

Nuclear Weapons in Europe

Stop the Process of Modernization - Starts Steps to Disarmament

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The end of the Cold War and the new post-9/11 environment dramatically upset the strategic balance in general and the role of military nuclear power in particular. The future of nuclear deterrence has today come back into the spotlight. The threat of proliferation, the issue of strategic surprise or the resurgence of international tensions, as highlighted by the Ukrainian crisis, sends conflicting signals. In recent years thought has been given to overcoming deterrence for doctrinal, ideological, strategic, ethnic as well as budgetary reasons.

But since the end of the Cold War and the enlargement of NATO, the B61 Tactical Nuclear Weapon (TNW) is militarily irrelevant. Most dual capable aircraft cannot even reach targets outside NATO's territory. How can NATO "deter" with weapons that have no military use? These Cold War relics are generally agreed to serve no military purpose, and there were hopes that the Obama administration would remove them as a unilateral gesture, with the aim of inviting reciprocal action from Russia. So far this has not happened, and the dangerous Cold War nuclear stand-off has been allowed to continue.

Eight European nations have nuclear weapons on their territory: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom. With the exception of Russia, all of these States are NATO members, and share responsibility for the continued forward deployment of USA tactical (non-strategic) nuclear weapons. Of the five States hosting these forward deployed nuclear bombs, four are also member of the European Union and a resolution by the European parliament in March 2010 calls these weapons an "anachronism". EU statements for Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

conferences tend to focus on the nuclear disarmament steps that other countries should take.¹

The 5 European “host nations”² are in the midst of selecting a new generation of fighter jets to replace current F16 or Tornado aircraft. To perform the nuclear task, the new aircraft would have to be dual capable, able to undertake both nuclear and conventional missions.

NATO States currently hosting nuclear weapons have a key role to play in broader disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. The continued stationing of nuclear weapons in non-nuclear weapons States, as well as the training of their military to use these weapons is in violation of Articles 1 and 2 which prohibit any transfer of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapon States. The USA is the only country continuing the practice of forward deployment. There is no legitimate justification for the continued deployment of these weapons and they must be repatriated, so that Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey can be in unquestionable compliance with all of their treaty obligations.

Tactical or non-strategic nuclear weapons are “small” nuclear weapons regarded to be more “useable” in combat. During the Cold War, the USA stationed hundreds of these tactical nukes in Europe under the NATO nuclear umbrella sharing policy.

The United States now has approximately 1,100 non-strategic nuclear weapons, with a few hundred deployed with aircraft in Europe and the remaining stored in the United States. Estimates vary, but experts believe Russia still has between 2,000 and 6,000 warheads for non-strategic nuclear weapons in its arsenal. These weapons are outside of the agreements between the United States and Russia on the limits for nuclear weapons or reduction and verification measures.

USA and NATO aircrafts regularly conduct nuclear strike exercises where they practice loading and delivering the weapons. The nuclear exercises include practicing “generation” of aircraft, during which the aircraft simulate taking off in strike formation with air-defence aircraft and conduct a simulated strike at a bombing range.

However, there is discussion within NATO about changing the role of nuclear weapons in its security defence doctrines and strategy. A

¹ www.nonukes.nl – 2014 NPT Challenges and Opportunities. PAX Recommendations to the NPT PrepCom.

² Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey

majority of NATO countries do not explicitly want to keep USA nuclear weapons in Europe. Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and Poland have proposed a [series of steps](#) that NATO and Russia should take to increase transparency of USA and Russian non-strategic nuclear weapons. Belgium, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Iceland, Luxemburg, and Slovenia also supported the proposal.

Two obstacles stand in the way of removal the TNW. First, there is an East-West split in NATO. A number of Western European NATO countries see little use for continued deployment, while some Central and Eastern European countries regard the physical presence of USA TNW as a hedge against potential future Russian aggression.

The second obstacle is the assumption that the USA TNW can be used as bargaining chip in bilateral negotiations with Russia, with the aim to commit Russia to reductions of its own much larger stockpile of TNW. However, since Russia has at least 10 times more TNW, it is difficult to see how negotiations could proceed without the USA and NATO having to put other items on the bargaining table, such as missile defence and conventional weapons, which they are extremely unlikely to do so.

Nuclear Disarmament for Development

One urgent topic is the human and financial cost of maintaining - and even renovating - the U.S. stockpile of nuclear weapons. The USA is poised to spend \$11.6 billion to upgrade a handful of nuclear bombs.³ The Pentagon wants to upgrade the TNW in Europe, making them more accurate and more usable. There is a growing political and public opinion - not at least in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium - to get rid of those weapons. A small minority of NATO allies cling to the bombs as a political symbol of America's commitment for the security in Europe.

Those funds would be better used for those who are impoverished, including in the USA itself. The continued investment in weapons of mass destruction is not only intrinsically immoral, but also it is an immense violation of the dignity of those who are forced to live on the margins of our world. On behalf of the poor and excluded in society, all plans to refurbish nuclear arsenals, and to resist moves to eliminate nuclear weapons from the face of the earth, should be abandoned.

³ <http://www.ploughshares.org/blog/budget-busting-b61>

The doctrine of nuclear deterrence is the chief obstacle to meaningful progress on nuclear disarmament. This military doctrine is leading to the modernisation of existing stocks of nuclear systems, thus preventing genuine nuclear disarmament. The catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, at the core of this conference, stem from the core problem of nuclear deterrence. This is the problem that must be dealt with, not only in words but action.⁴

All nuclear-armed States are in the process of modernising their arsenals. Even debating modernization undermines the credibility of their commitment to the NPT, and especially the disarmament obligations under Article VI. This was explicitly recognized by a group of non-nuclear weapons States in a working paper presented to the 2009 NPT Preparatory Committee meeting, in which they stated that “the development of new types of nuclear weapons... and the lack of significant progress in diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in security policies undermine disarmament commitments and work counter to the letter and spirit, of the Treaty. More than one trillion dollars is currently allocated for modernisation expenses over the next decade by the nuclear weapons States which undermines the credibility of States calling for strengthening of the non-proliferation aims of the NPT.”⁵

Crazy facts!

Nearly 1.5 billion people in developing countries live in extreme poverty, living on less than \$1.25 a day. Every day, almost 16,000 children die from hunger-related causes. In the United States, 14.5 percent of households struggle to put food on the table. More than one in four American children are at risk of hunger. More than one in five children live in households that struggle to put food on the table.⁶

⁴ Intervention of the Holy See at the Second Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons (Nayarit, Mexico 13-14 February 2014) by H.E. Archbishop Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to Mexico.

⁵ www.nonukes.nl

⁶ From <http://www.bread.org/hunger/>

It must be clear: Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNW) have no conceivable military function anymore. The debate about whether or not the TNW can be withdrawn is a political one. There is a growing public opinion in Europe in urging the USA not to renew its tactical weapons capacity. Let's take the Belgian case:

For 50 years there have been nuclear weapons in Belgium. These weapons are useless, expensive and dangerous. The majority of the Belgian population wants them out. The government committed itself to work on a world without nuclear weapons, but tangible progress remains to be made.

There is broad public support for the removal of the nuclear weapons from Belgium. The list of organizations that joined the campaign "Time to Go"⁷ of last year keeps on growing. Over a hundred personalities from the academic, cultural, political, trade union and socio-cultural sectors support the demand for the removal of nuclear weapons from Kleine Brogel. Just as the former Belgian prime ministers and the former NATO Secretary General, they are concerned about the lack of policies that might lead to a world without nuclear weapons.

In its governmental agreement of 2011 the current Belgian leadership promised "to promote and support international initiatives for disarmament, including nuclear disarmament". To this day this intention has not been fulfilled. Will our Belgian representatives within the General Assembly of the United Nations continue to vote against a proposal to start negotiations on a UN-treaty against nuclear weapons? The Belgian government should start working on nuclear disarmament, starting with the removal of the circa 20 American B-61 bombs (tactical nuclear weapons) that are currently stationed in Kleine Brogel.

So far, only a few political parties committed themselves to be part of a new federal government only when the removal is part of the new government policies, after the elections of 25 May 2014.

Recommendations:⁸

⁷ <http://www.timetogo.be/>

⁸ www.nonukes.nl

1. We recommend European States recognize their non-proliferation responsibilities and take transparent, irreversible and verifiable action to remove nuclear weapons from the continent. Where the EU is unable to speak with one voice, individual member States should express their view and uphold their non-proliferation obligations by insisting that USA nuclear weapons be removed from European soil.
2. We recommend NATO nuclear host countries seize the opportunity of the NPT Preparatory Committee meeting to announce their intention to comply with all of that NPT obligations through efforts to end the NATO practice of nuclear “burden-sharing.”
3. We recommend nuclear-armed States declare that they will not modernize their weapons and delivery systems, and these declarations should be supported and encouraged by States involved in nuclear sharing or umbrella agreements.

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