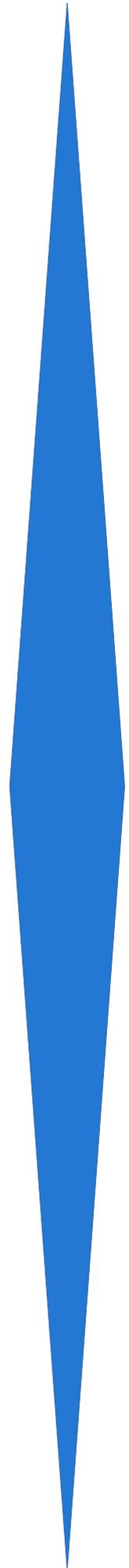


TRIDENT
STILL NOWHERE TO GO



Scottish CND



Introduction

In the period leading up to the 2014 referendum the late John Ainslie undertook a rigorous programme of work which enabled him to provide Scottish CND with invaluable resources; Trident Nowhere To Go, and No Place for Trident show that a Scottish Government that could control policies on defence and international relations could not only insist that the UK removed its nuclear weapons from this country, but initiate the elimination of the Trident nuclear weapons system in the UK. He additionally provided a practical guide to the steps that would need to be taken and the time frame for doing so in Disarming Trident and along with the earlier reports, the House of Commons Select Committee accepted his analysis¹.

In John's words, we had 'a rare privilege, the power to cast a vote which would lead to nuclear disarmament'. He asked us not to squander that opportunity, but the nation did, and when the world came together at the UN in 2017 to adopt a legally binding Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons², many of us were heartbroken that an independent Scotland was not in a position to sign it and had failed to be first to force a nuclear-armed state to disarm. Scottish CND and the wider peace movement owe a huge debt of gratitude to John Ainslie, and his painstaking work is still relevant. This summary aims to encourage its wider application.



Let us insist that there is a second opportunity, and let us ensure that this time it is not squandered.

1 All of the full reports by John Ainslie are available to download from the Scottish CND website, banthebomb.org

2 <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/tpnw/> hard copies of the treaty can be obtained from the Scottish CND office

Outline

The UK's nuclear weapon system based on four intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) submarines, and a renewal programme to upgrade it is an ongoing matter of controversy.

Leaving aside the questions arising from the UN Treaty on The Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the UK Government should consider what will happen to the UK's Trident nuclear weapon system if Scotland achieves independence and maintains in its intention to remove nuclear weapons from its territory and seas.

To persist with this continuous at sea nuclear “deterrent” the remnant UK would require to find an alternative to Faslane as home berth for the submarines and a nuclear warhead store in place of Coulport. If such a relocation proved impossible for fiscal, political or practical reasons the UK would face the choice of attempting to negotiate the continuing use of Faslane/Coulport, developing a new land or air delivery system, or ceasing to be a nuclear-armed state.

Thus, Scottish independence could lead to the disarming of one of the P5 nuclear-armed states, with the potential of a benign domino effect on global disarmament. It is this factor that has deepened and strengthened the role of nuclear disarmament within the Scottish independent movement. The aim is not only to rid Scotland of the internal threat from hosting the arsenal and of the shame of being the delivery platform of a hideous weapon of mass destruction, but also to contribute to global disarmament.

The requirement

There are basic criteria for an adequate alternative location which were applied to the original choice of site. A deep water port accessible at all times is essential. The warhead store, with an explosives handling jetty, would require the acquisition of an extensive site (Coulport takes up nearly two square miles). A key issue is the risk arising from the missiles and their propellant fuel. An accident with a missile could cause

the release of radiation from the warheads and the submarine's reactor. This means that both the submarine berths and the warhead store must be a fair distance from large centres of population. To propose placing them closer would be obviously irresponsible and would meet critical public and political opposition. Further, the submarine berths and the warhead store must be fairly close to each other so that warheads can be removed from the missiles and replaced. The missiles themselves (leased from the US) are never removed in the UK. That task is done in the US.

Using the above criteria all the suggested English or Welsh sites are deemed inadequate.



Portland fails due to the absence of a nearby site for the warhead store. Using Falmouth would require the removal of two whole villages and the ruination of local tourism and the water sports industry. Barrow in Cumbria, where

submarines are built, looks

likely at first glance, but turns out only to have deep water access with a full moon and a high tide. Milford Haven in Wales would be ruled out since its use would involve the complete disruption of a facility for fossil fuel imports long before the UK will achieve its transformation to a low emission state without oil or gas. Other options in England and Wales would involve the politically unacceptable use of large greenfield sites while environmental protection requirements are even more stringent than at the time the original decisions were made.

Non-UK bases have also been considered. One option discussed is King's Bay in Georgia, one of the bases for the US ICBM submarines. To comply with the Non-Proliferation Treaty this would require a

separate British facility to be developed there at considerable cost. More significant would be the further undermining of any claim to operational independence for the UK's nuclear arsenal. The option of sharing the French nuclear weapon base in Brittany is politically beyond the pale.

Conclusion

Faced with an anti-nuclear independent Scotland, a remnant UK committed to Trident would almost certainly focus on what might be called the Guantanamo Option – negotiating the continued use of Falsane/Coulport as the operational base for its ICBM fleet. Pressure on Scotland to agree would be intense and would include financial inducements and the matter of NATO membership. In this context Scotland will need to maintain its resolve. Its ability to do so is very much strengthened by the arrival of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) adopted by 121 member states of the UN. A Scotland that can ratify the TPNW and does so, would not be alone in its resistance but will have the critical support of the majority of UN states.

Recommendation

In John's words,

'Because there is no viable alternative site for Trident, Scottish independence could 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. A Scotland which votes for independence and then sustains a clear policy of banning these Weapons of Mass Destruction will be able to set an example to the world.'



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