



Ministry of Defence

THE RT HON THE EARL HOWE PC
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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23rd April 2019

Dear Mr. Webb,

Thank you for the correspondence received as part of the campaign calling on the Secretary of State for Defence to reconsider plans to hold a service to mark 50 years of the United Kingdom (UK)'s nuclear deterrent at Westminster Abbey on 3 May 2019. I am responding on his behalf.

I should like to start by emphasising that the service will recognise the commitment of the Royal Navy to effective peace-keeping through the deterrent over the past 50 years and will pray for peace throughout the world.

It is important to recognise that, for 50 years, generations of Royal Navy submariners and their families have made sacrifices to maintain the ultimate guarantee of our national security and way of life. Most notable of these sacrifices is the lack of contact between patrol crews and their families for months at a time. Crew members have no communication with their loved ones other than receiving one very short weekly family message, to which they are unable to respond. While their sacrifice is the greatest, it is also important to recognise that other Service personnel, civil servants and industry partners have all contributed to the maintenance of the UK's independent nuclear deterrent, making it a truly national endeavour, and one that is worthy of recognition.

I hope that the above clarifies the purpose of the Westminster Abbey service. Let me assure you this event is to pay tribute to our submariners and others involved in protecting this nation; not to 'celebrate' or to 'give thanks for' nuclear weapons.

Please accept this letter as a reply to all correspondence related to this campaign. I should be grateful if you would arrange for it to be posted on your website, and I will ensure it is also promulgated on the Government's website.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Howe

THE RT HON THE EARL HOWE PC

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