



# West Midlands

CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

# Mailing

July/August 2025

## AWE Aldermaston – 75 years on

As our nuclear-weapons-friendly government rushes towards expanding the UK's weaponry, there has been a flurry of articles about the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) at Aldermaston to mark 75 years of its existence. At the beginning of June, the local MP Olivia Bailey welcomed the announcement of £15 billion investment in the AWE's nuclear warhead programme and has gone on record saying that she is delighted to represent a constituency that is "so vital to the nation's security".

Later in June, the Ministry of Defence announced that 1,500 skilled roles had been created in the last year, with nearly 10,000 new jobs being created across the UK as part of the "Plan for Change"; and that people working in the defence nuclear industry receive 20% above the national average. The Defence Secretary John Healey visited the site to inspect the progress of the development where, he has said, the AWE is providing security for "generations to come" by creating the next generation of warheads, replacing those on the Trident system.

Although the site is sometimes described as "top secret", the media was given access to selected parts of the establishment, with film shown on Sky News <https://tinyurl.com/2ancpudx> and on ITV <https://tinyurl.com/yd35xs3p>.

## Spending on nuclear weapons in 2024 - more than \$100 billion globally

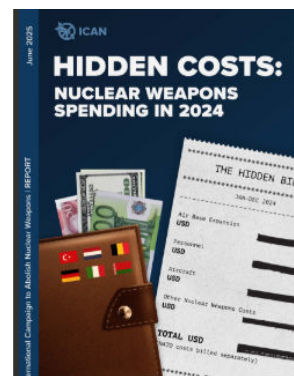
The latest report from ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) reveals that the combined spending of the nuclear armed states – China, France, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, the UK and US – increased by nearly \$10 billion from 2023 spending. The private sector earned at least \$42.5 billion from their nuclear weapons contracts in 2024 alone.

The Executive Summary provides graphs and charts which clearly present the basic information, including how much was earned by the companies involved, and gives a brief overview of the key changes since the previous report. The full report gives a detailed breakdown of the situation in each of the nine nuclear armed states, plus information on countries which host nuclear weapons.

To understand how big \$100 billion is, bear in mind that 1 million seconds is just over 11½ days, whereas 1 billion seconds is just over 31½ years.

You can download the report here:

<https://tinyurl.com/52xvtdzu>



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## **BITS FROM ABROAD**

Top leaders of the agency responsible for the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile admitted to DOGE-related staffing challenges at a Senate hearing. Asked by Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, if a hiring freeze, resignations and attrition could bring "some pretty important vacancies," acting National Nuclear Security Agency defense programs head David Hoagland said, "That's very true." Hoagland said at the May 20 hearing that his office had "shifted people around" to meet "critical needs."

*USA Today 21st May 2025*

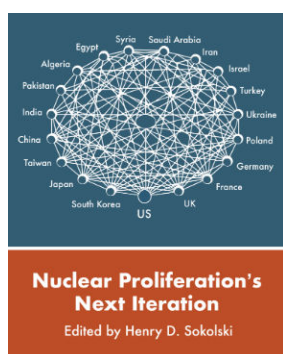
<https://tinyurl.com/3zsevxv>

For the first time since the 1990s, the World Health Organization has been asked by member states to update its assessment on the health impacts of nuclear war, although not without significant resistance, led by Russia and North Korea, but also including many other major nuclear states. The resolution calling for an updated assessment of the "effects of nuclear war on public health" was approved by a margin of 84-14 votes with 28 abstentions.

*Health Policy Watch, 26th May 2025*

<https://tinyurl.com/ypmj5thm>

Nuclear weapons proliferation is back. This time, it's America's allies—South Korea, Germany, Poland, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey—that are getting the nuclear itch. If Iran gets the bomb, we could conceivably see the first use of nuclear weapons between Israel and Iran. Meanwhile, Putin has found a new strategic target in Ukraine—its nuclear plants. China and North Korea are taking careful notes. Beijing recently detailed the military vulnerabilities of its own nuclear reactors.



Taiwanese, Japanese, and South Korean nuclear plants are also in the crosshairs. All of this is grist for NPEC's latest research volume, Nuclear Proliferation's Next Iteration.

*NPEC =*

*Nonproliferation Policy Education Center  
NPEC 29th May 2025*

<https://npolicy.org/nuclear-proliferations-next-iteration/>

## **FROM THE MEDIA**

Labour ministers under pressure as viral video shows broken promises to nuclear veterans. A video showing Labour ministers promising compensation to nuclear veterans has gone viral, putting the government under pressure to keep its word.

*Mirror 30th May 2025*

<https://tinyurl.com/yc53sjs5>

Britain wants to purchase fighter jets capable of firing tactical nuclear weapons, in a major expansion of the deterrent intended to counter the growing threat posed by Russia. Sir Keir Starmer's government is in highly sensitive talks over the move, which would represent the biggest development in the UK's deterrent since the Cold War and a recognition that the world has entered a more dangerous nuclear era.

*Times 31st May 2025*

<https://tinyurl.com/wdkkvt4s>

People living near an atomic weapons site are being invited to sign up to emergency text alerts so they can be notified in the event of a radiation emergency. West Berkshire Council said people affected by the Detailed Emergency Planning Zones (DEPZ) around the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) sites in Aldermaston or Burghfield, Berkshire, could sign up for the new service. The authority said the likelihood of an emergency that could impact the public was "extremely low". But it added that it was "essential" to have a quick way to share information if needed.

*BBC 9th June 2025*

<https://tinyurl.com/57fh5hm5>

The Scottish Secretary has ended his "lifelong" opposition to nuclear weapons - and said he will look to remove his name from a Nobel prize-winning campaign's pledge. Speaking to Scottish media during a visit to East Lothian on Monday, Ian Murray said that his long-held position on nukes had changed because the world had changed. Previously, Murray described himself as a "lifelong unilateralist" ... He is among the 2000 parliamentarians to have signed the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) pledge, which obliges signatories to work for their nations to sign up to a worldwide ban on nuclear weapons through the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

*The National 23rd June 2025*

<https://tinyurl.com/yc5tbs2b>

## TRIDENT AND RELATED NEWS

Defence Nuclear Enterprise 2025 Annual Update to Parliament. Last year, this government made clear in our manifesto that we would reinforce our commitment to the nuclear deterrent with a triple lock. The triple lock guarantees: (i) the building of the four Dreadnought nuclear submarines in Barrow; (ii) that we will maintain the UK's Continuous At-Sea Deterrent (CASD) 24 hours a day, 365 days a year; and (iii) the delivery of all future upgrades to ensure the safety and effectiveness of our deterrent.

*MOD 22nd May 2025*

<https://tinyurl.com/5hcwrrbe>

Sir Keir Starmer has accused the SNP of putting the safety of Scotland at risk by continuing to demand that Britain gives up its nuclear weapons. The prime minister, unveiling his government's long-awaited strategic defence review at the BAE Systems shipyard in Govan, said the deterrent had kept Scotland and the rest of the UK safe for "many, many years". He said 25,000 Scottish jobs would be protected as Labour boosts British defence spending, with plans to build six munitions factories across the UK and spend £15 billion on a new nuclear warhead programme.

*Times 2nd June 2025*

<https://tinyurl.com/4x9242h9>

The UK must prepare for the possibility of operating its nuclear deterrent without American support, according to a new Policy Exchange paper by former First Sea Lord Admiral Lord West of Spithead. The report traces the history of Britain's nuclear weapons programme from its origins in the Second World War to the present day, highlighting how closely tied the UK's capabilities have become to the United States. From missiles and warhead components to testing data and satellite communications, the UK's Trident system now depends on extensive US collaboration.

*Forces News 6th June 2025*

<https://tinyurl.com/586a96m7>

Former defence minister Tobias Ellwood said the UK must expand their nuclear arsenal with tactical bombs to prepare for Putin. Keir Starmer acknowledged that Britain faces "rapidly increasing threats" as he opened the door to expanding the nation's nuclear arsenal – but defence experts are not convinced. With no sign of an agreement in peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, and Donald

Trump reluctant to offer military support to end the conflict on Europe's border, experts have warned that the UK must invest in weaponry. Britain is the only major nuclear power that has a single method of delivering a nuclear weapon, from a submarine at sea. The Government's Strategic Defence Review (SDR) stopped short of proposing the acquisition of tactical nuclear weapons but called for closer coordination with allies to strengthen the UK's nuclear deterrent.

*iNews 4th June 2025*

<https://tinyurl.com/44eu5ava>

Senior authors of the Strategic Defence Review have downplayed the idea of Britain acquiring air-launched tactical nuclear weapons, despite growing speculation that the UK is considering purchasing F-35A aircraft to enable such a capability. The SDR makes only a brief mention of the aircraft variant and the concept itself. Lord Robertson, former Defence Secretary and lead reviewer for the SDR, confirmed during an evidence session with the Defence Committee that the issue had been considered but ultimately not included as a specific in the final report.

*UK Defence Journal 11th June 2025*

<https://tinyurl.com/4w8zpwbf>

### **Things are moving very fast...**

We're sure the recipients of our mailings are following current developments closely, therefore we're not including separate items on this which are in the news. We can however recommend the **national CND** website for updates which you may not find in the regular media:

<https://tinyurl.com/62yvtv9sa> (re: Iran)

<https://tinyurl.com/3x2rvu2h> (re: UK buying nuclear-capable jets)

**The government's Strategic Defence Review will make the world more dangerous and the British population poorer in the process. Read CND's Alternative Defence Review here:**

<https://tinyurl.com/yc8hbwvt>

## What's On

### July/August 2025

The next **Mailing** is due to be sent out at the beginning of September 2025

**The next meeting will be on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July at 19.30.** Please e-mail [wmcndall@gmail.com](mailto:wmcndall@gmail.com) for the zoom link.

**Hereford Peace Council – Meetings** at 10 – 11.30 on the second Monday of the months of January, April, June and September, at Friends Meeting House, King Street, Hereford.

**Malvern Churches Justice and Peace group Prayers for Peace**, 12 noon on 2nd and 4th Monday of the month (except Bank Holidays), Lyttleton Well Prayer Room, Church Street, Great Malvern.

**About uranium enrichment:** There is a lot of confusion about uranium enrichment in Iran. In natural uranium, only 7 atoms out of 1000 are chain-reacting uranium-235. The other 993 atoms are, for the most part, uranium-238 atoms – not a chain-reacting material. Uranium enrichment refers to any technology that increases the percentage of the chain-reacting U-235 beyond the 0.7% level ... It is often reported that 90% uranium enrichment is “needed” to have a nuclear weapon. This is not true. The Hiroshima bombs had only 80% enrichment. Iran has a good deal of 60% enriched uranium, and you can make a bomb from 60% enriched uranium -- it would be bulkier than a bomb with 90% enrichment and therefore harder to deliver, but not so very much harder.

*Project Save the World 21st June 2025*

<https://tinyurl.com/3emhrhvf>

Follow us on X/twitter:  
@westmidlandscnd

## Noticeboard

**Peace posters:** Hereford Peace Council produces monthly posters on peace topics, to be displayed as widely as possible. The posters are not dated.

The current posters are:

**July: 'There is no true peace without fairness, truth, justice and solidarity.' Pope John Paul II**



**August: WMCND gravestone** (photo left)

Please contact

[jennywmcnd@gn.apc.org](mailto:jennywmcnd@gn.apc.org) if you would like to use these posters.

### **New video on Donald Trump's Golden Dome – interview with Bruce Gagnon**

Donald Trump is calling for a renewal of Ronald Reagan's 1980's vision of SDI (Strategic



Defense Initiative), popularly called Star Wars. Early estimates are that Trump's 'Golden Dome' shield would cost from \$500 billion to trillions of dollars. The recipients of this largess would be weapons corporations like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, L3Harris and Space X.

Watch here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loCL6AMnAw>

### **WMCND Event**

**Saturday 2nd August**  
**Birmingham Cathedral Churchyard**  
**11.00 – 12 noon**  
**Commemoration of the bombing of Hiroshima**

**If you can volunteer to read a poem or piece of prose let Gill Cox know at [wmcndall@gmail.com](mailto:wmcndall@gmail.com) . If you have a particular piece you would like to read, Gill needs the text by mid-July as the Cathedral have to agree it**