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WILLIAM BAIN MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA



Scotland's For Peace
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05 March 2010

Dear Cardinal O'Brien, Reverend Hewitt, & Ms Lindsay,

Trident

Thank you for contacting me in relation to the above.

I should put on record my opposition to nuclear weapons, and my wish to see a world free of such instruments of destruction. However, the one caveat I would add is that the United Kingdom should not unilaterally disarm. It is only in the interests of both this country and the wider world that disarmament takes place multilaterally. Global problems require global solutions, and it is necessary for all states possessing nuclear weapons to work together to achieve a multilateral agreement to bring about full disarmament.

The real cost of replacing Trident needs to be seen in the context of what the government has accomplished. Since its election in 1997, the Government has increased investment in our schools, hospitals and overseas aid, taken an international lead on issues such as climate change and relieving poverty in Africa and is pushing for bold international action to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Costs for the Trident replacement are similar to other major defence equipment programmes and the average annual procurement costs will represent less than 0.1 per cent of GDP.

The UK is committed to working towards a world free of nuclear weapons, to zero tolerance of proliferation and to the integrity and strengthening of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This Labour Government has worked hard to further nuclear non-proliferation and to make progress on nuclear disarmament.

We cannot discount the risk that a nuclear threat to our vital interests will emerge and the UK needs a credible nuclear capability to deter these threats.



If aggressive states and regimes retain nuclear weapons, whilst more stable and democratic countries like ours allow our deterrent to lapse, the world will become a much more dangerous place. Nuclear weapons pose a uniquely terrible threat and remain a necessary element of the capability we need to deter others possessing nuclear weapons. Unfortunately the conditions have not yet been met to enable the UK to give up its nuclear deterrent, which continues to be essential to national security.

The UK Government decided to make the minimum investment required to sustain our deterrent capability. Replacing Trident is the result of this analysis. From a capacity perspective, a submarine based system offers the most practical and effective means of meeting our future nuclear deterrence requirements. In terms of cost, maintaining a submarine-based deterrent is more cost effective compared with many alternative approaches and is no more expensive than any of the other approaches considered.

Although the decision to maintain a submarine based nuclear deterrent capability is about national security, not employment, maintaining the deterrent will sustain skilled jobs in Scotland. Replacing Trident will directly and indirectly support thousands of jobs across Scotland and Scottish companies will benefit greatly as part of the supply chain for nuclear powered submarines.

Our nuclear deterrent is reaching the end of its lifetime and, despite our best efforts towards non-proliferation, it must be maintained. The Trident renewal programme is the most cost-effective way to do this and, in addition, Scotland will benefit directly from continued security and prosperity.

If you would like to discuss this further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

William Bain

William Bain MP
Glasgow North East