



**Evidence to the Defence Select Committee on their inquiry into the future of the strategic nuclear deterrent: the UK manufacturing and skills base**

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**Amicus is the UK's second largest trade union with 1.2 million members across the private and public sectors. Our members work in a range of industries including manufacturing, financial services, print, media, construction and not for profit sectors, local government, education and the health service.**

1. There are currently 115,000 people employed in the Aerospace and Shipbuilding sector, Amicus represents 63,000 members within this sector, and at the BAE Systems factory at Barrow-in-Furness there are currently 1,000 Amicus members, at Devonport Dockyard there are 1500 Amicus members with a further 13,500 jobs dependent on the yard, at the Faslane Naval Base there are 500 Amicus members with a further 6000 jobs supported by the naval base and at the Coulport Naval Base, out of 400 employees, 200 are Amicus members and there are 1200 people whose jobs are dependent on the shipyard. A further 140,000 people are also indirectly supported by the Aerospace and Shipbuilding industry. These figures show that a very large number of workers are wholly dependent on the work commissioned by the MoD in relation to the nuclear deterrent and the platforms designed and built at these sites.
2. The most significant concern for Amicus members within this sector is the protection of their jobs, their skills and their livelihoods. Barrow is the only submarine production yard in the UK, the capability, skills and expertise of the workers is unique in the UK. This level of skills and expertise demands to be protected, encouraged and utilised. The only way this will happen is with the continued investment by the MoD in providing a UK replacement nuclear deterrent.

3. The UK Government has clearly committed itself to a replacement for the existing nuclear deterrent 'strong in defence in fighting terrorism, upholding NATO, supporting our armed forces at home and abroad and retaining our nuclear deterrent'<sup>1</sup> The Government has indicated that a decision on replacing Trident will be needed during the current Parliament. Tony Blair has promised 'the fullest possible debate' on the replacement of Trident.
4. In any discussion regarding a replacement for Trident, consideration needs to be accorded to what that replacement should be. Trident was designed and developed to counteract the threat posed by the size and technical capabilities of the Soviet Union, however this threat no longer exists but there have emerged other and as equally challenging areas of conflict within the world today. As a consequence of this, questions need to be asked about the existing nuclear capabilities and what is needed for these future strategic operational challenges.
5. UK current capability comprises 4 Vanguard class nuclear powered submarines (SSBN's) each with 16 launch tubes of trident D.5. Missiles. All other nuclear weapons systems were phased out by the end of the 1990's and the situation now is to clarify whether the replacement of Trident is also to be a submarine based capability.
6. Government surveyed other weapons delivery options before the 1980 Trident option was taken and the alternatives currently being looked at are not very different from those available when Trident was chosen. The other replacement options currently being looked at are;
  - a) Land based missiles, these present an unacceptable level of vulnerability, with little capability of supporting protection commitments in distant regions.
  - b) Air launched missiles, there would need to be a significant increase in the financial investment if this option were chosen. This investment would need to create and provide for aircraft, missiles and warheads of a kind that the UK currently does not possess. There are also serious concerns about where this type of capability would be based.
7. The most obvious option is to retain the existing operational base and established infrastructure of submarine based missiles, with something that is more flexible but with the strategic capabilities of the submarine, whereby it is difficult to detect and also difficult to attack.
8. The cost of the new capability (£15-20 billion has been suggested) is a sizeable sum but is manageable when viewed as part of the whole defence budget. The procurement of a new generation of submarines designed and built in Barrow-in-Furness would ensure the retention of

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon Brown – Speech at the Mansion House, City of London, 21 June 2006.

the existing jobs and skills base, while encouraging companies and workers to up their skills levels to take on board the new skills requirements for this new generation of submarines. It should also be noted that the Royal Navy currently possesses the experience and skills to operate the submarine deterrent system, while any change to the existing system could result in significant operational problems that could take decades to overcome and would need a momentous investment in re-skilling, training and resource capabilities of Royal Navy personnel.

9. Other agencies have argued that the money spent on defence, and in particular the nuclear deterrent could be better utilised with spending on health or education. This is a totally impractical suggestion. If the money spent on the defence budget ceased, this money would not necessarily be used for further public sector provision. The idea is unsustainable and impractical. The funding of the replacement nuclear deterrent will ensure that many high skilled jobs are retained, new jobs created and many workers in the industry will be allowed to enjoy a position of relative security.
10. The UK needs a British designed and built deterrent. The considerable amount of investment required within the industry would ensure a programme of research and development that would take the UK to the forefront of technological design and manufacture. In real terms this will ensure the future prosperity and security of many jobs in this manufacturing sector. It would be insupportable to envisage that this amount of investment could be sent out of the UK and off-shored to another country. Amicus is prepared to do all it can to support its members in retaining their jobs, protecting their livelihoods and encouraging them to further the view of workers in the UK manufacturing sector as highly skilled and highly trained.
11. The existing Vanguard class submarine has a design life of 25 years, to ensure there is something in place before 2020; replacements will need to be on the drawing board by 2007. The Trident programme was the largest ever UK defence procurement project and was delivered on time and within budget. The domain expertise and intellectual property remains at Barrow and Amicus hopes this will encourage and enable the MoD to aim for a similar outcome by retaining the submarine capability system at Barrow, while acknowledging the substantive contribution the workers have made to the success of the project.
12. The design capability at Barrow is unique; no other place in the UK has this level of design concentration. If this capability is lost the capacity to design and build other ships is also lost. SEMTA<sup>2</sup> has undertaken a supply chain analysis on training and skills and the local dependency on this employer. The training and skills capability of this sector cannot

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<sup>2</sup> The Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering, Manufacturing Technologies Alliance

be ignored; BAE Systems has taken on 50 new apprentices as part of their commitment to the continued investment in training and skills. This opportunity for training in an 'Objective 2'<sup>3</sup> area, that is polarised, disenfranchised and with high levels of unemployment cannot be stressed too strongly.

**Derek Simpson  
General Secretary  
Amicus the Union  
35 King Street  
London  
WC2E 8JG**

For further contact or information:

Janet Golds Research Officer  
Tel: 020 7780 4008  
Email: [janet.golds@amicustheunion.org](mailto:janet.golds@amicustheunion.org)

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<sup>3</sup> Funded through, the England Rural Development Programme  
[www.defra.gov.uk/rural/structure/obj2.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/structure/obj2.htm)