

# CITIZENS' WEAPONS INSPECTION REPORT

## UK NUCLEAR WEAPONS ESTABLISHMENTS

WEST MIDLANDS  
CND

TRIDENT  
PLOUGHSHARES

EAST MIDLANDS  
CND

NUKEWATCH(UK)

SCOTTISH  
CND



Faslane Nuclear Weapons Base



Rolls Royce Derby

Aldermaston Atomic  
Weapons Establishment

INSPECTED NOV 2003 – MARCH 2004

# **UK NUCLEAR WEAPONS DEVELOPMENTS AND THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY**

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 In 2000 at the Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the UK government confirmed its commitment to the NPT and agreed to a thirteen point Programme of Action.

1.2 We consider that the UK government has failed to honour the commitments given and is breaking the terms of the NPT, particularly article VI of the NPT:

***“Each of the Parties to the Treaty to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament...”***

1.3 We consider also that the UK government has failed to implement the thirteen point plan particularly points 6 and 9 :

***Point 6 “An unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament to which all States parties are committed under Article VI.”***

***Point 9 “Steps by all the nuclear-weapon States leading to nuclear disarmament in a way that promotes international stability, and based on the principle of undiminished security for all:***

- ***Further efforts by the nuclear-weapon States to reduce their nuclear arsenals unilaterally.***
- ***Increased transparency by the nuclear states.***
- ***A diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies to minimize the risk that these weapons ever be used and to facilitate the process of their total elimination.”***

1.4 Britain's nuclear cycle starts at its nuclear power stations. From these, spent nuclear fuel is taken by train to the Sellafield reprocessing plant in north west England.

1.5 UK bombs are designed and manufactured at Aldermaston, about 200 miles South East of Sellafield. They are assembled at nearby Burghfield.

1.6 All UK nuclear weapons are now part of the Trident submarine fleet, based at Faslane in south west Scotland and stored at nearby Coulport.

1.7 The first of the Trident submarines is now being re-fitted at Devonport Dockyard, Plymouth, in south west England.

1.8 The fuel plates for the re-fitted Trident are made at Derby, in the Midlands.

1.9 The UK nuclear programme affects all parts of the UK.

**1.10 Because we believe that our government is failing to honour its commitments we, citizens of the UK, have carried out Citizens' Inspections of the UK Trident related sites.**



## **2. Citizens Inspection**

- 2.1 The idea of the "citizens inspection" was born some time in 1998, while international attention was focussed on the UNSCOM inspections in Iraq. Peace campaigners all over the world were appalled by the fact that while these inspections took place in Iraq, all five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, the UK and the USA) were themselves deploying illegal nuclear weapons of mass destruction in an extremely secretive manner.
- 2.2 Because of the lack of openness about nuclear weapons in these countries, and the absence of UN-inspectors at the sites of nuclear crime, many groups decided to take the responsibility of upholding international law, and started citizen's war crimes inspections at nuclear related sites around the world. They found justification for their actions in the International Court of Justice advisory opinion (issued in 1996) that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be against international and humanitarian law.
- 2.3 The recent round of UNMOVIC weapon inspections in Iraq (2002-2003) led to renewed interest in this model of nonviolent direct action, with several international initiatives being launched. Many of the forthcoming citizens inspections will be reported to the UN Security Council, and the Non-Proliferation Treaty "PrepCom" in New York in 2004.

### 3. Reprocessing

3.1 The trains carrying spent nuclear fuel go through major centres of population, including London and the West Midlands conurbation.

3.2 Reprocessing produces plutonium, which used to be used for the UK nuclear bomb programme. Now, sufficient plutonium for the warheads is extracted from obsolete weapons and the plutonium extracted by reprocessing is stored at Sellafield.

3.3 *We believe that much attention is given to the security of plutonium storage. The stockpiles nevertheless pose a significant danger, from terrorist attack or theft. The availability of plutonium is one of the greatest threats to non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.*



#### 4. Aldermaston and Burghfield

***Four Citizens Inspectors attempted to enter both these sites on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2004, having given them due written notice. They were denied entry. From publicly available information we are able to identify the following:***

The Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Aldermaston, is the centre of the UK nuclear bomb research and production programme.

The Ministry of Defence is planning to develop it to research and test materials for new nuclear weapons.

Now that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) prevents underground nuclear tests, a new laser and associated laboratories are planned as part of the AWE Sites Development Strategy Plan. The scheme includes a supercomputer, hydrodynamics facility, conference centre, accommodation block and landscaping. AWE wants to recruit over 100 scientists, who will co-operate with scientists working on the United States nuclear weapons' programme.

Following the threat of legal action, on the grounds that there has been no publicly available Environmental Impact Assessment, the planning application for the proposed laser has been withdrawn. We assume it will be re-submitted.



In the Defence White Paper, issued in December, 2003, the government said that a decision on whether or not to replace Trident would have to be made in the next parliament. [A General Election for the next parliament has to be held by June, 2006, but is likely to be held in 2005]. The government says that AWE 'needs the infrastructure ready to develop a new weapon *in case* a decision is made'.

There has never been a parliamentary debate on the development of UK nuclear weapons, and it is very unlikely that one will take place on a successor to Trident.

***These developments directly contravene the NPT particularly Article VI and points 6 and 9 of the Thirteen Point Plan.***

It is noted that in recent times the government and media no longer make the distinction between chemical, nuclear and biological weapons but refer to them under the generic term of 'Weapons of Mass Destruction' (WMD). This ploy serves to attempt to undermine the Negative Security Assurances given under the NPT.

In March, 2002, the UK Defence Secretary said that the UK would not rule out using its nuclear weapons, should its troops in Iraq be attacked with chemical or biological weapons.

***This statement contravenes the Negative Security Assurances given under the NPT.***



As well as researching and developing new warheads, AWE decommissions old warheads and production plant, and services the 180 or so Trident warheads based in Scotland. They are carried by road, a round trip of about 800 miles.

AWE has been active in developing verification skills, and is needed, too, to contribute decommissioning tasks to the practical nuclear disarmament process, so we are not calling for its immediate closure.

4.13 AWE Strategy plan is at:

[http://www.awe.co.uk/main\\_site/scientific\\_and\\_technical/publications/pdf\\_reports/20885-sd-plan-update.pdf](http://www.awe.co.uk/main_site/scientific_and_technical/publications/pdf_reports/20885-sd-plan-update.pdf)

## 5. Faslane and Coulport

***Four Citizens Inspectors attempted to enter both these sites on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2003. They were denied entry. From publicly available information we are able to identify the following:***

- 5.1 The Trident fleet of four nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed submarines is based at Faslane about 20 miles south west of Glasgow in Scotland.
- 5.2 Each submarine can carry sixteen missiles, which are leased from the US. Each missile can carry six 100 kiloton warheads, eight times the power of the Hiroshima bomb. Each warhead can be independently targeted and has a greater range and accuracy than its predecessor Polaris. The UK government says that the explosive power of the warheads carried by Trident is less than that of Polaris. This is true, but the Polaris warheads could not hit different targets, giving Trident a vastly "superior" destructive power.
- 5.3 Trident has the capability of deploying one warhead on a missile and has the potential for the warhead yield to be decreased as low as two kiloton. This would give the UK Trident system a sub-strategic role should the government decide in future to deploy this potential capability.
- 5.4 One Trident submarine is always at sea. Although the government states that the missiles have been de-targeted, they can be re-targeted very quickly.
- 5.5 ***The UK government says that it has been honouring the NPT by getting rid of its air- launched nuclear weapons and its naval depth charges. Both of these were obsolete. Although Trident warheads have less explosive power than those of Polaris, they are capable of much greater destruction.***
- 5.6 ***These developments directly contravene the NPT particularly Article VI and points 6 and 9 of the Thirteen Point Plan.***



## 6. Devonport Dockyard, Plymouth

**Two Citizens Inspectors met a representative of the naval base in March 2004. From publicly available information we are able to identify the following:**

- 6.1 The first of the four Trident submarines is being re-fitted at the Royal Naval Dockyard, Devonport. The work is scheduled to take two years. When the first re-fit is completed, the second will start until the cycle is complete.
- 6.2 *Re-fitting the Trident fleet to maintain its operational capability is not compatible with UK obligations under the NPT, particularly Article VI and point 6 of the Thirteen Point Plan and the aspect of point 9 concerning 'a diminished role for nuclear weapons in security policies (doctrines)'.*



## 7. Rolls Royce, Derby

**Seven Citizens Inspectors met representatives of the management of Rolls Royce, Derby. We established the following:**

- 7.1 The fuel plates for the refurbished Trident submarine reactors are manufactured at Derby and taken to Devonport by road. Those for the first re-fit have already gone. We do not know whether work has started on the other three sets of fuel plates.
- 7.2 *This work, too in extending the life of Trident for the foreseeable future, is not compatible with UK obligations under the NPT, particularly Article VI and point 6 of the Thirteen Point Plan and the aspect of point 9 concerning 'a diminished role for nuclear weapons in security policies (doctrines)'.*

**Carol Naughton and Jenny Maxwell, on behalf of the UK Citizens Inspection  
28:03:04**