

# Trident and America

# 3

**Since the 1960s Britain's nuclear forces have been heavily dependent on the United States. This continues today.**

## ▶ **Trident system**

Trident missiles are purchased directly from America. Trident was acquired from America under the 1963 Polaris Sales Agreement as amended for Trident (Polaris was the previous submarine-based nuclear weapon system purchased from America). Trident missiles are test fired from British submarines near Cape Canaveral under American supervision. Britain also received substantial design assistance with its Vanguard submarines. The UK's Trident warhead is based on America's Trident warhead design and was developed through the Joint Atomic Information Exchange Group. It was tested at America's Nevada test Site. Important components of UK warheads are bought off-the-shelf from America. There are U.S.-UK Joint Working Groups on a wide range of nuclear-related topics, including all aspects of nuclear warhead development.

## ▶ **Mutual Defence Agreement**

The UK enjoys substantial nuclear weapons cooperation with America under the terms of the 1958 Mutual Defence Agreement. The agreement allows cooperation on defence planning, delivery systems, training, some intelligence sharing, and military nuclear reactors and provides for the transfer of special nuclear materials (plutonium or highly enriched uranium), components, and equipment.

## ▶ **Nuclear targeting**

British warheads can be integrated into American nuclear war plans and there is a UK Liaison Cell at the headquarters of U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM) responsible for American plans. America also supplies important aspects of nuclear targeting data to UK submarines and the Royal Navy uses American software for target planning and data processing. American officers are stationed at the Permanent Joint Headquarters at Northwood from where UK submarine operations are controlled in order to coordinate British and American Trident submarine operations. Under the Polaris Sales Agreement UK nuclear forces are formally "committed to NATO and targeted in accordance with Alliance policy and strategic concepts under plans made by the Supreme Allied Command Europe (SACEUR)". NATO's Nuclear Planning System is linked to STRATCOM and probably MOD and is dominated by U.S. nuclear planning.

