

CHRONOLOGY

1940

- March Otto Frisch and Rudolf Peierls, a pair of émigré scientists at Birmingham University, complete their memorandum 'On the Construction of a "Super-bomb"; based on a Nuclear Chain Reaction in Uranium', showing that far less uranium than previously thought, if it could be enriched, would be needed to make a bomb of great destructive power producing 'radiations [which] would be fatal to living beings even a long time after the explosion.'
- April The Ministry of Aircraft Production establishes the Maud Committee to examine the feasibility of a uranium bomb on the basis of the Frisch-Peierls Memorandum.

1941

- July The Maud Committee 'considers that the scheme for a uranium bomb is practicable and likely to lead to decisive results in the war. It recommends that this work be continued on the highest priority and on the increasing scale necessary to obtain the weapon in the shortest possible time.'

1942

- 30 July Sir John Anderson, minister for 'Tube Alloys' (the weapon's cover name), minutes Churchill advising that the scale and cost of the atomic bomb project requires the UK to 'move our design work and the personnel concerned to the United States. Henceforth, work on the bomb project would be pursued as a combined Anglo-American effort.'

1943

- 19 August Churchill and Roosevelt sign the secret Quebec Agreement establishing 'First, that we will never use this agency [the atomic bomb] against each other. Secondly, that we will not use it against third parties without each other's consent. Thirdly, that we will not either of us communicate any information about Tube Alloys to third parties except by mutual consent.' Collaboration between the US and the UK to be overseen by a Combined Policy Committee meeting in Washington.
- December First members of a 19-strong UK team of British scientists arrive at Los Alamos in New Mexico, where the bomb is designed and built in immense secrecy.

1944

- 19 September Hyde Park Aide-memoire of conversation between Roosevelt and Churchill at the President's home in upstate New York recording the decision that the 'matter should continue to be regarded as of the utmost secrecy; but when a "bomb" is finally available, it might

perhaps, after mature consideration, be used against the Japanese, who should be warned that this bombardment will be repeated until they surrender' and that '[f]ull collaboration between the United States and the British Government in developing tube alloys for military and commercial purposes should continue after the defeat of Japan unless and until terminated by joint agreement.'

1945

- 1 July Churchill gives UK approval for atomic bombs to be dropped on Japan.
- 16 July World's first atomic explosion takes place at the Trinity test site in New Mexico.
- 26 July Attlee forms a government. Labour majority of 146 in the House of Commons.
- 6 August Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.
- 9 August Atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki.
- 14 August Japan surrenders.
- 28 August Attlee circulates memorandum on 'The Atomic Bomb' to GEN 75, his Cabinet Committee on Atomic Energy. He tells ministers that 'No government has ever been placed in such a position as is ours today. The Governments of the UK and the USA are responsible as never before for the future of the human race' and that 'The answer to an atomic bomb on London is an atomic bomb on another great city.'
- 18 December GEN 75 authorises the construction of an atomic pile at Windscale to produce plutonium.

1946

- August US Congress passes the McMahon Act prohibiting the transmission of nuclear information to another country.
- 25 October During a GEN 75 meeting, Dalton (Chancellor of the Exchequer) and Cripps (President of the Board of Trade) argue that UK economic recovery could not afford the £30–40 million needed over five years to build a gaseous diffusion plant for the production of Uranium 235. Bevin insists 'We've got to have the bloody Union Jack on top of it' [i.e. the atomic bomb], and prevails.

1947

- 8 January GEN 163 meets for the first and only time to authorise 'that research and development work on atomic weapons should be undertaken' in conditions of the utmost secrecy. The decision is taken by Attlee and five ministers. The group does not include Dalton and Cripps.

1948

- 12 May Minister of Defence, A. V. Alexander, tells the House of Commons that 'research and developments continue to receive the highest priority in the defence field, and all types of modern weapons, inclu-

ding atomic weapons, are being developed.' He adds that it would not be 'in the public interest' to say more.

1949

- 29 August The Soviet Union detonates its first atomic device in Kazakhstan.
23 September Truman announces the news of the Russian test in Washington.

1950

- 31 January Truman makes public his decision taken that day that the US will manufacture 'the so-called hydrogen or superbomb'.
3 February British nuclear physicist Klaus Fuchs charged with passing nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union.
23 February General election: Attlee government returned to office with a majority of five.
1 March Fuchs sentenced to 14 years imprisonment.

1951

- 25 October General election: Churchill and the Conservatives returned to power with a majority of 17.
21 November Churchill briefed on Attlee governments' work on the atomic bomb.
12 December Churchill briefed on how Attlee governments concealed the cost of the atomic bomb from Parliament.
14 December Churchill authorises bomb test in Australia.

1952

- 18 February Churchill announces that the UK will test an atomic bomb later in the year.
3 October First British atomic device detonated in the Monte Bello Islands off north-west Australia.
1 November US tests first hydrogen bomb at Eniwetok in the Pacific. At 10.4 megatons, its power is twice that of all the explosives used in the Second World War.

1953

- 12 August Soviet Union tests an H-bomb. (In fact, it was a hybrid device, not a true thermonuclear explosion.)
7 November First Blue Danube atomic bomb arrives from Aldermaston at RAF Wittering.

1954

- 1 March US explodes a 15-megaton H-bomb at Bikini Atoll in the Pacific.
22 March *Lucky Dragon* returns to Japan from a Pacific fishing voyage with its crew suffering from radiation sickness.

13 April	Churchill tells ministers on the GEN 464 Cabinet Committee he would like the full Cabinet to authorise the manufacture of a British H-bomb.
1 June	Chiefs of Staff brief Churchill and members of his Defence Policy Committee on the danger of the USA starting a 'forestalling' war against the Soviet Union. They also claim that a UK armed with its own H-bomb could 'be on terms with the United States and Russia.'
16 June	Churchill's Defence Policy Committee authorises an H-bomb programme.
7 July	Cabinet breaks up in disarray after discussing proposed talks with the Russians and the making of a British H-bomb. Some ministers complain at lack of consultation.
8 July	Cabinet discusses morality and cost of an H-bomb.
26 July	Cabinet agrees to the manufacture of a British H-bomb.
1955	
13 January	Joint Intelligence Committee states that the only warning of an H-bomb attack on the UK will probably be the presence of Russian bombers on RAF and allied radar screens.
17 February	Defence White Paper reveals government's intention to make an H-bomb.
5 April	Churchill resigns. Eden Prime Minister.
26 May	General election: Conservatives increase majority to 59.
22 November	Soviets test a 1.6-megaton hydrogen bomb.
1956	
July	First operational Valiant bombers arrive at RAF Wittering.
5 November	Soviet Prime Minister, Bulganin, threatens rockets on Paris and London if Anglo-French invasion of Egypt is not halted.
1957	
9 January	Eden resigns.
10 January	Queen appoints Macmillan Prime Minister.
4 April	Sandys Defence White Paper published stressing the primacy of nuclear deterrence and foreshadowing the end of National Service.
15 May	UK tests a thermonuclear device at Christmas Island in the Pacific. It yields 300 kilotons, 30 per cent of the megaton target.
3 October	Bevan heckled at Labour Party Conference for arguing this is not the time for Britain to renounce the H-bomb.
24 October	President Eisenhower agrees to amend the McMahon Act to enable a US-UK exchange of nuclear weapons information during talks in Washington with Macmillan.
8 November	Britain's first megaton H-bomb explodes off Christmas Island yielding 1.8 megatons.

1958

- 15 January Meeting at Canon Collins' home near St Paul's Cathedral sees birth of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).
- 17 February CND holds its first meeting in Westminster Central Hall.
- 4 April 4,000 protestors leave Trafalgar Square for the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment at Aldermaston.
- 7 April They arrive.
- 30 June US Congress repeals those sections of the McMahon Act that prevented nuclear weapons collaboration with the UK.
- 4 August US and UK governments conclude the Agreement for Co-operation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes.

1959

- 7 June Secret meeting at Chequers of military, officials and diplomats chaired by Macmillan rules out unilateral nuclear disarmament and concludes that 'In terms of foreign policy the British contribution to the western deterrent had paid a handsome dividend up to now, but we should have to consider whether it would continue to do so.' Macmillan commissions a *Future Policy Study* to forecast Britain's place in the world by 1970.
- 8 October General election: Conservatives increase majority to 100.

1960

- 13 February France tests its first atomic bomb in the Algerian Sahara.
- 24 February *Future Policy Study* completed. It concludes that: 'Our purpose should be to maintain a strategic nuclear force which is accepted by the Americans, and by the [NATO] Alliance as a whole, as a significant contribution to the western deterrent. . . This would not mean (except in the view of one of those associated with this study [Sir Dermot Boyle, Chief of the Air Staff]) that we were aiming to provide a force capable by itself of deterring Russia.'
- 13 April Cabinet told that its Defence Committee, on the advice of the Chiefs of Staff, had decided to abandon the Blue Streak rocket. Cabinet concurs and the decision is announced in the House of Commons the same day.
- 20 June Cabinet approves the purchase of the untested US stand-off Skybolt missile which, if it worked, would have a British nuclear warhead and prolong the deterrent capability of the RAF's V-bombers into 'the later 1960s', thereby filling the gap left by the cancellation of Blue Streak.

1962

- 11 December Kennedy Administration announces the cancellation of Skybolt.
- 18 December Macmillan flies to Nassau to meet President Kennedy in an attempt to persuade his administration to supply submarine-launched Polaris missiles as a replacement for Skybolt.

- 21 December Cabinet, chaired by R. A. Butler in Macmillan's absence, considers telegrams from the Prime Minister in Nassau and asking 'for the advice of the Cabinet' on the acceptability of the terms proposed for the purchase of Polaris.
- 26 December Macmillan asks Minister of Defence to prepare a paper on UK designed and built alternatives to Polaris if the Nassau agreement collapsed.
- 31 December At a meeting of ministers and officials, chaired by Macmillan, Ted Heath says the Skybolt cancellation and the Polaris purchase exposed to the public 'the extent of our dependence on the United States.' If the two governments disagreed strongly on policy, the US might cancel the arrangement. The Minister of Defence, Peter Thorneycroft says the UK would not be able to afford to develop 'a reinsurance system of its own' from scratch.

1963

- 3 January Full Cabinet discusses the Nassau deal and authorises the purchase of Polaris, and the arrangement whereby it could be withdrawn from NATO into national service 'if the supreme interests of the country required it'. Macmillan says that, unlike Skybolt, 'Polaris would extend the effectiveness and credibility of the United Kingdom deterrent for an almost indefinite period.'
- 15 January Amery, Minister of Aviation, briefs Thorneycroft on the long-term procurement runs and expense needed to develop a UK alternative to Polaris.
- 28 January Thorneycroft rules out taking the exercise further.
- 6 April Polaris Sales Agreement signed in Washington.

1964

- September Labour's General Election Manifesto says of Polaris: 'It will not be independent and it will not be British and it will not deter. . . We are not prepared any longer to waste the country's resources on endless duplication of strategic nuclear weapons. We shall propose the re-negotiation of the Nassau agreement.'
- 15 October General election: Labour wins with a majority of 5. Harold Wilson Prime Minister the following day.
- 16 October China explodes an atomic device in Sinkiang Province.
- 11 November MISC 16 Cabinet committee on 'Atlantic Nuclear Force' meets (Wilson; Patrick Gordon Walker, Foreign Secretary; Denis Healey, Defence Secretary). Discusses the idea of pooling the UK Polaris submarines with a number of US ones in an Atlantic nuclear force. Decides that 'three submarines would represent the minimum force which would be acceptable to us in the event of the dissolution of the NATO Alliance.' The Conservative Government's proposed five submarines 'would not represent a nuclear force for a world-wide role, but would only meet the requirements of the European theatre.'
- 21-22 November Wilson summons a meeting of MISC 17, his Cabinet Committee on Defence Policy, to Chequers to consider the forthcoming defence

review and the future of Polaris. Wilson tells his colleagues that 'of the five submarines which had been planned, two were at an advanced stage of development and short of scrapping it would be impracticable not to complete them.' Debate focuses on desirability of a three or four-boat force.

26 November Full Cabinet briefed by Wilson on decision to commit 'such Polaris submarines as we might construct' to a proposed Atlantic Nuclear Force. . . The precise number of these submarines would be for further consideration; but it was relevant to a decision that the construction of some of them was already sufficiently advanced to make it unrealistic to cancel the orders. On the other hand the number to be retained would be smaller than the number which the previous Government had envisaged and would be such as to make it clear that we no longer contemplated the maintenance of an independent nuclear force.' The Cabinet approves the Prime Minister's proposals.

1965

6 January Healey circulates a paper to the Cabinet's Defence and Oversea Policy Committee arguing that a fleet of four Polaris submarines is preferable to three, and as the fourth boat is already under construction, 'cancellation at this stage would involve the payment of cancellation charges. . .'

29 January Cabinet's Defence and Oversea Policy Committee meets (Wilson plus six ministers). Decision taken to build four Polaris submarines partly to ensure that one boat will always be on station when the Royal Navy assumes the main deterrent role in the late 1960s.

1966

March Labour manifesto says the party 'stands by its pledge to internationalise our strategic nuclear forces' through the proposed Atlantic Nuclear Force (which never materialised).

31 March General election: Labour returned with a majority of 96.

28 September First meeting of Wilson's new Cabinet Committee on Nuclear Policy (PN). Discussion on whether UK 'could no longer count on United States co-operation in nuclear defence matters unless we retained a nuclear weapons capability.'

1967

3 August Healey implements PN committee decision that 'in accordance with the Nassau Agreement our POLARIS missiles will be assigned' to NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, 'as soon as the first submarine becomes operational, i.e., in 1968. Ultimate United Kingdom control of the POLARIS force will not be affected, since control of the firing chain will remain in UK hands; in particular, no submarine commander will be authorised to fire the POLARIS weapons without the Prime Minister's specific authority.'

30 October *HMS Resolution*, first of the Polaris missile-carrying submarines, is commissioned.

- 18 November The pound is devalued by 14 per cent from \$2.80 to \$2.40 against the US dollar.
- 1 December Paper goes to PN on future options for Polaris. Should it be improved to enable the missiles to penetrate the anti-ballistic missile screen the Russians were thought to be planning to protect Moscow? The Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office say yes. The Treasury and the Department for Economic Affairs urge 'abandonment' of 'the whole of our nuclear capability as quickly as possible. Given our difficult economic situation, the capability is a misuse of the resources it will consume.'
- 5 December PN meets. Polaris to continue but 'further studies should be undertaken to clarify the requirements and the costs of alternative programmes for hardening the Polaris warhead and of penetration aids for the Polaris system.' Inquiry to be held 'into the minimum scale of effort' that would be needed at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Aldermaston.

1968

- 15 February *HMS Resolution* successfully test fires the first of the Royal Navy's Polaris missiles off Florida.
- 31 July Lord Rothschild, in a minority dissenting note to the Kings Norton inquiry into the future of Aldermaston, recommends against improving Polaris as it 'will incur additional open-ended expenditure' as 'No technical considerations have been advanced which lead to the conclusion that hardening or the development of more sophisticated warheads would confer clear-cut and unequivocal advantages on the United Kingdom.'
- 24 August France successfully tests an H-bomb at Fangataufa Atoll in the Pacific.
- 28 September *HMS Repulse* commissioned.
- 15 November *HMS Renown* commissioned.

1969

- 17 January Joint Intelligence Committee reports that 'An ABM system is being constructed around Moscow' based on the Galosh missile which 'is expected to provide Moscow with a limited defence against ... Polaris missiles' picked up on radars in the Baltic and the Kola Peninsula.
- 14 June Royal Navy Polaris submarines formally take over the primary deterrent role from the RAF V force. *HMS Resolution* had slipped out of Faslane on 30 April.
- 4 December *HMS Revenge* commissioned.

1970

- 18 June General election: Conservatives returned with a majority of 30. Heath becomes Prime Minister the following day and inherits Labour's work on a possible Polaris Improvement Programme codenamed 'Super Antelope'.

1972

26 May Signing in Moscow of SALT I treaty limiting the USA and USSR to 200 anti-ballistic missile launchers to protect Washington and Moscow.

1973

12 September Heath chairs a meeting of three ministers (Douglas-Home, Foreign Secretary; Carrington, Defence Secretary; Barber, Chancellor of the Exchequer) on the future of the deterrent. Funding for 'Super Antelope' research due to run out at the end of the month. Carrington says it's uncertain that the US Congress would approve the sale of Poseidon missiles to the Royal Navy. Heath says 'the maintenance of a credible nuclear deterrent must be regarded as of very great importance in the wider political context.' More money allocated to 'Super Antelope'.

30 October The same ministerial group approves the development of 'Super Antelope' (later known as 'Chevaline'). Co-operation with France ruled out.

1974

28 February General election produces a 'hung' result. Labour 301 seats; Conservatives 297; Liberals 14.

4 March Heath resigns; Wilson appointed Prime Minister in a minority Labour government.

5 April Wilson, after discussion with Callaghan (Foreign Secretary) and Healey (Chancellor) approves a Chevaline-related test in Nevada planned by the Heath administration.

24 May UK underground test, codenamed 'Fallon', in Nevada.

13 June Joint Intelligence Committee reports heavy Soviet R and D and new construction work around Moscow to improve 'the deployed MOSCOW system'.

19 June Defence Studies Working Party (part of Labour's 1974 defence review) reports that £50m has already been spent on 'Super Antelope' and that the project's cancellation 'would mean that our Polaris missiles could no longer be certain of penetrating Soviet ABM defences throughout the existing life of the submarines; and, although our ability to threaten undefended cities within range would remain, our ultimate determination to go to the limit in confronting the USSR would be in question and the main reason for possessing a strategic deterrent negated.'

15 July Paper circulated to ministers on the Cabinet's Defence and Overseas Policy Committee arguing that 'peacetime capability' of Polaris needs improving if the UK strategic deterrent is to remain credible. The cost estimated at 'about £170m over the [10-year] LTC [long-term costing] period'.

31 July Wilson prepares a paper for the Cabinet on a recent British nuclear test in America. 'We knew from technical assessment . . . [of] . . . the nature and rate of Soviet anti-missile defence development that our

missiles would have to be given better penetration capability if we wished to retain a credible deterrent. . . We also specifically agreed that the decision to hold this test was without prejudice to the policy decision of whether to retain our nuclear deterrent which would be taken in the context of the defence review.’ (The paper is not shown to the Cabinet until 12 September because of pressure of other business at last pre-recess Cabinet).

- 18 September Wilson chairs a meeting of the Defence and Oversea Policy Committee (including Callaghan; Healey; Short, Lord President; Mason, Defence Secretary; Lever, Chancellor of the Duchy). Decides not to lower ‘the nuclear threshold’.
- 10 October General election; Labour returned with an overall majority of 3. Its manifesto says ‘We have renounced any intention of moving towards a new generation of strategic nuclear weapons.’
- 20 November Wilson tells the full Cabinet that the DOPC ‘had unanimously decided’ the UK strategic nuclear deterrent ‘should be retained.’ Planned improvements ‘necessary to ensure the continuing credibility of the present force were relatively cheap; they would not involve either a new generation of missiles or Multiple Independently Targeted Re-entry Vehicles.’ Some dissenting views expressed, but Cabinet agrees.

1976

- 4 April Wilson resigns and Callaghan becomes Prime Minister.
- December Substantial defence spending cuts, to meet the terms of an International Monetary Fund loan, fleetingly place ‘Chevaline’ and the Polaris system in jeopardy.

1977

Estimates of ‘Chevaline’ costs rise to £810m (£494m at 1972 prices). Callaghan and a small group of ministers decide to carry on nonetheless.

1978

- January Callaghan sets up Ministerial Nuclear Policy Group (himself; Owen, Foreign Secretary; Healey, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Mulley, Defence Secretary) to consider possible Polaris replacement. Commissions an official Steering Group on Nuclear Matters chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, Hunt.
- 16 February The steering group commissions Nuclear Matters Working Party to produce a two-part report: on politico-military requirements for a future UK deterrent led by Sir Antony Duff, a senior diplomat; and on the technical options, led by Professor Sir Ronald Mason, Chief Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Defence.
- 13 December Callaghan’s ministerial group meets to consider the Duff-Mason Report which recommends Polaris be replaced by Trident. Owen argues for a cheaper, submarine-launched cruise missile system. Callaghan says: ‘To give up our status as a nuclear weapon state would be a momentous step in British history,’ but the decision

	should go to Cabinet after the general election. Full Cabinet unaware of this discussion.
21 December	Ministerial Group meets.
1979	
2 January	Ministerial Group meets.
6 January	Callaghan secures agreement from President Carter at a private meeting during the Guadalupe summit that the US would supply Trident missiles if a UK Cabinet asked for them.
April	Labour's manifesto states 'In 1974, we renounced any intention of moving towards the production of a new generation of nuclear weapons or a successor to the Polaris nuclear force; we reiterate our belief that this is the best course for Britain. But many great issues affecting our allies and the world are involved, and a new round of strategic arms limitation negotiations will soon begin. We think it is essential that there must be a full and informed debate about these issues in the country before the necessary decision is taken.'
	Conservative manifesto states: 'The SALT [Strategic Arms Limitation Talks] increase the importance of ensuring the continuing effectiveness of Britain's nuclear deterrent.'
3 May	General election: Conservatives win a majority of 43.
4 May	Callaghan leaves instructions in Downing Street that Duff-Mason reports should be made available to Mrs Thatcher who becomes Prime Minister that day.
	Mrs Thatcher swiftly convenes her MISC 7 Cabinet committee to examine Polaris replacement.
6 December	MISC 7 decides to opt for the Trident C4 missile.
1980	
24 January	Pym (Defence Secretary) reveals 'Chevaline' programme to Parliament and says its costs have risen to £1bn (£530m in 1972 prices).
15 July	Thatcher tells the full Cabinet that MISC 7 has decided to opt for the Trident C4 missile (announcement made in Parliament that afternoon for fear of a leak in the <i>New York Times</i>).
	Government publishes <i>The Future United Kingdom Strategic Nuclear Deterrent Force</i> . Drafted by Michael Quinlan, it stresses the 'second centre of decision-making' argument ('We need to convince Soviet leaders that even if they thought at some critical point as a conflict developed the US would hold back, the British force could still inflict a blow so destructive that the penalty for aggression would have proved too high').
1981	
November–January	MISC 7 reopens C4 decision. Decides to opt for the improved D5 missile and a four-boat force.

1982

- January Full Cabinet briefed on MISC 7 deliberations and concurs.
- November Ministry of Defence announces 'Chevaline' missiles operational at sea.

1993

- 14 August *HMS Vanguard*, the first Trident missile carrying submarine, is commissioned.

1994

- May *HMS Vanguard* launches first UK test-firing of a Trident D5 missile off Florida.
- December *HMS Vanguard* sails on first Trident operational patrol.

1995

- 7 January *HMS Victorious* commissioned.

1996

- 13 May *HMS Repulse* returns to Faslane at the end of the 229th and final Polaris operational patrol.
- 28 August Prime Minister John Major visits Faslane for decommissioning ceremony for *HMS Repulse* and the end of Polaris' 27 years of continuous patrols.
- 10 December *HMS Vigilant* commissioned.

1999

- 27 November *HMS Vengeance* commissioned.

2003

- 11 December The Ministry of Defence publishes its White Paper *Delivering Security in a Changing World*, which notes that decisions on replacing Trident 'are not needed in this Parliament but are likely to be required in the next one.'

2004

- January Prime Minister's group on nuclear weapons policy agrees funds to sustain capabilities of the Atomic Weapons Establishment.
- 21 July The Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, unveils the White Paper *Delivering Security in a Changing World: Future Capabilities*. He tells Parliament that the Government remains committed to keeping open the option to replace Trident until such time as a decision is required, 'probably in the next Parliament' and announces continued funding for Atomic Weapons Establishment, Aldermaston.

2005

- 13 April The Labour Manifesto is published, stating 'we are . . . committed to retaining the independent nuclear deterrent. . .'

19 July	The Defence Secretary, John Reid, tells Parliament that an average of an additional £350m per annum will be invested in Aldermaston over three years to maintain its capability.
1 November	John Reid informs the House of Commons Defence Committee that the Government's working assumption is that the UK will keep its nuclear weapons as long as other nuclear states which present a potential threat keep theirs, but that that assumption will be tested before decisions are taken.
16 November	The Official Group on the Future of the Deterrent meets for the first time under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Gus O'Donnell.
24 November	The Ministry of Defence submits evidence to the Commons Defence Committee inquiry into the future of the deterrent, on the strategic context.
14 December	The Official Group on the Future of the Deterrent meets for the second time under the chairmanship of Sir Nigel Sheinwald, Foreign Policy Adviser to the Prime Minister.
2006	
26 April	The Official Group on the Future of the Deterrent meets for the third time under the chairmanship of O'Donnell.
22 June	The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, in his Mansion House speech, says the 'strength of national purpose' needed to maintain UK security requires 'retaining our independent nuclear deterrent'.
27 June	The Prime Minister's Group on the Future of the Deterrent meets for the first time.
28 June	The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, tells Parliament that a decision will be taken in 2006.
30 June	The Commons Defence Committee publishes its report <i>The Future of the UK's Strategic Nuclear Deterrent: the Strategic Context</i> .
12 July	Tony Blair confirms that Parliament will vote on the future of the deterrent.
26 July	The Government responds to the Commons Defence Committee report on the Strategic Context.
18 September	The Official Group on the Future of the Deterrent meets for the fourth time under the chairmanship of O'Donnell.
17 October	The Official Group on the Future of the Deterrent meets for the fifth time under the chairmanship of Sheinwald.
10 November	The Official Group on the Future of the Deterrent meets for the sixth time under the chairmanship of O'Donnell.
15 November	The Prime Minister's Group on the Future of the Deterrent meets for the second time.

- 21 November The Minister for Defence Procurement, Lord Drayson, gives evidence to the Commons Defence Committee inquiry into the Strategic Nuclear Deterrent, on the manufacturing and skills base.
- 23 November The Cabinet discusses future threats which might require the retention of nuclear weapons by the UK.
- 4 December Full Cabinet decides, without ‘any dissenting voices’, to authorise construction of a new generation of missile-carrying submarines to sustain UK deterrent over the period 2020–2050. A White Paper, *The Future of the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent* (Cm 6994), is published that afternoon.
- 6 December The Commons Defence Committee announces its inquiry into the White Paper.
- 7 December President Bush and Tony Blair exchange letters arranging collaboration on Trident’s ‘life extension programme’ under the terms of the 1958 agreement on nuclear co-operation and the 1963 Polaris Sales Agreement, and stating that ‘any successor to the D5 system’ will be compatible with UK submarine-carried launch systems.
- 19 December Tony Blair publishes the UK-US exchange of letters. The Commons Defence Committee publishes its report on the manufacturing and skills base.
- 2007**
- 14 March House of Commons votes 409–161 to renew the Trident system (88 Labour MPs vote against).