



Ministry of Defence

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Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of 11 February 2016 to the Defence Secretary in which you raise a number of concerns about the UK's nuclear deterrent. As the official responsible for these topics I have been asked to reply.

Firstly, I thought it would be helpful to set out our deterrent policy. The first responsibility of government is the protection of the UK and its citizens. There are continuing risks to our security from, for example, the re-emergence of a major nuclear threat, merging nuclear weapons states and from state-sponsored (nuclear) terrorism. We believe we can best protect ourselves against these threats by the continued operation of a minimum, credible nuclear deterrent. Accordingly, the Government has committed to maintain the deterrent and to continue with the programme to renew it, as debated and approved by a significant majority in 2007 after the publication of the 2006 White paper on the topic. At the November 2015 debate in the Commons, an SNP motion opposing Trident's renewal was defeated by 330 votes to 64.

The UK views its possession of nuclear weapons as a strategic deterrent. In this sense we use them every day to deter potential adversaries, reassure allies and prevent nuclear blackmail and acts of aggression against our vital interests including our NATO Allies that cannot be countered by other means. We hope never to employ nuclear weapons but to deliver a deterrent effect under all foreseeable circumstances. Our nuclear deterrent seeks to influence a potential adversary's decision making that the consequences of any nuclear blackmail or nuclear attack on the UK or our vital interests, including our NATO Allies, will far outweigh any benefits they expect to achieve.