

remains potentially adversarial and posited on retaliatory deterrence.

For these reasons, as well as because no "rogue" nation ICBM threat exists (or is likely to eventuate in the next decade, if ever), it would be the height of strategic folly for the US to trash the ABM treaty on the pretext of protecting the nation against a non-existent threat. The real threat to the US - the bottom line, as it were - is that, if this decade's attack on the ABM treaty succeeds, by the millenium the entire nuclear arms reduction process may have fallen victim to an unjustifiable desire to deploy an extensive, expensive and needless national missile defense.

Notes and References

1. Report of the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States, 15 July, 1998.
2. The CIA judges that the North Korean Taepo Dong-2 will have a range of between 4,000 and 6,000 km and could reach mainland Alaska and the Hawaiian Islands.
3. Declassified summary of the intelligence community's "1998 Report on the Ballistic Missile Threat," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 28 September, 1998.
4. Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Ballistic Missile Defense, 2 October, 1998.
5. Letter to the President, 5 October, 1998, signed by Senators Lott, Helms, Nickles, Mack, Craig, Coverdale, Kyl and Smith.
6. TASS Newswire, 29 January 1992. Cited in "The Arms Control Obligations of the former Soviet Union," George Bunn and John B. Rhinelander, *Virginia Journal of International Law*, Winter, 1993.
7. For a brief but useful discussion of the history and costs of US anti-ballistic missile defense programs, see *Atomic Audit*, edited by Stephen I. Schwartz, Brookings Institution Press, 1998, pp. 284-298.
8. According to the General Accounting Office (GAO), an investigative arm of the US Congress, "[a]ny decision in fiscal year 2000 to deploy an NMD system by 2003 would involve high technical risk because the associated compressed schedule will permit only limited testing of the system." *Report to Congressional Requesters on National Missile Defense: Even with Increased Funding Technical and Schedule Risks are High*, GAO, June 1998, p. 19.
9. See *Atomic Audit* for a cost survey.
10. *Scientific American*, October, 1984.
11. Accidental or unauthorized launches are extremely unlikely to occur. Chinese warheads are not mated to their missiles and, in the case of Russia, US intelligence and the StratCom Commander General Habiger believe that their control mechanisms are very good. In any case, ballistic missile defenses are not the appropriate response to the threat of a potential failure in command and control arrangements. Operational arms control measures, such as reduced alert rates, separating warheads from delivery systems, and improved electronic locks (PALS) are a much more effective and direct way of dealing with this concern.

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DISARMAMENT ISSUES IN THE UK PARLIAMENT

By Nicola Butler

HOUSE OF COMMONS DEBATES STRATEGIC DEFENCE REVIEW (SDR)

The House of Commons held its annual defence debate on Monday 19 and Tuesday 20 October 1998 (1). Despite the timing of the debate on the first two days after the summer recess, Members of Parliament (MPs) had to be restricted to 10 minute speeches on the second day, due to the high number wishing to take part. Nonetheless, the MPs who spoke were mainly those who have a specific interest in defence, for example members of the Defence Select Committee, former Defence Ministers, and MPs with constituency interests in defence.

Motion and Amendments

The Government motion for debate read simply that "this House approves the conclusions of the Government's Strategic Defence Review" (2). In contrast with US Congressional defence debates, the British Parliament may choose only to support or oppose Defence White Papers as a whole. It may not vote separately on individual sections or projects. MPs therefore use the debate primarily as an opportunity to promote or oppose particular policies and as an opportunity to elicit a Government response on specific aspects of policy.

A short amendment from the main opposition Conservative party welcomed those aspects of the Review that "build on Conservative policy". The amendment made no specific mention of nuclear issues, reflecting that this is no longer an area in which the Conservative front bench perceives Labour to be vulnerable (3). The Conservatives instead focused on the "proposed cuts in money, men, ships and planes", the lack of "clear foreign policy objectives", the proposed fall in defence spending between 1996-97 and 2001-2, and cuts to the Territorial Army. Cutting the Territorial Army was the political issue that dominated debate, due to the large number of MPs who have units in their constituencies.

The Liberal Democrats also submitted an amendment welcoming some aspects of the Review, but regretting a "lack of either vision or practical

proposals for greater European co-operation in defence". The Liberal Democrat amendment went on to state that "*Trident* warhead numbers could be further reduced without jeopardising the security of the UK".

A final amendment was tabled by Labour back bench MP, Tony Benn. Benn - a former Cabinet Minister and veteran supporter of British unilateral nuclear disarmament - regretted an ongoing "higher level of defence expenditure than Britain requires", criticised continuing arms sales to "countries where human rights are denied", and opposed the UK *Trident* programme.

In previous years, following the shift in Labour policy to support of *Trident*, a small group of around 40 Labour back bench MPs have consistently broken ranks with their own leadership to vote against Defence White Papers on the grounds of moral opposition to nuclear weapons. However, this year the only amendment that was put to the vote was the Conservative one.

Speakers

The debate was opened by Secretary of State for Defence, George Robertson, who presented the SDR as giving British armed forces a "robust vision for the next century". He quoted a senior NATO official as describing the Alliance's reaction to the review as "qualified rapture".

The Secretary of State was clearly well prepared for criticism of the Government's progress on nuclear disarmament from Labour back benchers, immediately accepting an intervention from Alan Simpson MP, a well-known proponent of unilateralism. Simpson criticised the Government's lack of commitment to no-first-use of nuclear weapons and asked for an explanation of the UK's sub-strategic nuclear policy. Robertson's response was to highlight "the endorsement by 90% of Labour party members" of Labour's draft election manifesto.

Although pursuit of a multilateral agreement on no-first-use was included in Labour's pre-election policy document, *A Fresh Start for Britain*, Government officials now consistently refer back to the Labour Manifesto, which does not include any reference to no-first-use, to justify lack of progress in this area. Despite pre-election policy statements, the possibility of pursuing a no-first-use policy was addressed during the SDR and rejected.

In support of the UK's record on nuclear disarmament, Robertson went on to quote from a letter from UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, stating:

"[Y]our decision to reduce by one third the UK's stockpile of operationally available nuclear warheads . . . is an important step towards the general disarmament envisaged in Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and at a time when developments elsewhere are subjecting it to considerable strain".

Little reference was made to nuclear policy by the Labour and Conservative front benches. However, Liberal Democrat spokesperson and Defence Select Committee member, Menzies Campbell MP, asked: "If the Government are, as they say, committed to our obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, why do they give the impression that they are content to wait for progress between Russia and the United States?" He called for the UK to take steps "to provide a productive and exemplary lead".

Fellow Defence Select Committee members, Laura Moffatt MP (Labour) and Harry Cohen MP (Labour), also highlighted the Government's commitment to nuclear disarmament. Moffatt urged the Government "to take the lead and reduce the nuclear threat to humanity", whilst Cohen pointed out that the Labour Manifesto did not just commit the UK to retain *Trident*, it also committed the Government "to enter into international nuclear weapon disarmament negotiations".

Labour back benchers provided the strongest support for progress on nuclear disarmament, with Malcolm Savidge MP devoting the whole of his speech to the subject. Savidge concluded that a "third way" was required to overcome "the sterile talk about unilateralism and multilateralism", which has dominated British debates on nuclear policy since the late 1950s. He proposed "unilateral initiatives to achieve multilateral disarmament".

On this occasion, back bench Conservative criticism of the Government's nuclear policies focused on negative security assurances. Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith MP raised the question of nuclear deterrence of chemical and biological proliferators. Quoting from an International Security Information Service (ISIS) publication, he asked: "why should aggressors who do not have nuclear weapons but who are contemplating the use of chemical and biological weapons be given an assurance that nuclear retaliation to such use is entirely ruled out?"

He received no response from the Government, but was joined by Conservative MP, Julian Lewis, who called for negative security assurances to be "rescinded, particularly in the light of the fact that biological weapons have not been abolished, although that was supposed to have happened in 1972".

The debate was concluded by Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, John Spellar, who restated existing Government policy on multilateral disarmament negotiations, but placed this policy firmly within the framework of the SDR. The Government was "working to take forward our commitment [to nuclear disarmament] in the light of the conclusions of the SDR".

Following the defeat of the Conservative amendment, the House of Commons approved the Strategic Defence Review without a vote: an outcome that was never in doubt.

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Since publication of the SDR, the Government has made a number of new statements in response to written questions in both Houses of Parliament, concerning its stance on nuclear arms control and disarmament, and on its nuclear operating posture.

Arms Control

In response to questions on progress on nuclear disarmament, the UK Government has set out its policy as follows:

"The Government set out their comprehensive approach towards nuclear disarmament in the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) in July 1998. Many of the national measures announced in the SDR will help lay the ground for UK participation in multilateral negotiations when the conditions are right. These include the reduction in the size of our deterrent; greater transparency about our nuclear and fissile material stockpiles; placing fissile material no longer required for defence purposes under international safeguards; reprocessing of spent fuel from the defence Chapelcross reactors under international safeguards; beginning a national historical accounting for fissile material produced; and beginning of a programme to develop UK expertise in verifying the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons. In addition, since May 1997 the United Kingdom has:

- ratified the Treaty of Raratonga (South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone) in September 1997;
- ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in April 1998;
- agreed strengthened international safeguards arrangements for the UK with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in September 1998, following international agreement of model strengthened international safeguards arrangements for non-nuclear-weapon States in May 1998;

- played an active role in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Strengthened Review Process in preparation for the next Review Conference in 2000;
- engaged in international consideration at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva of security assurances to Non-Nuclear-Weapon States;
- worked for the successful agreement at the Conference on Disarmament in August 1998 on the opening of negotiations on a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices;
- continued consultations with regional States of South East Asia aimed at moving towards UK signature of the relevant protocols to the Treaty of Bangkok (South East Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone);
- entered into discussions with the States of Central Asia on establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in their region;
- played a leading role in coordinating the international response to the nuclear test conducted by India and Pakistan in May 1998;
- contributed nationally and through the European Union to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO) to assist in full implementation of North Korea's international safeguards obligations; and
- continued to make a major contribution to the IAEA's efforts in Iraq." (4)

In response to a question in the House of Lords on the possibility of establishing a Five Power Nuclear Forum, Government spokesperson, Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean added that:

"Internationally, we welcome the establishment by the Conference on Disarmament of an Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty, and will play an active part in getting negotiations off to a good start. We continue to consider further ways to achieve progress towards our goal of global nuclear disarmament, building on the steps we have taken in the Strategic Defence Review and bearing in mind the commitment by the Nuclear Weapon States to work together for the success of the preparatory process for the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, the conference itself and related issues." (5)

New Agenda Statement

On 30 July 1998, Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Tony Lloyd, gave the following answer concerning the 'New Agenda' Statement of 9 June 1998 (6):

"The 'New Agenda' statement calls for a clear commitment from the Nuclear Weapon States to the speedy, final and total elimination of nuclear weapons. We have made clear our commitment to the global elimination of nuclear weapons. We have taken some important steps towards this goal in the Strategic Defence Review and elsewhere." (7)

At the time of writing (early November), no answer had been received concerning the UK's stance on the 'New Agenda' resolution as submitted to the UN First Committee.

The Minister was also asked what the Government's policy was on the South African Conference on Disarmament proposal to establish an ad-hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, but would only respond that: "We are actively considering how best to follow up internationally the initiatives on nuclear disarmament set out in the Strategic Defence Review." (8)

Negative Security Assurances and No-First-Use

In response to written questions in the House of Lords concerning nuclear retaliation in the case of "aggressor States contemplating the use of chemical and biological weapons", the Government responded as follows:

"The use of chemical or biological weapons by any State would be a grave breach of international law. A State which chose to use chemical or biological weapons against the United Kingdom should expect us to exercise our right of self defence and to make a proportionate response."

On the subject of negative security assurances, Government spokesperson, Lord Hoyle, added:

"We have long given assurances to non-nuclear weapon States who are party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and who meet their obligations under that treaty that we would not use nuclear weapons against them unless they first attacked us in association with a nuclear-weapon State. We considered No-first-use in the Strategic Defence Review but saw no reason to change our and NATO's current nuclear policy." (9)

Trident Warhead Reductions

Further to the SDR's announcement that UK *Trident* submarines would carry a reduced load of

48 warheads, Secretary of State, George Robertson has confirmed that:

- "All three *Trident* submarines normally in the operational cycle will have 48 warheads loaded" (10); and
- "The figure of 48 is the exact number of warheads that the UK plans to deploy on its *Trident* submarines." (11)

In addition, the Secretary of State has given further details of previous warhead deployments:

- On no occasion has a UK *Trident* submarine deployed with more than 65 warheads (12);
- "HMS Vanguard first deployed on patrol with slightly fewer than 60 warheads, prior to the *Trident* force also assuming a sub-strategic role" (13); and
- "The other two *Trident* submarines currently in service have typically deployed on deterrent patrol with 60 warheads." (14)

Consequently, implementation of the SDR's reduction to 48 warheads per submarine will mean that:

"12 warheads are to be removed from each of the three *Trident* submarines currently in service during their next programmed docking in the warhead fitting facility at Coulport. This process will be completed before the end of the year. Production of warheads to meet previous plans had not been completed and we do not need to decommission any warheads to implement Strategic Defence Review changes." (15)

In practice, the effect of the SDR has therefore been to reduce typical *Trident* warhead deployments by only one fifth: somewhat less than the statistics promoted by the Government suggest. The greater effect has been the change in declared policy from a stated maximum deployment of 96 warheads under the Conservative Government to an actual deployment of 48 warheads under Labour.

Trident Missile Deployments

The UK Government announced in the SDR that it would not order any further *Trident* II D5 missile bodies from the United States, beyond the 58 missiles already purchased. The Government continues to withhold details of the exact numbers of missiles carried on UK *Trident* submarines on deterrent patrol under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information. (16) However, some further information has been supplied in response to written questions. According to Secretary of State, George Robertson:

- “Six *Trident* D5 missiles have been test fired as part of the work-up of the three Vanguard class submarines currently in operational service”;
- “On current plans, a further eight missiles will be test fired over the life of the *Trident* programme”; and
- “A further four missiles will constitute a processing margin.” (17)

To date UK submarines have collected 42 D5 missiles from the US. HMS *Vanguard* collected 16 missiles in 1994, HMS *Victorious* collected 12 in 1995, (18) and HMS *Vigilant* collected 14 in 1997. (19) The submarines are therefore deployed with less than their full complement of 16 missiles each. The implication of the new Parliamentary answers is that this practice of deploying with less than a full load will continue as the UK will eventually have only 40 D5 missiles in operational service - not enough to equip fully the three *Trident* submarines normally in the operational cycle.

Notes and References

1. House of Commons, *Official Report*, 19 October 1998, cols. 968 - 1052; House of Commons, *Official Report*, The Stationery Office, 20 October 1998, cols. 1097 - 1180. *Official Report* is available on the Internet at <http://www.parliament.uk>
2. For a detailed summary and consideration of the SDR, see *Disarmament Diplomacy* No. 28, July/August 1998. In October, the Defence Select Committee published its report on the SDR ('The Strategic Defence Review', Eighth Report of the Committee, 1997-98), available from The Stationery Office.
3. For much of the 1980s, the Labour Party advocated total, unilateral nuclear disarmament by the United Kingdom, a policy perceived as being an important contributory factor to the Party's two heavy General Election defeats during that decade (1983 & 1987). See 'Britain, *Trident* and Disarmament,' by Stephen Pullinger, *Disarmament Diplomacy* No. 17, July/August 1997.
4. House of Commons, *Official Report*, 2 November 1998, col. 346-347.
5. House of Lords, *Official Report*, 15 October 1998, WA 121-122.
6. For the full text of the 'New Agenda' statement, issued by Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Sweden - see *Disarmament Diplomacy* No. 27, June 1998.
7. House of Commons, *Official Report*, 30 July 1998, col. 534.
8. *ibid.*
9. House of Lords, *Official Report*, 29 October 1998, WA 224.
10. House of Commons, *Official Report*, 28 July 1998, col. 201.
11. House of Commons, *Official Report*, 16 July 1998, col. 237.
12. House of Commons, *Official Report*, 30 July 1998, col. 453.
13. House of Commons, *Official Report*, 30 July 1998, col. 452.
14. *ibid.*
15. House of Commons, *Official Report*, 16 July 1998, col. 237.
16. House of Commons, *Official Report*, 30 July 1998, cols. 448-449.
17. *ibid.*
18. House of Commons, *Official Report*, 9 May 1995, col. 405.
19. House of Commons, *Official Report*, 1 December 1997, col. 27.

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DOCUMENTS AND SOURCES

UN FIRST COMMITTEE GENERAL DEBATE

United Nations First Committee (Disarmament and International Security), General Debate, 12-21 October 1998

Editor's notes: the Committee agreed on its Programme of Work (A.C.1/53/CRP.1) on 17 September. The Committee's schedule (Summarised in UN Press Release GA/DIS/3105) is as follows: general debate, 12-21 October; "exchange of views on the rationalization of work and reform of the Committee's agenda," 21 October; "thematic discussion of specific disarmament and international security items and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under those items," 23 October-2 November; action on draft resolutions, 3-13 November. Coverage of the Committee's deliberations will continue in the next issue.

The Chair of the Committee is Andre Mernier of Belgium.

With the exception of the opening statement in the General Debate by the UN Secretary-General, the extracts below are taken from official UN summaries which utilize the speakers' words as much as possible.

UN Secretary-General

Opening Statement by Kofi Annan, 12 October

"As you know, I decided last year to re-establish the Department for Disarmament Affairs with an Under-Secretary-General as its head. I was very pleased that the General Assembly supported that decision. I am glad also that it acted on my recommendation to review the work of the Disarmament Commission, and of this Committee. I know you plan to update, streamline and revitalize your work, and I look forward eagerly to the results. ...

It is sometimes said that weapons do not kill: people do. And it is true that in recent years some horrific acts of violence have been committed without recourse to sophisticated weapons. ...

Small arms are used to inflict death or injury on thousands upon thousands of civilians every year. ... So disarmament has to concern itself with small weapons, as well as large. I am glad that the international community is now coming to realize this.