

# The Nuclear Implications of the SDSR<sup>1</sup>/NSS

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*The nuclear proposals contained in the SDSR can be divided into five main areas:*

## 1. The Existing Trident Nuclear Force

- “The government will maintain a continuous submarine-based deterrent” (SDSR, p38, para. 3.9).
- The currently 12 tubes operational in each submarine to be reduced to 8, and [maximum (SDSR, p38, para.3.11)] number (of warheads carried by each submarine from 48 to 40 “in line with our commitment to vigorously pursue multilateral nuclear disarmament” (SDSR, p5 and p38, para.3.10).
- This will “reduce our requirement for operationally available warheads from fewer than 160 to no more than 120” (SDSR, p38, para.3.11). The changes in operational missiles and warheads “will start to take effect over the next few years. This will enable us to reduce our overall warhead stockpile ceiling from not more than 225 to not more than 180 by the mid-2020s” (SDSR, p39, para.3.11).
- The life of the current Vanguard class submarines will be extended, as “with sufficient investment we can safely operate them into the late 2020s and early 2030” (SDSR, p39, para.3.13).
- The strategic situation will be reviewed in 2015 and every 5 years thereafter.

## 2. Trident Nuclear Force Replacement Activity

- “We cannot discount the possibility that the number of states armed with nuclear weapons might increase. Equally, there is a risk that some countries might in future seek to sponsor nuclear terrorism.”(SDSR, p37, para. 3.3)
- “the UK’s nuclear deterrent supports collective security through NATO for the Euro-Atlantic area; nuclear deterrence plays an important part in NATO’s overall strategy and the UK’s nuclear forces make a substantial contribution”(SDSR, p37, para.3.4).
- “We will ...proceed with the renewal of Trident and the submarine replacement programme...initial gate will be approved, and the next phase of the project commenced” (SDSR, p38, para. 3.9).
- The building programme for the new submarines can therefore be adjusted “with the aim of delivering the first of the new class of submarines in 2028” (SDSR, p38, para. 3.9).Detailed design work on the new submarines will begin in late 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review Cm 7948* October 2010

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- A decision on whether CASD can be sustained with 3 submarines will be required at the Main Gate, around 2016, on the basis of design work over the next 5 years (SDSR, p39, para. 3.13).
- Under the 1958 UK-US Mutual Defence Agreement “we have agreed on the future of the Trident D5 delivery system and determined that a replacement warhead is not needed until at least the late 2030s” (SDSR, p39, para.3.12). No decision on replacing the warhead will therefore be required before 2015.
- Agreement has also been reached “with the US over the size of the missile tubes in the new submarines” (SDSR, p39, para. 3.12).
- “We have also determined that the next generation of submarines can be configured with only eight operational missile tubes, rather than the 16 on the current Vanguard class. Together with the US, we will now proceed with a common design for the missile compartment that provides that capacity” (SDSR, p39, para. 3.14).

### **3. Nuclear Doctrine/Security Assurances/NPT**

- “we would only consider using our nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances of self defence, including the defence of our NATO Allies, and we remain deliberately ambiguous about precisely when, how and at what scale we would contemplate their use”(SDSR, p37, para.3.5).
- “We...give an assurance that the UK will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states parties to the NPT...we emphasise the need for universal adherence to and compliance with the NPT, and note that this assurance would not apply to any state in material breach of these non-proliferation obligations. We also note that while there is currently no direct threat to the UK or its vital interests from states developing capabilities in other weapons of mass destruction, for example chemical and biological, we reserve the right to review this assurance if the future threat, development and proliferation of these weapons make it necessary”(SDSR p37-38, para.3.7).[While the basic commitment in the first two lines above is similar to that made by the US in their April 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, and both amend informally their 1995 NPT Security Assurances, it differs significantly in other respects. ed].

### **4. Counter Proliferation and Arms Control**

- The National Security Risk Assessment identifies a range of risks faced by the UK from hostile acts or states...a number of capabilities – weapons of mass destruction, emerging technologies, and the systems used to deploy them – ...could dramatically increase these risks if they reached the wrong hands. Direct threats to the UK include an attack by a terrorist group or a state, using chemical, biological radiological or nuclear (CBRN) weapons.....The problem is one that transcends national boundaries and is likely to worsen with the spread of technology over the coming years” (SDSR, p55, para.4.H.1).
- “The national Security Tasks and Guidelines...(includes) the retention of critical capabilities at the national level, and by proactively seeking to

strengthen multilateral initiatives to counter proliferation and secure fissile material and expertise from malicious use...Specifically we will:

- Strengthen central government direction over our strategic counter proliferation priorities. This will be supported by the establishment of a new committee, chaired by the Cabinet office, reporting to the National Security Council...
- Introduce a new common fund-the Critical Capabilities Pool-overseen by the new committee that will bring together the cross-government activities that underpin our strategic priorities. This will ensure that the UK retains the skills and abilities it needs to tackle proliferation risks at home and overseas to tackle proliferation risks at home and overseas...
- Work to strengthen international commitments to non-proliferation treaties... (and) continue to support the international bodies that monitor and verify compliance against these commitments..
- Focus critical programmes for building security capacity overseas...prioritising the security of nuclear, biological and chemical materials and expertise; (SDSR, pp55-56, para.4.H.2).

## 5. Structural Changes in Nuclear Governance

- “We have already established at the heart of the Government the National Security Council, supported by the New Security Advisor and National Security Secretariat” (SDSR, p65, para.6.1).
- “existing centres of excellence within departments will be developed further to meet the needs of the broader national security community in a cost effective and sustainable manner, starting with a **virtual hub for counter proliferation technical assessment** based in the MOD, which will join up proliferation expertise from across the community and wider government” (SDSR, p67, para.6.5).
- “Lead ministers, accountable to the National Security Council, will .....be supported by officials who will lead work across government and in partnership with others including the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international partners, including by:
  - **Co-located teams:** suited to priority areas of work needing joined-up expertise to produce strategy and guide implementation, such as counter-terrorism where experts ...are located to form the Office of Security and Counter-Terrorism” (SDSR, p68, para.6.8).
- “It will be important to drive and monitor the implementation ...of Review outcomes by the following means:
  - regular forums with NGOs, civil society and the private sector led by departments”
- “Ofgem, in the forthcoming Energy Bill, will be given the power to remove unnecessary obstacles to investment in nuclear power, such as planning barriers, so that energy companies can come forward to build new nuclear power without public subsidy” (SDSR, p51, para.4.E.2).
- “The Home Office, MOD and ..DECC..will produce a policing policy for critical national infrastructure, which will explore the potential benefits of aligning policing at these locations, including civil nuclear sites. DECC will

report to the National Security Council on the management of civil nuclear material stocks and will provide both a comprehensive assessment of the risks and threats to safety and security at civil nuclear sites as well as proposals for future actions the Government may take. The Nuclear decommissioning Agency will continue to take forward the cleanup and decommissioning of the civil legacy sites” (SDSR, p51, para.4.E.2.