

URGENT ACTION LETTER ON THE REPLACEMENT OF TRIDENT

The UK's nuclear deterrent system, Trident, will come to the end of its life in the mid-2020s. The Government looks set to embark on a course to replace Trident with a new nuclear weapons system.

We live in an uncertain world, but Britain's chances of reversing the proliferation of nuclear weapons will not be helped if at the same time we develop further our own nuclear capabilities. There are other, more effective, ways of improving security around the globe, and many other demands on the billions of pounds a new deterrent would cost.

In November 2006 the Baptist Union Council voted to oppose the replacement of Trident, Britain's nuclear weapons system. This follows a similar decision at the URC Mission Council meeting in October and the Methodist Conference in June.

The Government plan to release a White Paper in December outlining the government's position. There will then be a debate in Parliament in the New Year after which the Government will make a decision in principle on the replacement of Trident. If you are of the view that our government should oppose the replacement of Trident and instead press for non-proliferation, please seriously consider writing to your MP now and encourage others to do so.

Writing to your MP

You can write to your MP at The House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA

If you don't know who your MP is, visit www.upmystreet.com/commons/ or ring the House of Commons Information Office 020 7219 4272

Writing personally to your MP has far more effect than signing a round robin-style letter. Similarly it is more effective for 10 people to write a letter than for 20 to sign a petition.

Explain in your own words why you believe that Trident should not be replaced. You will find a briefing enclosed which gives further details, but you might like to make some of these points – in your own words - in your letter. These points set out the pragmatic arguments against the replacement of Trident in the expectation that these are likely to be the most persuasive with many MPs.

- Our security from nuclear attack is best served by disarmament coupled with strong persuasion of non-nuclear states to forego development of nuclear arms. Further progress on non-proliferation has become urgent. The UK will find it much more difficult to influence disarmament or non-proliferation negotiations if we commit substantial spending to the development of a new weapons system.
- The Non-Proliferation Treaty calls for the abolition of nuclear weapons and the UK government has stated its unequivocal commitment to this aim.
- The end of the cold war and the threat posed by terrorism require a re-evaluation of 'deterrence', the value of which has long been contested. The Defence Select Committee notes that the government has not made the case for deterrence in the post-cold war era¹.
- The cost of a replacement of Trident is likely to be in the region of £15 - £25 billion. The cost of maintaining and running the system will be even more. There are more effective ways to use our taxes to make the world a safer place, for example alleviating poverty or tackling climate change.
- Ask your MP to write to the Secretary of State for Defence raising your concerns. Express your hope that, in the proposed vote in Parliament on this issue, they would oppose the replacement of Trident.

Remain courteous throughout whilst being clear that this is a significant issue for you. Ask your MP to write back to you to let you know how they would vote if the issue comes before Parliament in a free vote and whether they have signed the Early Day Motion (EDM). (You can check whether your MP has already signed the EDM at <http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/Default.aspx>)

¹ Defence Select Committee enquiry report. "The future of the strategic nuclear deterrent: the strategic context" 30 June 2006