

[‘Virtual’ arsenal could replace Trident](#)

Ian Davis, NATO Watch, [letter, *Financial Times*](#), 10 January 2013

Sir, Your excellent review of potential alternatives to “like-for-like” Trident replacement omitted one other option for weaning our political elites and the Ministry of Defence off their addiction to nuclear weapons (“[The price of deterrence](#)”, Analysis, January 10). This would involve moving the UK from so-called “minimum deterrence” to “virtual deterrence”.

By working with the Obama administration on realising the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and working energetically on the actions required to achieve it, the British government could defer the Trident follow-on indefinitely. Adopting a virtual nuclear arsenal (ending the deployment of nuclear warheads but retaining the expertise at Aldermaston to reconstitute a rudimentary nuclear weapon quickly) is by far the cheapest insurance policy. It would also be more consistent with Britain’s obligation under the non-proliferation treaty to pursue disarmament negotiations in good faith, an international obligation consistently ignored by government ministers.

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