

Trident and Scotland

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▶ Scottish National Party

On May 3, 2007 the Scottish National Party gained a majority in the Scottish Parliament. The SNP and the majority of Scottish MPs are committed to a nuclear weapon-free Scotland.

On June 14, 2007 the Scottish Parliament voted overwhelmingly against the British Government's decision to replace Trident by a vote of 71 to 16 with 39 abstentions. Opinion polls show a majority of Scots opposed to Trident.

The Scottish Parliament currently has no say in national defence matters, a subject that was 'reserved' in the devolution settlement set out in the 1998 Scotland Act.



Alex Salmond, MSP, leader of the SNP

▶ The future of the Union

If the UK replaces Trident with a new fleet of submarines to carry the nuclear missiles they will continue to be based in Scotland at the Clyde Naval Base at Faslane. If the planned new submarines have a design lifetime of 30 years then nuclear-armed submarines will continue to operate out of Faslane well into the 2050s.

It is far from certain that Scotland will remain part of the Union through the life of the current and replacement Trident system or that the British Government will be able to resist nationalist pressure from the Scottish Executive and Scottish Parliament to end the operation of the Trident submarine fleet from Faslane. The SNP recently declared its intention to use powers devolved to the Scottish Executive to stymie Trident replacement by mounting environmental, transport, planning, and legal obstacles. SNP leader Alex Salmond has vowed to ban the transportation of nuclear weapons on Scottish soil.



Trident warhead convoy
Source: NukeWatch UK

If the British Government were no longer able to operate the Trident submarine fleet from Scotland it would have to relocate the facilities dedicated to the Trident programme at the Clyde Naval Base at substantial financial and political cost. The most obvious alternative location is Devonport in Plymouth.