

On 8/14

13.00

On 8/14, the Government's motion to begin the process of replacing the current fleet of submarines for the Trident missile. The motion had two key components:

The first was in principle on whether to replace Trident and therefore begin a process of research and commission replacement submarines to carry the Trident missiles. The second was to take steps towards meeting the UK's disarmament responsibilities under Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The motion also authorised British participation in the U.S. Navy's Trident II (D5) life extension programme (D5LE) to extend the service life of the current Trident missile fleet.

The Government made three important assurances to MPs:

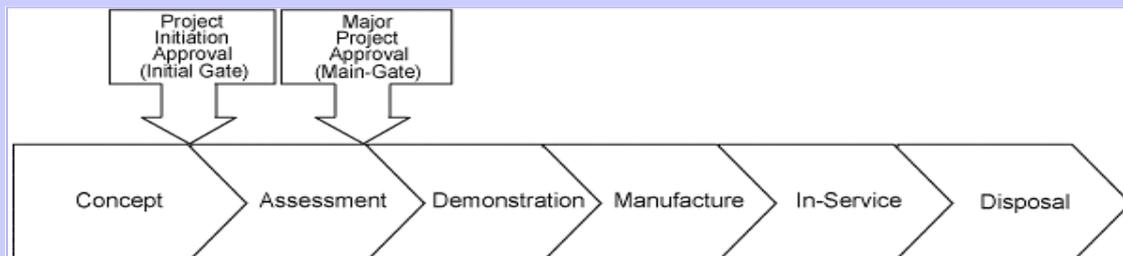
There will be renewed efforts to secure measures pursuant to nuclear disarmament under Article VI of the NPT, in particular to bring about negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) to end production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons.

The replacement system will not involve any upgrading or expansion of current nuclear capability.

- The decision in to authorise research and design on a new fleet of submarines will not bind a future government or parliament to that decision and that there will be opportunities in the future for Parliament to revisit the decision.

▶ The 'CADMID' cycle

The Ministry of Defence will procure the new submarines according to its CADMID cycle of Concept, Assessment, Demonstration, Manufacture, In-service, Disposal. The vote in March 2007 authorised the first 'Concept' phase.



Source: 2007 edition of MOD's UK Defence Statistics

Two crucial forthcoming decisions are:

Initial Gate decision: The 'Assessment' phase will begin following an 'initial gate' decision in 2009-2010 when approximately 15% of the £15-20 billion procurement costs will be committed.

Main Gate decision: The 'Demonstration' phase will begin following a 'main gate' decision. The Government has said that it is highly likely further parliamentary approval will be sought at this stage. A contract to build the first submarine can be expected around 2016 – the 'Manufacture' phase.

▶ Future key decisions

Future decisions will be needed on:

Size of the Trident force: Whether to build three or four submarines and how many missiles each submarine will carry.

New warheads: Whether to refurbish or replace the current warhead (this decision will be needed in the next parliament).

A new missile: Decisions will be needed on a successor to the current Trident II (D5) missile. The Government has sought assurances from America that the missile the U.S. Navy builds to replace Trident will be compatible with the new submarines the UK plans to build, but this is not guaranteed.

*The Government's formal position set out to MPs strongly suggests that the deal on Trident replacement is **not done** and that Parliament will have a major opportunity to reassess UK nuclear weapons policy and requirements around this 2012-2014 main gate decision.*
