Trident is a moral issue
the first UK party to speak out clearly against a like-for-like replacement for Trident. This followed a change of policy by their leader, Nick Clegg, in June. They have set up a review of nuclear weapons policy which will be led by Fife MP Menzies Campbell. This will consider alternatives such as cruise missiles and also abandoning all nuclear weapons and retaining only a virtual nuclear capability. The Lib Dem’s change of tack led Nick Robinson of the BBC to say “Not since the 1980s has an argument about nuclear weapons divided the major political parties. Not since then has it featured at an election.”

Unfortunately the political hiatus does not mean that work on a new submarine has ground to a halt. Britain is paying for the design, in the United States, of a Common Missile Compartment. This is a new missile section that could be used on future British and American nuclear-armed submarines. The work means that spending on Trident replacement in 2009/10 will be £100 million over budget.

Although the recent debate has been largely about how to reduce the cost of British nuclear weapons, Cardinal Keith O’Brien, in a letter to the Times, pointed out that the fundamental argument was a moral one. Journalist Ian Bell also highlighted the basic case against Trident - “The old jokes are the best. Britain deplores nuclear weapons, but must possess them in order to deter people who may not entirely deplore the species- killing art. We never intend to launch our missiles, but think it prudent to give the impression that we might, if pushed, one day change our minds. Just before being rendered into ash, that is.”

John Ainslie

You could say that it’s a matter of priorities. Dr. Johnson said to Boswell that “A decent provision for the poor is the true test of civilization.” Almost 200 years later, former Senator and Vice President Hubert Humphrey said ‘the moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the sick children; those are in the twilight of life, the elderly; those who are in the shadows of life; the sick, the needy and the handicapped.’

It is madness that we continue to spend billions on weapons of mass destruction and wars with seemingly no end in sight, and yet, in the USA, we can not find the means to provide health care as a right to all citizens. Hubert Humphrey was Vice President in 1965 when Medicare and Medicaid were signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson – Medicare providing health care to pensioners and Medicaid providing care to the very poor and other vulnerable groups. As President Obama attempts to do what President Clinton and the late Senator Edward Kennedy failed to accomplish, we reflect on what our priorities should be.

Are nuclear submarines and ICBMs and aircraft carriers and next generation fighter aircraft more important than health care? Is the war on terror more important than the war on cancer or the war on AIDS? In the USA, the score for 2009 is cancer 562,340 deaths, swine flu (H1N1 strain) 556 deaths, and terrorism (domestic strain) about 50 or so. Since June 1981, about 600,000 people with AIDS have died in the USA.

And then there is the politics – the Republican scare tactics of death panels for the elderly when in fact there are death panels of a sort: the health insurance company employees who are incented to cancel coverage or deny claims when people get sick. This is why health care expenses are the leading cause of bankruptcy in the USA.

But there are those who say that nuclear weapons are “good value for the money” but it’s not clear to us what our $5 or 6 or 10 Trillion has bought us for the past 50 years. Did we avoid any wars? To the contrary, it seems that we took advantage of every opportunity to have a war. How much health care or housing or food could a Trillion or two pay for? It’s a matter of priorities.

Joe Falcone & Karri Kaiser
Commemorating Hiroshima in 2009

In August CND groups in at least 11 locations around Scotland held events to commemorate the dropping of the first atom bomb in Hiroshima

Renfrewshire CND
Renfrewshire CND gathered in the beautiful Paisley Peace Garden to remember the victims of the A bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The gathering was addressed by Council Leader Derek Mackay and Margaret Morton. Margaret was SCND secretary at the time the Peace Garden was opened by Bruce Kent in 1986. Councillor Mackay said that at a time when essential Council services are facing budget cuts, it was obscene to spend billions of pounds on replacing Trident. Mrs Morton recalled how we had been in a minority in the 1980’s, but now the majority of Scots and British wanted to scrap nuclear weapons. The local CND secretary warned that any move by the government to reduce its nuclear arsenal by a third, in line with the US and Russia, would be mere window dressing, as the submarines could still be out patrolling with a full payload of 48 nuclear warheads, each 8 times as powerful as the bombs dropped on Japan.

Glasgow West
In Glasgow 50 people assembled at the peace tree in Kelvingrove Park to hear Pauline McNeil MSP (Labour), Bill Kidd MSP (SNP), Martin Bartos of the Green Party and Sarah Hipperson former Greenham Common activist. The speakers agreed that the best way to commemorate the 200,000 who died in 1945 was to keep up the pressure on the government to cancel the Trident replacement programme. The group then formed a colourful procession to the banks of the river Kelvin where around 50 paper cranes were launched onto the water. It was agreed that this had been a very successful and memorable event.

Aberdeen
Two hundred peace lanterns floated down the River Dee last night to mark 64 years since atomic bombs were dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The event was held to commemorate the 200,000 people who died when the bombs fell in August 1945, as well as to raise awareness of the UK’s nuclear capability and plans for a new Trident weapons system. The event was held by the riverbank near Riverside Drive in Aberdeen, was organised by the city’s CND.

The group’s secretary, Sinde Astrea, said: “It was really quite an incredible sight, with all the lanterns on the river. The focus seemed to be on next year’s vote on replacing Trident, but even then it was with optimism that the world may be able to turn away from nuclear weapons. It was an inspiring evening.”

The ceremony was attended by around 100 people who listened to a speech from former Aberdeen North MP Malcolm Savidge, as well as poems from veteran activist Hilda Meers and from Tommy Campbell, regional organiser of the Unite union.

Rutherglen
Rutherglen CND held a Hiroshima Day event on Saturday 8th August. The numbers attending were not large but at least we were a presence on the Main Street and are keeping the anti war message alive.

Kimiko Young, a survivor of Okayama, the adjacent town to Hiroshima, which was fire bombed in 1945, made the peace cranes which were attached to the tree.
Helensburgh CND
Nearly fifty local people turned out on the 6th of August for a candle lantern floating ceremony marking the 64th Anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and calling for the global abolition of all nuclear weapons. Stalwart Helensburgh CND members and several local families joined in launching some twenty five paper lanterns from the Rhu Spit at dusk in what was the most memorable lantern ceremony in years.

The small crowd gathered in a circle on the spit at 9:00 pm and shared poems, songs and personal reflections. A first hand account of the bombing of Hiroshima was read out. A long time peace camper spoke of the US decision to bomb the two cities. He said that, “Contrary to the widely held belief that the bombing was necessary to end the war Japan was ready to surrender. But the US wanted to test the bomb on civilian populations to see what the effect would be. And they wanted to demonstrate the awesome power of the bomb to Russia. The atomic bombing was intended to finish off Japan before Russia entered the war with Japan in order to insure US control of the Pacific following the war.” Brian Larkin said “When Japanese survivors of the bombing came to Faslane they told of the continuing suffering of A-bomb survivors to this day, children born with birth defects, people dying from cancers. The only way to insure there are No More Hriebimas is to abolish nuclear weapons. We must begin that process by taking Trident off patrol, cancelling the plans for replacement and starting decommissioning of the whole system.”

CND and PEACE flags fluttered in the breeze and the lanterns glowing in the dusk were carried by the incoming tide up the Gareloch. A voice was heard to comment “It’s a peace flotilla carrying the message to disarm into Faslane”. And people sang “Where have all the flowers gone?” which was also sung at the funeral of Harry Patch, the last veteran of World War I whose funeral was held the same day. Frankie Hamer quoted Patch: “We’ve had 87 years to think what war is. To me, it’s a licence to go out and murder. Why should the British government call me up and take me out to a battlefield to shoot a man I never knew?”

Ayrshire
Ayrshire CND marked the anniversary of the bombings of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with some local events in Ayrshire. On Saturday August 8th members of the local CND took to the streets of Irvine and Kilmarnock with leaflets and petitions focussing on the case against replacing Trident.

The following day, Sunday August 9th, the group held their Annual Peace Walk through the Dean Country Park, Kilmarnock. Fortunately the park was quite busy on the day of the walk as there was a major musical event on as well which brought about a situation where our event attracted a considerable amount of public attention.

The next major event on the Ayrshire CND calendar is a Peace Day Exhibition on Monday September 21st, 2009 in Nelson Mandela Cottages, 17 Townhead, Irvine from 2.00pm - 9.00pm. This event is free and open to anyone who is interested and is being organised to celebrate United Nations Peace Day.

The Group continues to meet on the 3rd Monday of the month at 7.30pm in Nelson Mandela Cottages, Irvine. Anyone interested in joining should contact Arthur West on 07803 936228.

Edinburgh
Campaigners in Edinburgh marked the anniversary of the atom bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at an event at 6pm on the Mound on 6th August. They called on the government not to approve the Trident replacement programme.

See page 12 for photographs of Hiroshima events across Scotland.
The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has welcomed the formation of a new grouping of ex-ministers and retired senior military officers calling for multilateral nuclear disarmament. The group, which echoes that formed by former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, is part of a growing movement of senior politicians from across the political spectrum who are highlighting the urgency of moving towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

The announcement of the group's formation comes at a time of renewed debate about the £76bn project to replace the UK's Trident nuclear weapons system. A recent ComRes/Independent opinion poll yet again showed a majority of voters in favour of scrapping Trident by 58 to 35%.

The 'Top Level Group of UK Parliamentarians for Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation' includes former Labour ministers Des Browne, Margaret Beckett, John Reid and Lord Robertson; senior Conservatives Malcolm Rifkind and Michael Ancram; and three former chiefs of the defence staff, General Lord Guthrie, Field Marshal Lord Inge and Admiral Lord Boyce. Liberal Democrat peer Shirley Williams, an internationally acknowledged expert in this area, will also join the group.

Kate Hudson, Chair of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, said "The formation of such a high-level coalition underlines the
urgency of the task facing govern-
ments, the UK included, to ensure progress on disarmament. Seri-
ous steps must be taken towards disarmament otherwise we will see the further spread of these most dangerous of weapons. The cross-party nature of this group shows how nuclear disarmament is taken increasingly seriously across the political spectrum. It is now vital that the leaders of the parties represented in this group also fully support its goals."

"We strongly support the group's goal of reaching a common Euro-
pean position on the withdrawal of the remaining 200 US nuclear weapons in Europe. Rapidly reaching a consensus on this could feed into the current re-writ-
ing of NATO's 'strategic concept'. The 'sharing' of US nuclear weap-
on with Germany, Belgium, Hol-
land, Italy and Turkey contradicts both the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and NATO's international non-proliferation policy. Any ef-
forts which secure the removal of these weapons will be a positive step towards reducing tensions and de-nuclearising NATO."
New documents reveal risk of major accident at Faslane

In November 2007 Scottish CND submitted a Freedom of Information request to the Ministry of Defence asking for copies of the risk assessments for the shiplift at Faslane. After a long delay the documents were finally released in August this year. They were heavily redacted, with all the probability figures blacked out. Reading the reports provides a scary insight into the danger of a catastrophic accident at Faslane. The papers also reveal major weaknesses in the MoD’s risk assessment process.

The documents consider what might happen if there was a serious accident when a fully armed Trident submarine was inside the shiplift for maintenance. The scenario which they modelled was one in which all of the missiles on the submarines explode and the plutonium from all of the warheads is released into the atmosphere. From other information it is known that the total explosive power of the rocket fuel on one submarine is equivalent to around 1,000 tonnes of TNT. The total amount of plutonium in all the warheads would be close to 200 kgs. Dispersing this across Scotland would have a catastrophic effect.

The assessments expressed particular concern about “societal contamination” saying that “the risks are close to the tolerability criterion level”. However we don’t know what this “tolerable” level is because the figure has been censored from the reports.

The release of these documents was reported by Rob Edwards in the Sunday Herald. Nuclear engineer John Large told the newspaper – “If the containment of a nuclear weapon was breached, the consequences could be dire indeed, particularly if the plutonium was lofted high into the air by a fire. No civil contingency plans could cope with it. The risks are not minimised to an acceptable level”

A major failing in the assessments is that they don’t take proper account of the consequences of an accident which affects both the missiles and the nuclear reactor. The Radiological Probability Risk Assessment lists several chains of events which might happen. In some of these scenarios there is a reactor accident which then leads to a missile explosion. But Aldermaston only modelled the effect of dispersing the plutonium from the warheads, they omitted the deadly radioactive material which would be scattered from the reactor.

As well as these scenarios, where the reactor accident occurs first, it is likely that any missile explosion would rupture the containment of the reactor because the reactor compartment is close to the missile compartment. Yet this risk has been conveniently ignored from the fault trees.

A further omission is any mention of the likelihood of a nuclear explosion. If the missiles exploded shrapnel would be scattered in all directions. There would be a significant chance that fragments impacting a warhead from several directions could cause a nuclear explosion. Even a very small nuclear yield would produce additional nuclear hazards. But this possibility is not considered.

Bill Kidd MSP (SNP) has written to the Health and Safety Executive asking them to investigate these documents. He said - “The risks outlined in these safety reports are of grave concern. The prospect of a major nuclear accident on the Faslane shiplift is unspeakable, with the potential to contaminate some of Scotland’s most densely populated areas.”

John Ainslie
SCND Administrator
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