



campaign for nuclear disarmament

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Dear Friend,

Please find enclosed the CND General Election Pack. It is designed to help you get our concerns across to all candidates at the forthcoming election and find out what their views are.

Included in it you will find briefing sheets on a number of nuclear issues, which we would like to be put at the top of the political agenda during the election campaign. The information sheets cover Trident, the US National Missile Defence system – known as Star Wars, and NATO and European security. They also touch on crucial issues like the Trident replacement and new nuclear weapons. Information about a wider range of issues can be found on our web site at www.cnduk.org. In the light of the fact that a decision on a replacement for Trident is expected in the next parliament, and work is likely to start at Aldermaston at any moment, we suggest that these could be priority questions. But obviously the location of your constituency will affect your choice.

The pack also includes suggestions on what you can do, model questions, likely answers to questions, a model letter to the press, the current policies of the major parties, and a feedback sheet.

The forthcoming general election is your chance to try and influence the direction of events in the next parliament. Through your MP, the next government must take the nuclear disarmament debate seriously, and work for the elimination of British nuclear weapons as a major contribution to global abolition.

At the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the UK and the other four declared nuclear weapons states gave an 'unequivocal undertaking to work towards the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals'. We must use this election to remind our politicians of this treaty obligation if future generations are to be saved from the threat of nuclear war.

Yours in peace,

Sam Akaki,
CND Parliamentary Officer



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Trident and the global abolition of nuclear weapons

TRIDENT is Britain's nuclear weapon system. It consists of four nuclear-armed submarines, one of which is on operational patrol at all times. Each Trident submarine can carry up to 48 nuclear warheads, each of which can be sent to a different target. Each warhead has an explosive power of up to 100 kilotons, the equivalent of 100,000 tons of conventional high explosive and 8 times the power of the atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima in 1945, killing at least 140,000 people.

Trident replacement

A decision on the replacement of the Trident system is due during the next parliament. The type of replacement that may be proposed is not yet known, but it is thought that rather than being a Trident-type system it might be one of a new generation of nuclear weapons, perhaps designed for battlefield use.

Trident and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

- Britain has made no significant progress on nuclear disarmament since the 2000 NPT Review Conference, despite commitments made there of an 'unequivocal undertaking' to begin the process of global abolition. At the NPT Prepcom in 2003, Britain claimed to have taken steps towards this goal. However all those steps have been refuted as either predating 2000 or simply being inaccurate.
- Since 9/11 and especially during the Iraq War, Britain refused to rule out using nuclear weapons, even as a first strike option, in contravention of international law.
- The recent renewal of the Mutual Defence Agreement (MDA), Britain's nuclear sharing agreement with the US, strengthens the 'special relationship'. It will ensure that Britain's commitment to nuclear weapons remains and it strengthens the risk of new developments.
- New building developments and recruitment at AWE Aldermaston suggest that the government is planning to research and develop a replacement for Trident and/or a new generation of nuclear weapons there. These constitute vertical proliferation and contravene the government's commitment to the NPT.

CND believes that Britain must:

- Scrap Trident and rule out any replacement system.
- Reaffirm commitment to the 13 practical steps agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference and begin their implementation.
- Implement Article 6 of the NPT to pursue negotiations towards nuclear disarmament.



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Star Wars and the race for space

UNITED STATES' efforts to achieve 'Full Spectrum Dominance' through the implementation of its Star Wars National Missile Defence Programme continue unabated. The system is portrayed as a defensive measure which aims to employ a complex array of radars, satellites, missiles and control centres worldwide to detect, monitor and destroy a limited number of inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) fired at the US. In reality it is part of the US bid for global military dominance because it will protect the US from retaliatory strikes, allowing the US to launch pre-emptive strikes with impunity. The system is already leading to a new nuclear arms race as other states seek new and better missiles to break through these defences. The system also raises the spectre of weapons in space.

- The US has withdrawn from the ABM Treaty in order to implement this system.
- Britain is integral to US Missile Defence plans. It hosts two military bases essential to the system – Menwith Hill and Fylingdales in North Yorkshire. The UK has already granted permission for the use of Fylingdales for Star Wars and it is currently being upgraded. This presence in Britain makes the country a front-line target.
- States such as Canada, Russia, China and some European countries are openly opposed to space weapons and are trying to develop a Treaty to ban them, but the US vetoes all attempts and the UK has so far played no useful role in opposing space weapons.
- Canada has recently refused to take part in the Star Wars system – despite intense US lobbying. Why can't the UK do the same?
- Deploying space weapons would have seriously destabilising effects on international relations and disarmament efforts.
- There is a very real possibility that states which see the US as a threat, such as China, could begin their own programmes and hence start a Space Arms Race.

British public opinion

According to an opinion poll commissioned by Yorkshire CND there is overwhelming public opposition to Star Wars and Space Weapons. 72% of respondents believe placing offensive weapons in space would make the world more dangerous. BUT 69% of respondents believe placing 'DEFENSIVE' weapons in space would still make the world a more dangerous place! 63% wanted to see the development of a treaty banning the development and deployment of space weapons, and 67% of respondents oppose British involvement in the US Missile Defence system if it involves the deployment of weapons in space that have a capability of being both so-called defensive and offensive.

CND believes:

- Britain must end its cooperation with the Star Wars system and remove Fylingdales from its operations. It should not allow the use of Menwith Hill for the system.
- The British and US governments should concentrate on genuinely peaceful, multilateral initiatives, working through the United Nations, to help deal with the world's complex problems.



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NATO and European Security

THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION (NATO) was formed in 1949. It is a military alliance of countries from North America (Canada and the US) and Europe (17 states, including Britain). Part of the NATO military strategy is a dependence on the option of the use of nuclear weapons as a first strike option. Those nuclear weapons possessed by the US and Britain can be used on NATO's behalf if necessary. Although ostensibly set up as a defensive organisation, in 1999, its mission statement was redrawn to allow for offensive action, extended to the whole Eurasian landmass.

There are 488 US nuclear weapons under the control of NATO stationed at eight air force bases across Europe. They are located in Britain, Belgium, Netherlands, Turkey, Germany and Italy. The nuclear weapons in Britain are based at United States Air Force base at Lakenheath in Suffolk and consist of over 100 freefall nuclear bombs. They are ready and available for rapid deployment and Britain has no control over their use. Location of these weapons in non-nuclear weapons states - and acceptance by them - contravenes articles 1 and 2 of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

In 1999, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland became the first former Warsaw Pact countries to gain NATO membership. In March 2004 Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania also joined the rapidly expanding group. Current applicant states are Croatia, Albania, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. This creates a further risk of nuclear proliferation if nuclear weapons are sited in these new member states.

CND believes:

- Britain must withdraw from NATO, and all foreign military bases on British soil should be closed.
- NATO should be disbanded and the influence, resources and funding of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) be extended towards a nuclear free, less militarised and therefore more secure Europe.
- There should be no proliferation of nuclear weapons in Europe.



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What you can do

THERE are a number of things that local CND groups and individuals can do in the run up to the election. If you are not familiar with electoral law, it is a good idea to look at the Electoral Commission's website to make sure you are not doing anything wrong! They can be found on www.electoralcommission.gov.uk. Some of the following advice might seem obvious but, nevertheless, do read through it and see what ideas there are for you and your group. The ideas represent different ways of finding out the views of the candidates and publicising both those views and your campaigning. CND is grateful for any feedback that we may get from current MPs or prospective candidates.

Public meetings with the candidates

You can either organise a meeting for all the local candidates, or find out from any of the local political parties when any candidates' meeting is taking place. You may need to get your questions in writing, in advance, to the organisers.

Alternatively, you could invite individual candidates to attend your local group's meeting to speak and answer questions. Please, send their answers to the CND national office.

Private meetings with the candidates

Sitting MPs will have their local surgeries, giving you an opportunity to meet them to find out their views on nuclear disarmament and related issues. Remember to make an appointment by contacting the local constituency office. You may prefer to go in a group or individually. Let the candidate know how many of you will be visiting and, if you have had previous correspondence, refer to it in your letter.

Preparations

Please read the briefings included in this pack before going to the meeting. If you want more depth information on a particular issue, do please refer to the CND website [www.cnduk.org] or call Sam Akaki in the office on [0207 700 2393/07813077561]. It's also a good idea, if you have time, to do some biographical research on the candidate and his or her voting records in the House of Commons. Again, CND office could help you on this.

Meeting the candidates

Introduce yourselves, state your concerns clearly, politely but firmly. Remember that he/she needs you, or rather your vote, more than you need him or her. Stick closely to the issue and try not to get sidetracked into general debate. Remember that not all candidates will be completely frank! This is especially true with sitting MPs and front bench spokespeople. Try to ask questions to probe the candidate's own personal viewpoint and not just those of his or her party. Keep an eye on the time so that you are able to cover all the points you wish to make. You may only have half an hour or so to get your message across.

Just before the end of the meeting confirm and clarify what the views of the candidate are. Also check whether it is acceptable for you to report their views to the local press. At the end of the meeting, leave copies of the briefing sheets with the candidates and thank them for taking the time to meet with you.



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After the meeting

Immediately afterwards, send a letter of thanks to the candidate. In your letter you should summarise what was said. Write a press release for the local newspapers, if you have the permission of the candidate, reporting on the meeting.

Please do fill in and return the feedback sheet included in this pack. If you make copies of the sheet, you can return it after each meeting and not have to wait until you have seen all the candidates.

Suggested questions

These are only to give you an idea of what to ask. Please do rephrase them or come up with your own. There may well be local issues that you consider more appropriate for questions. That's great. You know your area better than we do! So please use these questions as a guide.

1. Do you think the UK's minimum nuclear deterrent policy is consistent with its NPT commitment to work towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons?
2. Do you think it is right for any government to spend up to £1.5 billion every year on Trident when that money is urgently needed in other, more useful areas of society such as health, education, transport and housing?
3. Do you believe that it is a worthwhile investment for Britain to develop a replacement to Trident? If so, how do the benefits outweigh the costs?
4. Do you think that Britain should allow the US Government to use bases such as Fylingdales and Menwith Hill in Yorkshire for use in their proposed National Missile Defence system?
5. Do you agree that we would be better off working for a more effective United Nations representing all nations rather than military alliances such as NATO?
6. Do you think that NATO, a Cold war nuclear military establishment, should remain in existence more than a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union?
7. Did you support the war on Iraq? If so, why?
8. What are your views on pre-emptive military strikes?
9. Do you agree with Mr Geoff Hoon who told Parliament that the UK would, under certain conditions, use nuclear weapons even against a non-nuclear weapons state?

Likely answers to your questions

Some candidates will do everything to avoid or evade your questions by hiding behind their party policies. But not only are nuclear weapons immoral, illegal and expensive, the UK has an obligation as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) 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, and on a treaty on the general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control". (Article VI.) Every candidate should be made fully aware of this obligation.



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Nuclear weapons are no longer a threat

In theory, this should be true. After all, there was a huge amount of publicity when the nuclear weapon states (Britain, US, France, Russia and China) made a statement at the end of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference held in New York in May 2000. In it they gave an 'unequivocal commitment' to get rid of all nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, it hasn't happened. Not only that but Britain, US and France are all part of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) and the policy of NATO includes the first strike option of nuclear weapons. How can any government balance these two commitments?

We need our nuclear weapons in case a fanatic gets hold of the bomb

US nuclear weapons did not stop the 9/11 2001 terrorist attacks. Only the global elimination of nuclear weapons, together with justice for all peoples and social investment to tackle the causes of poverty and inequality, will bring genuine peace and security for all nations.

You can't dis-invent nuclear weapons

True. But you can get rid of them. Chemical and Biological weapons can't be disinvented either but they have been banned under the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention. Both Conventions include strict checks to make sure nobody is cheating. Inspection systems to monitor a Nuclear Weapons Convention already exist. So why not start to negotiate one now?

Nuclear weapons prevent war

Nuclear weapons did not prevent the outbreak of Falklands war, the first Gulf war, the war in Yugoslavia and the current war in Iraq

Britain is a responsible nation; the problem is other countries getting the bomb

Britain might be a responsible country, but its possession of nuclear weapons also gives the incentive for other countries to develop nuclear weapons. There is also the ever-present risk of accidental nuclear explosion, which could have catastrophic consequences.

CND and nuclear weapons issues are not relevant anymore. Other issues such as globalisation and the environment are more important

As long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, CND is relevant. If we don't stop the development, production, deployment and spread of nuclear weapons and related technology around the world there may not be an environment left to worry about. As for globalisation, arms manufacturers are among the biggest corporations on the planet and have enormous 'influence' over governments.

Nuclear weapons drain valuable resources from other areas such as education and health. There is a tremendous opportunity now to eliminate nuclear weapons.

Letters

If you are not able to organise or attend any local meetings, perhaps you could write directly to the local candidates to ask their views on the issues we have raised. This could be in the form of a questionnaire. You could use the questions suggested above, or modify them or devise questions with particular local relevance.

Alternatively, you could use the model overleaf to write a very short and straightforward letter to the local press.



Model letter

Dear Editor,

Every person in (your district/town) should be concerned about weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. This begins here at home with the nuclear weapons kept by Britain at Faslane in Scotland – the US Trident nuclear-armed submarines. For a start they cost all of us £1.5 billion to maintain and a large proportion of that money goes to the US in 'lease-lend' for the missiles.

Geoffrey Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence, stated in Parliament in March this year that 'there is currently no significant threat of a nuclear strike against UK military bases'. Yet the government continues to support this fearful system, which carries 1000 times the killing power of the bomb at Hiroshima. Furthermore, lorries with these dangerous nuclear warheads are routinely carried up and down the busy M1 and, now, the M6, between Aldermaston and Faslane. On our small island no-one lives far from a nuclear convoy.

Please ask your parliamentary candidates what her or his position is on the Trident nuclear-armed submarines.

Yours sincerely,



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2005 General Election feedback form

Please complete a separate feedback sheet for each candidate you meet and return it to the CND office as soon as possible after meeting with a candidate. Please do not wait until you have seen all the candidates before returning the form. Please fill in as many details as you can; obviously not all topics will arise in your discussion.

Constituency_____

Your name_____

Your contact details_____

Candidates name_____

Party_____

Candidates' address_____

Telephone number_____

Background information on the candidate e.g. is he/she a member of your local group/council, local committee, trades union official, religious group or in business?

Does the candidate have much prior knowledge of nuclear disarmament including the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)?

Does the candidate feel that the Trident is essential for Britain's defence or not? What is the reason for his/her answer?



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Does the candidate feel that Britain can be committed to the Trident, NATO and the NPT at the same time?

Does the candidate feel that the UK should support Article 40 of the European Constitution, which calls for a joint defence and foreign European policy?

Is the candidate in favour of the UK's support for Missile Defence?

Does the candidate know that Missile Defence is related to weaponisation in space?

Does the candidate know anything about the US Vision 2020 which could enable the US to achieve full spectrum military and economic dominance on land, air, sea and space?



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Current policies of the main political parties

Key issues	Labour Party	Conservative Party	Liberal Democrats Party	Scottish National Party	Plaid Cymru Party	Green Party	Respect Party	CND
Trident	Replacement to be decided in the next parliament	In favour	Support "Minimum deterrent" policy	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed
New nuclear weapons	Increased funding at AWE	In favour	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed
Counter-proliferation	In favour	In favour	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed
Pre-emptive strikes	In favour	In favour	Must be authorised by the UN	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed
NATO	In favour	In favour	In favour	Wants a negotiated exit	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed
Star Wars	In favour	In favour	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed
EU Constitution on Common Defence and Foreign Policy	In favour	No European army outside NATO	In favour	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed
Nuclear reprocessing	Not decided	In favour	In favour of closing down all the plants at the end of their current life-time	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed