

# NUKEWATCH UK



[www.nukewatch.org.uk](http://www.nukewatch.org.uk)

# **This lorry carries the most deadly load on British roads...**



- Highly secret military convoys carrying nuclear warheads travel regularly up and down the country by road — between the nuclear warhead factory in Berkshire and the Trident nuclear base in Scotland.
  - No radiation warning symbols are carried and neither the public nor local authorities are warned of these nuclear convoys.
- 
- Each lorry can contain up to 8kg of deadly plutonium.
  - Any accident involving an explosion or fire could lead to a radioactive plume spreading for miles, poisoning a huge area for thousands of years.
  - US and British government research has still been unable to rule out even the risk of a catastrophic nuclear explosion. The risk of a major accident is growing as traffic on British roads increases.

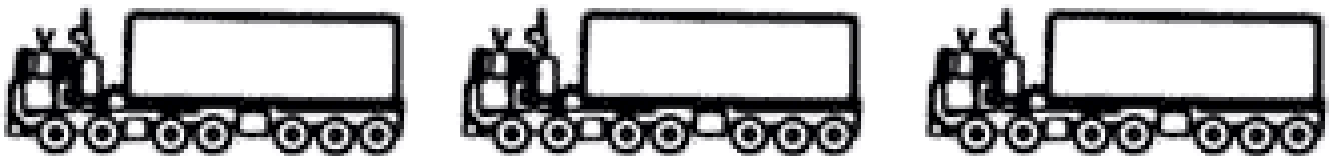
## **They can travel by day and night...**

- In 2004 the MoD changed its 50-year policy on nuclear convoys to allow making the 500 mile road trip in one go, travelling in the dark and without overnight stops: more hazardous and with higher risks to the public.
- They may also use additional routes to those frequently used and marked on the map here.

# What is a nuclear weapon convoy?



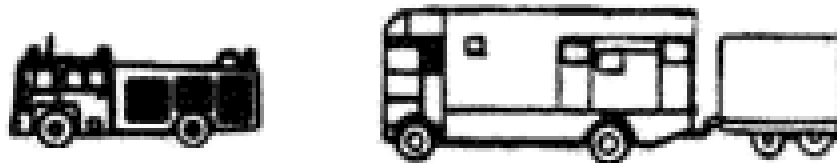
- A nuclear weapon convoy is a cluster of military and police vehicles travelling by road in convoy formation.
- The convoy comprises TCHD (Truck Cargo Heavy Duty) load carriers, Ministry of Defence Police escort vehicles, military land rovers and three minibuses of Royal Marines.
- The convoy is often spread out over a couple of miles and travels at up to 55mph.



- Once seen, a nuclear weapons convoy is easily recognisable and unlike anything else on the roads. There is a multiplicity of police escort vehicles, and the carriers are 44 tons, seven axle, articulated dark green trucks.
- There are usually 3 (but can be up to 5) warhead carriers with the spare cab in front of them.
- The Trident warheads are carried in large crates inside the green trucks. They are fully assembled and complete. The core of the warhead is a ball of plutonium and uranium. This is surrounded by specially developed conventional high explosives.



- The fire engine will follow, often at the front of the support vehicles.



- The three support vehicles of Mobile Workshop & trailer, Breakdown Truck, and Support Coach travel some distance behind the main convoy.



## **Nuclear weapons are illegal**

- The nuclear warheads these convoys carry are Weapons of Mass Destruction owned and wielded by the UK Government.
- Deploying Weapons of Mass Destruction is fundamentally wrong, illegal under international law, deeply hypocritical and flawed in its approaches to the modern world's challenges.

# **Where do they run?**

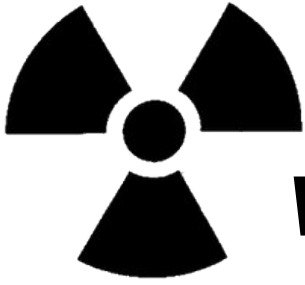
- The components for the warheads are made at the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Aldermaston in Berkshire and taken to nearby AWE Burghfield for assembly.
- The convoys then take the completed warheads from Burghfield north to Coulport on Loch Long, north of Glasgow.
- At Loch Long the carriers are unloaded and the warheads placed in underground bunkers in the Trident Area.
- When required they are taken to the Explosive Handling Jetty at Coulport where they are fitted onto the missiles on the Trident submarines.
- Regular training exercises also take place.

## **Why are nuclear weapons moved on our roads?**

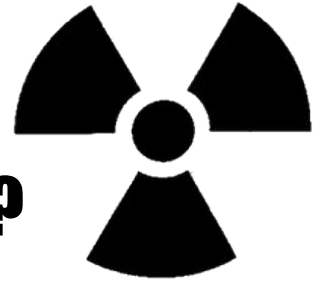
- The warheads require to be checked every so often and batch samples are taken from the Coulport depot to Burghfield and returned to Coulport after servicing.

## **What roads do they use?**

- The MOD prefers convoys to travel on motorways and A roads but at either end of the route they must use smaller roads.
- Not all roads are passable due to the great weight of the convoy trucks. There is an eastern route, mainly relying on the A1(M), although they also use the M1 sometimes, and a western route using the M6/M74.
- Emergency exercises take place on bases in East Anglia and occasionally elsewhere.



## What are the dangers?



- In an accident, the highly volatile “conventional” explosive could be set off, causing the warhead to ‘jet’ plutonium. The MoD estimates that, in a serious accident, a circle some 600 yards in radius would be affected by blast and fragments of explosives.
- Even more problematic than the explosion itself would be its effect in dispersing alpha emitting plutonium and uranium particles down wind for miles. Even a tiny speck of plutonium can prove fatal if inhaled or ingested.
- The Ministry Of Defence (MOD) said for years that there is no risk of a nuclear detonation during transport.
- However, in 2006 they admitted that in the event of a major accident, there could be a partial nuclear blast.
- Nuclear weapons convoys often pass close to or even through large towns. It would be impossible to evacuate heavily populated areas on the routes in time to avoid the potential consequences of a traffic accident involving a nuclear warhead. MOD accident guidelines do not explain whether traffic would be quarantined, sent on its way or gridlocked in the contaminated zone.
- A terrorist attack on a nuclear weapons convoy could cause *“considerable loss of life and severe disruption both to the British people's way of life and to the UK's ability to function effectively as a sovereign state”* the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has admitted.



# What is NukeWatch?

- NukeWatch is a UK-wide network which monitors the convoys, informs the public and local authorities of their movements and campaigns against them.
- We only know these convoys exist because ordinary people have tracked them.
- NukeWatch is not a membership organisation. It is a network of individuals who campaign against the convoys mainly because they are part of a system of weapons of mass destruction, but also because we believe that communities potentially affected by the convoys should be aware of their existence and the risks they pose.

## What you can do:

- Take a leaflet and let us know if you see a convoy.
- Get the film “Deadly Cargo” and arrange a screening.
- Watch the video on our website and send the link to your friends.
- Write to your local Emergency Planning Officer (a model letter is available on our website).
- Sign up for campaign alerts on our website and write to your local Councillor/MP/MSP/paper when a convoy comes through your area.

**If you see a convoy please call**

**0845 45 88 364 (south)**

**0845 45 88 365 (north)**

**[info@nukewatch.org.uk](mailto:info@nukewatch.org.uk)**

**[www.nukewatch.org.uk](http://www.nukewatch.org.uk)**

# UK Nuclear Warhead Convoy Routes 2007

