Recently, an unremarked but remarkable answer was given to a UK Parliamentary question about aircraft carriers. After the multi-site celebration of progress of the JV and the carriers last week, no action is likely. But there is certainly an underlying reality to ponder on.

That reality is the oil price used when the decision was made on propulsion - $19 a barrel....

Now it maybe either the grey matter isn't what it was, or incipient laziness which ruled out an Internet search, but this correspondent is hard put to remember how long ago it was that oil was at such levels. Apart from wondering if the original analysis was ever revisited during the extensive competition and design phases (if not, why not? Who's afraid of nukes in the Navy?), the big thought is – what else?

What other programmes have been analysed and through-life costs estimated based on hopelessly unrealistic future energy cost forecasts? What is the impact on running costs which come out of the fixed "pie"? How much live training will have to be foregone in order to try to balance the books? And so how much will this affect combat readiness?

Some commentators in the USA have already started to think about how such mundane matters as energy consumption in the military (The UK Defence Forum for instance has recently published an abridged version of a series of editorials by the President of the National Defense Industries Association, Laurence P Farrell Jnr [GR173 Energy security and the U S Military]). An enquiring MP might care to follow up these thoughts with the UK Ministry of Defence.....