

In detail

1. 'The ultimate guarantee of our national security'

A submission to Scottish Affairs Select Committee from the UK Government in January 2013 stated:

*“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.”*

2. The cost of the UK's nuclear deterrent

The nationalists often make arguments against the UK nuclear deterrent on the basis of cost.

The anti-UK campaign has argued that Scotland's share of the annual running cost of the UK nuclear deterrent is £163 million. However, this would not even pay for half the additional annual cost of a separate Scottish taxman.

Calculation

John Swinney's leaked secret paper said that the "annual costs of tax administration in Scotland" would "be expected to lie in the region of £575m to £625m"

According to a recent National Audit Office report, HMRC's annual running costs in 2010-11 were £3.5bn for the whole of the UK

Scotland's share of the UK population is 8.4%

Scotland's share of HMRC annual running costs = 8.4% of £3.5bn = £294m

How much more could we be paying for a new Scottish tax system = John Swinney's estimate – Our current share of HMRC costs = £625m – £294m = £331m

Therefore, the figure the nationalists quote for Scotland's share of the annual cost of the UK nuclear deterrent would not even pay for half the additional annual cost of setting up a separate Scottish taxman.

The nationalist's fantasy Trident shopping list

Despite the fact that the figure the nationalists quote for Scotland's share of the annual cost of the UK nuclear deterrent would not even pay for half the cost of a separate Scottish taxman, the nationalists claimed would use this money to fund other areas of public spending on over 20 separate occasions. The table below gives some examples.

Whether you agree with the UK nuclear deterrent or not, the fact is you can't spend the same money twice, never mind over 20 times.

One nationalist, Patrick Harvie MSP, has even admitted that "the cost of Trident in itself will not fill every financial hole." (Scottish Parliament, 13 November 2012)

	Who	What would the money be spent on	What did they say	When	Where
1	Alex Salmond MSP	Other defence spending	"During the debate yesterday some delegates suggested our projected Budget for conventional defence be lower. I understand that but we must keep the nation secure and we shall. What they may have missed is that our plans are almost £1,000 million a year lower than what we pay to Westminster at the moment - £230 million of	20 October 2012	SNP Conference Speech

			that will be saved by ending our payments for the Trident programme”		
2	Alex Salmond MSP	Youth unemployment and colleges	“...what I can do is remove the nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction from Scotland called Trident and I can do that if Scotland votes for independence in two years’ time and we can devote the enormous resources that are wasted on these nuclear weapons just now to things like employment for young people and further investment in Scotland’s colleges”	18 October 2012	BBC Good Morning Scotland programme
3	Nicola Sturgeon MSP	Nurses, teachers, schools, hospitals	Nicola Sturgeon outlined five different ways she wanted to spend money saved. Her shopping list included: 8,333 nurses; 9,722 teachers; 43 Primary Schools; 18 Secondary School; and 18 Community Hospitals	29 October 2012	Scottish Times
4	Nicola Sturgeon MSP	Unclear	“...not have Trident nuclear missiles on the River Clyde but instead those resources to benefit people in Scotland”	27 May 2012	BBC ‘The Big Debate – Choosing Scotland’s Future’ programme
5	Nicola Sturgeon MSP	Tackling child poverty	“I hope that the First Minister and I agree on the need to give every child the best possible start in life. For that reason, if for no other, will he tell Tony Blair in no uncertain terms that when 250,000 Scottish children still live in poverty, a decision to spend £25 billion on weapons of mass destruction would be absolutely indefensible?”	15 Feb 2007	Scottish Parliament
6	Nicola Sturgeon MSP	Welfare spending	“within the union, Trident nuclear weapons will remain on the Clyde and the damaging impact of UK Government welfare reforms that are impoverishing so many of Scotland’s most vulnerable citizens, which are both compelling arguments for a different and independent future for Scotland”	30 October 2012	Scottish Parliament motion
7	Angus Robertson MP	Schools, hospitals, and other ‘frontline services’	"Renewing the Trident nuclear weapons system will cost £100bn over the next 20 years - it cannot be right that we proceed with its procurement whilst simultaneously cutting funding for schools, hospitals and frontline services and putting the recovery of our nations at risk."	23 April 2010	BBC
8	Angus Robertson MP	Infrastructure projects	“Trident is a jobs destroyer, indeed, if capital expenditure of £1bn was invested in infrastructure projects it would support as many as 15,000 jobs”	18 June 2012	House of Commons
9	Angus Robertson MP	Conflict resolution budget	“This Parliament is expected to vote on a projected replacement cost for the Trident nuclear missile programme of £20 billion. I have been discussing a shortfall of £20 million in the global conflict prevention pool, cast against £20 billion. The priorities are wrong. ... I hope that budget lines for the next financial year will be restored to the appropriate level.”	25 October 2005	House of Commons
10	Angus Robertson MP	Other defence spending	“Scotland's share of these assets is worth billions. It makes sense to consider continuing to share some of these capabilities with our neighbours but, when it comes to others, such as Trident, I am quite certain that we can trade that asset for something more useful.”	20 July 2012	The Scotsman
11	Angus Robertson	Inequality and the economy	“Only a Yes vote in the independence referendum can get rid of Trident from Scotland,	6 March 2013	SNP Press Release

	MP		and ensure that the billions of pounds the Westminster parties want to waste on weapons of mass destruction can be invested instead in building a fair society and strong economy”		
12	Stewart Hosie MP	Infrastructure projects	“...it is a scandal that the MoD is wasting £350million on a down-payment for these nuclear weapons. This money should be invested in the £300million of shovel ready projects”	22 May 2012	SNP Press Release
13	Christine Grahame MSP	NHS, schools and job creation	“the billions of pounds that are earmarked for Trident's replacement could be better invested in improving the health service and schools and in job creation throughout Scotland?”	28 May 2009	Scottish Parliament
14	George Adam MSP	Nurses, teachers, schools	“Here is an idea: trident cost £1.245 billion, so why not instead go for 29,643 nurses, or 34,585 teachers or 42 to 62 secondary schools?”	13 November 2012	Scottish Parliament
15	Alex Neil MSP	Education and health	“Does the member agree that spending money on our people in education, health and similar services is a much higher priority than wasting billions more on a Trident nuclear defence system”	13 November 2012	Scottish Parliament
16	Kenny Gibson MSP	Other defence spending	“clearly an independent Scotland would spend more on defence and it would be a conventional defence policy ... The SNP wants to ensure an independent Scotland is non nuclear, we do not want the obscenity of Trident on the Clyde. We do not believe spending £100bn in modernising that is something that we should accept”	20 April 2012	BBC ‘Brian Taylor’s Big Debate’ programme
17	Bill Kidd MSP	Other defence and welfare spending	“Mr Hammond is absolutely right that the Armed Forces cannot take any more cuts from his Government – but neither can the Welfare budget, which has been brutally slashed, leaving hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people out of pocket. A simple solution is for the UK Government to abandon its obsession with renewing its Trident nuclear weapons programme – saving £100bn in the process.”	2 March 2013	SNP Press Release
18	Bill Kidd MSP	A fair society and strong economy	“Only a Yes vote can get rid of Trident, and invest the money saved helping to build a fair society and strong economy.”	13 March 2013	SNP Press Release
19	Shirley-Anne Summerville MSP	Poverty	“The Scottish National Party and the Scottish Government will not sit back and say nothing as 100 billion pounds is blown on a mythical enemy, whilst the battle against the real enemies of poverty and inequality remains to be fought”	3 November 2007	SNP Press Release
20	Christina McKelvie MSP	Nurses, teachers, schools, hospitals	“the £163m that Scotland is currently paying towards Trident could be spent on 3,880 nurses, 4,527 teachers or a host of new schools and hospitals in our communities.”	1 November 2012	SNP Press Release
21	Joan McAlpine MSP	Nurses, teachers	“The £350m announced by Hammond yesterday could be better spent. It could buy 8333 nurses and up to 9722 teachers. The total cost of replacing Trident, which the UK Government wants to do, is £100billion. The Scottish share of that saving could create thousands of jobs in construction and get the country back to work.”	30 October 2012	Daily Record

Do you have any more examples? We would love to hear from you. Please email through any more examples to info@bettertogether.net with the subject line ‘Trident fantasy shopping list’. Thank you.

Ian Davis, an arms control consultant and former director of the British American Security Information Council think tank, has argued that the savings from cancelling the UK nuclear deterrent would be negligible:

“The financial and employment consequences of cancelling Trident are likely to be neutral in the short term. Any savings in the £2.24bn annual operational and maintenance costs are likely to be offset by decommissioning costs” ([The Guardian](#), 30 April 2010)

The UK Government’s Mid-Term review noted:

“We have maintained our current Trident nuclear deterrent and we conducted a value-for-money study into it in summer 2010. Its conclusions were reported in the Strategic Defence and Security Review. Overall impact of the study was a reduction in costs of £3.2 billion.” ([Cabinet Office Mid Term Review](#), 7 January 2013)

3. What the CND survey tells us

A recent [poll](#) commissioned by the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament showed that, regardless of Scots views on the UK nuclear deterrent, voters do not connect this issue with the independence referendum.

As the table below demonstrates the poll showed that – irrespective of voter’s position on whether the UK nuclear deterrent should be renewed – levels of support for separation remain in line with other polls (i.e. the majority of Scots believe we are better together as part of the United Kingdom).

	Do you support or oppose the UK Government buying a new nuclear weapons system to replace Trident?			
Should Scotland be an independent country?	Support	Neither	Oppose	Don't know
Yes (33%)	25%	24%	38%	25%
No (52%)	67%	55%	48%	51%
Don't know (15%)	8%	21%	14%	25%

Source: Extracted from CND poll data tables, p.6

4. Jobs

The UK Government stated in its submission to the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Select Committee in January 2013 that:

- Her Majesty's Naval Base Clyde – where the UK's nuclear deterrent is based – is the single largest employment site in Scotland.
- The Base is a major source of employment for highly skilled workers and a significant contributor to the local economy.
- The Base sustains around 6,700 military and civilian jobs and this is projected to increase by 1,500 to around 8,200 by 2022.
- The rise in the number of jobs is a result of the Ministry of Defence's decision to make the Base a "submarine centre of specialisation" and locate all Royal Navy submarines on the Clyde to achieve economies of scale and the greater effectiveness of collocation. That means more jobs and more investment in the local economy.

It is for the anti-UK campaign to explain how this quality and quantity of employment in the region would be matched if the UK nuclear deterrent had to be relocated.

5. The contradiction at the heart of the nationalists defence policy

There is a contradiction at the heart of the nationalists' defence policy. On the one hand they are opposed to UK's nuclear deterrent, but at the same time they want a separate Scotland to join the nuclear defence alliance NATO.

The nationalists U-turn on NATO marked a major shift in policy for the nationalists which saw the SNP turn its back on 30-years of opposition to NATO. The SNP came under fierce criticism from within its own party.

A recent briefing from the SNP Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament group produced ahead of the SNP's NATO U-turn stated:

"no major policy should ever be changed on the basis of one opinion poll"

"If Scotland wants to stay in NATO then it will be more difficult to get rid of Trident."

"Changing party policy on NATO is inconsistent with the vision of Scotland as a young, vibrant and peaceful nation."

"[The proposed U-turn on NATO] confuses the strategy and makes the SNP look cynical and lacking in moral courage. It alienates almost all active supporters of independence outside the SNP and will cause more conflict within the Yes campaign. It removes all differentiation between the SNP and the other parties. It does nothing to counter the media onslaught from those that oppose independence. In fact, tactically and strategically, it is hard to see what meaningful benefit it is meant to bring."

The U-turn also led two SNP Members of the Scottish Parliament to resign from the party.

Professor Paul Cornish, Professor of Strategic Studies at the University of Exeter said:

"The SNP's position is clearest where nuclear weapons are concerned. Alex Salmond insists that it is 'inconceivable that an independent nation of 5,250,000 people would tolerate the continued presence of weapons of mass destruction on its soil'. But this is inconsistent with the SNP's new plan to become a member of Nato: why would a nuclear alliance accept a new member so openly opposed to such weapons?"

"A more fundamental problem is the SNP's understanding of collective defence. It insists that Scotland will remain in Nato if it 'continues to respect the right of members to only take part in UN-sanctioned operations'. Yet at NATO's core is the principle that an attack on one is an attack on all – a commitment to collective defence that has nothing to do with the UN."
([The Telegraph](#), 14 March 2013)

6. Moving the UK's nuclear deterrent

The nationalists try to frame the debate about the UK's nuclear deterrent as a moral argument about those who are pro-nuclear weapons versus those who are against. It is not. Everybody wants to work towards a more peaceful world where there are no nuclear weapons – the debate is about the best way we do that. Some people believe we should do so unilaterally – one country at a time. Others think we should do so on a multilateral basis – working cooperatively with countries around the world to rid the world of such weapons.

The question the nationalists need to answer is what is moral about simply moving the UK's nuclear deterrent a few miles down the coast?

There are a number of difficulties associated with moving the UK nuclear to a new site have been

The UK Government has made clear that:

“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.”

A recent briefing from the SNP Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament group said:

“Moving nuclear weapons out of Scotland to an alternative base in England or Wales would be very difficult, if not almost impossible.”

Asked by a member of the public “On the subject of Trident when the day comes or if the day comes when Scotland is independent – who picks up the tab for the removal of these weapons from Scottish waters?” Nicola Sturgeon said:

“These would be matters for negotiation but I think Scotland more than shared its burden of Trident over the past number of years” (BBC The Big Debate programme, 27 May 2012)

Professor William Walker, professor of international relations at St Andrews University, told the Scottish Affairs Select committee there was no suitable location outside Scotland for the UK's nuclear deterrent (The Guardian, 25 October 2012). He expanded this point at the Scotsman Conference on Defence and Security Policy in May 2012 saying:

“moving Trident from the Clyde is tantamount to UK Nuclear disarmament. There is nowhere else for it to go, no alternative bases- certainly no alternative to Coulport where the missiles and warheads are stored. This is a very big deal and makes for very difficult politics”. (Scotsman Conference, 17 May 2012)

Further information

- *'Maintaining an effective, independent nuclear deterrent'*, UK Government, December 2012, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/maintaining-an-effective-independent-nuclear-deterrent>
- *'The Referendum on Separation for Scotland: Terminating Trident-Days or Decades?'*, House of Commons Scottish Affairs Select Committee Fourth Report, October 2012, available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmsscota/676/67602.htm>

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