

## **Factsheet on NATO Nuclear Weapons**

### **Nuclear weapons available to NATO**

The Strategic Concept of NATO states: " A credible Alliance nuclear posture and the demonstration of Alliance solidarity and common commitment to war prevention continue to require widespread participation by European Allies involved in collective defence planning in nuclear roles, in peacetime basing of nuclear forces on their territory and in command, control and consultation arrangements." (§. 63)

In the NATO Strategic Concept, the US, UK and French nuclear arsenals are mentioned in general terms as support of the deterrence role.

Directly assigned to NATO are the following nuclear weapons:

- US tactical B61 plane bombs (480 bombs in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey and UK)
- nuclear missiles on the 4 UK Trident-submarines (each submarine has a maximum of 48 nuclear warheads on board)
- nuclear missiles on US Trident-submarines: 4 of the 15 submarines are assigned to NATO (24 missiles on each submarine)

### **When will NATO nuclear weapons be used?**

Under US pressure NATO has since 2000 allowed a new strategy which permits the use of nuclear weapons against states who do not possess nuclear weapons themselves. After the Cold War the US changed its nuclear strategy. Originally nuclear weapons were used to deter other nuclear weapon states. Countries that did not possess nuclear weapons were not threatened by them. Since the 90's the US broadened the role of nuclear weapons. Also countries which the US supposes to possess weapons of mass destruction like chemical or biological weapons, are now threatened with nuclear weapons. Documents of US Stratcom, released under the Freedom of Information Act, revealed that US nuclear weapons on European soil have a role in the US war planning for the Middle East.

Because many more countries have the potential to possess chemical or biological weapons than nuclear weapons, many more countries are now the target of US nuclear weapons. NATO accepted a similar doctrine in June 2000 by adopting a revision of her military strategy in the secret document MC 400/2. The first use of nuclear weapons is now possible against an enemy that is supposed to possess any sort of weapon of mass destruction.

This new nuclear strategy, combined with an active policy of military intervention and concepts like 'preventive defense', make nuclear weapons much more threatening to a whole new range of countries and pulls them in a new arms race.

### **The role of NATO headquarters in Brussels**

Political decision making concerning NATO nuclear strategy is carried out at the NATO headquarters in Brussels by the North Atlantic Council and the Nuclear Planning Group. The military decision making of NATO happens at SHAPE, the 'Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Powers in Europe' in Mons.

The North Atlantic Council takes all important decisions like the approval of the NATO Strategic Concept. This Council consists of a representative of each country, sometimes the head of state or a minister, but most of the time the permanent representatives or NATO-ambassadors.

Nuclear policy is decided by the Nuclear Planning Group, which functions in the same way. France does not take part in it since it does not belong to the military structure of NATO. Each of these decision making bodies is supported by a range of committees and working groups. The whole is supported by the International Staff under the leadership of the Secretary General.

The connection between the civil authority and the military headquarter SHAPE is formed by the Military Committee, which consists of the national military supreme commanders. It advises the political bodies and gives directives to the NATO-commanders.

## The role of SHAPE

The use of nuclear weapons is planned at SHAPE by means of the NATO Nuclear Planning System (NNPS) and the NATO Nuclear Command and Control Reporting System (NNCCRS). In peacetime all defense planning happens at SHAPE. NATO states its nuclear weapons are not targeted at a specific country but this does not mean it does not plan the actual use of nuclear weapons. A range of scenario's and target lists are prepared and available for use. This effectively forms a threat of use.

In wartime all NATO troops, including the Belgian, Dutch, ... pilots, are under command of SACEUR. The use of nuclear weapons will happen on his command.

## The role of Kleine Brogel

US nuclear weapons have been deployed at Kleine Brogel since November 1963. These nuclear weapons are under control of the US 701 MUNSS (*Munition Support Squadron*). But it will be Belgian pilots with Belgian F16-planes who will use these nuclear weapons of mass destruction in war time.

The nuclear weapons are stored in 11 underground WS3-bunkers (*Weapons Storage & Security System*). These bunkers are placed under the hardened aircraft shelters. They are in use since 1993. Each WS3-bunker can contain 4 nuclear weapons. Following a Presidential Directive from Bill Clinton 20 nuclear weapons are stored in Kleine Brogel from the type B61, model 3, 4 or 10. The B61 is a modern nuclear airplane bomb with different explosion levels between 0.3 and 170 kiloton. The maximum yield of the B61 is 14 times the bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

Nuclear weapons are also deployed in other countries. Here follows an overview from the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists:

### U.S. B61 bombs in Europe, 2004

Location	Delivery aircraft	WS3 storage vaults			Number			
		No.	Capacity	Completed	U.S.	Host	Total	
Belgium	Kleine Brogel Airbase	Belgian F-16A/B	11	44	April 1992	0	20	20
Germany	Büchel Airbase	German PA-200 Tornados	11	44	Aug. 1990	0	20	20
	Memmingen Airbase		11	44	Oct. 1990	0	0	0
	Nörvenich Airbase	Tornados	11	44	June 1991	0	0	0

	Ramstein Airbase	US F- 16C/D	55	220	Jan. 1992	90	40*	130
Greece	Araxos Airbase	Greek A-7	6	24	Sept. 1997	0	0	0
Italy	Aviano Airbase	US F- 16C/D	18	72	Jan. 1996	50	0	50
	Ghedi Torre Airbase	Italian PA-200 Tornados	11	44	Jan. 1997	0	40	40
Netherlands	Volkel Airbase	Dutch F- 16A/B	11	44	Sept. 1991	0	20	20
Turkey	Akinci Airbase	Turkish F- 16	6	24	Oct. 1997	0	0	0
	Balikesir Airbase		6	24	Sept. 1997	0	0	0
	Incirlik Airbase	US F- 16C/D	25	100	April 1998	50	40	90
Britain	RAF Lakenheath	US F-15E	33	132	Nov. 1994	110	0	110
<b>Total</b>			<b>215</b>	<b>860</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>180*</b> *	<b>480*</b> *

Notes: Memmingen Airbase is closed. Nörvenich, Araxos, Akinci, and Balikesir airbases are in caretaker status. One vault at Ramstein is a training vault. \*Half of these weapons may have been returned to the United States after Memmingen closed in 2003. \*\*These totals assume that the 20 bombs from Araxos have been moved to Ramstein or possibly Aviano. Alternatively, the weapons may have been returned to the United States.

source: U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe, 1954-2004 By Robert S. Norris and Hans M. Kristensen November/December 2004 pp. 76-77 (vol. 60, no. 6) © 2004 Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

## **Illegality of nuclear weapons**

The International Court of Justice pointed in the Advisory Opinion of 8 July 1996 to 3 rules applying to nuclear weapons, and clarified the interpretation. The first is that states must never make civilians the object of attack and must consequently never use weapons that are incapable of distinguishing between civilian and military targets. According to the second principle, it is prohibited to cause unnecessary suffering to combatants. This means that violence may only be used to render an opponent incapable to fight and that weapons adding extra suffering, for example by making someone's death inevitable, are prohibited. The third rule is that no neutral countries may be harmed.

Compliance with these rules is impossible with nuclear weapons. Their destructive force is enormous and the effects in time or space are uncontrollable. For example the effect of fall-out or radiation can not be targeted. The destructive force has effects far outside the military target and more than is ever acceptable as collateral damage, which makes it impossible to discriminate between civilians and combatants. The radiation causes damage long after the actual war situation, which results in unnecessary suffering. The impossibility to contain fall-out causes damage to neutral countries.

The International Court of Justice did not come to a conclusion concerning the legality of use in an extreme circumstance of self-defence, in which the very survival of a state would be at stake. Does this make the nuclear policy legal?

The ICJ did not come to a conclusion, which is not the same as a concluding legality.

The rules of international law continue to apply. The ICJ only had lack of factual knowledge to make a conclusion.

The ICJ had to make a decision about nuclear weapons as a general category. This is far-reaching and includes future developments. The Chairman of the ICJ Bedjaoui stated that the existing nuclear weapons clearly violate humanitarian law, but the potential development of 'cleaner' nuclear weapons make a categorical conclusion of illegality impossible. To make such a categorical prohibition a treaty is needed.

This makes clear that with sufficient factual knowledge a juridical evaluation of nuclear weapons can be made. And that NATO has a legal problem.

When we talk about the nuclear weapons at Kleine Brogel or on other nuclear weapon bases in Europe, we do not deal with an abstract category but with a specific weapon connected with a specific use. To make a decision about the legality of these weapons the necessary factual knowledge exists. NATO has this knowledge and can make it available for an independent juridical evaluation. A juridical evaluation of the directives for the use of fire arms by the police on their conformity with the law can be made. The same can be done for nuclear weapons, the use which is planned with them and for which the pilots train. We are convinced this will lead to a conclusion that these weapons are illegal.

A similar reasoning is valid for the other nuclear weapons. The Advisory Opinion results in the illegality of all existing nuclear weapons.