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23 March 2010

HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Ms Isobel Lindsay
Scotland's For Peace
15 Barrland Street
Glasgow
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Dear Mrs Lindsay

Thank you for writing to express your concerns about the Government's plans for replacing Britain's nuclear deterrent.

As you will be aware, my party colleagues and I voted against the purchase of a new generation of nuclear armed submarines when this issue was debated in the House of Commons in 2007.

Since this time, the onset of the economic crisis has raised fresh questions about the future of this procurement. Even some senior military figures have recently voiced grave doubts about giving such priority to weapons we hope never to use, at the cost of the rest of our drastically over-stretched defence budget. In committing £100 billion or more (in today's money values) over a 40 year period from 2015, we risk continuing to short-change our front line servicemen and women of the equipment and protection they require. With public spending likely to come under increasing pressure in coming years, by keeping our options open we can concentrate our limited resources in the areas they are needed most.

Most of the cost of replacement would only begin when manufacturing a new system starts (2015-16). Concept and design work now underway incurs only a small proportion of the cost.

Although it is always difficult to predict changes in the economy, given the current circumstances it is hard to see how we can afford to replace the Trident deterrent with anything on the same scale. Less costly alternatives must be considered in the context of the next strategic defence review.

Yours Sincerely

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