

OXFORD UNION –THURSDAY 11 Nov 2010

Remembrance – The 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th Month

THIS HOUSE WOULD SCRAP TRIDENT

Thank you for inviting me – I am honoured to be here.

Where do I stand on this? Where am I coming from?

I am the Founder and Chief Executive of the United Kingdom National Defence Association (UKNDA) – and our purpose is:

To campaign for sufficient, appropriate and fully funded Armed Forces that the Nation needs to defend effectively this Country, its people, their security and vital interests wherever they may be.

Straight away I would submit to you that this country has got its national priorities wrong. Politicians of all persuasions often say that Defence is the first priority of any government; indeed our new Prime Minister joined that Band Wagon and has repeatedly said in the House and in public that **Defence of the Realm is his first priority.**

Now we, the UKNDA, say that is patently untrue because, in the financial order of things Defence is sixth or seventh – way down on the list – of budget allocations.

In Defence terms however TRIDENT, the nation's nuclear Deterrent – is at the top of the Defence Priorities.

WHY DO WE HAVE A DETERRENT? Because for the past forty years the Nation – as represented by the various Governments – have, as a political decision, decided that the country needed a nuclear deterrent – and in that time we have always had an SSBN at sea.... and there has been no nuclear war - Deterrence has worked.

Our present coalition government and the opposition both agree that we need a Deterrent. If they didn't then we wouldn't be having this debate.

WHAT IS A DETERRENT? It is a reliable effective force of overwhelming power that deters a potential enemy from using a similar or lesser force against us.

If a Deterrent is not reliable – it is useless.

If it is not effective (if it doesn't work) – it is useless.

If it is not overwhelming, then it gives the potential enemy a reason to think that they can risk it, ignore it and overcome it.

Like its predecessor POLARIS, the TRIDENT missile is a proven reliable weapon. It is effective – it works. The power it can project and the effect it would have on any enemy would be overwhelming.

SO, ACCEPTING THAT WE NEED A NUCLEAR DETERRENT – WHAT DO WE NEED?

Land based missiles? No – the whereabouts of their launch pads or bases can be identified by a potential enemy and are thus liable to a pre-emptive strike.

Missile carried by and launched from aircraft? Aerodromes can be attacked – aircraft can be shot down with relative ease.

The only elusive undetectable vehicle is a nuclear submarine armed with intercontinental ballistic nuclear tipped missiles.

To be an EFFECTIVE DETERRENT – that deterrent needs to be at constant readiness – not just available from time to time. Thus one Trident submarine must be on patrol at any one time. That means that we must have at least a minimum of FOUR submarines – one on patrol – one will be coming off patrol and into maintenance and refit – one will be training and preparing to go on patrol – and the fourth is on standby to fill in any gap caused by unforeseen accidents or collisions.

THOSE ARE THE PRACTICALITIES – To have an effective Deterrent we need four SSBNs.

WHAT IS THE THREAT?

Potential enemies who have or who seek to have nuclear weapons with which to attack us or disrupt our vital interests.

WHERE is the Threat? Who are the nuclear powers?

The USA. RUSSIA. CHINA. FRANCE. ISRAEL. INDIA. PAKISTAN.
NORTH KOREA. IRAN??? AL QUEDA??? Dirty bombs?

You can't UN-invent the nuclear bomb – you can only seek to prevent its use.

CLOSING SUMMARY

You can't have DEFENCE ON THE CHEAP

For sixty years since the Second World War this country has been steadily and consistently disarming. Our Armed Forces are now smaller than they have ever been and are approaching a point of no return when they will be unable to defend effectively this country, its people and their vital interests..

The recent Strategic Defence and Security Review was rushed in order to be completed before the results of the Comprehensive Spending Review were announced.

In practice, this was a Strategic Defence and CUTS review.

The Trident deterrent force has been put at risk because – incredibly – the almost complete programme to provide the RAF with nine brand new Nimrod Mk 4 maritime surveillance aircraft has been cancelled. Such state of the art aircraft are essential to ensure the security of our SSBNs as they set out on the three month patrols – they can 'clear the way' by detecting any potential enemy submarines that lurk just outside our territorial waters of NW Scotland where lies their home base of the Clyde Submarine Base.

The decision to discard these aircraft after more than £3 billion pounds has been spent on them is folly in the extreme and should be rescinded before it is too late.

MY APPEAL TO THIS FAMOUS GATHERING.....

Ladies and Gentlemen – You are a part of world famous gathering – the Oxford Union. Home of the nation's finest minds and intellects. I urge you to use your minds and intellects to defeat this motion.

In 1933 your predecessors astounded the world and staggered this country by declaring that "This house will in no circumstances fight for King and Country". That infamous declaration resonated throughout the world – but

followed in the path of our politicians who were – in the face of stark realities – still disarming while Germany, Italy and Japan were rearming as fast as they could. The Germans, Italians and Japanese took heart from what was said in this place at that time and gave succour and hope to our enemies.

At that time Winston Churchill – still a lone voice crying in the wilderness – condemned that motion – and persevered with his crusade to bring the country to its senses and re-arm. In the later 30s this country (our politicians) at last saw – not the light of day – but the darkness that was gathering all about them. We rearmed – but almost too late – and WWII was upon us.

To his dying day Winston always maintained that if we had rearmed in time, if we had maintained our defences – then WWII and its awesome costs of millions of lives lost and incalculable sums of money squandered could have been avoided.

Ladies and Gentlemen – we are now repeating history. 1930's was the time of the "Great Depression" and we were disarming. Today we are now endeavouring to struggle out of a 'global depression' – but we are repeating the errors of our forebears and are still disarming! The disarming is not in the 'charming' sense – but is now alarming in the extreme.

DEFENCE OF THIS COUNTRY, ITS PEOPLE AND THEIR VITAL INTERESTS WHEREVER THEY MAY BE is the first priority of any Government – but we need to make it so.

Your voices will be listed to. This evening's work WILL make headlines.

Either way you vote this evening you may shock the world. If you take the easy way – claim financial necessity and a high moral justification – then vote scrap Trident, and you will help to weaken this Country even further and consign us to the third division of nations. We will inevitably lose our place on the Security Council of the UN – to be supplanted by the fast growing nations of India and Brazil. Any such decision will, in future times and like your predecessors before you, be derided as being infamous. If you vote to scrap TRIDENT – then you know not what you do!

Or – rather - take the high ground, the hard ground, and vote to keep Trident. Save the Deterrent – if it works (as it has done for more than 40 years) then we shall never have to fire such a terrible weapon in anger. Silence and peace is golden – but comes at a cost.

If we throw away our nuclear deterrent our enemies will gloat with glee and we will be in inevitable mortal danger. You here tonight can be of great service to our country – vote to defeat the motion and keep TRIDENT.

JLM 11 Nov 2010