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# £205billion?! How the Cost of Trident Replacement Doubled

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For some years, CND has been using the figure of £100billion for the procurement and lifetime cost of a Trident replacement. From time to time, pro-Trident politicians have told me that's just absurd, as if we have plucked a wild figure out of the air. However, it has become clear over the past few months that even that £100billion figure is a massive underestimate. Recent information released by the government makes it clear that a new nuclear weapons system will actually end up costing at least £205billion.

For the sceptical reader, here's a breakdown of that new figure, taking into account the three elements of the system - submarines, missiles and warheads - together with related costs. Again I stress: these are figures from government sources not something that CND has made up.

The cost of replacing the four submarines now comes in at an estimated £31billion, with a contingency fund of £10billion. That information comes from the government's National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review published last November.

The missiles are leased from the United States and Britain will participate in their missile life extension programme making them usable until the 2040s. This is set out in the government's 2006 White Paper on The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent, listed as costing £250million, which is £350million in today's prices.

The current warhead will last into the 2020s and that same White Paper also provided for up to £3billion for the possible future refurbishment or replacement of the warhead. This is £4billion in today's prices.

Infrastructure at Faslane and Coulport bases over the lives of the submarines was allocated another £3billion (or £4billion in today's prices).

Day to day running costs are the biggest expense. The government confirms this is around 6% of the total defence budget. Conservative MP and Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee Crispin Blunt worked with Reuters to estimate that over the lifetime of the system, this would add up to £142billion.

Conventional military forces assigned to support Trident are also part of the price tag. In 2007, the government said it believed around £30million was spent on this function annually. Over the lifetime of Trident's replacement, this will add up to just over £1billion in total.

Decommissioning costs also have to be factored in. Using the government's estimate for decommissioning its previous nuclear weapons system, Polaris, it seems this will be at least £13 billion in today's prices.

For too long the pro-Trident lobby has been in denial about the real cost to our economy of Trident replacement. These new calculations, drawn from actual government figures, show that the bill has spiralled beyond all expectations. £205 billion of public money is a huge amount. Pouring it into a nuclear weapons system that experts say could be rendered obsolete by new technology is hardly a wise choice. And the opportunity cost is very significant whether it's in terms of industrial, social or defence spending. Far better to spend it on industrial regeneration, building homes and hospitals, tackling climate change or meeting our defence needs in practical and usable ways. The world has moved on since nuclear subs were first designed and procured - politically, economically and technologically and it's time for our politicians to catch up.