

# Fact Sheet 10: Trident Value for Money Review

## The UK's security is underpinned by the retention of a minimum credible nuclear deterrent

The Government is committed to maintaining a continuous submarine-based deterrent using the Trident ballistic missile system. Currently, there are four Vanguard-class submarines, one of which is always deployed on patrol. Each submarine is equipped with up to 48 nuclear warheads. Overall, the UK has a stockpile of no more than 225 nuclear warheads.

In the 2006 White Paper, *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent*, the cost of retaining the deterrent was estimated at up to £20 billion (at 2006 prices): £14 billion for four new ballistic missile submarines; £3 billion for replacement or refurbished warheads; and £3 billion for supporting infrastructure.

The Trident value for money review looked at whether the policy of maintaining the UK's essential minimum deterrent could be met while reducing its scale and its cost, including by shifting the balance between financial savings and operational risk. The work covered the programme timetable; submarine numbers; numbers of missiles, missile tubes and warheads; infrastructure and other support costs; and the industrial supply chain.



HMS Vanguard

## The review has recommended reducing the scale of the UK's deterrent



Sailing for patrol

The Government is committed to maintaining the deterrent at the level judged necessary to deter a major nuclear threat to the UK in the event that one re-emerges in future.

The review has concluded that we can meet the minimum requirement of an effective and credible level of deterrence with a smaller nuclear weapons capability. We will reduce the maximum number of nuclear warheads onboard each Vanguard-class submarine from 48 to 40.

In the longer term, the next generation of ballistic missile submarines will be designed with only eight operational missile tubes. That compares with previous plans for 12 operational tubes on the new submarines.

As a consequence, we are also able to reduce the number of warheads in the UK stockpile. Once the reduction has been achieved on the Vanguard-class, our maximum requirement for operationally available warheads will reduce from fewer than 160 warheads to no more than 120. By the mid-2020s, this will allow our overall stockpile ceiling to reduce from 225 to no more than 180 warheads.

## The review has recommended reducing the scale of the UK's minimum deterrent (continued)

The review confirmed the rationale for continuous patrols as the foundation of a credible deterrent. Always having one submarine at sea means we can be assured of our ability to deter an attack without risk of escalation during a crisis. A decision on the number of submarines needed to maintain continuous at sea deterrent patrols will be made at the end of the assessment phase, in around 2016, when we will have the necessary information on the reliability and maintainability of the new submarine design.

## The review has saved or deferred £3 billion over the next 10 years

Surveys have shown that the current warheads will last until the late 2030s. Decisions on a replacement will not therefore be required until around 2019. This defers £500 million of spending from the next 10 years. We have also reached agreement with the US over the likely size of the missile tubes in the new submarines: this has enabled us to reduce the cost of the submarine missile compartment by up to £250 million. We will defer and potentially remove over £1 billion of future spending on infrastructure over the next 10 years.

We will be working closely with our industrial suppliers to improve commercial arrangements across the defence nuclear programme. As part of this, we expect the Submarine Enterprise Performance Programme to deliver savings at least £900 million over the next 10 years.

In the 2006 White Paper estimated that the planned in service date for the first of the new submarines was 2024. The value for money review showed we could aim to deliver the first new submarine around 2028 and that it will be possible to extend the lives of the Vanguard-class submarines to match.



Trident test launch

## Declaratory Policy

Following a review of our nuclear declaratory policy, we are now able to give assurance that the UK will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states parties to the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In giving this assurance, we emphasise the need for universal adherence to and compliance with the NPT, and note that this assurance would not apply to any state in material breach of those non-proliferation obligations. We also note that while there is currently no direct threat to the UK or its vital interests from states developing capabilities in other weapons of mass destruction, for example chemical and biological, we reserve the right to review this assurance if the future threat, development and proliferation of these weapons make it necessary.