

UK Labour leader Keir Starmer boasts of readiness to kill millions of people in nuclear war

Robert Stevens
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UK Labour Party leader Sir Keir Starmer has boasted that he is prepared to kill millions of people by using Britain's nuclear bombs against an enemy state.

He did so in an interview with ITV News during an April 12 visit to the BAE Systems shipyard in Barrow, England, where Britain's nuclear-armed submarines are built. BAE has the contract to replace, from the early 2030s, the Vanguard-class submarines. Starmer was accompanied by Shadow Defence Secretary John Healey to roll out Labour's nuclear arms policy for this year's general election.

Asked by Political Correspondent Harry Horton whether, if Britain was under attack, he would be prepared to push the nuclear button, Starmer replied, "The nuclear deterrent is the ultimate threat and therefore, of course the deterrent only works if there is a preparedness to use it."

Pressed if this was the case "even it means potentially killing millions of people", Starmer replied, "The deterrent only works if there is a preparedness to use it—so that is a clear answer to your question."

In January, while visiting British soldiers at NATO's Tapa base in Estonia, Starmer also answered yes to the same question now asked of all potential prime ministers since Starmer's predecessor Jeremy Corbyn hesitated to do so.

Starmer routinely flaunts Labour as the "party of NATO," which can be trusted amid war in Europe and the Middle East and as the main partner of the US in its military moves against China.

Labour trailed Starmer's visit as the first by a Labour leader to the BAE Systems factory for more than 30 years. Starmer and Healey were joined in Barrow by Australian High Commissioner to the UK Stephen Smith, as Starmer declared that Labour in government would back the US/UK/Australia military alliance, AUKUS.

For the occasion, the party turned to the *Daily Mail*, one of a number of Tory-supporting newspapers courted for months via a succession of ever-more right-wing policy statements made in interviews with shadow cabinet ministers.

Mail's coverage resembled a Royal Navy brochure advertising the latest technology of mass death, with a war-crazed Starmer as front man. Leading with a banner frontpage headline, "Starmer: UK Nuclear Deterrent is Safe in My Hands", the *Mail* lauded a "landmark article" in which "Sir Keir vows 'unshakable' commitment to Trident—and to build new generation of subs here".

The article continued onto page four, placed alongside a full-page piece by Starmer that began with the words, "Watching a nuclear submarine being built is a humbling experience".

Pages six and seven, under the heading "Labour's nuclear pledge," featured a spread on the new Dreadnought class of submarines being built at Barrow. It noted, "Each vessel will have the capability to launch 12 Trident II D5 ballistic missiles from four missile tubes known as 'Quad Pack'. The devastating weapons, which are each worth £17 million, have the ability to reach enemy targets within a range of 12,000 km".

The coverage rounded off with an editorial, "Starmer stands firm on UK's deterrent," declaring, "Less than five years ago, Labour was led by Jeremy Corbyn, who stated publicly that he would never agree to the use of nuclear weapons. His predecessor Ed Miliband wanted only a 'minimum deterrent', hinting that he would cut back our nuclear fleet."

How far the Labour Party has shifted right in its commitment to defend the interests of British imperialism is made clear in the *Mail's* conclusion: "Defence has historically been Labour's weak spot, but not today." The paper even denounced the Tories' "recent legacy" of "a hollowed-out military, massively expensive aircraft carriers that don't seem to work, and a recruitment crisis in all three services. Their failure to spend even 2.5 percent of national income on defence in such dangerous times completes a picture of complacency and penny-pinching."

Its editorial concluded, "Sir Keir hopes to persuade the

public our nuclear capability, military alliances and national security are safe in his hands. If he can, he will remove one more of the dwindling number of reasons to vote Tory.”

Starmer outlined a policy in which the entire economy is to be subordinated to the requirements of the military, enforced by a “Buy British” procurement policy. He appropriated language previously associated with the protection of pensions, the “triple lock”, for his nuclear war policy. Under the triple lock, governments of all stripes have traditionally increased the state pension by either the annual CPI rate of inflation, the average annual increase in earnings, or 2.5 percent, whichever is the greater.

Last month, Starmer refused to commit a future Labour government to a triple-locked state pension. But he announced in the *Mail*, “My commitment to the UK’s nuclear deterrent is... Unshakeable. Absolute. Total... My Labour Party will put in place a nuclear deterrent triple lock as the bedrock of our plan to keep Britain safe. And we’ll ensure our investment in Britain’s defence supports British jobs first”.

The three components of the military triple lock are “a cast-iron commitment to build all four new Dreadnought nuclear subs here in the UK, in Barrow-in-Furness. British investment, supporting skilled British jobs and boosting British communities”; a “pledge to maintain Britain’s continuous at sea nuclear deterrent. Backing our brave submariners who sacrifice a normal life to keep us safe 24 hours a day, 365 days a year”; and a “promise to deliver all future upgrades needed. We’ll ensure our nuclear deterrent is properly equipped and armed to face the challenges of the decades to come.”

Starmer boasted, “Although [Clement] Attlee led a change of government to Labour in 1945, there was no change in commitment to Britain’s national security. Building on Churchill’s wartime legacy it was Attlee—and his foreign secretary Ernest Bevin—who first established our independent British nuclear programme. Meanwhile, Bevin was helping to create the NATO alliance.”

Today, Labour’s NATO and nuclear policy was being advanced in the “face of rising global threats and growing Russian aggression... The changed Labour Party that I lead knows that our national security always comes first. You can see that in the rising numbers of candidates and five-fold increase in Labour members from the Armed Forces community.”

The cost of upgrading to the Dreadnoughts is at least £41 billion, which demands massive cuts in social spending. This is only the cost the government has made public, but according to a 2015 estimate by Philip Dunne, the Cameron government’s Defence Procurement minister, the total cost of renewal to 2060 is a staggering £167 billion. “Make no

mistake, this is a generational, multi-decade commitment,” wrote Starmer.

“Not only is this about defending our land and our NATO allies, it’s also defending our economy—prioritising British jobs, British skills and much-needed economic growth here on our shores. I want to see more homegrown involvement in the nuclear submarine supply chain—and our wider defence manufacturing. With Labour, the defence industry will be hardwired into my national mission to drive economic growth across the UK.”

Starmer is assured the backing of the trade union bureaucracy in putting the economy on a war footing, with Unite the latest union to declare its total backing for the arms industry and NATO.

Starmer has also committed Labour to matching the Tories in increasing military spending from 2.3 percent (£52 billion annually) to 2.5 percent of GDP. Asked by the *i* newspaper if the huge amount of spending on armaments was a necessity, Starmer said it was “the number one issue for any government.” His commitments are only a downpayment as the demands of Britain’s war machine escalate.

Two weeks ago, Lord West of Spithead, a former First Sea Lord and security minister in Gordon Brown’s Labour government, told the *Mail*: “in this world that is highly unpredictable and dangerous... I’m afraid that what we’re spending at the moment is not enough.” As Labour was “not a Corbyn party any more, it’s a proper party”, he advised, “I would like Labour to commit to 2.5 per cent, but actually we really need 3 per cent”—the amount being called for by the *Mail* in its “Don’t Leave Britain Defenceless” campaign.



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