Scottish Affairs Committee - Minutes of Evidence HC 139

Oral Evidence

Taken before the Scottish Affairs Committee

on Monday 16 July 2012

Members present:

Mr Ian Davidson (Chair) Jim McGovern
Mr Iain McKenzie Simon Reevell

Mr Alan Reid Lindsay Roy

Examination of Witness

Witness: **John Ainslie**, Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Q1058 Chair: Good afternoon, Mr Ainslie. Thanks for coming to give evidence to the Scottish Affairs Select Committee. Could we just start by asking you to introduce yourself? Tell us what your role is and then tell us a little bit about CND Scotland.

John Ainslie: I am John Ainslie. I have been working as co-ordinator of Scottish CND for about 20 years. I have a degree in international relations from the 1970s. During my time with Scottish CND, I have produced a significant number of reports and papers, particularly on the Trident nuclear weapon system. I have previously given evidence to the Defence Committee on the Trident system.

In terms of Scottish CND, our main focus clearly is on nuclear disarmament, although it is slightly broader than that. We were involved a lot in the protests against the Iraq war, but now we have moved back to our main focus on nuclear disarmament, particularly in the context of the referendum coming up. Clearly this is an issue. How do we relate to that as an organisation?

Q1059 Chair: As you will appreciate, there has been some dubiety expressed about the timetable that you have brought forward. It seems astonishingly fast for some people. Maybe you could just talk us through the timetable that you envisage being possible for the removal of nuclear weapons from Scotland.

John Ainslie: What we are looking at is disarmament not just as an abstract concept, but as a real practical possibility and how it could be brought about. The initial step is that Trident could be deactivated, in a sense, so that it cannot be used within a matter of days. There is a trigger that the weapons operating officer presses and the captain turns a key. If you take away the triggers and the keys and you take the submarine off patrol, there are components of the missile that can be removed within a period of a day. That deactivates it in a sense so that it cannot be used in anger within a matter of days. Within a period of about eight weeks or so, you could remove all the warheads and store them at Coulport, which again is a further step. They are still there, but the system has been taken apart. Then it would take two years to physically move those warheads out of Scotland, which is based on frequency of convoys in the mid- ’90s.

The actual dismantlement of warheads at Burghfield might take as long as four years. Having said that, Bruce Blair, the leading world expert on de-alerting nuclear forces in America, basically said that this programme is credible. His own studies show that these various steps can be done in half the time, but that the proposal that I am putting forward is therefore a safe and reasonable way of doing it. You could in fact do it more quickly is what Bruce Blair was saying, but because this is not as quick as possible, that then builds more of an element of safety in the process.

Q1060 Chair: Can I be clear? You are saying that there are three stages. The first is the switching-off stage. The second is disarming, as it were, and removing things. Then there is the breaking up or whatever it is that you do with them.

John Ainslie: I am proposing about eight different stages- **Q1061 Chair:** I see that-

John Ainslie: Basically, that is right. It is an initial stage where you say, "Well, it is still there, but you can't use it because various components are not there." Even at that disarmament stage-from what I'm talking about here, the dismantlement of the warheads-you still have plutonium pits, so where do you start and where do you stop in that process?

Q1062 Chair: If the first stage is that you switch something off, presumably you can switch it back on again. What I am not clear about from your timetable of 24 months is at what stage is that, as it were, irrecoverable?

John Ainslie: It is an interesting question. In terms of disarmament principles-from the international bodies-irreversibility is a basic principle in disarmament. Having said that, how do you really enforce it? The study looks at verifying that those processes have happened, which clearly helps to make it more difficult to reverse them. That verification is more of a problem at those first stages. How do you know whether they have that spare key or a duplicate key? Those first stages are harder to verify than physically moving warheads. The study has been done on verifying that. On the one hand, the warhead information is classified, which produces a problem in terms of verification, but there have been studies on ways around that. In other words, it is possible to have systems to verify the physical process of moving or dismantling warheads.

Q1063 Chair: The first point you mentioned is on recalling submarines. You give seven days for that. How do you know that they could get back within seven days?

John Ainslie: That is a generous allowance. I do not have anything on the current patrol changeovers; I know that in the patrol changeovers in the early '90s there were problems with Polaris and there were four or five days between one patrol going out and another coming in. That is the total time for changing over between two submarines. It is possible with Trident that they can patrol further away because of the missile range. To be honest, seven days is allowing quite a long time; I think they could probably be back in three or four.

Q1064 Lindsay Roy: How robust is the evidence for your assertion that this could be completed within two years?

John Ainslie: As I say, these are my own. The two-year figure is primarily based on the time it takes for the nuclear convoys. The convoys drive up and down on a regular basis several times a year at the moment. I basically looked back at figures for convoys in the mid-1990s, when there were a lot of movements and convoys were on the road once a month, or sometimes more than once a month. At the peak of the Trident warheads being delivered to Scotland, that was the frequency. Again, Bruce Blair said the figure is perfectly credible.

The other person we put the figure past is Professor Richard Garwin, who is credited by Teller as being

the true inventor of the hydrogen bomb. He is a senior member of the American nuclear weapons establishment, and he was their man on the hydrogen bomb. He basically says that you can do these things within those time scales. Clearly, that depends-this is Garwin's caveat-on whether you want to do it. So Garwin's view is, yes, this is a credible timetable, but there is a whole political issue about whether you want to do it. He is one of the most senior nuclear weapons advisers, and he has advised successive American Governments over several decades.

Q1065 Lindsay Roy: Have you had any information from the MOD? Have you sought any information from the MOD on whether that is an accurate assertion?

John Ainslie: There was an official response from the MOD in the *Sunday Herald* a few weeks ago that did not engage with the detail of the time scale, which is what I expected.

Q1066 Lindsay Roy: What are the main limiting factors that prevent this happening within two years? You need two years.

John Ainslie: In terms of taking longer than that? **Lindsay Roy:** No, taking a shorter time.

John Ainslie: The safety of moving the warheads. They used to take three days to drive up and three days to drive down, so it was at least a week's operation every time. They are now quicker, but, even so, we have to allow time for the crew and for training. That would be having the vehicles operationally on the road for possibly a week every month and then three weeks' build up. There are clearly lots of safety and security concerns about moving nuclear warheads.

Q1067 Lindsay Roy: And this will be travelling through Scotland to England?
John Ainslie: Yes, by road. They tried doing it by sea once in the late '90s, but that was only an

experiment.
Q1068 Lindsay Roy: Are there special security arrangements?

John Ainslie: Yes. In theory you could run them non-stop, but in practice that is not very feasible because of all the security implications.

Q1069 Lindsay Roy: Can you tell us whose responsibility it would be to remove and transport the warheads, should Scotland become a separate country?

John Ainslie: There are specialised vehicles, which are based at Aldermaston. They have actually just introduced a new one; it was the truck cargo heavy duty mark II, and it is now the mark III. They are very specialised vehicles. It used to be RAF personnel, and it is now Ministry of Defence police personnel.

Q1070 Lindsay Roy: Would it be primarily Scotland's responsibility or the responsibility of the rest of the UK to remove the warheads and transport them?

John Ainslie: In terms of the logistics, it is a specialised job so the unit that is down in Aldermaston would be the people with the capability to do it.

Q1071 Lindsay Roy: So that would require the good will and co-operation of the rest of the UK?

John Ainslie: In practice, I think, yes.

Q1072 Mr McKenzie: Just on the removal of the warheads and the safety factor, is your safety calculated on the number of warheads that are removed at any one time, or is that a mass removal or a strategic one?

John Ainslie: I am basing this on nine or 10 warheads per convoy. The maximum number of vehicles is five. The maximum number of warheads-in theory, I think you can possibly put four, but in practice it is two, as we know historically from the 1990s. It comes back to the period when Trident was being brought up here. When Trident was brought up to Scotland there was quite an effort over what was going on. From that, we know the sort of process.

Q1073 Mr McKenzie: Do you reckon we still could do that sort of gradual removal of warheads within two years?

John Ainslie: Yes, this is moving nine or 10 a month over 24 months. The current stockpile is 225. **Q1074 Mr McKenzie:** So the removal would not commence after two years; it would commence before

two years in that respect, no?
John Ainslie: There is a separate issue of when this process starts, as it were.

Q1075 Mr McKenzie: If it started two years from the time you are saying, it would not be completed in the two years you were saying that it could be.

John Ainslie: I am really only looking at the practicalities of how it happens. There is clearly this other issue of: how do you get there?

Q1076 Chair: We understand that point. At the moment we are really just wanting to explore with you the practicalities. My understanding is that it is 24 months for the complete removal of all the warheads to somewhere in England.

John Ainslie: Yes.
Q1077 Lindsay Roy: If that were the case, what would be the proportionate cost to the Scottish budget of

removing and transferring the warheads and in the decommissioning? Has that been worked out?

John Ainslie: Very difficult to cost. One of the things I have tried to do over the years is to get estimates from the MOD of various costs. I do not think I have ever seen anything specifically on costs of nuclear weapons transport, but there is an organisation that does that normally. Part of the context would be that there will be nuclear warhead movements anyway. There is currently a call for mark 4A upgrades, so the warheads are being upgraded. All the warheads in the operational stockpile will be taken down to Burghfield, upgraded and brought back again. So there are going to be these movements happening in any case.

Q1078 Lindsay Roy: So there is no figure. My question was wider than that, about the decommissioning of Faslane and Coulport. Has any estimate been made of what proportion of the Scottish budget would have to be devoted to that?

John Ainslie: Decommissioning at the sites is a different question, and it is not really something that I have looked at. This is not talking about decommissioning the sites; this is talking about removing the warheads in particular. There is a second issue, to some extent, of

looking at the missiles, which are the two bits of the strategic weapons system. It is only really touching on the question of submarines, and it is not really going as far as what happens with the site. The site issue, if we want to go down that road, is really Coulport.

Q1079 Lindsay Roy: But just to clarify, you do not have a notion of the proportionate cost to Scotland's budget of transferring the warheads?

John Ainslie: There are not figures readily available, but part of my response would be that this is not additional. At some point these warheads have to be removed and dismantled, so it is a cost that at some

point will occur. Is it already there in the nuclear liabilities figure? I am not sure. The decommissioning might already be there in the MOD's nuclear liabilities figure.

Q1080 Lindsay Roy: The difference would be that there would be a separate state-a separate Scotland. There has been no estimate calculated on that basis?

John Ainslie: No. The transport figures are probably not necessarily particularly high; it will be the cost of sustaining that unit. Costs of decommissioning sites are then potentially far more substantial, if you are talking about that.

Q1081 Chair: Before we move on, could I go just go back through some of the phases of the actual physical dismantling, just to make sure that we are absolutely clear about this? You have given in your document eight phases, which would mean that everything is completed within four years and things could be out of Scotland within two years. Let me just go back, if I could, to phase 1, which is the end of operational deployment of submarines. You are quite clear, are you, that they could all be back in base within seven days? Can you just clarify again for me on what you base that?

John Ainslie: Basically, there is one Trident submarine on patrol at all times. The question in terms of how long it takes them to get back is then the issue of where the patrol areas are, which clearly is very highly classified. The only slight indication about that is the collision between the French and the British submarines-the Vanguard and the Triomphant-a couple of years ago. That was probably not that far from the Bay of Biscay, in terms of the time it took the French submarine. It was not on the west side of the Atlantic, but it was on patrol. That was a Trident submarine on patrol within about two days' sailing of the French base.

Q1082 Chair: As I understand it, these vessels often go off on three-month patrols. I am not quite sure, but do you just sort of ring them up, say "Hello" and ask them to come back? How do you know that, once they are away, you can actually get them back?

John Ainslie: One of a number of basic requirements of a Trident submarine on patrol-one of the fundamentals when you are talking about a tour-is constant communication. They must be in constant communication at all times. They never transmit, but they have to be able to receive, so it is easy to send a message to them. It is a fundamental thing, because if you want to fire them, they obviously have to be able to receive the message, so one of the basic requirements is constant communication.

Q1083 Chair: Removing the keys and triggers-we touched on this earlier-is something that is done, but is then reversible and can be put back again. I am not clear what the disabling of missiles, which is done in eight days, is. What is it that you do to disable them, since presumably they are already disabled by the removal of the keys and triggers? What different step is this and, again, is it reversible?

John Ainslie: It is. For removing components, which are removed anyway-there is a guidance unit inside the missile and there is a fire-control computer system inside the missile-there is a little hatch which allows submariners to get inside the missile and to remove those. They are gyroscopes and so forth, so they have to be quite

carefully handled. They are routinely removed and stowed on shore, anyway, and it is quite possible that, sometimes, they remove them.

There is this thing about their having several days' notice to fire and how they do that. Possibly one of the ways is that the British force, which is currently on a couple of days' notice, simply does not have those items installed. I do not know if that is the case, but it is a relatively routine process. It would take about a day to do, but you have to bring the submarine in.

The other one, that Bruce Blair in America suggested when I started raising this with him, was a thing called an AC/DC inverter, which physically launches the missile. Again, those are components which-within the US Navy, and presumably the British Navy-they already from time to time remove. Removing those inverters prevents a missile from being physically shot out of the tube.

These are all things. Again, you remove them and you lock them up in a cupboard somewhere, with a wee video camera or something on it, but can you be absolutely sure that somebody's not got a spare one up their sleeve?

Q1084 Chair: So up to that phase 3, where your missile is disabled in eight days, all of that is still reversible?

John Ainslie: Yes. The issue in terms of verification is quite hard to-

Q1085 Chair: No, I understand that. I just want to be clear. On the removal of warheads from submarines, you have "submarines" as plural, so I presume that means that one submarine takes eight weeks and that to remove missiles from two submarines takes 10 weeks. I am not sure if that is eight weeks and then another two weeks, or eight weeks and then another 10 weeks. Either way, I understand the concept that by the end of 10 or 18 weeks all the missiles are out of all the submarines.

John Ainslie: There are two stages. You have got nuclear warheads that are on top of the missile. The numbers are highly classified, but, in practice, say that they are down to eight missiles in each

submarine. You have three armed submarines, each of which has eight missiles and each missile has five nuclear warheads. Current practice in Britain on safety grounds is that they install and remove the warheads while they are on the missile on the submarine. The first stage is you take all the warheads off one submarine. The time for each is seven to 10 days. I say that because, again, I watched them loading a Vanguard in December 1994 before its first patrol. It was taking them about a week to 10 days. They were carrying slightly more than they carry now-they were loading 60 at that point. Each one would take about a week, so, in theory, with three submarines, you could do it in three weeks, but, again, because of the safety considerations, it is quite a big operation; it is not just something you can take on tomorrow. Eight weeks is building in a longer period. It is one week, for each of three submarines.

Q1086 Chair: Okay, I see the distinction there between warheads and missiles. Once that is done, the removal of the limited life components from Scotland takes a year. That is phase 6. Within a year, if these things were out of Scotland and not brought back in, that is the stage at which it is irreversible. Is that right?

John Ainslie: There is always this element in disarmament that you could in fact bring them back, but it is more difficult. The other thing is, you can verify that they have gone more easily. When you start moving substantial physical components, it is easier for someone outside to monitor that it is happening.

Q1087 Chair: A Government of a separate Scotland would presumably not condone them coming back in again, so there is a certain irrevocability about that. Can I just clarify something? If you are removing the keys and the triggers and disabling the missiles, can those bits not simply be moved south of the border at that stage as well? Suppose it took another week to take them down south. They would then be out of Scotland within a fortnight or three weeks and that would, unless they were smuggled back up, irrevocably stop the missiles being usable. Is that correct?

John Ainslie: Yes, possibly. It is a question of how easy it is to monitor it. As I have said, work has been done on verification. I was looking at how you verify it. Quite a bit of work has been done with warheads. Some of these other things are harder to verify. A warhead has a radiological signature. Because it is radioactive, you can check whether it has been moved around and that gives you the mechanism to verify it.

Q1088 Chair: For the sake of argument, let us suggest that this is done in good faith. If this is done in good faith, it would be entirely possible for the submarines to be back, for the keys and triggers to be removed within seven days-one thing, at the end of operational deployment, the keys and triggers are presumably removed another seven days after that.

John Ainslie: No, it really only takes about a day. That is why these various things are saying eight

days. Seven of those eight days is the time it takes to get the submarine back.

Q1089 Chair: Okay, so it is within that time and they get loaded into the back of a Vauxhall Vectra like mine and driven down to England and, subject to good faith and so on, that would essentially be the whole Trident fleet disabled.

John Ainslie: Yes, that might be a better way of doing it. What I was proposing is that somehow or other it is verified. If you were able to verify them down south, that might be preferable, because they are further away.

Q1090 Chair: I suppose that, with verifying them down south, you would not know whether they had a spare one. That was why I was making the point that, if it is done in good faith, this could be done in less than a fortnight. Is that fair?

John Ainslie: Yes, that was Bruce Blair's comment to me. He has done work. These initial stages overlap with de-alerting. There is a whole concern now that nuclear weapons are in too high a state of

alert. They are on hair triggers, which is less the case with British ones. That is why quite a lot of work has been done on de-alerting and those initial stages are the same as what is being talked about for American and Russian nuclear forces, so that they are not on hair trigger alerts. That is where this sort of expertise comes in.

Q1091 Chair: As I understand it, removing missiles from the two submarines is what it says on the tin. Presumably, they are physically taken out and that can easily be verified, because somebody looks in the holes and then counts them lying somewhere. On disabling the warheads, again, the point about limited life components is similar to the one we had before. On the caveat of two years, which Iain asked about earlier, effectively, it is not really as long as two years. That is just about how long it takes to physically remove them from Scotland. It might take some time to remove the boats and missiles, but under the system or timetable you have suggested of two years to no warheads, in reality, all of it could be disabled within 14 days, which is the point.

John Ainslie: I would say less than that; seven or eight days to disable it.
Chair: I was allowing leeway, just in case there was a blockage on the motorway or something like that. I

just wanted to be clear. Any other questions from anybody on those important points?

Q1092 Mr McKenzie: On removing the keys and disarming almost immediately, how could that happen, and is there a sort of overlap? I take it that the rest of the UK would still wish to retain a nuclear deterrent. As such, if you are taking the keys off all the nuclear weapons in that base, the nuclear deterrent that they wish to keep would be nullified. Would keys have to be sent down south, or to Wales or Northern Ireland, and then a submarine go there to maintain it? How would the rest of the UK maintain that nuclear deterrent if they wanted to?

John Ainslie: It is putting it beyond use. I suppose that the starting point is, to some extent, an understanding of international law, and any use of these weapons would almost certainly be contrary to the ICJ's 1996 ruling that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules and principles of humanitarian law. So, ever using these things would be illegal under international law and therefore, it is a responsible thing to put something in place to prevent that use. That is the sort of starting point.

Q1093 Simon Reevell: I was delayed and I missed the beginning, so I am sorry if I am going to ask something that has been covered. I presume what you have been describing is a scenario based on a desire on the part of the UK, not including Scotland, to disarm, because none of this is necessary without that desire.

John Ainslie: If the force is based in Scotland, and if we are looking at the scenario of an independent

Scotland, which is a separate, sovereign state, the idea of a sovereign state having its whole nuclear weapons capability indefinitely in another sovereign state is probably not sustainable. So at some point- this is my other argument to get on to-if they can't move it, you are in a position that becomes unsustainable.

Q1094 Simon Reevell: Let us assume that for some reason, the base could not be accessed. It is not an automatic consequence of that that you begin to disarm your capability.

John Ainslie: When you say it couldn't be accessed, sorry-

Q1095 Simon Reevell: Let us assume, for the sake of the argument, that the base, although it remains part of the UK, for whatever reason cannot be accessed, which would be the effect of separation. That does not mean that you begin then to remove triggers and gyroscopes. The two things are entirely unconnected, aren't they?

John Ainslie: Are you assuming a Guantanamo Bay or Cork model-

Q1096 Simon Reevell: No, let us simply assume that suddenly, for whatever reason, the base is not there any more. That is problematic, but the leap in logic that means you then start to remove the triggers comes from a desire to see disarmament. It is not an automatic consequence of that.

John Ainslie: What I am saying is that an independent Scotland could say to a member of the UK Government, "This is what we would like you to do."

Q1097 Simon Reevell: It cannot. It can say that you cannot bring your submarines here any more. That is the limit of what an independent Scottish Government could do. It could say, "The base is closed to your submarines. Do not bring them here", but what happens as a result of saying that is a completely separate consideration, isn't it?

John Ainslie: They are based there, and that is the problem. **Q1098 Simon Reevell:** The ones that are at sea.

John Ainslie: They cannot actually sail them anywhere else. They do not have safety clearance. Even Kings Bay in America will not have safety clearance to handle British warheads.

Q1099 Simon Reevell: But the point that you are trying to make is that if the bases are not available, the missiles have to be disarmed. The availability of the bases and the decision about the maintenance of the deterrent are separate. One has a bearing on the other, but it does not follow that they have to begin to disarm the missiles the day after the base becomes unavailable, does it?

John Ainslie: If that is the only base that they have.
Q1100 Simon Reevell: They could stay at sea for a period to begin with, for example.

John Ainslie: Not very long. There are practical problems. In theory, you could say, "Well, you can just temporarily move them to Devonport or to America." However, quite a lot of the work that I have done in recent years is on nuclear safety issues and to criticise

the defence nuclear safety regulator, but I don't think that the defence nuclear safety regulator would say, "Oh yes. Just bring them into Devonport and we'll handle the warheads there," or "Let's just take them over to Kings Bay in America and temporarily operate from there." There are huge issues with this.

Q1101 Simon Reevell: There are. From an American point of view, they might have to reassess the safety regulations at their base, but they would do that in the context of losing an important nuclear-powered ally. They may or may not, but there are all sorts of other considerations that would come in. Would you

accept that the idea that the base ceasing to be available means that we start to take the triggers out of the missiles is an enormous jump of logic?

John Ainslie: Not really, no. The other issue is that there is something less than 225 nuclear warheads, and 120 of those are on submarines. There are about 100 spares, of which a small number-10 or 20-are under refurbishment or overhaul at Burghfield. There are a significant number of extra warheads, which are currently sitting in bunkers at Coulport and so are not at sea.

Q1102 Simon Reevell: But that is not the same. They are weapons that are being stored. We are talking about the deterrent capability. Let us assume-God forbid-that one of those weapons being stored leaked and that whole area could not be approached. It would not follow from that that the submarine-based missile deterrent systems at seas would have to be disarmed unilaterally by the UK. That might be one option, but there are all sorts of other options, such as the French option, the American option or the relocation in the UK option.

John Ainslie: These are all possible options, but the other paper that I was doing was about relocation. Obviously, you cannot rule it out entirely, but I do not think that it is very viable.

Q1103 Simon Reevell: The impression that I got from what you were saying is that if there was separation for Scotland, a direct consequence of that would be imposed nuclear disarmament on the

UK. I appreciate that that is something that you might like to see, but it is not as strong a link as that, is it?

John Ainslie: It is quite a close link. I do not think that the weakness lies in the area that you are saying. The weakness lies with whether an independent Scotland would actually do this or whether it would negotiate a deal.

Q1104 Simon Reevell: That is a separate matter. If it negotiated a deal, the situation would not arise, but if the situation arises where the bases are no longer available, there are number of options at that stage, one of which is to dismantle the weapons.

John Ainslie: Yes, that is right, but the question is how viable these other options are.

Q1105 Simon Reevell: The viability of the other options depends on a number of things, which you are not aware of and neither are we, because of the very nature of those considerations. For example, there is the accommodation that is available at the American base or the French base-bearing in mind the different size of the submarines-or the rewriting of the rules and regulations for handling elsewhere in the UK. Those are the sorts of factors.

John Ainslie: One of the areas of research that I have been working on is international archives, particularly the Polaris track decision between 1977 and 1982. There are now several thousand pages of declassified files on that decision-making process. Part of what I am saying here is based on that information, which at the time was top secret. In that period, they looked at possibly basing them at Kings Bay. Frank Cooper, the permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence at the time, basically said it was not feasible or viable to build a replacement for Coulport on any greenfield site. If he is saying it was not viable at that point, at the height of the cold war-before Chernobyl and before Fukushima-then I would think it is less viable now than it was back then.

Q1106 Simon Reevell: But you are not aware of the work that has been done in the intervening 20 years and you know that this is a

completely different type of boat. It was Polaris in the early '90s. We are talking about Trident in 2012. So the work that you have looked at is 20 years out of date and relates to a different type of boat in a different political climate.

John Ainslie: The timing has the opposite effect. Between the 1960s and the late '70s, the safety regulations were tightened up. One of the implications of that was that the existing Polaris base safety zones were inadequate and they had to issue waivers in the late '70s. Explosives safety regulations and

nuclear safety regulations tightened up. There was a major problem with the shift to Faslane, because it was built and designed before Chernobyl. After Chernobyl, the regulations tightened, so it does not become easier over time. Certainly the experience of the previous decades is that it becomes harder over time.

Q1107 Simon Reevell: It becomes different, doesn't it? Let us be frank. You have no idea of what has happened in the period since the papers you looked at became available to the public and today, and that is a period of some 15 years plus.

John Ainslie: I have put in freedom of information requests for quite a lot of nuclear safety documents, so I know the direction of the nuclear safety issues. That is towards tightening things up. It is bringing defence nuclear safety in line with civil nuclear safety.

Q1108 Simon Reevell: But you are making a number of contentions about alternative bases. They might be informed guesses, but they are no more than that. That is the point that I am trying to make.

John Ainslie: I am not totally convinced that people in the Ministry of Defence have in fact been looking at this in the detail that you suggest. They are doing some work, but how detailed is it?

Q1109 Simon Reevell: If you are suggesting the MOD is not the model of efficiency that I understand it to be, I am stunned and surprised at that.

Q1110 Chair: Stop baiting the witness.

Coming back to the question of the phasing again, I just want to clarify one point. Is there enough room at Coulport for all the submarines to be worked on at the same time, particularly removing missiles from two submarines? Is there enough staff there to do that?

John Ainslie: Some bases would take one in at a time. The explosive handling jetty can take only one submarine. The staffing is an issue in terms of scheduling. How do they schedule that work in comparison with what they do? What happens at the moment is that when a submarine goes from Faslane into Devonport for a refit, at that stage they take all the warheads off. The missiles go to America, so the missiles do not necessarily come off. Then when a submarine comes out of refit, it goes into Coulport and they put them all on. Those things are happening every few years. When it happens, it is quite a big operation. Clearly, if you want to do it on three-one after the other-that is quite a task. On the other hand, the system is there to do it.

Q1111 Chair: That might conceivably stretch the timetable for removing missiles from two submarines and disabling the warheads and removing the live components from Scotland.

John Ainslie: There is potential for that, but, when I have put it to people in the States who have inside information on this, they say that this is all viable. They are not saying that this is not practical.

Q1112 Chair: Notwithstanding that, of course, that would not delay the two-week period that I was allowing for the disabling and the removal of the keys and triggers and loading these into the back of my Vauxhall Vectra and driving back to England. Notwithstanding that point about staff numbers, the actual disabling would still be able to take place within the timetable that you initially outlined, if there were full co-operation. Simon came in slightly late when we were exploring the question of what would be possible if that were desired.

Q1113 Mr McKenzie: In your report, you say that any delay by an independent Scottish Government in calling for the removal of

nuclear weapons would result in pressure from the rest of the UK to reverse the policy. Can you tell us a wee bit about what you believe those pressures would be?

John Ainslie: In terms of the remainder of the UK trying to say to Scotland that it should effectively

keep them? That is not something we looked at in detail, but obviously it is part of the wider picture of what Scotland might be like if it were independent, and it is whether that would really be the case. I come at this from a slightly different angle. I know the work of Malcolm Chalmers, and his interpretation of how this will pan out is slightly different. The answer is partly based on how strongly the establishment are determined that they must, on all accounts, keep hold of nuclear weapons. I am not totally convinced how solid that really is. I do not know to what extent this is a bit of a house of cards. The underlying rationale is not very credible. There are all sorts of economic pressures. They could propose such things, but whether they really would is my question.

Q1114 Mr McKenzie: You say that two years is a reasonable time scale to have these weapons removed. The rest of the UK is saying that it would be something in the region of 20 years. Is there an interim arrangement that you would accept with a guarantee that in, say, 20 years' time they would definitely be off Scottish soil but in the mean time there might be a gradual phasing?

John Ainslie: I think the time scales are measuring two different things. I am measuring practical disarmament. The UK Government could do that, and if they did there would be no nuclear weapons by the time of the referendum. These are practical things that could be done.

Q1115 Mr McKenzie: But the UK Government are saying 20 years; you are saying two years. There is a gulf. Is there anywhere in the middle that you would accept with a guarantee that, in the future, they would be gone?

John Ainslie: I do not think the UK Government are saying that it will take 20 years to move nuclear warheads from Coulport to Burghfield. The suggestion is to relocate them and rebuild a new facility. The main Trident programme decision was taken in July 1980, and the first submarine was operational in December 1994, so you have a 14-year period between when the decision to go ahead with Trident was made and when the system was fully operational. That is almost the minimum, and because it is a new site, it will take longer. That is where the 20 years comes from. If you have to replicate Faslane or Coulport somewhere else, that is where the 20-year figure comes from, but that is measuring something different from what I am measuring.

Q1116 Chair: To be fair, Mr McKenzie is picking up the issue of what might be acceptable to you and people like you. I think you mentioned that there are economic pressures on the UK Government with Trident, but surely Mr McKenzie's first question was about the pressures that would be exerted on the Scottish Government. As you will recognise, originally the SNP were in favour of having a republic without the Queen, but that has now changed. They were originally in favour of the euro, I think, which has now changed. They were also against the Bank of England being involved, which has now changed. It might well be that this, like NATO, is something that changes, too, given the pressures that might be exerted. I wonder whether you could help us with some clarification.

John Ainslie: As I say, I think it is possible that the UK Government could try to do that. I just think there is a possibility that a UK Government might look at this as an opportunity, because this is very much an Anglo-American system. How would America and the Obama Administration, if re-elected, look at this? They are looking at substantial further reductions in the American warhead stockpile in line with Russia. The British might then be a problem. So the whole climate might be different-

Q1117 Chair: I understand that. If the British Government decided to use this as an opportunity to disarm, this would give them an excuse to do so-I understand that. But if they decide not to disarm-not to

nuclear disarm unilaterally, and certainly not if foisted on them by a separate Scotland-and it takes 20 years to build a replacement, can I ask you to clarify what you believe would happen then?

John Ainslie: They clearly could try to make life difficult in the wider negotiation, but the other context is international-again, it is where I probably differ from what Malcolm Chalmers or some of the others are saying. I was at the NPT PrepCom earlier this year, there are a lot of countries around the world that are on the disarmament side-Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Germany or Scandinavian countries. We would

be trying to move towards nuclear disarmament, concerned about nuclear proliferation. If you have one country trying to insist that another country continues to host its nuclear weapons, I think that the international context might well be international support for Scotland's position, rather than for the rUK's position. It is very difficult, because all these are speculations and "what if", but it might play out in a different way.

Q1118 Jim McGovern: Not for the first time, you have probably just asked the question I wanted to ask.

Chair: I am sorry.

Jim McGovern: That's okay. My perception of CND is probably of a worldwide organisation. To me, it would sound slightly nimby-if you know the meaning of that acronym, not in my back yard-"I don't care if they are going to have to go to England, as long as they are not in Scotland."

John Ainslie: I think that the earlier work I did, which was commissioned last year but I published it in January, was basically looking at this and at whether there was anywhere they can go. Malcolm Chalmers and William Walker wrote a book in 2001, "Uncharted Waters"-I was aware of that because I discussed it with them at the time-and that went through the proposals in 1960 and ruled them out. What I was finding from the later 1977 to '82 archives was further evidence to rule those out. In other words, it is not just the

arguments for why these sites in England and Wales were ruled out in 1960-

Jim McGovern: I am looking at the future and not at the past.

John Ainslie: But it is a question of where. A point that I mentioned slightly earlier was that Frank Cooper was saying that no greenfield site was viable in 1979-so a greenfield site is not viable for a nuclear weapons depot. Of the existing sites, Barrow is far too shallow, it does not have the tides; Devonport is in the middle of the city of Plymouth, and the nuclear regulator would never allow it. I criticise nuclear regulators, but I cannot imagine the Office for Nuclear Regulation permitting a Coulport facility. At Coulport at the moment, the explosives handling jetty is 3 km from Garelochhead on one side and Ardentinny on the other. That is the sort of safety margin you have got around that site-you cannot build that in the middle of Plymouth.

Q1119 Jim McGovern: I should have started off by saying my apologies for being a bit late. I am aware that questions have probably been asked about how autonomous CND Scotland is-even from the rest of the UK-but if these weapons are going to be removed from Scotland and you are making an argument as to why they cannot be located in England, where are they going to go?

John Ainslie: Nowhere. It was from looking again at the Walker-Chalmers book and updating it from the more recent archive information that I have got- Basically, when Britain moved from Polaris to Trident, the Government suddenly realised that they had a huge problem with Coulport, because the safety regulations had tightened up. The Trident C4 was a bigger missile and the D5 an even bigger missile; even with moving the missile processing work to the United States, they still had a huge problem trying to accommodate it. They then said, at one point-1981-how about just basing the British Trident fleet, missiles and warheads at Kings Bay? So it was floated in 1981 as a way out of this problem with sites. Basically that was not viable-

Q1120 Jim McGovern: With all due respect, may I interrupt? When you say that they would go nowhere, do you mean that they would go to America or that they just would not exist any more?

John Ainslie: The American option is not viable. It was ruled out in 1981. **Q1121 Jim McGovern:** So they would just disappear. Is that what you mean?

John Ainslie: It has come back to this point. You are forced into a position of disarming. You cannot move them to England or Wales. You cannot move them to the United States, because that was previously

ruled out, and Ile Longue in France- What you are talking about in France is a new site. You would have to say to people in France: it is not using the existing place at Ile Longue, but building a new facility somewhere else in Brittany as a British nuclear base. It is very hard to see that happening.

Q1122 Jim McGovern: So there is nowhere round the globe-

John Ainslie: Looking at it, we could come up with somewhere like Diego Garcia.

Jim McGovern: You said nowhere, not me.

John Ainslie: It is a question of trying to come up with any viable options. You could always say that there is somewhere, but it is trying to come up with viable options.

Q1123 Mr McKenzie: Again, on the same theme: pressure has been applied from within. You have already said that CND is a worldwide organisation. What pressure would be applied from inside CND to the Scottish arm of it to say, "Look, you have a guarantee of 20 years and these weapons are gone." It is meeting its end goals. "Let us take the 20-year guarantee."

John Ainslie: I have to come back to the point that was being made there-the sort of nimby approach. For Scottish CND to say, "Let us

move them in 20 years' time to England," is not something we would have any time for at all. If what you are saying is that in 20 years' time, we will build another facility at Falmouth, which is the more viable of the options, we could not say, "Oh, yes, we will go along with that."

Q1124 Chair: You will be pressing the Scottish Government to say that they should be removed from Scotland within the timetable that you have given, even though you understand that that timetable would effectively mean unilateral nuclear disarmament for the rest of the UK?

John Ainslie: Yes.
Q1125 Chair: You would not be willing to give them time to build a replacement site?

John Ainslie: I do not think that any of the replacements are viable. That is the result of looking at the '63 proposals in the light of where things are. To put it in context, if you want to build a new nuclear power station on a greenfield site somewhere, it does not happen. Nuclear power stations are only built on existing nuclear sites.

Q1126 Chair: I do understand. Perhaps I should have said at the beginning that we are the Scottish Affairs Committee and therefore the question of where it goes in England and Wales will be the responsibility of someone else, but we must be clear about what sort of pressures they will be placed under by what may happen in Scotland. It is in that context that it is useful for us to clarify that from your perspective waiting 20 years to have a new site built would not be acceptable. I think that it is your understanding that it would not be acceptable to the SNP or the existing Scottish Government either. Is that correct?

John Ainslie: That is right. They did give a brief response to this report, which was that they would want to get rid of Trident in the shortest possible time scale.

Q1127 Chair: That is right. The shortest possible time scale does seem to be the eight weeks that we discussed earlier on-in fact, having

it disabled within the 14 days that you discussed earlier on. Any slide back from that is clearly a concession.

Q1128 Mr Reid: Is it your position that it is impossible for Trident to be relocated elsewhere in the UK or just that it would cost an awful lot of money?

John Ainslie: It is more than just money; it is political viability. Walker and Chalmers in their book looked at the '63 options, and they said if you look at the matter again, you should add other ones-that is about the political viability of the sites. In somewhere like Falmouth, with its peninsula, all its sailing and everything else that goes on, you are saying to the local community that we have now decided that we will build a nuclear weapons base here. That is quite tricky.

Q1129 Mr Reid: What about a community that already has a lot of people employed in the nuclear industry-either civil nuclear power or defence related? Do you not think that a community that is already used to living with nuclear and having a lot of jobs out of it would accept-

John Ainslie: The problem is finding it. Barrow is the one that comes to mind. I was reading the RAND study on refuelling submarines. Rather than fuel them at Barrow, they would take them to Devonport to be fuelled, which would mean towing them. So they looked at this in great detail and explained the tidal conditions in Barrow. It is not just that there are only particular days of a month that they can take them out; they have to travel at more than 8 knots to get over the sandbank. They managed to run aground when they launched it at Barrow. The facilities there are behind a dock gate, so you can have an operational submarine base on that basis. You have got to work not just on a high tide; it is a tide of one or two hours in a month. Likewise, there is an issue with Devonport, but Devonport is the city. I think you are right in saying that the most likely places to take them are where you already have an awareness of that, but those particular sites do not look viable.

Q1130 Mr Reid: So you are saying that it is not a question of cost; it is just impractical. *John Ainslie:* Cost clearly is an option.

Q1131 Mr Reid: If a lot of money was spent, would that overcome what you can see as the political difficulties?

John Ainslie: How much would it cost to dredge Barrow? That was the potential engineering solution to these things. My basic feeling is that these are not just my views in relation to the option not being viable. I suspect that, on an official level, they do not think radically different from that.

Q1132 Mr Reid: To summarise, what you are saying is that the cost of decommissioning would be insignificant compared with the cost of relocating.

John Ainslie: The cost of decommissioning is something that happens already and I think is built into defence nuclear liabilities figures. It is one of these strange words where they can alter it by a few billion and change the liability figure.

Q1133 Mr Reid: Obviously, even if the UK continued with Trident and a successor, all the existing components would have to be decommissioned at some point, but immediate decommissioning brings all those costs forward. Can you give a comparison of what it would cost to bring all those costs forward and have it done within the four-year period that you say it is possible to do it in?

John Ainslie: It is more looking at how that differs from the running costs. There may be additional costs. The point you were highlighting was about needing extra personnel at Coulport to unload the warheads and whether you have extra costs involved in that. Your convoys would run more frequently so there are extra costs. Burghfield-are they doing a higher work load? But they are not substantial.

Q1134 Mr Reid: You say it is not substantial. Can you put a figure on it?

John Ainslie: The total annual costs of the British nuclear weapons programme used to be £1 billion a year. It has now come to £2 billion a year, so it went up with the various Trident replacement things. Your total costs of everything-the basic running costs of the British nuclear weapons programmes-is a billion a year. That is what it currently runs at, but I do not really have the breakdown.

Q1135 Mr Reid: Over four years, it would cost £4 billion. During that four-year period that it would take to decommission, have you any estimate of the cost that would be incurred?

John Ainslie: Relative to normal operating costs?

Q1136 Mr Reid: Yes. Can you put a ballpark figure on it?

John Ainslie: It would be quite hard to say. I could have a go at looking at that.

Q1137 Mr Reid: Who do you think should bear those costs?

John Ainslie: It is not something there is a very clear view on as to whether it falls on the Scottish Government.

Q1138 Mr Reid: The nuclear weapons and the submarines are in Scottish territory. In the scenario we are envisaging, we are assuming that it is the Scottish Government that is insisting that all these costs be incurred.

John Ainslie: I suppose it is a question of ownership. I would not envisage that there would be any point-there are huge proliferation problems. They are never owned by the Scottish Government.

Q1139 Mr Reid: Well, if the residual UK Government wanted to remain a nuclear power, your argument is that if Scotland says, "No, they cannot stay here," that means that the residual UK Government could no longer be a nuclear power. I believe that is your argument. What if the UK Government just said, "Well, we are walking away. There are the submarines, and there are the warheads. You, the Scottish Government, do what do you like with them"?

John Ainslie: They would be quickly told by Washington that that is not on. They are Anglo-American warheads, and I think America would not allow that from the proliferation point of view. The Americans would not allow British nuclear weapons to be handed over to the Scottish Government.

Q1140 Mr Reid: But the UK becomes two separate states-Scotland and the residual UK, for want of a better name-so why does one of those states have a greater responsibility than the other?

John Ainslie: I think the assumption is that it would be the rUK-

Q1141 Mr Reid: But why? If Scotland is enforcing nuclear disarmament on rUK and effectively-this is your argument, anyway-saying to rUK, "All these multi-billion pound assets that the taxpayers have paid for are now worthless", why should it be rUK that bears the cost if Scotland is enforcing that decision?

John Ainslie: The historical parallels are certainly that that is what happened, in terms of the break-up of the Soviet Union and so forth.

Q1142 Mr Reid: Yes, but the break-up of the Soviet Union did not mean that Russia ceased to be a nuclear power. Your argument is that the break-up of the UK forces rUK to cease to be a nuclear power.

John Ainslie: It certainly removed bits of the Russian nuclear arsenal but, yes, they still had other bits left. It was less dramatic.

Q1143 Mr Reid: So who do you think should pay?
John Ainslie: I think the starting point is the rUK Government, because the weapons are effectively

theirs.

Q1144 Mr Reid: But the UK has ceased to exist, and there are two new states. What is your argument for England, Wales and Northern Ireland bearing this cost and not Scotland?

John Ainslie: I think the weapons would be seen as still being under the jurisdiction of rUK. **Mr Reid:** But why?

John Ainslie: There would be huge international proliferation problems if that was not the case.

Q1145 Mr Reid: Yes, but we are talking about a state that is split into two. Why does one part suddenly become responsible for all the components of the nuclear deterrent rather than the other part? The part whose territory they are on, you are saying, does not become responsible. You are saying that the responsibility is with the part whose territory they are not on. Why?

John Ainslie: I cannot see in practice anything else happening. It is harder to understand what the legal basis for that would be.

Q1146 Chair: Can I give you a parallel? I think the Scottish Government has, probably or possibly erroneously, argued that if the two states are created each of them will remain members of the European Union, because they have said that the two states will inherit membership of the European Union. I think Alan's point is that the same thing would apply here. If it is good enough for the European Union, surely it is good enough for nuclear weapons, and each successor state would, as it were, inherit a degree of a share-so many missiles each. As I understand it, when the Czech and Slovak Republics were created from Czechoslovakia, each bit kept what was on its territory. In these circumstances, Scotland would inherit all the nuclear facilities at Coulport and Faslane, and I am not entirely clear why you are saying that these parallels would not apply here.

John Ainslie: I cannot imagine Washington allowing these existing nuclear weapons to come under the jurisdiction of a Scottish Government.

Q1147 Chair: Sorry, I am not quite sure how that would work then. Washington would not necessarily be asked. This would not be a decision for Washington; this would presumably be something that needs to be resolved between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

John Ainslie: Just in terms of any diplomatic pressure, that is how I would see it work out. **Q1148 Chair:** Diplomatic pressure applied by whom to whom?

John Ainslie: By Washington.
Q1149 Chair: To whom?

John Ainslie: Both Governments.
Q1150 Mr Reid: You said that the responsibility should lie with rUK, but surely there is a responsibility

on Scotland as well. Why do you think Washington would put the pressure on rUK to accept all the costs?

John Ainslie: They would not accept the idea of those weapons falling under the control of the Scottish Government, and the international community would probably have concerns about that as well.

Q1151 Mr Reid: Why would they be concerned about them? You say they are concerned about them falling under the control of a Scottish Government. Why do you think that they would be concerned about that?

John Ainslie: I think to the extent to which the rUK is seen as the successor state, but again, as you pointed out earlier, there is this problem. I cannot say that I am an expert on that area. It is a question of treaty responsibilities and what happens with international treaty responsibilities, but I am a bit out of my depth, to be honest, if you are trying to get into that area.

Q1152 Mr McKenzie: The argument that you are outlining seems to me to be the Scottish separation question in reverse. We see those who want Scotland to separate saying that they feel that decisions are taken elsewhere and that they have no input, but here you are outlining how the rest of the UK would not have an input into a major decision unilaterally to disarm. Do you not think that the rest of the UK should also have some way of feeding into this decision making?

John Ainslie: The fact is that the weapons are currently here.

Q1153 Mr McKenzie: But you are saying that the rest of the UK should bear the costs, so you are recognising that the rest of the UK has, if you like, a stake in these weapons. You are saying that they

should bear the cost of dismantling, removing and so on, but you are saying that they should not have a say in the actual decision to go ahead and do that.

John Ainslie: They have been here, in my view, against our will for decades-since the '60s. From an historical point of view, I do not think people in Scotland have ever particularly-

Q1154 Mr McKenzie: But two wrongs do not make a right. If you are saying that we in Scotland were never offered the choice to have them, then it is equally wrong to say that we do not need to offer the choice to remove them. If you are saying that it is wrong for us in the first instance to have them stationed in Scotland without taking our position into account, then, equally, it works in reverse that it is wrong to say to the rest of the UK that these weapons should be removed, dismantled and made unusable without their input.

John Ainslie: My point of view is that disarmament is what we should be moving towards, so I do not really have any feeling of wanting to keep hold of nuclear weapons, and a feeling of a large number of members of the international community is that we want to be moving toward nuclear disarmament.

Q1155 Jim McGovern: I was not here at the start-I apologised for that earlier-so I do not know if the politics has been discussed, if CND Scotland is affiliated to any political party or, indeed, if you have personally expressed your support for any political party. I am certainly forming my own opinions on that.

It sounds to me that you would like Scotland to be able to cherry-pick: for 40 years or so, Scotland has been saying, "It is our oil, and these nasty English people are stealing our oil"; but when it comes to something like Trident, Scotland should accept no responsibility for it whatsoever, and say, "It doesn't belong to us, so get your tanks off our lawn, as it were. Get them out of here, but we're not paying anything for it." Do you have a view on that? Am I way off line there?

John Ainslie: Organisationally, Scottish CND is in a similar position to other organisations in Scotland. There are meetings with the Future

of Scotland and the wider grouping that the church is involved in. We are in a similar position of not having a clear yes or no view. We are consulting with our members at the moment in terms of where we are just now, so our chair has been attending local meetings to gauge what people's views are, because, as a membership organisation, we have a range of views. We have always managed to contain representatives from a wide range of political parties, and that is still the case. That said, there was also this feeling-it is not unique; I think the Church of Scotland is moving in a similar direction-of looking at issues and saying, "Can we provide information on those issues?"

For us and our relationship with nuclear disarmament, what would independence mean? That was why this research has been done. As an organisation, Scottish CND does not have a clear position. Our view is we want rid of nuclear weapons, whether it is in the UK or whether Scotland is independent. In terms of that particular plan there, although it is drafted in terms of Scottish independence, there is nothing that really stops the UK Government from saying, "Here is this plan. Here is how you can do it."

1156 Chair: I think it is fair to say that-
Q1157 Jim McGovern: I do not think that Mr Ainslie has answered my question yet. You are certainly

under no obligation to tell me what your particular politics are, but I go back to what I said about the separatism and claiming for 40 years that it is our oil, because it is around our sea base, as it were. To say that the Trident submarines that are around about our sea base are nothing to do with us, so we will not pay to get rid of them, sounds like a contradiction in terms to me.

John Ainslie: I said earlier that it is only wanting to get nuclear weapons out of Scotland, because that gets them out of the UK and because the UK not having nuclear weapons would have a major international impact on other countries.

Q1158 Jim McGovern: So it would be beneficial for Scotland-

John Ainslie: It would be of benefit to the world in terms of the threats that there are today from nuclear weapons and the threats in future, and trying to break that logjam. If the UK did not have nuclear weapons-other people argue against this.

Q1159 Jim McGovern: If Scotland regards it as that important, Mr McKenzie's point comes back into play. Presumably if Scotland wants rid of the weapons, Scotland should foot the bill, or at least in part foot the bill.

John Ainslie: The costing is not something that I have looked at in detail. If you are looking at a bill for disarmament or for rebuilding another nuclear site in England, I suppose that is a personal thing. It is not something that comes with political guidance. If you say to me we have got to pay for these convoys to go down the road, then-

Q1160 Chair: I think you understand why we want to probe this. As we have said to some other people that have been in front of us, there is an enormous absence of comment, observation and solutions from the Scottish Government and those who are advocating separation. We are having to therefore seize on the evidence and the work that has been done by other organisations and individuals like yourself, so therefore when we have somebody with us, it is only natural that we want to probe it as far as we can. All the points that we are raising are in the context of actually being very grateful for the work that has been done, but of course we reserve the right not to completely agree with it, as I am sure you would accept. That is why we are pursuing some of these points.

Q1161 Lindsay Roy: Are you not being partisan when you describe it as an Anglo-American arrangement? It is a UK-American arrangement.

John Ainslie: As I said, I have written various papers recently. There is a group called Reaching Critical Will that produced books for the NPT conferences. The last major event was the 2010 nuclear non-proliferation treaty conference. The contribution that I made was

basically looking at that US-UK nuclear relationship in technical detail.

Q1162 Lindsay Roy: The point I was making was that you said earlier it was an Anglo arrangement. *John Ainslie:* Sorry, that is just the terminology that tends to get used. It is US-UK. I just slipped into

saying Anglo-American. US-UK is what I would say if I was writing it properly.

Q1163 Mr Reid: Say, after independence, that the UK Government, or rUK, want to continue as a nuclear power, and they offer Scotland a very large sum of money in order to negotiate a deal whereby Faslane and Coulport become rUK sovereign territory, and they continue to operate as they do now. Under those circumstances, where would Scotland stand under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty?

John Ainslie: That is a tricky one. It certainly could be argued that it is a problem under the NPT. There are clearly other examples of that. America has a history of basing nuclear weapons around the world. It is an issue that is raised in the NPT conference, and some non-nuclear weapons states say that they are unhappy with the nuclear sharing arrangements and that deployment. Is it consistent? The view of the US

and UK Governments would be that is still in line with the letter of the agreement, if not the spirit of it. It is certainly a potential problem. William Walker highlighted that where the arrangement would differ, if it happened, in comparison with the American nuclear weapons in Germany, is that whereas America has a few nuclear weapons in Germany and it has thousands of others, this would be the whole arsenal of a nuclear weapons state in another state, and that starts getting more problematic.

Q1164 Chair: Would the case be easier if Britain had in fact retained tactical nuclear weapons and kept them somewhere else in the UK? I am dealing specifically with your point about its entire nuclear arsenal. As I understand it, Britain is pretty well disarmed from tactical nuclear weapons. Effectively, you are now saying that from

Britain's point of view, it would have been more secure internationally, in terms of the non-proliferation treaty, if it had not disarmed its tactical nuclear weapons.

John Ainslie: I would not want to endorse the United Kingdom keeping hold of-
Q1165 Chair: I am not asking you to endorse it. I am just exploring the point that you made.

John Ainslie: I am not sure from the NPT context that it would necessarily be any better, but I could imagine that there might well be people, particularly on the RAF side of the Ministry of Defence, saying, "We should have held on to these, because to do it now is not very viable." "Oh well, why don't we simply introduce an RAF nuclear capability as a way round the dilemma?"

Q1166 Chair: I do not think any of us had quite understood the point that you made before, which was that Britain having all of its nuclear weapons stock in a separate state was different to Britain having just some of them. In fact, in those circumstances, that could be overcome by buying another weapon, as it were-a tactical nuclear weapon that would be held on British soil. What practical difference would that make in legal terms?

John Ainslie: I maybe was exaggerating the difference there.
Chair: If it is not a substantial point, that is fair enough. Perhaps I misunderstood you.

Q1167 Mr Reid: From what you said, would I be right that the international legal position is unclear? Is that a fair comment?

John Ainslie: There is a history of them being criticised. The defence that the British and American Governments would use is that they were there before the treaty was signed.

Q1168 Mr Reid: The angle I am coming from is that if the Scottish had signed a treaty with rUK for Faslane and Coulport to become a sovereign UK territory with nuclear weapons on it, could the Scottish Government plausibly argue that it was a nuclear-free state?

John Ainslie: I don't think they could argue that it was a nuclear-free state.

Mr Reid: Sorry, I meant nuclear weapons-free state.

John Ainslie: In terms of the NPT, it would be a non-nuclear weapons state, but it is a legal anomaly. The non-proliferation treaty only recognises the five countries that had nuclear weapons at the time the treaty was signed. That is almost there within it, so everyone else is a non-nuclear weapons state, or had their own nuclear weapons at the time it was signed. Germany and these other countries are regarded from the point of view of the NPT as non-nuclear weapons states, although they are hosting nuclear weapons.

Q1169 Mr Reid: So the point I am trying to make is: could the Scottish Government sign this deal and still regard itself as a non-nuclear weapons state?

John Ainslie: In terms of the NPT?

Mr Reid: Yes.
John Ainslie: That might be the case. That is a legal anomaly in terms of the wording. It isn't that they

are really nuclear weapon-free states. **Q1170 Mr Reid:** But legally, yes.

John Ainslie: That is right. The question of Germany being a non-nuclear state was not affected by the fact that nuclear weapons are on its soil. It was a question of whether Germany owned and controlled them. Under the, as it were, Guantanamo Bay parallel that is being suggested or floated here, Scotland would not own or control them. They would be owned and controlled by rUK and, therefore, that might open a different door.

I was going to raise with you facilities being created at Milford Haven, Devonport or Barrow, but I think we have pretty well-

Q1171 Mr Reid: One line I wanted to pursue is that of separation distances. You said about Ardentinny being 3 km away from Coulport, but that is not my-

John Ainslie: The explosive handling jetty. That is a key place where you are putting warheads on and off a missile. That is the most likely place. Each missile is 70 tonnes of high explosive, so it would be 500-plus tonnes of high explosive on missiles and you are moving nuclear weapons on and off. That is the most hazardous facility. I just checked it recently, that it is 3 km-

Q1172 Mr Reid: So the facility would need to be-the actual place where you put the missiles on to the submarine-would have to be more than 3 km away.

John Ainslie: And you can't find that. I am not sure. There is a problem again with the issue of classification. I know somebody in America, and the American Pacific site is trying to get the Trident explosive safety distances. One is a freedom of information case-

Q1173 Mr Reid: It is hard to believe there is not somewhere in the whole of England and Wales that is not 3 km away from habitation and deep water enough to bring in a submarine.

John Ainslie: It is the west coast because of proximity to deep water. The east coast and south east are ruled out because they need to be close-they want to be close-to deep water.

Q1174 Mr Reid: It is not an essential, surely.
John Ainslie: It comes back to the original 1960 criteria. It started off in the 1960s for Polaris, looking

at everything and then they ruled out a whole large chunk on the basis of being too far from deep water.

Q1175 Mr Reid: So, you are saying there is nowhere down the west coast of England or Wales where you couldn't find a deep channel 3 km from significant habitation.

John Ainslie: It is looking. The study that Walker and Chalmers report in quite detail, you start with quite a lot on the shortlist and get it down and down to various ones. So the ones that are looked at in more detail are the ones that end up on the shortlist. Those other ones were just considered. Actually, there was always a high proportion in Scotland. There were quite a lot of other options but a fairly high proportion were up there.

Q1176 Simon Reevell: What about Lulworth?
John Ainslie: I floated that as a possibility but I am not sure how viable that is. I was just looking at that. **Q1177 Simon Reevell:** There were two reasons you didn't like Lulworth. One was that the Army would

have to give up its tank range. Presumably, given the choice between losing its nuclear deterrent and moving its tank range to Otterburn, that is a difficulty that could be overcome.

John Ainslie: Yes.
Q1178 Simon Reevell: The other is that Lulworth cove is nearby and it is a pretty cove-a pretty cove near

a tank range. Those were the only two points you raised against it, weren't they? *John Ainslie:* That is in terms of a depot. It was not on the original 1960s proposals.

Q1179 Simon Reevell: You were just asked questions about whether there was anywhere else down the coast.

John Ainslie: Yes, I was looking at Portland, as that is one of the other sites. The reason Portland was ruled out-

Q1180 Simon Reevell: Let's stick with Lulworth. What is the problem with Lulworth?

John Ainslie: Lulworth was ruled out because they could not find a site for a depot anywhere near Portland in the 1960s. So, I was certainly looking at that. It is possible it is one they could look at in more detail. I wasn't convinced it was viable. I was just floating it.

Q1181 Simon Reevell: But in fairness to the questions that you were being asked by Mr Reid, one possibility is Lulworth, and the only two measures against it were the tank range and the cove. That is what your thing said, isn't it?

John Ainslie: Just looking at it there, but, as I said, I didn't look at that in as much detail, because it was not there on the initial proposals.

Q1182 Simon Reevell: So there may be other places that weren't on the original proposals, such as Lulworth, that may be suitable.

John Ainslie: It is possible, but there may be other reasons why it wasn't-

Q1183 Simon Reevell: It would be quite a good thing to know, because the impression that you are giving is that there is nowhere for these boats to go. It would be quite useful to know whether there are in fact a number of places that have not been considered because they were not on the 1963 list.

John Ainslie: If you put aside greenfield sites, which are a problem. There are other bits of the defence military estate, which is partly why that cropped up. I was just looking at what other areas of land the Ministry of Defence own near the coast that might be possible options. It is an area where further work could be done. The official response from the Ministry of Defence is that they are not doing it, but they could do it.

Chair: We have generally taken the view that it is not for us to determine what the other possible locations are. I know that the Defence Committee is going to be looking at that, but, of course, that does have an influence on our consideration of whether a separate Scotland would be likely to allow the rest of the UK the 20 years or so that might be necessary to build a replacement, as distinct from the 14 days that might be necessary to completely disable it and what would happen in the interim. That is the area that we are exploring. In that context, I will not go over the stuff about Milford Haven,

Devonport or Barrow, because we have quite a lot of that in your documents.

Q1184 Mr McKenzie: Do you see a link between Scotland being a member of NATO and allowing nuclear weapons on its territory?

John Ainslie: From our point of view, the CND is opposed to the UK being involved in NATO, so

therefore it follows that it would not be very consistent for us to say that we would support an independent Scotland being a member of NATO, primarily because, historically, NATO is a nuclear alliance in terms of where it comes from. Our position would be that NATO is an anachronism.

Q1185 Mr McKenzie: You wouldn't support membership of NATO by a separate Scotland. *John Ainslie:* That's right.

Q1186 Mr McKenzie: What do you think taking that stance on nuclear would do to international relationships in the first few weeks or months of a separate Scotland?

John Ainslie: It allows different relationships. It is hard to go through it in detail, but some countries might be happier if Scotland was within NATO and others might not. I don't know all the details and the ins and outs of it.

Q1187 Mr McKenzie: But you wouldn't see a wholly negative attitude out there towards Scotland.

John Ainslie: If it wasn't in NATO?

Simon Reevell: If it wasn't in NATO.

John Ainslie: If it wasn't in NATO, would lots of other countries be unhappy about that? Not particularly. The complicated one is the United States-

Q1188 Mr McKenzie: Bearing in mind Scotland's strategic position on the map, would you not think that other countries would be a bit unsupportive of it not being a member of NATO?

John Ainslie: The political geography issue is a sort of cold-war issue. I don't know the extent to which that is really still valid today. The problem may well be in terms of the United States or the elements within it that would be keen on Scotland being a member of NATO. I think that the European response might be more mixed.

Q1189 Lindsay Roy: If the NATO alliance rests on a principle of nuclear deterrents, why do you think the SNP are now reconsidering an application to join NATO?

John Ainslie: From a Scottish CND perspective, that is not something that we would support. I don't really know quite where that issue is within the SNP. My understanding is that they might be looking at defence issues, which is fair enough. To what extent are they looking at NATO membership? We would not consider that a move in the right direction.

Q1190 Lindsay Roy: Is it not inconsistent, on the basis of how NATO is predicated on nuclear deterrence, that the SNP should be considering that?

John Ainslie: From our point of view, it would be preferable for all political parties to adopt a position opposed to NATO membership, because NATO is a nuclear alliance.

Lindsay Roy: That is very clear and helpful. Thank you.

Q1191 Chair: Norway, for example, is not a nuclear state, yet it is a member of NATO. Surely Scotland could be in that position. As I understand it, Norway does not allow nuclear weapons on its soil, yet it manages to exist within NATO. Why could Scotland not do that?

John Ainslie: I am not saying that is impossible. Scotland could be in that position, but it is not desirable from our point of view. There are a number of NATO members such as Norway, Germany and Canada

that are actively involved in the nuclear disarmament movement and are trying to change NATO policy. My concern is that they have not been able to get very far. Their attempts to change things have been

hampered by the feeling that there has to be consensus. NATO's nuclear policy has not moved very far since the end of the cold war when it could have potentially moved more radically.

If Scotland were a member of NATO, it would not be impossible also to follow a disarmament route, but NATO membership would make that more difficult. Certainly, from our point of view, that is not helpful.

Q1192 Mr Reid: What do you think will be the economic impact on the west of Scotland if the nuclear deterrent were removed from Faslane and Coulport?

John Ainslie: I did a study with the STUC five years ago looking at that. Certainly, the issue is separating the removal of Trident from the closure of Faslane. We are generally looking at Faslane continuing to have a function. The more specific point that we have tied down recently is in the jobs figures, which are more about understanding the question. The question was asked in 2009, but at the time we did not understand what it meant. Bob Ainsworth's reply was that there are 464 jobs at Clyde naval base that rely on the Trident programme. I think you would look at that and say that 464 is not very many and that surely there are far more than that. Because of privatisation, jobs at Coulport are being moved into the private sector from the MOD civilian force. Looking at that again, those 464 jobs are related to the Trident strategic weapon system at Faslane. That says there are fewer than 500 civilian people working on the warheads, missiles and systems that support them at Coulport and on some of the strategic weapon system facilities at Faslane. In other words, if you remove the weapon system in the way I am talking about, you have that figure of 500 jobs. Clearly, what happens out there is the bigger issue.

Q1193 Mr Reid: Yes, because the Vanguard submarines will not stay and be maintained without the weapon systems. In practice, a lot more than 400 people work directly on maintaining the weapon system.

John Ainslie: This is not something I or the CND would necessarily advocate, but there was a Lib Dem study by Toby Fenwick called "Dropping the bomb" that basically proposed alternative uses for the submarines. The study presented an argument for getting rid of the nuclear weapon system that said, "We now have these four Vanguard-class boats. What do we do with them?" The study looked at them as assets that could have alternative uses. That is more difficult from a CND perspective, because we are also opposed to nuclear-powered submarines.

Q1194 Mr Reid: So CND would want to see the submarines go as well as the weapons.

John Ainslie: I think the question would be one of time scale, and we have to recognise that there is a backlog of submarines awaiting decommissioning at Devonport. Although what we are saying is, "Let's get rid of Trident quickly; we can do it on this sort of time scale," the question of nuclear submarines is perhaps a longer one. There is this issue of negotiation and so forth.

Q1195 Mr Reid: What use would there be for the Vanguard submarines without the Trident missiles and warheads that they were designed to carry?

John Ainslie: Toby Fenwick's proposal was as cruise missile launchers, although that is not something that we particularly want to advocate. From the American navy's point of view, the Americans converted the four oldest Ohio-class into cruise missile boats. The American commanders-central command, Pacific command and European command-want those four submarines that fire cruise missiles. They do not want the other ones. There is a demand, and that is actually quite a problem for the US submarine programme because they do not have any plans to replace them. Our ballistic missiles have

not been converted into cruise missile carriers, but that is quite arbitrary for me because I do not really-

Q1196 Mr Reid: Yes, presumably you are also opposed to cruise missiles carrying nuclear weapons. Let us take the CND's position. You obviously want rid of the nuclear-powered submarines as well, so have you done any analysis of how many jobs would go if the submarines went as well as the nuclear weapons?

John Ainslie: It is a question of transition. It is assuming Trident is maintained as a naval base of some form.

Q1197 Mr Reid: Faslane is maintained, you mean.
John Ainslie: Yes. Coulport I think is a separate issue, and if you remove the nuclear weapons, what is

there to do with this huge site?

Q1198 Mr Reid: Have you done any analysis as to what else might be done?

John Ainslie: The only thing with that is that we did manage to get a reply from the Ministry of Defence saying that there was no radiological or toxic contamination on the site that would prevent alternative use. We asked whether there was any huge problem that would mean the site could not be used for something else, and they said that there was not. Beyond that, we have not actually looked any more, but I think it would be one of the stages to ask, "What is the potential for that site?"

The STUC study that was done a few years ago was partly looking at this idea where you could get rid of Vanguard-class submarines and have Astute-class submarines coming in. Again, there is a bit of a weak point there, certainly in terms of what happens if you get rid of nuclear submarines as well and you have got a conventional base. I think the issue in the wider context was one of transition and how long and how quickly you do these things. The experience of Dunoon and the experience of base closures both in the UK and America is

that you ought to plan when you are looking at closures or even at a substantial change.

Q1199 Mr Reid: Yes, but you have said this would happen overnight. Within a few weeks the submarines would no longer-

John Ainslie: There are not job implications. In fact, as the Chair was suggesting, you might actually need these people more in the short term. There might be more of a demand for people to do some of those jobs.

Q1200 Mr Reid: That is only for the first two years, though. Have you done any studies as to what would happen after that?

John Ainslie: Not since the STUC one.
Q1201 Mr Reid: What did the STUC come up with? Was the STUC assuming that nuclear-powered

submarines went as well?

John Ainslie: No, that was assuming that the nuclear-powered submarines were there. That is an entirely different scenario. It said that because the Astute numbers were coming up, if you ended up with a similar number of submarines, yes there would be some job losses-

Q1202 Mr Reid: And what purpose did the STUC see for all these submarines that were not carrying nuclear weapons?

John Ainslie: No, it was assuming that the Vanguards go and the Astutes come, so you have a static number of six submarines.

Q1203 Mr Reid: What would those submarines be doing?
John Ainslie: What Astute would be planning to do, so it would be Astute-

Q1204 Mr Reid: But the main purpose of the Astute is to protect the Vanguard. Without the Vanguard to protect, what is the purpose of the Astute?

John Ainslie: I would question that now. I think the submarines that were there in the past-it probably still is the primary purpose, but in terms of the balance of work load, I am not sure it is in the sense that it was in the old days.

Q1205 Mr Reid: So what other role do you see for the Astute submarines?
John Ainslie: Off hand, I think the allocation to protection of the deterrent is probably one submarine at

the moment.

Q1206 Mr Reid: Sorry; I did not hear that. Allocation to?

John Ainslie: To protecting the nuclear-armed submarine force. I think it is one submarine. I am aware that the figures have gone down. The figures are somewhere in some strategic defence review. Certainly, the 1998 strategic defence review gave a breakdown of those.

Q1207 Mr Reid: But this all presumably assumes that the UK is still in existence. Would you see an independent Scotland having a need for all these Astute submarines?

John Ainslie: That is more looking at whether it is a conventional military base or a conventional navy base. More importantly-I have only just looked at this myself, slightly-you had Stuart Crawford and he was looking at these figures. I have done a similar thing of looking at what sort of numbers there are and what you do with the things there.

One of the issues would be that you have got all this accommodation in Faslane, so would you have some sort of military unit based at Faslane simply because it has the facilities for that, even if you no longer have a naval requirement? That is the sort of thing that I was looking at. It has got over 4,000 service personnel there at the moment, and I found it quite hard to see that you have a naval presence on that scale. Do you look at it and say, "Ah, somehow or other, do you accommodate a military presence?"

Q1208 Chair: My understanding is that, apart from the nuclear submarines that are there with the missiles, there is virtually no other work there for anybody supporting the base. Astute is due to come in, but if Astute does not come in because a separate Scotland cannot afford it, it will just simply be the Scottish Navy. They will then have a lot of surplus accommodation, but there is going to be a lot of surplus accommodation elsewhere in Scotland.

I was interested in the point that you made about being willing to look at running down the base over a longer period, and trying to preserve work in that sort of way. That is almost an argument for accepting the running down of the Trident missile force over a much longer period in order gradually to wean either Scotland or the UK off these boats and this system, or to allow the rest of the UK to build up another system. That is moving away from the 14 days that it could be scrapped under. Is that something that CND would really consider?

John Ainslie: What we were doing is making a distinction between nuclear weapons, because of this basic moral argument, and nuclear-powered submarines, which, yes, have hazards and so forth but are really on a different scale. That is probably where it is coming from, because we want to get rid of nuclear weapons from that point of view, whereas we would rather we did not have nuclear submarines but there is a difference.

Q1209 Chair: Right. That is a helpful distinction. Are there any other questions that any of my colleagues want to raise? Do you have any answers prepared for questions that we have forgotten to ask, or do you have anything else that you feel that you want to tell us that we have not touched on? We have tried to give you as much of an opportunity as possible to outline and expand on the documents that you had already written.

John Ainslie: I think that that has largely covered it. I am very grateful for the opportunity to get across

these points. I suppose the feeling is that this is initial work. You will be aware of this, but the wider context is that both of these reports

were produced relatively quickly. We need to look at these and, as with a whole number of other issues around independence and so forth, we need to home in on them in more detail. It is quite useful, in a sense, to be questioned about it to see what points we actually need to come back and look at a bit more.

Chair: On behalf of my colleagues, I want to place on the record that we regard your work as extremely valuable. Obviously, if people in Scotland are going to have to take this major decision about separation or not, they need to have the maximum information and, regrettably, those who are actually arguing for separation seem unwilling to provide it. So the sources that you have identified and the papers that you have drawn up have been very helpful to us. It might very well be that we come back to you in due course, as the debate goes on, and seek clarification on some of the points as the argument goes on.

May I thank you very much for coming and draw the meeting to a close?

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