

Letters

Nuclear options for the MoD if Trident is kicked out of Scotland

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I do not believe the MoD spokesman's statement that "we are ... not making plans to move the nuclear deterrent from HM Naval Base Clyde" (Trident subs could not be based in Plymouth, MoD reveals, 5 January). It is clear from the recent joint CND and Scottish CND report Trident: Nowhere to Go (2012) that the MoD will have to consider alternative sites for Trident, based on previous studies it carried out for Polaris.

Sites considered in the 1960s included not only Plymouth Devonport (now also rejected for Trident) but also nearby Falmouth or a combination of Devonport and Falmouth, as well as Portland (Weymouth), Milford Haven, shared with the oil terminal and refinery, and Barrow. Overseas options were also examined, primarily in the US (which controls Trident) and France, but these were ruled out as such bases would contravene article 1 of the non-proliferation treaty, which forbids the "transfer to any recipient whatsoever [of] nuclear weapons". So, all these sites were rejected.

Yet, it looks as if the MoD is resurrecting the Falmouth option. Private Eye has revealed that George Osborne is urging Cornwall county council to spend £60m (a third from the government) to dredge a deep channel, more than a mile long, out of Falmouth harbour on the pretext that it would be used by large liners, when there is no demand for such a use.

The French option could be reconsidered under the terms of the Teutates Anglo-French nuclear treaty (2010). This commits the two countries to collaborate on military nuclear research and development and to share facilities.

It seems the government is determined to forge ahead with the renewal of Trident despite the coalition agreement to defer the "gateway decision" until 2015-16. Over £3bn has already been allocated to upgrading facilities to develop a new generation of Trident. So, I think the MoD will be seriously looking at other bases for Trident before the 2014 Scottish referendum on independence.

David Penney

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- The campaign against Trident in Plymouth has raged for the past 25 years and more, with the threat of nuclear contamination to a city of 250,000 people a central issue. Now it is published that a possible 11,000 Plymothians would die from radiation in a nuclear accident in the city. Until now, the political class of all hues here have linked arms to defend the

