

## Parliamentary update: Nuclear Weapons Policy Liaison Group, 9th June 2015.

Read about the latest political activity around nuclear weapons in the UK. This parliamentary update is also attached as a downloadable PDF.

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# 1. Parliamentary debates, and written questions and answers

## House of Lords

### Armed Forces: Airborne Maritime Patrol

#### Lord Empey:

Steady on. Does the Minister not agree with me that one does not need a review to know that, as an island nation with a sea-borne nuclear deterrent capability, we are not even in a position to secure our own deterrent, because we do not have the capability to do so? I understand that all things have to be reviewed, but this is such a no-brainer. It is obviously of great concern if we cannot protect our own sea lanes against an increasingly aggressive Russian naval force. Will the Minister go back to his right honourable friend in the other place and say that we should be proceeding now to prepare the necessary facilities to ensure that we have adequate protection for our nuclear deterrent as well as for our shores? (Citation: [HL Deb, 4 June 2015, c518](#))

#### Earl Howe:

My Lords, I absolutely do not accept that we cannot protect our own sea lanes. We have acknowledged that we have a capability gap, following the decision not to bring the Nimrod MRA4 into service, but at the same time we made it clear that we chose to accept that gap because we knew that we could mitigate it through employment of other assets, as well as through co-operation with allies. Even taking operational activity into account, we remain of the view that the SDSR is the right context in which to take a decision of this significance. (Citation: [HL Deb, 4 June 2015, c519](#))

#### Lord Reid of Cardowan:

My Lords, does the noble Earl accept that there is an ingenuity in the MoD in producing euphemisms? I was once told that something was being put not into mothballs, but into a “state of extended readiness”. When he mentions the capability gap, will he accept that the maritime patrol aircraft and its facilities is not an optional add-on for a nuclear deterrent but an essential component providing surveillance, security and secrecy of location? What is the point of having a continuous at-sea submarine-based nuclear deterrent if it does not have those features? This has all the hallmarks not of a minor housekeeping problem for the MoD but of a major

strategic blunder.

(Citation: [HL Deb, 4 June 2015, c519](#))

**Earl Howe:**

My Lords, I emphasise again that this matter will be looked at very closely in the context of the [SDSR](#)—indeed, some preparatory work has already been done. I do not accept the noble Lord’s contention that we are without protection in this important area. We have the use of other military assets, as I said, including Type 23 frigates, submarines and Merlin anti-submarine warfare helicopters, and we rely on the assistance that we get from our allies and partners.

(Citation: [HL Deb, 4 June 2015, c519](#))

**Written Questions and Answers:**

**Ministry of Defence**

Trident Submarines: Fire Prevention [\[c140\]](#)

**Paul Flynn (27.05.2015):**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what procedures exist to stop toilet rolls catching fire on Trident submarines; and what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of any such procedures.

**Philip Dunne (04.06.2015):**

Strict safety rules govern the stowage of all flammable material on Trident submarines. These rules are regularly reviewed and compliance is subject to regular independent assessment.

Source: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-05-27/140/>

**Ministry of Defence**

HMS Vanguard: Repairs and Maintenance [\[c137\]](#)

**Paul Flynn (27.05.2015):**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the reported problems with the main hydraulic plant on HMS Vanguard; and whether each such reported defect has been resolved.

**Philip Dunne (04.06.2015):**

I have interpreted this question to refer to recent claims made about HMS Victorious.

As the Secretary of State for Defence (Michael Fallon) said in his Written Statement of 28 May 2015 (Column 1WS), and as was reiterated during

the Adjournment Debate the same day (Column 293), I can assure the House and the general public that the recently reported comments and concerns raised by an Able Seaman following his first submarine deployment have been thoroughly investigated. That investigation concluded that neither the operational effectiveness of our continuous at-sea deterrent nor the safety of our submariners or members of the public has been compromised.

Source: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-05-27/137/>

### **Ministry of Defence**

Strategic Defence and Security Review [\[c594\]](#)

#### **Vernon Coaker (01.06.2015):**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress his Department has made on developing the next Strategic Defence and Security Review.

#### **Michael Fallon (04.06.2015):**

Work has now begun on the 2015 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review. The Review will build on the 2010 Review and will be informed by a refreshed National Security Risk Assessment. This work is led by the Cabinet Office in close consultation with relevant Departments including the Ministry of Defence.

4th June 2015

Source: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-06-01/594/>

### **Ministry of Defence**

Strategic Defence and Security Review [\[c494\]](#)

#### **Vernon Coaker (29.05.2015):**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to consult (a) the public, (b) the defence industry and (c) academics on the forthcoming Strategic Defence and Security Review.

#### **Michael Fallon (04.06.2015):**

In the Queen's Speech on 27 May 2015, the Government made clear its intention to conduct a full Strategic Defence and Security Review. Led by the Cabinet Office, the Government will consult with the academic and think tank communities, defence industry, members of Parliament and the public to inform our decision-making

4th June 2015

Source: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-05-29/494/>

### **Ministry of Defence**

Clyde Naval Base: Safety [[c129](#)]

#### **Vernon Coaker (27.05.2015):**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the safety of nuclear submarines on the Clyde; and if he will make a statement.

#### **Penny Mordaunt (02.06.2015):**

As the Secretary of State for Defence, my right hon. Friend, the Member for Sevenoaks, (Michael Fallon) reported in his Written Statement of 28 May 2015 (Column 1WS), and as I reiterated during the Adjournment Debate the same day (Column 293), I can assure the public that neither the operational effectiveness of our continuous at-sea deterrent nor the safety of our submariners or members of the public has been compromised. The Ministry of Defence has an ongoing programme of work to review and, where appropriate, improve safety and security at HM Naval Base Clyde.

Source: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-05-27/129/>

### **Ministry of Defence**

Strategic Defence and Security Review: Departmental Coordination [[c495](#)]

#### **Vernon Coaker (29.05.2015):**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the forthcoming Strategic Defence and Security Review.

#### **Michael Fallon (03.06.2015):**

The Chancellor of the Exchequer is actively engaged, as a full member of the National Security Council, in the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

Source: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-05-29/495/>

## Ministry of Defence

NATO: Joint Exercises [\[c493\]](#)

### **Douglas Chapman (29.05.2015):**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost is of the UK contribution to and involvement in NATO Allied Shield exercises.

### **Penny Mordaunt (03.06.2015):**

NATO's ALLIED SHIELD is a series of four different exercises - BALTOPS, SABER STRIKE, NOBLE JUMP and TRIDENT JOUST. As well as enhancing interoperability, readiness and responsiveness among Allied and partner nations, this series of exercises will provide reassurance to Allies in response to the changing geopolitical security situation in Europe and the threats faced by Allies along NATO's southern and eastern periphery.

For Exercise BALTOPS, a major Allied naval exercise in Polish waters, the UK will provide three Royal Navy vessels: HMS OCEAN, a helicopter carrier (ship's company of some 400); HMS IRON DUKE, a Type 23 frigate (ship's company of 185); and HMS QUORN, a Hunt Class mine countermeasure vessel (ship's company of 40). Deploying with HMS OCEAN will be two Lynx Mk 8, two CH47 Chinook, and four Apache helicopters (some 130 personnel within the Tailored Air Group), and a detachment of Royal Marines of approximately 80 personnel.

For Exercise SABER STRIKE, a significant land exercise in Latvia, the UK will contribute some 170 UK personnel, including the Battle Group Headquarters and an Infantry Company from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles.

The Net Additional Costs of Exercises BALTOPS and SABRE STRIKE are approximately £920,000 and £200,000 respectively.

Ex NOBLE JUMP and TRIDENT JOUST are designed to train the command and control elements of the NATO Response Force that are at high readiness. The UK is not 'rostered' to provide high readiness forces this year and therefore will not be included in these two exercises.

Source: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-05-29/493/>

## Ministry of Defence

Trident Missiles: Testing [\[c142\]](#)

### **Paul Flynn (27.05.2015):**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the results are of all

WP186 missile compensation tests undertaken by Trident submarines since May 2010.

**Philip Dunne (03.06.2015):**

These tests are part of a submarine's preparation for deployment. It may take more than one attempt for a submarine to pass the Weapons Procedure 186 missile compensation test, but Trident submarines do not go on patrol without successfully passing. For the purpose of safeguarding national security I am unable to disclose details of these tests.

Source: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-05-27/142/>

## **Ministry of Defence**

Trident Submarines: Fire Extinguishers [\[c139\]](#)

**Paul Flynn (27.05.2015):**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many formal reports his Department has received of firefighting fog sprays being activated in weapon stowage compartments on Trident submarines in the last five years.

**Philip Dunne (03.06.2015):**

In the last five years there has been one report of inadvertent initiation of the weapon stowage compartment fog spray on Trident submarines.

Source: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-05-27/139/>

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## **2. Early Day Motions**

### **EDM 91 - UK and the NPT Review Conference**

Date tabled: 08.06.2015

Primary sponsor: Lucas, Caroline

Sponsors: Durkan, Mark; McDonnell, John; Day, Martyn; Weir, Mike; Ritchie, Margaret;

That this House notes that in the Government's Official Statement of 23 May 2015 on the conclusion of the 190-member state Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference that finished at the UN in New York on 22 May 2015, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the hon. Member for Bournemouth East said that NPT is vitally important for the international community as a whole and has played an unparalleled role in curtailing the nuclear arms race; further notes he asserted that despite the best efforts of the UK and others, this year's Review Conference was unable to agree a substantive outcome; points out that the failure arose because the UK disgracefully joined Canada in backing the US in blocking the final NPT Review Conference declaration because it promoted a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East as championed by Egypt; further notes with dismay the UK blocked the consensus agreement in support of Israel which opposes Egypt's proposals, even though Israel is not even a party to the NPT; and calls on the Government instead to join with 107 NPT member states who called in New York for a nuclear weapons ban, which is widely supported by civil society groups led by the International Campaign To Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

View [EDM 91 online](#)

## **EDM 73 - Trident and the Strategic Defence and Security Review**

Date tabled: 02.06.2015

Primary sponsor: Corbyn, Jeremy

Sponsors: Lucas, Caroline; Oswald, Kirsten; Paterson, Steven; Williams, Hywel; Durkan, Mark;

That this House notes that a decision on the replacement of the Trident nuclear weapon submarines is due in the life of this Parliament; further notes that the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) will precede that decision; recognises that international circumstances have significantly changed from those in which the current Trident missile system was conceived, designed and constructed; further recognises the Government's decision to require departments to reduce expenditure; and therefore calls on the Government to ensure that the SDSR sets out how it has considered the delivery of UK defence and security capability without nuclear weapons, including threat assessments, estimated costs and all non-nuclear options, as a basis for public debate ahead of the replacement decision.

View [EDM 73 online](#)

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### 3. Publications and Papers

International treaty: [TS No. 10/2015] Protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia

View Online & Print Versions [here](#).

Membership of Cabinet Committee

View Membership of Cabinet Committees online [here](#).

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### 4. Nominations for Select Committee Chairs

All nominations received for select committee Chairs are listed [here](#) including [Defence Committee](#) and [Foreign Affairs Committee](#).

#### **Chair nominations for Defence Committee**

The nominations for Select Committee Chairs ran from 4-10 June and the ballot will be on Wednesday 17 June from 10am to 5pm. Below, you can find the full list of nominees for the Defence Committee, the Committee Chair will be a member of the Conservative Party.

- [Richard Benyon](#)
- [Dr Julian Lewis](#)
- [Bob Stewart](#)

#### **Chair nominations for the Foreign Affairs Committee**

The nominations for Select Committee Chairs ran from 4-10 June and the ballot will be on Wednesday 17 June from 10am to 5pm. Below, you can find the full list of nominees for the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Committee Chair will be a member of the Conservative Party.

- [Mr John Baron](#)
- [Crispin Blunt](#)
- [Richard Graham](#)
- [Daniel Kawczynski](#)
- [Nadhim Zahawi](#)

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## 5. Media watch

### [US nuclear missiles may return to Britain over Russia threat: Foreign Secretary says Government will consider hosting weapons for first time since Cold War](#)

Jack Doyle, Political Correspondent for the Daily Mail.

June 8th 2015.

Britain could once again host US nuclear missiles amid growing tensions with Russia, Philip Hammond indicated yesterday. The Foreign Secretary said the Government 'would look at the case' for cruise missiles to be sited in the UK. He added that Britain needed to send 'clear signals' to Vladimir Putin amid 'worrying signs' of increased military activity by Russian forces – including the installation of missiles in Kaliningrad, an enclave on the Baltic Sea.

The US is considering scrapping a Cold War-era treaty and deploying missiles in Europe in response. Asked on BBC1's Andrew Marr Show if he would back the plans, Mr Hammond said: 'We would look at the case. We work extremely closely with the Americans.

'That would be a decision that we would make together if that proposition was on the table. We have got to send a clear signal to Russia that we will not allow them to transgress our red lines.'

However, he added that the West would not want to 'make unnecessary provocations', and said the question about nuclear missiles was a hypothetical one. Any such move would raise fears about a new Cold War arms race amid continuing tensions with Russia over the Ukraine.

The siting of US cruise missiles at RAF Greenham Common in Berkshire in the 1980s led to years of clashes between police and protesters, mainly women, who set up a series of peace camps near the military base. The camps began in September 1981 and the first blockade of the base occurred in May 1982. In April 1983, about 70,000 protesters formed a 14-mile human chain from Greenham to Aldermaston and the ordnance factory at Burghfield. Media attention surrounding the camp prompted the creation of others at more than a dozen sites in Britain and elsewhere in Europe.

Another encircling of the base occurred in December that year with 50,000 women. Sections of the fence were cut and there were hundreds of arrests. Weapons were kept at the base from November 1983 to March 1991 when

they were removed as a result of disarmament treaties signed by the US and the USSR. The last four protesters left the site in 2000. Mr Hammond said there was 'no clear sign' of an imminent attack on Ukraine but said President Putin was 'keeping his options open'.

The Foreign Secretary told BBC1's Andrew Marr Show Russia has a 'sense of being surrounded and under attack and we don't want to make unnecessary provocations'. David Cameron said yesterday he was hopeful the G7 summit would show 'a united front against Russian-backed aggression' in Ukraine. He said sanctions imposed on Moscow following the annexation of Crimea last year should be retained when they come up for renewal at the end of July.

[View Original Article here.](#)

## **Reviewing a review conference: can there ever be a successful NPT RevCon?**

Henrik Salander, Former Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament, Secretary-General of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission.  
June 8th 2015.

Every time an NPT Review Conference (RevCon) ends without a final consensus document, it is seen as a serious failure and a sign that the Treaty may be falling apart. So far, this has been an exaggeration. Expectations were already low before this year's RevCon ended without agreement. It is clear that the NPT has been under pressure for a long time. State parties have been disappointed with the Treaty for over two decades for diverging reasons: many want more disarmament, others want more effective non-proliferation. Since 1995 every RevCon has triggered a combination of hope and fear, later followed by disappointment.

The undertakings that secured the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995 have been delayed or unfulfilled: the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT), the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the disarmament objectives and the Middle East agreement. Similarly, after 2000 all of these and several additional agreements have been left hanging: the operational status of nuclear weapons, their diminishing role, tactical weapons, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) process. This has bred frustration amongst the Non-Nuclear-Weapon States (NNWS), for whom the slow reductions in nuclear weapons numbers can't satisfy. For the NNWS, it doesn't matter much whether present Nuclear-Weapons States (NWS) have 20,000 or 10,000 warheads between them.

Despite the talk of the NPT being in a crisis, there are no criteria against

which success or failure of the Review Conferences can be measured. The RevCons of 1980, 1990, 2005 and 2015 ended without agreement ("failures"), whereas those of 1975, 1985, 1995, 2000 and 2010 produced consensus documents ("successes"). But there is no discernible correlation between those outcomes and what happened afterwards in nuclear weapons policy and politics.

This doesn't mean however that NPT Review Conferences are unimportant.

Can we know what a consensus agreement is worth? No, because it is impossible to know whether promises and undertakings will be upheld or not. Consequently, it is also impossible to know whether it is good or bad to get a consensus outcome that most governments don't like, as is most often the case with hard-fought compromises. Again this year, delegations and governments were genuinely unsure. Are principled substantive positions better in the long run (even with failed conferences and no agreements) than pragmatic and practical compromises? Nobody can know, since nobody knows whether the compromises will be adhered to. Let's say that the next NPT RevCon in 2020 ends in "failure". That would be the first time that two consecutive RevCons crash. Will that be disastrous? My tentative answer would be probably not in the short term, but possibly in the longer. At the very least, two consecutive NPT non-agreements would make all multilateral approaches to the nuclear-weapons regime much more difficult to manage, perhaps impossible. This pertains not only to disarmament but also to the most pressing non-proliferation problems, such as Iran and North Korea.

It is possible that the longer-term fate of the NPT will be viewed differently before the next Review Conference. The frustration that has built up among NNWS may result in unexpected developments taking place before 2020.

Behind the sour mood and irritated exchanges that permeated last month's conference, one could sense that a line had been crossed – that states parties were approaching a point where their differing views might be impossible to bridge, not only now but also in future conferences. "Forget step-by-step and incremental solutions, now we're talking about a monopoly on ultra-violence." That's what it sounded like at times. "And by the way, you propose incremental steps, and then you block these steps? What's that?"

Behind such sentiments, every NPT delegation knows that very little will change until relations between the NWS have improved considerably.

Significant disarmament will not happen in the present climate.

So the most pressing question now, after the RevCon breakdown, is how

the NNWS manage their disappointment and what conclusions will they draw about any future strategy, especially regarding disarmament. The formal reason for failure to achieve a final consensus document was that the Middle East WMD-free zone process within the NPT is in disarray. Arab states' attacks on the Finnish mediator left a bad taste and will not make it easier to find new help in bridge-building. Egypt may take the issue to the UN General Assembly, a move that most probably will not untie knots or generate tangible progress.

The future of the Humanitarian Initiative is quite unclear at present. It is possible that some states will initiate a process outside the NPT, the CD and the UNGA, aiming at drafting a document prohibiting the possession of nuclear weapons, not involving the five NPT nuclear states or the four outside the Treaty. The underlying hope of the states behind the initiative would be to create a new normative environment for nuclear weapons politics. A ban, in their view, would wipe away the legitimacy of weapons possession and the political value of owning them. The group of countries led by Austria hinted at this when they spoke in the final session about the need to overcome "a reality gap, a credibility gap, a confidence gap and a moral gap".

A much less dramatic line of action might be to start an open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament tied to the UN General Assembly and involving all interested states, including the nine weapons possessors. The group would be consensus-based, thereby almost guaranteeing that concrete disarmament action would not be forthcoming. On the other hand, proponents argue, a process can lead off in unexpected directions. A ban process and an UNGA process are not mutually exclusive. Both can happen before the next NPT Review Conference.

In any case, there is the prospect that the NPT landscape in five years may look quite different from today.

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