



House of Commons  
Scottish Affairs Committee

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**The Referendum on  
Separation for  
Scotland: Terminating  
Trident—Days or  
Decades?: Government  
Response to the  
Committee's Fourth  
Report of Session  
2012–13**

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**1st Special Report of Session 2012–13**

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## The Scottish Affairs Committee

The Scottish Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Scotland Office (including (i) relations with the Scottish Parliament and (ii) administration and expenditure of the offices of the Advocate General for Scotland (but excluding individual cases and advice given within government by the Advocate General)).

### Current membership

Mr Ian Davidson MP (*Labour/Co-op, Glasgow South West*) (Chair)  
Fiona Bruce MP (*Conservative, Congleton*)  
Mike Crockart MP (*Liberal Democrat, Edinburgh West*)  
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Jim McGovern MP (*Labour, Dundee West*)  
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Lindsay Roy MP (*Labour, Glenrothes*)  
Dr Eilidh Whiteford MP (*Scottish National Party, Banff and Buchan*)

The following members were also members of the committee during the parliament:

Cathy Jamieson MP (*Labour/Co-op, Kilmarnock and Loudoun*)  
Mark Menzies MP (*Conservative, Fylde*)  
Graeme Morrice MP (*Labour, Livingston*)  
David Mowat MP (*Conservative, Warrington South*)  
Fiona O'Donnell MP (*Labour, East Lothian*)  
Julian Smith MP (*Conservative, Skipton and Ripon*)

### Powers

The committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

### Publication

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the internet at [www.parliament.uk/scotaffcom](http://www.parliament.uk/scotaffcom). A list of Reports of the Committee in the present parliament is at the back of this volume.

The Reports of the Committee, the formal minutes relating to that report, oral evidence taken and some or all written evidence are available in a printed volume. Additional written evidence may be published on the internet only.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Eliot Wilson (Clerk), Duma Langton (Inquiry Manager), Gabrielle Hill (Senior Committee Assistant) and Ravi Abhayaratne (Committee Support Assistant).

### Contacts

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## First Special Report

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The Scottish Affairs Committee reported to the House on *The Referendum on Separation for Scotland: Terminating Trident—Days or Decades?* in its Fourth Report of Session 2012–13, published on 25 October 2012. The Government response to the Report was received on 19 December 2012.

## Government response

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The UK Government is pleased to present its response to the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2012-13 *The Referendum on Separation for Scotland: Terminating Trident – Days or Decades?* (HC 676)

The first duty of any government is to ensure the security of the nation, its people and their vital interests. Consequently, successive UK Governments have retained an independent nuclear deterrent as an essential contribution to our security. As the Strategic Defence and Security Review of 2010 concluded, the nuclear deterrent provides the ultimate guarantee of our national security against the most extreme risks from nuclear-armed adversaries. The UK's minimum nuclear deterrent is designed to deter and prevent blackmail and acts of aggression against our vital interests that cannot be countered by other means. It also supports collective security through NATO for the Euro-Atlantic area. The UK Government has thus committed to maintain the strategic nuclear deterrent and to continue with the programme to renew it as debated and approved by a significant majority in Parliament in 2007.

The Government is committed to a continuous submarine-based deterrent, and has made clear that Continuous At Sea Deterrence (CASD - Operation RELENTLESS) remains the backbone of our deterrence posture. Operation RELENTLESS is the UK's most enduring current operation and has been successfully delivered for over 43 years. By being continuously at sea, it neither escalates nor de-escalates, maximising political freedom of manoeuvre in crisis. A submarine launched ballistic missile system offers invulnerability, range and endurance. All promote the credibility of this ultimate safeguard for national security.

The Government does not intend to conduct any review on the future of the UK nuclear deterrent. The Government's policy remains as set out on 18 June 2012 (Hansard House of Commons Official Report, column 611), that the VANGUARD Class submarines will be replaced at the end of their lives in the late 2020s/early 2030s by a successor submarine carrying the Trident missile, subject to main gate investment approval for the project in 2016.

The UK Government's position on the referendum on Scottish independence is clear: Scotland benefits from being part of the UK and the UK benefits from having Scotland within it. We are confident that the people of Scotland will choose to remain part of the UK

and are not planning for Scottish independence or to move the strategic nuclear deterrent from Her Majesty's Naval Base Clyde (HMNB Clyde).

If the result of the referendum on Scottish independence were to lead to the current situation being challenged, then other options would be considered. Any alternative solution would come at huge cost. It would be an enormous exercise to reproduce the facilities elsewhere. It would cost billions of pounds and take many years. It is impossible to estimate how much it would cost to replicate the infrastructure, which would depend on many factors including timescales and the precise scope of the facilities that might be required.

The initial decision to base the nuclear deterrent on the Clyde was taken in the 1960s, with the introduction of the RESOLUTION Class Polaris ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs). This decision was reviewed in the 1980s alongside the decision to introduce the VANGUARD Class Trident SSBNs. At that time it was concluded that the Clyde continued to offer the best location; nothing has happened since to alter that conclusion; indeed the Clyde has been chosen as the submarine centre of excellence and all our submarines will be based there by the end of this decade.

HMNB Clyde is the largest employment site in Scotland, with around 6,700 military and civilian jobs and this is projected to increase to around 8,200 by 2022. The Base is a major source of employment for highly skilled workers and a significant contributor to the local economy. The rise in the number of jobs over the next decade accompanies the move to base all Royal Navy submarines on the Clyde to achieve economies of scale and the greater effectiveness of collocation; this symbiosis of a submarine centre of specialisation and associated contractor and base support is a matter of pride for the United Kingdom. It is for the Scottish Government to explain how this quality and quantity of employment in the region would be matched if the enterprise had to be relocated.

HMNB Clyde underwent a significant investment programme to prepare it for the introduction of the VANGUARD Class submarines, and Trident missile system; that programme cost in the region of £3.5 billion at 2011/12 prices, and this built upon decades of investment in the base infrastructure and associated housing. Any replication of facilities would cost at least that much and probably more. Since the collocation benefits would be required in any alternative location, there would be no question but that the entirety of the submarine enterprise on the Clyde would be relocated.

As the UK Government has no plans to unilaterally disarm, there would inevitably be time and cost implications if an independent Scottish Government demanded the withdrawal of the UK deterrent. The UK Government will not pre-negotiate the departure of Scotland from the UK. Therefore scenarios mentioned in the Committee's report under which the UK may negotiate a basing agreement for the deterrent with an independent Scottish Government will not be discussed prior to the outcome of the referendum.

Nor do we plan to discuss this with our international partners. The appropriate facilities do not exist in France and to use facilities at King's Bay in Georgia USA would present a complex logistic and cost challenge. Operations from any base in the USA or France would

greatly compromise the independence of the deterrent and there would be significant political and legal obstacles.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the Government remains committed to an independent nuclear deterrent as the bedrock of the UK's national security, and is making no plans to move the VANGUARD Class submarines from HMNB Clyde. The Government is not planning for Scottish independence as it is of the view that Scotland benefits from being part of the UK and the UK benefits from having Scotland within the UK. The UK Government is therefore confident that the people of Scotland will choose to remain part of the UK, and is not planning for any other outcome.