

*Correspondence between John Glen and Tony Miller
regarding John Glen's position on Trident replacement*

From: GLEN, John
Sent: 07 February 2015 10:08
To: 'Tony Miller'
Subject: RE: Show your opposition to Trident WMD renewal

Dear Tony,

Many thanks – I understand and respect your position, even if I do not personally agree. I think you need to contemplate one reason why we don't have a nuclear exchange is paradoxically because we have nuclear weapons – mutually assured destruction is a terrifying concept but it has kept us from nuclear war – I suggest the key word is “mutually”...

Very best

John

From: Tony Miller
Sent: 06 February 2015 13:45
To: GLEN, John
Subject: RE: Show your opposition to Trident WMD renewal

Dear John

Thank you so much for taking the time and trouble to reply to my latest email.

I agree that we are unlikely to agree but I simply wish to say that I cannot envisage a case where the use of nuclear weapons either in retaliation or as a first strike is ethically justifiable, by which I mean that I would rather give up my life and, if necessary, the lives of other innocent people rather than take part in a nuclear exchange.

Kind regards

Tony

From: GLEN, John

Sent: 28 January 2015 15:52

To: 'Tony Miller'

Subject: RE: Show your opposition to Trident WMD renewal

Dear Tony

Thank you for your email.

Personally, I think it is difficult for politicians to outline specific scenarios where we can conceive of using a nuclear deterrent. It should be used only when there are absolutely no options left. It is not part of our conventional arsenal and it would never be treated as such by any Government. In terms of security risks facing us today, there are bigger immediate risks like terrorism.

But what we cannot say with certainty is that this position will stay the same. Given the pace of advancement (and the speed with which India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel have acquired certain capabilities too), it is becoming more difficult to stop the spread of the underlying technology. There is a limit to how much diplomacy can stop the physical movement of knowledge and technology between states, and indeed between groups who would seek to do us harm and do not share our world view.

Trident is a capability we will keep up to 2060: asking me for details of a time when we would use it is like gazing into a crystal ball trying to predict what the biggest security threats will be in thirty years' time, and then in forty years' time. I am not suggesting that all these groups are seeking nuclear armageddon tomorrow, but if we lose the capability, it is not something we can simply bring online again in a couple of years.

I do also question, however, what alternatives there are to deter nuclear threats – given there are over 17,000 nuclear weapons in existence? We

conducted a review of Trident alternatives, and this concluded that 'none of these alternative systems and postures offers the same degree of resilience as the current posture of Continuous at Sea Deterrence, nor could they guarantee a prompt response in all circumstances'.

I am sure we would all like to see nuclear weapons eliminated altogether, but the reality facing us is that will not happen in the short term. We have met our own commitment to reduce the number of operational warheads to 120 – but other states in possession of nuclear weapons have not followed this example, and others seeking to acquire the technology have not been deterred either. Nevertheless, we are committed to pulling together a strong package of negotiations for the next round of Non Proliferation Treaty talks.

As the Secretary of State for Defence said, retaining a deterrent and seeking a world free of nuclear weapons are not mutually exclusive options: there is a difference between scrapping a capability overnight and progressing towards disarmament gradually in a fashion that may ultimately be more achievable.

I am sorry that we will have to agree to disagree on this matter.

Very best

John

From: Tony Miller

Sent: 24 January 2015 18:58

To: GLEN, John

Subject: RE: Show your opposition to Trident WMD renewal

Dear John

Thank you for your response.

While I can understand your reluctance to give up Trident, I would, if I may, put just two questions to you –

At what theoretical point would/should our country use our “nuclear deterrent”? Of course, I am not talking about *threatening* to use. And what would the consequences of such use be?

Is it right for our country to retain a weapon of mass destruction while the vast majority of countries don't? How can we justify that while forbidding other countries, via the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, to do the same?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Tony

P.S. Would it not be a better use of Trident for the money to be spent on shoring up the NHS?

From: GLEN, John

Sent: 22 January 2015 16:56

To: 'Tony Miller'

Subject: RE: Show your opposition to Trident WMD renewal

Dear Tony,

Thank you for writing to me about Trident renewal. I realise that a number of my constituents have an ideological objection to our retention of a nuclear deterrent – and I respect those views.

Personally, I believe there is still value in having a deterrent in a world where the threats we face are constantly evolving: in an unpredictable world where the capability to acquire nuclear weapons is not beyond the reach of a number of states, I believe there is an imperative for our own position to remain unchanged.

As remarkable as it seems, the objective of our deterrent is not to use it on other states. It is to prevent nuclear blackmail and acts of aggression against our interests that cannot be countered by any other means. However, it requires constant maintenance and, if we are to have a deterrent, I think we can agree it

should be underpinned by the best technical knowledge in the world and operate safely and reliably to the highest standards.

I welcomed the debate in the House of Commons on Tuesday – it is always important to debate these issues so a full range of views can be represented. However, on this occasion the motion that Trident should not be renewed was defeated by 364 votes to 35 which represents a strong consensus. Similarly the last vote held in 2007 was overwhelmingly in favour of renewing our deterrent, with a cross-party majority of 248 votes. Tuesday's vote has, I think, shown that public opinion has not changed substantively in this time.

So whilst I welcome the debates on Trident, I am afraid I would disagree with your viewpoint. Despite successes over recent decades in limiting the number of states with nuclear capabilities, we cannot dismiss the possibility that a major direct nuclear threat to the UK might re-emerge. For this reason I believe it is absolutely vital that we maintain a continuous independent nuclear deterrent as the ultimate guarantee of our national security.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me. Whilst we may disagree, I hope you can understand my position.

Very best,

John

From: Tony Miller

Sent: 20 January 2015 15:34

To: GLEN, John

Subject: Show your opposition to Trident WMD renewal

Tony Miller

Dear John Glen MP,

I urge you to express your opposition to Trident replacement and vote in support of the motion 'That this House believes Trident should not be renewed' on Tuesday 20th January.

In light of austerity, the £100 billion cost of the replacement is unaffordable; in terms of our post-Cold War security requirements it is an outdated and irrelevant white elephant; and in terms of legality it flies in the face of our 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty commitment to nuclear disarmament

MPs elected in May will vote on whether or not to replace the Trident nuclear weapons system at a cost of £100bn as the Government recently announced a decision will take place in 'early 2016'.

This Tuesday's vote is an early opportunity for MPs to express their opposition and indicate their views to the public and is likely to influence how people vote in May.

Please use this opportunity to vote against Trident replacement, by supporting the motion.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Miller