

SPEAKERS' FACT FILE: Trident

In 2016 the government is due to take the final decision about renewing the Trident system. The election of Jeremy Corbyn has opened up a much-needed debate on nuclear disarmament in local Labour Parties. Labour CND has compiled a fact file to help you prepare an introduction or contribution to the debates which are taking place across the country. We urge you to put a resolution to your branch and/or constituency too, to ask them to oppose Trident replacement.

**'What's that? Corbyn doesn't want to cause a nuclear holocaust?
What a monster! It's such a shame Labour didn't elect somebody more
moderate who would be willing to press the button...'**

*Comedian Mark Steel
Independent, 2nd October 2015*

THE BASICS

What is Trident?

There are three parts to Trident, Britain's nuclear weapons system:

- the warheads, which are the nuclear explosives or 'bombs';
- the missiles that carry the warheads, which Britain leases from the United States under the Mutual Defence Agreement which provides for an exchange of nuclear materials, technology and information; and
- the four submarines, often referred to as 'the platform', which are on patrol 24/7 with nuclear weapons on board.

At least 1 of the 4 Vanguard-class Trident submarines is on the seas at all times; each carries an estimated 8 missiles with up to 5 warheads. That's 40 nuclear bombs per submarine, with an explosive power equivalent to 100 kilotons of conventional high explosives. That's 8 times the power of the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945, the blast and radiation from which killed an estimated 240,000 people.

These submarines are located near Glasgow, at Faslane naval base on the Clyde. Faslane also hosts a number of nuclear-powered attack submarines, known as 'hunter killers', which carry conventional weapons and escort Trident submarines on their patrols. Details of all the locations which contribute to keeping the Trident nuclear weapons system operational are on the CND website at <http://www.cnduk.org/images/stories/Sites.pdf>

Which countries have nuclear weapons?

There are five states which have officially declared they have nuclear weapons, and which are signatories to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT):

- **United States,**
- **Russia,**
- **Britain,**
- **France,** and
- **China**

Three more states have developed nuclear weapons outside the NPT framework. They are:

- **Israel,**
- **India,** and
- **Pakistan**

Israel does not admit to having nuclear weapons. This was revealed by whistle-blower Mordechai Vanunu, a former Israeli nuclear technician and a peace activist who revealed details of Israel's nuclear weapons programme to the British press in 1986. Vanunu was abducted by Mossad (Israeli secret service) and spent 18 years in prison, 11 of them in solitary confinement. He was released from jail in 2004, but is still subject to restrictions on his movements and what he can say.

North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) claims to have nuclear weapons capability. It withdrew from the NPT in 2003 and has since tested three nuclear devices, in 2006, 2009 and 2013. In January 2016 the DPRK claimed to have tested a hydrogen bomb, but this is widely disputed. A White House spokesperson said initial data from US monitoring stations in Asia was 'not consistent' with a hydrogen bomb test.

Iran has a nuclear power programme, which is alleged to also be programme for nuclear weapons acquisition. This is unproved. In summer 2015, after negotiations with the US, UK, Russia, China, France and Germany, Iran agreed to curb its nuclear programme in return for the US and EU lifting some sanctions.

Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Italy and *Turkey* have several hundred US nuclear weapons based on their soil, as part of their membership of NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Many nuclear weapons are installed on surface warships or submarines. So, in practice, they can be found almost anywhere in international waters.

... and which have renounced them?

South Africa admitted it had nuclear weapons, but scrapped them in 1991. **Brazil** has undertaken not to develop them.

Three former Soviet states – **Ukraine, Belarus** and **Kazakhstan** – had nuclear weapons but have either scrapped them or sent them back to Russia.

There are 39 countries in the world that have nuclear power or research reactors, and thus the potential to produce nuclear weapons. Nearly all of them have chosen not to possess nuclear weapons and have signed treaties to this effect.

Many countries have also signed up to be part of **nuclear weapons free zones**. Large areas of the world – covering Southeast Asia, Central Asia, South Pacific, Latin America and Africa – have committed to remain free of nuclear weapons.

What's the difference between atomic and hydrogen bombs?

North Korea has recently announced it's tested a hydrogen bomb, though the US disputes this. The difference between atomic bombs (like the ones used against Japan) and hydrogen bombs is defined by the type of nuclear reaction which is used to generate the bomb's explosive energy. Atomic bombs use nuclear fission – that is, atoms are split in order to create the explosion. Hydrogen bombs use fusion – that is atoms are joined together to create the explosion. Hydrogen bombs are potentially much more powerful than their atomic counterparts.

Are Britain's nuclear weapons independent?

Claims that Britain's nuclear weapons are independent are false. The UK depends on American technology – not simply for the purchase of ballistic missiles, but for their servicing and for warhead and submarine design too. It is claimed that Britain can use and deploy its nuclear weapons in whatever way it chooses. But British nuclear weapons depend on the United States in the following ways:

- the UK does not own its missiles; rather they are leased from the USA;
- British submarines must regularly visit the US base in Kings Bay for the maintenance and replacement of these missiles;
- UK warheads are a copy of the US ones, with some components directly bought from the US;
- even though the submarines are built in the UK, a lot of the components are also bought from the US; Trident is dependent on the larger US system for practical information such as weather and navigational data, information which is essential to target a nuclear weapon.

Unsurprisingly, Britain's access to American nuclear know-how comes at a price. Two important political consequences of Trident are:

- Britain's dependence on American nuclear know-how has bred tacit and unacknowledged obligations; and
- promotes anti-democratic practices such as the secrecy that surrounds UK nuclear weapons decision-making and how large amounts of public funds are allocated. Trident means a democratic deficit for Britain as well as a financial one.

How does the US-UK Mutual Defence Agreement come in?

This nuclear relationship is organised largely through the US-UK Mutual Defence Agreement, first signed in 1958, which provides for the exchange of nuclear materials, technology and information. Renewable every 10 years, it was reaffirmed most recently at the end of 2014. The British government is cautious about revealing details about its MDA, citing the dangers of proliferation. But it is widely understood that US-UK cooperation provides the US with access to British bases around the world and to UK communications and intelligence support from Menwith Hill monitoring station and Fylingdales radar station in Yorkshire.

NATO relationship

Britain is a founder member of NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which has a nuclear first strike policy – meaning members agree in principle to using their nuclear weapons against others without being attacked.

Trident has been assigned to NATO since the 1960s, meaning it could be used against a country attacking – or even just threatening to attack – one of the alliance's member states. Membership requires accepting that the US can access member state bases and/or station US nuclear weapons on their territories.

What about the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty?

The nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty came into force in 1970, reflecting widespread international concern about the spread of nuclear weapons and the ever-growing weapon stocks of the nuclear armed states. It is a multilateral treaty with the goal of general and complete nuclear weapons disarmament. The full text is available at <http://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2005/npttreaty.html>

The UK is one of five states that had already acquired nuclear weapons before the treaty was signed – the others are US, Russia, China and France. Three states, Israel, India and Pakistan did not sign the treaty, and have developed nuclear weapons outside the framework of the NPT.

Under the terms of the NPT nuclear armed states agree to take steps to disarm, and those that don't have nuclear weapons agree not to acquire them. The NPT provides for inspection to verify the nuclear status of signatory states, and also gives signatories the right to develop civil nuclear power.

The UK is one of 188 states which have signed the NPT. Britain has also ratified the treaty (passed it into law), though not every one of the other signatories have done so. This means the UK is legally bound to disarm. Replacing Trident will commit the UK to owning nuclear weapons until at least 2050 which would mean 80 years of non-compliance with its disarmament obligation.

Legal opinions show that a decision to upgrade Trident would not be acceptable under the NPT. In 2005, Rabinder Singh QC of Matrix Chambers and Professor Christine Chinkin stated their opinion that the replacement of Trident would be a 'material breach' of the NPT. They said: 'The linkage between the principles of non-proliferation and the obligation to negotiate towards disarmament ... indicate that Article VI is a provision 'essential to the accomplishment of the object or purpose of the treaty.' In 2006 from Philippe Sands QC, likewise showed that replacing or renewing Trident was inconsistent with Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the UN Charter and international humanitarian law.

TRIDENT REPLACEMENT

What does 'Trident replacement' mean?

Trident replacement is likely to be decided sometime in 2016. Replacement means building 4 new submarines, the most expensive part of the system, as well as up-grading and renewing other high-cost components. The government started the ball rolling in December 2006, with the publication of a white paper recommending replacement.

The design phase has already begun, after parliament backed the government's decision to take the first steps in finding a successor. The final go-ahead is due in 2016 (often referred to as the main gate decision), when key investment decisions are due to be taken and building work to begin. The present submarines are anticipated to reach the end of their active life in 2028.

What's will Trident replacement cost?

The estimated cost of replacing Trident is **£100 billion over its life time**, based on government figures and made up of:

Submarine procurement	£26 billion (£20bn at 2006 prices)
Cost of missile extension programme	£250 million
Replacement warheads from 2-30 on	£3 billion
In service costs	£57 billion
Conventional military forces directly assigned to Trident support	£900 million
Decommissioning costs	£13 billion (£9.75 at 2006 prices)
TOTAL	£100 billion

More recently, this estimate has been **revised to £167 billion**, based on figures provided by the government in a written answer to a parliamentary question by Conservative MP Crispin Blunt, who is chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee and sceptical about Trident replacement. Furthermore, military projects always overrun their budgets, so we might reasonably assume Trident replacement will cost even more than these eye-watering figures.

On 12 November 2015, *The Times* reported that Chancellor George Osborne is attempting to take financial control of the submarine building programme away from the Ministry of Defence and set up a new body that will report directly to the Treasury. Two commercial companies, BAE Systems and Rolls-Royce, will play the key role in building the nuclear submarines.

Trident's impact on the UK economy

Government investment in civilian projects such as house-building and transport infrastructure, rather than building and maintaining a nuclear weapons system, would help grow the British economy. Such investment would create more jobs and generating greater government resources for public spending in hard-hit areas such as the NHS, social care for the most vulnerable, schools, universities, and so on.

Since the first UK nuclear weapons were built in the 1950s, billions of pounds have been invested in an industrial and technological network necessary to maintain them. Huge amounts of public money have been spent on warhead research, development and production, on the design and manufacture of submarines, and on the construction of facilities for servicing the nuclear fleet, not to mention day to day operation and decommissioning costs. Collectively, these represent the largest and on-going capital investment programme ever undertaken by the British state.

It is often claimed that military investment has important civilian spin-offs. But many economists agree that military needs have become too specialised to be of much use elsewhere, and that civilian investment is more productive for the UK economy. As far back as the 1997 for example, Nobel prize-winning economist Lawrence Klein argued: 'The evidence suggests that smaller military spending over time increases investment and consumption and produces an important overall gain for the economy.'

Does Trident create jobs?

Trident advocates claim the UK's nuclear weapons system provides high-skilled, high-paid civilian employment – a notion repeated by some trade unions. The figures speak for themselves. A study by Dr Steven Schofield in 2007 shows that cost cutting by the private companies which own and run Britain's nuclear weapons facilities have resulted in a dramatic decline in employment.

Trident submarine jobs

	1990	2006	% decline
Barrow	12,500	3,400	73
Rosyth	1,800	900	50
Devonport	3,500	2,300	34
Total	17,800	6,600	63

Trident warhead jobs

	1990	2006	% decline
AWE	7,500	4,200	44
Coulport	1,500	500	67
Total	9,000	4,700	48

Overall employment on Trident

	1990	2006	% decline
Total	26,300	11,300	57

Schofield estimated that Trident's successor, if built, would generate 35-40% less jobs than the original project, and cost somewhere between 25-100% more – a poor rate of return for a multi-

million investment. In Autumn 2015, the Scottish TUC and Scottish CND produced a similar report about Trident jobs in Scotland, and suggested appropriate and sustainable alternative employment projects that could be considered.

What are the employment alternatives?

Other research has shown that if we scrapped Trident, 7,000 jobs would be lost compared to the 62,000 that could be created if the annual running cost was invested in the housing sector instead for example.

Most Trident-related jobs are in the BAE shipyard at Barrow-in-Furness, where the submarines are built. The yard could be adapted to build other ships or the workforce's skills used to manufacture wind or tidal turbines. The engineering skills of those working in the industry could be transferred to other projects. And employees would still be needed for decommissioning, even if Trident was scrapped.

A government-led economic diversification plan would minimise the job losses should Trident be scrapped. During his leadership campaign, Jeremy Corbyn issued a Defence Diversification statement outlining his commitment to 'a careful strategy – backed by investment – to ensure a just transition, as part of an industrial policy committed to more high skill manufacturing jobs'.

THE CASE AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Rarely do opponents of nuclear disarmament argue that nuclear weapons are a good thing. They're more likely to describe them as a necessary evil. They rest their case on the notions of security through '**deterrence**'. This is an ideologically-loaded, fanciful and completely unprovable notion that having nuclear weapons stops other states from attacking us.

Another way in which this is sometimes expressed is to suggest that **nuclear disarmers are moral but unworldly dreamers**. Some of the most frequently-used arguments in favour of nuclear weapons are listed – and refuted – below.

- '**Nuclear weapons help keep the peace**'

This is the false belief that we will dissuade an 'enemy' from attacking if they know that we could retaliate with nuclear weapons. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union may have avoided a direct war but that didn't prevent their involvement in wars in Vietnam, Korea, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Possession of nuclear weapons did not prevent US defeat in Vietnam or Soviet defeat in Afghanistan. Since the first nuclear weapon was used in 1945, we have seen more wars than ever before. Hundreds of conflicts have taken place across the world, including in Europe, over the last seventy years. We have also been dangerously close to nuclear war on at least 25 known occasions. Robert McNamara, the United States Secretary of State for Defence during the Cuban Missile Crisis, said 'we have been very lucky'. This luck will not last forever.

- '**We need them for our security**'

Nuclear weapons make us less safe. The main security threats we face today, as stated by the government in its latest National Security Strategy, are terrorism and cyber-attacks. The threat of state-on state nuclear attack has been downgraded. In the latest Strategic Defence and Security Review and National Security Strategy, which the government published at the end of November 2015, nuclear attacks are a Level 2 threat, compared to Level 1 threats of terrorism and cyber-attacks.

Former Labour Secretary of State for Defence, Lord Des Brown, who helped Tony Blair's government push the first steps towards Trident replacement through parliament in 2007, has said that cyber-

attacks could render Trident obsolete. Nuclear industry experts agree that ‘any national public or private infrastructure service or defence facility’ could be hacked.

Investing billions in nuclear weapons diverts funds away from addressing Level 1 priorities. There are many experienced military and political figures who confirm that nuclear weapons are not strategically useful. Former Conservative Defence Secretary Michael Portillo has described Trident as ‘completely past its sell-by date’. Senior military figures, including the former head of the British Armed Forces, have described Britain’s nuclear weapons as ‘completely useless’ and ‘virtually irrelevant’.

- **‘Nuclear weapons ended the Second World War’**

Even putting aside the moral argument of whether killing thousands of innocent civilians to save thousands more can ever be justified, research shows that it was not necessary to drop the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to end the Second World War. Extensive work by academics tells us that Japan was already trying to surrender, under the same terms which they agreed to in August 1945. British Prime Minister at the time Winston Churchill agreed with this assessment. He said: ‘It would be a mistake to suppose that the fate of Japan was settled by the atomic bomb. Her defeat was certain before the first bomb fell and was brought about by overwhelming maritime power.’

- **‘You can’t uninvent them’**

While no technology is ever ‘un-invented’, we regularly see an end to use or production, particularly where a technology is outlawed for humanitarian or legal reasons, such as the gas chambers of the Second World War.

- **‘No one has ever given them up’**

Scrapping Trident wouldn’t be an exotic and untried step. Countries have already either got rid of their nuclear weapons or abandoned research programmes (see above for details).

- **‘Multilateral global disarmament is the way forward’**

The UK is committed to multilateral disarmament through the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which it signed in 1968. This Treaty commits its signatories to negotiate the elimination of all nuclear weapons. So far however, Britain has not played a particularly constructive role in the process. The UK should lead the way by deciding not to replace Trident. However, the government’s intention to replace the system means committing the UK to maintaining an arsenal of nuclear weapons for decades to come. That is not in line with the UK’s obligation as an NPT signatory to ‘pursue negotiations in good faith on... nuclear disarmament’.

- **‘We would never use them’**

£100 billion plus is a mega amount to spend on a weapon that even its supporters say is never likely to be used. But their very existence poses the risk of accidents or the weapons falling into the wrong hands. We know of dozens of accidents or serious errors involving nuclear weapons, including 13 occasions when they have been lost. It would only take one incident, one detonated bomb, to create unspeakable suffering and grave political repercussions.

- **‘We need them to keep our status in the world’**

The vast majority of countries have not developed nuclear weapons. Germany and Japan are economically and politically important countries and they do not possess nuclear weapons. Some people think we are a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council because we have nuclear weapons. Britain was a member years before we developed nuclear weapons.

- **‘We need them because “rogue states” are getting them’**

No one wants to see more countries getting nuclear weapons. But that is what is going to happen if a small number of very powerful countries – the UK and others – insist that they need them for their security. Other countries will come to the same conclusion. Possession of nuclear weapons by some when others are not allowed to have them is seen by many as a provocative double standard. No country has the right to have nuclear weapons and the only safe way forward is global disarmament. That can only happen if the nuclear states are willing to give up their weapons.

If we go ahead with Trident replacement, we are rearming for another thirty to forty years. That sends a message that nuclear weapons are necessary, powerful and desirable. Unstable or isolated states are more likely to seek nuclear weapons in this context. Their behaviour is often the result of complex regional problems or of a history of hostile external intervention or exploitation. These issues are best resolved through diplomacy and political negotiation on the basis of equality and mutual respect – not on the basis of having the capacity to destroy them many times over. May 2015.

‘Most people think we need them’

Opinion polls consistently show that the majority of British people are against nuclear weapons. Since the first vote in parliament on Trident replacement, in 2007, opinion polls have consistently showed majorities against this. 63% of the public said they would back scrapping Trident in a survey for the *Mail on Sunday* in 2010. The figure is even higher in Scotland, where the Trident submarines are based. A poll commissioned in 2013 by Scottish CND showed that 80% of respondents were opposed to plans to replace Trident.

Senior figures in the armed forces have said Trident is ‘completely useless’ and concern is growing in the military over its impact on the MoD’s ability to fund conventional defence forces. Even a former Conservative chair of the Defence Select Committee questions the sense of Trident replacement, arguing that nuclear deterrence does not provide the certainty that it seemed to in the past.

Former defence ministers have also expressed opposition. Des Browne has called for the end of constant patrols by nuclear-armed submarines while Sir Nick Harvey MP has said it is ‘complete insanity’ that our defence strategy should be based on a Cold War premise of the ability to ‘flatten Moscow’.

Many elected representatives from across the political spectrum are openly questioning the rationale for like-for-like replacement of Trident. Trade unions – including UNISON, the UK’s largest – are also calling for Trident to be scrapped.

WHERE LABOUR STANDS

What’s Labour Party policy on Trident?

Labour is committed to reviewing its defence policies, as proposed by the National Policy Forum and agreed by annual conference. Shadow Secretary of State for Defence, Emily Thornberry published the terms of reference for her review of defence policy in January 2016. It includes key questions for discussion, including on Trident, within a framework of seeking to establish what ‘should be the values and principles that drive Britain’s strategic defence policy’.

Thornberry invites submissions from members, affiliates and the wider public. Written submissions should broadly seek to address the questions she poses as part of her terms of reference, and must be received before 30 April 2016. A copy of *Britain’s Security: Labour’s Defence Policy Review* is available on the Labour CND website.

This defence review will then feed in to the **National Policy Forum** which is responsible for policy development. The document will form a submission to the the International Policy Commission which

is responsible for this area of Labour policy. The Commission will produce a report on its work for Labour's Annual Conference, the sovereign decision making body of the party.

Labour's 2015 manifesto for the general election said: 'Labour remains committed to a minimum, credible, independent nuclear capability, delivered through a Continuous At-Sea Deterrent.' The **National Policy Forum** report to the 2015 annual conference acknowledged that: 'The manifesto outlined Labour's commitment to a minimum, credible, independent nuclear capability, delivered through a Continuous At-Sea Deterrent.' It also pointed out Labour's 'commitment to actively work to increase momentum on global multilateral disarmament efforts and negotiations, and look at further reductions in global stockpiles and the numbers of weapons' and to hold a review of policy.

Opposition to Trident replacement and support for nuclear disarmament figured prominently in **Jeremy Corbyn's** leadership campaign. An opinion poll of Labour Party members shortly after his election showed majority support the Labour leader.

In a *BBC news* interview on 14 September 2015, two days after Corbyn's election, Emily Thornberry said:

'I don't think that being against nuclear weapons is that zany. If you look at what it is going to cost, £100bn on weapons that we won't be in charge of but that the Americans will be in charge of. Would we ever want to use them? They are the ultimate weapons of mass destruction and we will be killing women and children if we used them and if we wouldn't use them why would we spend £100bn on them? Just imagine what we could spend that money on instead.

'Jeremy stood quite clearly on a platform that this is the direction he wanted to take the party in, and look what has happened with the Labour Party. We are now half a million people, I think there will be a debate in public and it will be interesting to see what the public say about this. Because we haven't really had a discussion about this, it's always been "Oh we've got to have nuclear weapons, don't be ridiculous, don't be so childish, of course we've got to have them" well actually I don't think we necessarily do, but I think its perfectly fine for the leader of the opposition to ask questions about that and to have a debate in the Parliamentary Labour Party, the Labour Party and in the country. Let's decide if there are better things to spend £100bn on, because I can certainly think of a few things. How about spending more money on the army, we've got a smaller army than Oliver Cromwell these days, yet we expect them to do jobs all over the world at all times and it is incredibly stretched. How about spending some of that money on homes, on infrastructure. This is a perfectly reasonable discussion to have.'

Will opposition to Trident lose Labour the next election?

No! The Oldham by-election is the first example of Labour's standing under its new leader. A majority of the public is with us on Trident. Opposition to Trident aided the SNP's record win in Scotland, and contributed to the Labour wipe-out.

The Tory have led a series of attacks on the Corbyn Labour Party, amplified by their friends in the media, claiming that 'Labour is weak on defence'. This idea is very old thinking. Far from Corbyn's views being 30 years out of date as some in the media put it, he's ahead of the pack.

Scrapping Trident points the way to a more peaceful, more just and safer world in future, which a Labour government of Britain can help to build.

ENDS