

## UK's nuclear missile system Trident II D5

This month's newsletter is dedicated to the debate around the update of the UK's nuclear missile system Trident II D5.

Almost two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the weapons race between the two opposing blocs, nuclear deterrence seems to have experienced a renaissance in Europe. US plans to employ system components of a missile defense shield on the continent has caused disagreement among European governments, but the Old Continent has already started to think about a sea change. On 19 January 2007, President Jacques Chirac announced that France would be ready to launch a tactical nuclear strike in the face of a terrorist attack, marking another step in the ongoing transformation of the French nuclear capabilities. On the other side of the channel, the British government had published a defense white paper on the replacement of Trident, the UK's missile program, just one month earlier.

Both European leaders bring forward a similar set of arguments: Even though the Cold War has ended, the actual number of nuclear powers is increasing. Nowadays, not only are the five states recognized by the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in the possession of nuclear missiles but also India, Pakistan, North Korea and supposedly Israel. In addition to the end of bipolarity, terrorism has added new impetus to the debate on the importance of ballistic missiles for national security.

The renewal of Europe's nuclear potential is highly contested. In mid-March 2007, the UK House of Commons approved by a majority of 248 the replacement of the nuclear weapons system Trident after hours of heated debate and only with the votes from the Conservative party. According to BBC reports (see below), this has been the most controversial vote since the beginning of the Iraq war, causing 16 former ministers to revolt against their party. The act came under heavy criticism while opponents point to the argument that the country could be protected more cost-efficiently and effectively by other means than an out-dated deterrence strategy. But most of all, it is argued that the renewal of the nuclear weapon systems violates the NPT, according to which each party is obliged to downscale their arsenal.

The UK has been a nuclear power for more than 50 years. In 1994, Trident was introduced to the Royal Navy. It is a submarine-based missile system developed and serviced by the US. At the moment, Britain maintains four submarines which will be outdated within 20 years. For this reason, the government announced the need for renewal and upgrading, in combination with a cut-back in the number of submarines and warheads, also implying that the UK will remain a nuclear power at least until the middle of the 21st century.

This newsletter provides more information on the ongoing controversy in the UK and Europe. You will find links to government, civil society, research and academia, and media publications on this issue below.

Carsten-Andreas Schulz

## **1.1 INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Vienna, Austria

This is the official homepage of the IAEA. The agency, which is part of the UN framework, is an independent international organization created in 1957 to foster the development of "secure and peaceful nuclear technologies." The site contains information on the IAEA's work and provides data and publications on the area of operations, including a link to download the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) - Non-Proliferation & Disarmament: The

Contribution of the European Commission, by the European Commission, Brussels, Belgium

This is the official website of the CFSP of the European Commission. It outlines the EC's standpoint toward non-proliferation, lists initiatives and contains recent press releases.

## **1.2 GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

### **1.2.1 United States**

US Missile Defense Agency (MDA), Washington

The MDA is a US government organization placed under the Department of Defense that is responsible for the development and preparation of a missile defense shield. The website provides basic information on the agency as well as introduces the principle technical features of the program (see Ballistic Missile Defense System Overview)

### **1.2.2 United Kingdom**

The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent: Defence White Paper 2006, by the UK Ministry of Defense, London

This defense white paper on the replacement of the actual Trident D5 weapon system by the early 2020s explains the government's strategy and gives reasons for the maintenance of Britain's nuclear deterrent. According to this paper, the program has to be continued due to the still existing and even growing number of countries with nuclear potential. It shows estimated costs and addresses planned restructuring.

The Royal Navy Submarine Service, London, UK

This is the official homepage of the Royal Navy Submarine Service. It contains information on the nuclear deterrent units of the UK and provides technical information on the Vanguard submarines.

### **1.3 NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Missile Defense Advocacy Agency, Alexandria, US

The Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance (MDAA) is a US-based non-governmental organization dedicated to the lobbying of missile defense shields in the US and Europe. Its homepage contains profiles of most countries' ballistic missile arsenals, defends arguments in favor of the program and features links to relevant US government organizations.

GlobalSecurity.org, Alexandria, US

This site comprises a list of analyses, information on US military and police aid in Colombia and news links. It also has a links library that focuses on issues such as: US and Colombian politics, peace and security, drug policy, and human rights. A part of this site is also available in Spanish.

Trident Ploughshares, Norwich, UK

The Trident Ploughshares program is a civil society group committed to the abolition of the UK nuclear weapon program. They organize protests, workshops and meetings for the public and provide information in the form of newsletters and leaflets.

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, London, UK

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is a non-governmental organization operating in the UK and Ireland. Its website contains reports on recent events regarding nuclear technologies.

The Bulletin Online: Global Security News and Analysis, by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Chicago, US

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists is a non-governmental organization dedicated to science and society. The homepage features the Doomsday Clock which seeks to demonstrate the destructive potential of the world's weapons arsenal. The Bulletin gives an overview on the Trident discussion and provides newsletters and a newsfeed about Trident.

### **1.4 RESEARCH AND ACADEMIA**

Worse than Irrelevant? British Nuclear Weapons in the 21st Century, by Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy, London, UK

This report published by the Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy in 2006 discusses the deterrence strategy related to the Trident upgrade in the face of threats originated from terrorism and environmental issues. It concludes with policy suggestions aiming at downsizing the program to strengthen the non-proliferation regime.

Ballistic Missile Defense, by the UK House of Commons, London, UK

This UK House of Commons Library Research Paper provides a history of US efforts to develop a missile defense system, an overview of the international debate over ballistic missile defense, and an assessment of the emerging ballistic missile threat to the US and the UK. It examines the US' decision to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and considers the costs and potential consequences of the US decision to proceed with deployment. It also examines the position of the UK government on this issue.

Nuclear Weapons Policy in Britain and France: Strategic Thinking and Disarmament, by the Center for Security Studies (CSS), Zurich, Switzerland

This paper is an examination of the changes, continuities and differences in British and French nuclear weapons policy. The author discusses the domestic and international factors affecting both countries' approach to nuclear deterrence and disarmament.

Replacing Trident: Who will Make the Decisions and How?, by the Oxford Research Group, UK

This paper examines the future of Britain's nuclear arsenal. It explores the likely policymaking process for a review of the Trident nuclear weapon system, discusses the government departments involved and the difficulties faced in holding the government to account for its decisions. The author argues that the policymaking process will be tightly controlled and secretive with little hope of effective accountability through parliament and advocacy groups. He concludes by arguing that the British government should take the opportunity afforded by nuclear weapons decisions to conduct a full review of Britain's strategic security policy.

Telos or Brick Wall? British Nuclear Posture and European Defence Integration, by the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), Helsinki

This paper published by the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA) examines the UK's nuclear weapons policy and its influence on the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The author offers an analysis on how nuclear weapons could play a role in the EU's future defense policy. The paper concludes that the issue of nuclear weapons is being avoided by EU politicians and could pose a problem for future security cooperation in the European Union.

The Future of Britain's WMD, by the Foreign Policy Institute (FPI), London, UK

This report discusses replacing the UK Trident nuclear missile system. It examines UK dependence on the US and concludes that most of the discussion on the replacement is based on the false premise that the UK has an independent nuclear weapons program. To support this conclusion, the report reviews the history of UK involvement with nuclear weapons from 1940 to the present day to show a 60-year-old pattern of UK dependence on the US for WMDs. The author argues that with greater freedom of action to work closely with the US, the EU and other partners, the UK should act to renew the multilateral disarmament agenda, which achieved so much in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Future of the British Nuclear Deterrent, by the UK House of Commons, London, UK

This UK House of Commons Library Research Paper from 2006 sets out a number of issues that may inform the Trident debate, including assessments of the future security environment; the UK's international treaty obligations; the potential cost of procuring a successor system; and the implications of dispensing with the deterrent. It also examines public opinion and the options available to the government.

## **1.5 MEDIA**

France 'would use nuclear arms'

This BBC article from 19 January 2006 summarizes French President Jacques Chirac's statement on the possible employment of the French nuclear arsenal as response to a terrorist attack.

### Gorbachev attacks Labour's 'rush to deploy nuclear missiles' until 2050

This is a letter from the former Russian president Mikhail Gorbachev in *The Times* in which he expresses his concerns about the UK's initiative to renew its nuclear deterrent potential. He argues that the modernization is not in line with the principle of non-proliferation and would breach with the mutual agreement that led to the end of the Cold War.

### Q&A: Trident replacement

This BBC website addresses frequently asked questions on the Trident replacement, provides technical information, outlines the discussion and summarizes the arguments of opponents as well as supporters.

**Rebels with a cause: Britain's nuclear deterrent is renewed, but only with Conservative support**  
This article from *The Economist* looks at the Labour party's rebellion in the House of Commons.

### Trident decision has international impact

This BBC article lays out the major arguments against the Trident initiative and provides an outline of the international legal framework. The author argues that the technological upgrading of the UK's nuclear arsenal has the prospect of discouraging countries that have not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty to give up their nuclear programs.

### US missile shield touches raw nerve in Europe

This CNN article analyzes the critique brought forward by the European NATO partners and the Russian government against the US missile defense shield and the planned deployment of system components in former member states of the USSR. While the US states that the missile shield is not directed toward attacks from Russia but rather North Korea or Iran, European leaders have expressed concerns that the initiative would trigger a new arms race and furthermore disunite Europe in security issues.

### Unanswered questions surrounding Trident

This article from the *Financial Times* addresses the Trident case from a budgetary point of view. The author raises the question whether the budget assigned to the technological upgrade will be appropriately spent according to its political outcome.

**UK opts for long-term nuclear deterrent: French and British deterrence capabilities are essential last resort in an era of uncertainty**

The author of this ISN Security Watch commentary analyzes the implications for European security as a whole. He argues that Britain has already shown its commitment to downsize their nuclear capabilities and that the modernization has to be seen in the context of an increased uncertainty. From this perspective, both European nuclear powers contribute to the protection of the European continent.

### Britain's 21st century defense

This ISN Security Watch article widens the scope of analysis and puts both the Trident upgrade as well as the decision whether to purchase two new aircraft-carriers into the context of UK's long term defense strategy. The author argues that a cancellation of the high-cost acquisition would open the space to rethink Britain's position in the world.

