European Nuclear Disarmament
Dossier

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Stop European Nuclear Proliferation

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In his opening speech to the 2026 Munich Security Conference (14 February), German Chancellor Friedrich Merz announced that he has "started first talks with the French President Emmanuel Macron about European nuclear deterrence … to be clear, we absolutely stick to our legal obligations. This will be fully embedded in our nuclear sharing within NATO".

Merz's declaration has been confirmed by President Macron, who delivered a substantial address on France's nuclear capabilites and intentions at the Île Longue Operational Base on 2 March. We republish some of Macron's speech in the following pages, but it is worth highlighting some of what was said here. For instance:

> *Today, a new step of France's deterrence can now be taken. We are entering the path of what I will call "forward deterrence"...*
>
> *It will finally involve the temporary deployment of elements of our strategic air forces to allied countries.*
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> *In the same way that our strategic submarines dilute naturally in the oceans, guaranteeing a permanent-strike capability, our strategic air forces will also be able to be spread deep into the European continent. This dispersal across European territory, a sort of archipelago of forces, will complicate the calculations of our adversaries and will make this forward deterrence very valuable to us. It will strengthen our defence, while giving it room to operate: it will offer it a new strategic depth, in line with the challenges of European security. It will be, I believe, very valuable to partners who will follow this approach with us, and whose territory will gain a strong link with our deterrence.*

In this speech, Macron strongly indicates an intention to deploy French nuclear-armed aircraft across the continent of Europe.

NATO is a nuclear-armed military alliance, dominated by the United States. Present nuclear sharing arrangements within NATO are wholly reliant on US capabilities. The US military has referred to Europe as "our territory" and considers the continent to be a potential "nuclear battlefield".

Nuclear proliferation is generally understood as the spread of nuclear weapons to countries not recognised under the NPT. The recent deployment of new, higher-capability US B61-12 nuclear gravity bombs to bases across Europe represents one element of what can be termed 'internal nuclear proliferation' whereby capabilities are enhanced and/or modernised. Developments at the US air base at Lakenheath are another element. The British Government's announcement that it will again breach NPT commitments by purchasing nuclear capable jets that can launch US B61-12 nuclear gravity bombs is yet another element. These elements of 'internal nuclear proliferation' have now been joined by these Franco-German plans for a "European nuclear deterrence [sic]", apparently within NATO nuclear sharing arrangements, based upon French nuclear weapons. France, a NATO member, does not currently assign its nuclear weapons to the alliance.

Merz's Munich statement and Macron's speech follow the Northwood Agreement (July 2025) between the UK and France to coordinate "nuclear policy, capabilities and operations … [strengthen] NATO's deterrence posture, [reassure] European allies and [offer] a fallback should the United States' nuclear umbrella over Europe come into question" and the bilateral Kensington treaty between the UK and Germany (July 2025), Article 7 ['Defence Cooperation'] of which commits to close cooperation within NATO and a "close dialogue on defence issues of mutual interest and global horizon-scanning, including on nuclear issues".

The most recent of these developments have taken place: in the aftermath of the Trump Administration's insistence that European NATO member states massively increase military spending (a demand that has been agreed to); in the context of the US's destruction of successive nuclear non-proliferation treaties and blatant breaches of the NPT; and at a time when European leaders warn of the collapse of the "international order" and instruct their populations to be "ready for war".

The recent proliferation of US nuclear capabilities within NATO and the further proliferation to come stand at odds with the idea that the nuclear-armed alliance is in mortal jeopardy. Whilst it is true that considerable tensions exist within the alliance and doubts about Trump's commitment heighten, the core nuclear element of NATO is consolidating.

The statements of Merz and Macron on plans for a "European nuclear deterrence [sic]" suggest the truth of the matter: US nuclear weapons, deployed in Europe under NATO nuclear sharing arrangements, are for US

purposes alone and that this is now a concern in the context of the Trump administration's 'America First' approach. The joint US-Israel assault on Iran and the negative reactions from some European NATO states further illustrate a deep concern.

European nuclear proliferation is inseparable from European militarisation because NATO member states mistakenly and dangerously insist that nuclear weapons are the "ultimate guarantor of security". There have been no obvious attempts to craft or thoroughly articulate alternative, non-nuclear and non-military, means of enhancing security. Although Macron indicates the need for dialogue with Russia what, exactly, would he expect Russia to do in response to stationing French nuclear-capable jets closer to the Russian border?

The destruction of the ABM Treaty, INF Treaty, Open Skies Treaty and New START and the multiple breaches of the NPT represent a crisis in the "international order" that European governments either participated in or did nothing about. Likewise, for all the warnings of a crumbling 'world order' and breaches of international law, many of the statespeople now announcing concern did little at best and at worst were complicit in Israel's genocide on Palestine. For many observers, particularly those outside of Europe and North America, the hypocrisy is all-too-clear. It is also clear that 'remedies' such as European nuclear proliferation will do nothing to enhance security: in fact, it will lead to greater destabilisation and further risks.

The British government's Agreement with France and bilateral treaty with Germany implicates it in moves towards a European nuclear capability even if - as is the case - the nuclear weapons based in Britain are wholly reliant on the United States. Britain cannot 'assign' Trident to European 'defence' in any independent fashion. Neither will it be able to assign the B61-12 bombs destined for RAF Marham. Yet unlike the German Chancellor and French President, who have both registered Britain as part of their plans for a European Deterrent [sic], Britain's political leaders have not commented on this development. Why is that and what can be done to extract a modicum of transparency?

The complex of elements within "European Nuclear Proliferation" will do nothing to increase security but will rather generate further instability, proliferation, tension and increase the ultimate risk of nuclear use. Rather than acting as a replacement to the existing, US-controlled and dominated NATO nuclear sharing arrangements, the plans announced by Merz and Macron will be in addition to existing nuclear deployments. Macron names "Poland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Sweden and Denmark" as participants in the scheme. What do the people of Poland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Sweden and Denmark have to say about this? Have they been consulted? Of course not, no more than the British public were consulted on the expanding US nuclear boot-print at Lakenheath and

Marham. What will the people of the wider-Mediterranean region say about the return of nuclear weapons to Greece? What will the people of Russia make of French nuclear-armed jets in Poland? We can easily imagine the reaction of the Russian government.

As we have argued before, such developments point in one direction for those concerned with peace, real security and with efforts to avert the catastrophic worst: they point towards the demand for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Europe. Even if such a zone feels like a distant prospect, the struggle to realise a common security approach to the very real risks posed by nuclear proliferation in Europe (and elsewhere) can unite a powerful, determined and creative movement for peace. Now is the time to act on this basis.

Tom Unterrainer

Macron's speech: France's European Nuclear Posture

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... In these times of uncertainty, and I say this before the nation with determination, as President of the Republic, I will never hesitate to make decisions that are essential to protect our vital interests. If we had to use our arsenal, no State, however powerful, could shield itself from it; and no State, however vast, could recover. Just one of our submarines, like the one behind me, carries firepower equivalent to the sum of all bombs that fell on Europe during the Second World War. That's close to a thousand times the power of the first nuclear bombs. I stand before you today to deliver a speech of asserted strength in the service of peace. And this power, as you know better than anyone, does not come without effort. The continued credibility of this instrument is the fruit of important decisions made in the last decades, which have gained pace in recent years. The three years following the end of the Cold War were a parenthesis in history, during which we enjoyed the weakness of our adversaries and the certainty of empathy on the part of our allies. And so we gradually abandoned the land component of our deterrent, and our arsenal dwindled. Those times, so recent, are already seeming so distant.

France, since François Mitterrand, has abandoned any notion of tactical use of nuclear weapons and we will not go back on this. Within this deliberate asymmetrical approach, France has always defined the size of its arsenal in strict accordance with the operational effectiveness of our nuclear deterrent. My responsibility is to ensure that our deterrent maintains, and in the future continues to maintain, its power of assured destruction in the

dangerous moving environment, beset by proliferation, that I just pointed out. As a consequence, I have decided to increase the number of warheads of our arsenal. To put an end to any speculation, we will no longer release figures on our nuclear arsenal, as we have done in the past. To be free, we must be feared, and to be feared, we must be powerful. This increase in our arsenal is a testament to this.

But to be powerful, and this is the second focus of my speech today, we must be more united. And I will now speak of Europe. Our security was never conceived within the sole limits of our territory, in both conventional and nuclear terms. It is a clear geographical fact that exists and that we cannot negotiate. I will also add, today more than ever: independence cannot be solitude. When it comes to nuclear issues, this has been recognized by all of my predecessors without exception. But today, the conditions are now truly in place to draw its tangible consequences.

To explain this point, allow me to take the time to dwell upon a central element of our nuclear doctrine, the vital interests of the nation. French nuclear deterrence is intended to deter any State from encroaching on our vital interests. And what are they? We have never laid them out specifically. We have never laid them out, deliberately. Our red lines are not clear. They cannot be. Without a doubt, our interests, although they cover mainland and overseas France, should not merely considered as what is within our national borders.

Could we consider that the survival of our closest partners might be put at risk without it affecting our vital interests? Or conversely, that an extreme threat in Europe only concerns us? For these fundamental reasons, successive Presidents have referred to the European dimension of France's vital interests. In February 2020, I reiterated the offer of all my predecessors, since President François Mitterrand, of a dialogue with European countries that would wish to develop this dimension with us more deeply. I had even offered to involve these countries in exercises of our deterrent.

Six years later, we are in a different strategic universe. We must move into an entirely new stage and articulate for our times the intuition already formulated by General de Gaulle. I believe I am in a position to affirm that our partners now stand ready for this.

First of all, last July, we forged closer ties with the United Kingdom, a major partner and independent nuclear power with which, since 1995, we have acknowledged that no situation affects the vital interests of one without those of the other also being affected. We have strengthened our bilateral nuclear cooperation, asserted our joint solidarity with the Europeans, and opened up the possibility of coordinating our respective deterrents. This winter, for the first time since our deterrent has existed, senior British officials attended one of our strategic air forces' exercises.

But our ambition must be greater, because it is Europe's security, our security, which is at stake in the future. Contact has been made with a first group of allies, of course starting with our crucial partners, Germany. They responded positively to France's offer.

Today, a new step of France's deterrence can now be taken. We are entering the path of what I will call "forward deterrence". I prefer to be clear from the start, there will be no sharing of the ultimate decision, nor of its planification, nor of its conduct. Under our Constitution, the decision to employ nuclear weapons rests solely with the President of the Republic, who is accountable to the French people.

Therefore, there will also be no sharing of the definition of our vital interests, which will remain of sovereign assessment for our country. And for this reason, as with other nuclear alliances, including when they have plans and procedures, there will be no guarantee in the strict sense of the term. A rigid guarantee would not be wise. It would lower the nuclear threshold and reduce the uncertainty of our adversaries in equal proportion.

With forward deterrence, our doctrine will retain its original foundations: its strictly defensive character, the refusal of any nuclear battle, and the total and deliberate distinction between conventional and nuclear realms. The same holds true for the opportunity of a nuclear warning shot, unique and non-renewable: it will always be decided at France's sole discretion, to demonstrate very clearly that the nature of a conflict has changed and that France intends, through this means, to preserve an ultimate chance to restore deterrence.

So France will always assume on her own the responsibility for the deliberate crossing of the nuclear threshold, fully factoring in the interests of our allies. This is a progressive approach. It offers, first of all, the possibility for partners to participate in deterrence exercises. It may also involve signalling, including beyond our strict borders, or conventional participation of allies' forces in our nuclear activities. It will finally involve the temporary deployment of elements of our strategic air forces to allied countries.

In the same way that our strategic submarines dilute naturally in the oceans, guaranteeing a permanent-strike capability, our strategic air forces will also be able to be spread deep into the European continent. This dispersal across European territory, a sort of archipelago of forces, will complicate the calculations of our adversaries and will make this forward deterrence very valuable to us. It will strengthen our defence, while giving it room to operate: it will offer it a new strategic depth, in line with the challenges of European security. It will be, I believe, very valuable to partners who will follow this approach with us, and whose territory will gain a strong link with our deterrence.

It has been clear since the beginning, to us and to our partners, that this effort will come as an addition to NATO's nuclear mission. In which, I would like to point out, we do not take part. The forward deterrence we are proposing is a distinct effort which has its own value and is perfectly complementary to NATO's at both strategic and technical level. The work we have started on this project with the Europeans has been done in full transparency with the United States of America and in close coordination with the UK.

I would like to thank those allies who have demonstrated their trust by working intensely towards these future partnerships, in compliance with our international obligations, and particularly the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Germany will be a key partner in this most ambitious effort, of course, in the spirit of the Treaty of Aachen. The first steps of cooperation will begin this year and could include visits of strategic sites and joint exercises.

Other countries have already agreed to this dialogue, in addition to our British and German partners and friends, whom I have already mentioned: Poland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Sweden and Denmark will join it. This is a genuine strategic convergence between our countries, that will give real depth to the defence of our continent. Discussions are also open with several other countries and will be developed the next weeks and months.

Mirroring what we have put in place with the UK, exchange bodies at political level will be created with each of these countries in the next few days. This requires joint work on the threat and intelligence, specific means of communication, organization, but also a common understanding of the drivers of escalation and how to respond to them, particularly in the conventional phase.

That is also why the approach of forward deterrence, by its very nature, strengthens our protection and that of our partners. In the same way that France creates for Europe's adversaries new strategic dilemmas through forward deterrence, our partners are contributing in exchange to collective security and therefore France's security. That is the very nature of mutual support between nuclear and conventional capabilities...

This is the new layer that I want to add to France's defence, and the new cohesion that it will create for our continent. You can see it for yourselves, it is therefore a major shift that I have chosen to bring about for our deterrence. The context allows me at last to make the words "European dimension", pronounced by nearly all my predecessors, a reality that benefits both our country and our allies...

Emmanuel Macron, President of France, 2 March 2026
www.elysee.fr/front/pdf/elysee-module-26067-en.pdf

Keep Finland Nuclear-Free

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When Finland applied to join the nuclear-armed NATO alliance in May 2022 and when, in April 2023, membership was ratified, two claims were emphasised. Firstly, that joining NATO was a rational 'security' response in the context of Russia's invasion of and ongoing war in Ukraine. Second, that despite joining an organisation where nuclear weapons are regarded as the 'bedrock of security', Finland would maintain its nuclear-free status whilst enjoying the 'security' provided by nuclear weapons. The plans of the current Finnish government to now remove nuclear-free status by amending Chapter 2, Section 4 of the Nuclear Energy Act demand an examination of both claims.

On the first point: Finland's application for NATO membership did not come as a 'bolt from the blue' refutation of long-standing neutrality. In fact, Finland has maintained close relations with the nuclear-armed alliance since at least 1994 when it joined NATO's 'Partnership for Peace' initiative. Then, in 1997, Finland joined the 'Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council'. As NATO's own website points out, Finland "had been one of NATO's most active partners and a valued contributor to NATO-led operations and missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq." Further, NATO heralds Finland's status as "an 'Enhanced Opportunity Partner' (a partner country that makes particularly significant contributions to NATO operations and other Alliance objectives)" whereby "Finland experienced enhanced opportunities for dialogue and cooperation with the Allies."

It seems clear that just as NATO expanded in the post-Soviet era into former-Soviet states bordering Russia, NATO's influence and reach steadily increased within Finland, which has an approximately 1,340km (830 mile) long border with Russia.

The extent of this border and the depth of support for neutrality within Finnish society are surely linked and taken together, go some way to explaining why it took almost three decades for formal NATO membership to be finalised. Of course, Russia's invasion of and war against Ukraine marked a tipping point but NATO/Finnish relations were close and cordial before this. The ground for full NATO membership had been well-prepared and when Finland finally joined, it did so with political and a plurality of public support. It is worth noting that this support extended to previously anti-NATO political parties of the left. Of course, the peace movement was not convinced and protested the move.

On the second point: there is a clear contradiction between membership of a nuclear-armed military alliance and nuclear-free status. There are, of course, a number of NATO member states that are not nuclear-armed in

their own right and do not permit the stationing of NATO-assigned nuclear weapons in the territory. Nevertheless, all NATO member states are but default 'under the nuclear umbrella'. This, in fact, is the fundamental basis of the security NATO claims to offer. Whatever nuclear-free status NATO member states claim to hold, any such status dissolves at the point where the ultimate security guarantee NATO offers is invoked.

Despite this contradiction, it is the case that most NATO member states bordering Russia do not house NATO nuclear capabilities: and for very good reason. The reason is illustrated by the reaction to suggestions during the first Trump administration that Poland would be willing to join NATO nuclear-sharing arrangements. This suggestion was made in the context of debates at the time in Germany over continuing participation in the scheme. Both the then-Polish government and then-US Ambassador to Poland heralded the idea (see *END Info* 37). This was in 2020. On 27 February 2022, three days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Belarus concluded a constitutional referendum which removed nuclear-free status. This move has little to do with Russia's invasion and everything to do with responding to Poland's offer. The border between Poland and Belarus is approximately 400km, less than a third of the length of the border between Finland and Russia. The geography matters!

Which is why when Kremlin spokesperson Dimtry Peskov warns that Finland's plan "leads to an escalation of tensions on the European continent" and that "by deploying nuclear weapons on its territory, Finland is beginning to threaten" Russia we should take note. Why? Because the border matters and if the current Finnish government insists that NATO membership and potential nuclear status enhance security then there will be a symmetric response from the other side of the border: tensions will continue to escalate and actual security will be diminished. It's time to re-learn the lessons of common security initiatives of the 1980s, particularly the simple idea that security for one cannot be achieved at the expense of others. Security is indivisible and is certainly not achieved by nuclear means.

Tom Unterrainer

The Finnish Government is playing with nuclear apocalypse

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The **Association of Conscientious Objectors**, the **Peace League**, the **Peace Defenders** and the **Committee of One Hundred** are shocked by the government's plans to allow the transport of nuclear weapons in Finnish territories and even their deployment in Finland.

Nuclear weapons do not increase Finland's security

It is in the common interest of Finland, the European Union and all of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used. Nuclear weapons are not a conventional military deterrent. They are weapons of mass destruction, the use or threat of which endangers the future of all of Europe and, in the worst case, the future of all of humanity.

Enabling the transport of nuclear weapons in Finnish airspace or territorial waters – or their hypothetical placement in Finland – will not increase Finland's security in any way, not even militarily. Finland would find itself in a situation where Russia would prepare for the possibility that Finland has nuclear weapons, even if it does not know for sure. This would make Finland a tool in the confrontation between nuclear-armed powers without voting rights.

The decision would also set Finland apart from other Nordic countries, which, despite being NATO members, have imposed strict restrictions on nuclear weapons. Similar restrictions exist in several NATO and EU countries, including in Eastern Europe.

If the Finnish government decides to push through the removal of restrictions on nuclear weapons with a narrow parliamentary majority, there is a threat that more and more European countries will join in the dismantling of restrictions.

The use of nuclear weapons in Europe would be fatal for Finland

The use of nuclear weapons – or even the mere threat of them, such as demonstration flights near borders – would pose a serious risk to the whole of Europe. As a neighbor of a major nuclear power, Finland is in a situation where even a limited use of nuclear weapons or a serious accident would cause fatal consequences.

The government wants to change Finland's foreign policy, which has enjoyed broad public support.

Finland's long-standing policy has been to support nuclear disarmament, with the aim of reducing global dependence on nuclear weapons. This policy has had clear public support. Now the government wants to change this policy, in a hurry and without extensive public debate, in a way that will bring Finland closer to the front line of a possible major European war.

Decision-making powers over nuclear weapons remains with the nuclear powers

Minister of Defense Häkkänen refers to NATO policy in order to allow nuclear weapons, but does not point out that the bilateral DCA defense cooperation agreement between Finland and the United States leaves the

decision-making power over the transportation and possible deployment of nuclear weapons in Finland to the United States. According to the agreement, the Finnish authorities do not even have the right to check what weapons the United States is transporting or storing on Finnish territory. It is also not part of the policy of the United States to say whether its ships or aircraft are equipped with nuclear weapons or not.

French President Macron's recent proposal to expand France's nuclear weapons program in Europe would not create any better conditions. It also does not involve sharing decision-making power, but the opposite. France has emphasized that nuclear weapons will always remain its own decision-making power. Others would be left with the risks and mainly the role of the paymaster.

According to the government's proposal, Finland would open its territory to nuclear weapons, but would not have the power to decide on their use. At the same time, Finland would in practice be more likely to be targeted by nuclear weapons.

Undermining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty would be a dangerous development

The UN Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is one of the last remaining international mechanisms to limit the spread of nuclear weapons. Finland has supported the NPT for decades. States that have ratified it have committed to reducing and eventually eliminating nuclear weapons, and non-nuclear-weapon states have committed not to acquire them.

If Finland, through its own actions, signals that it supports the relocation of nuclear weapons and new nuclear weapons, it would weaken the NPT and potentially open Pandora's Box as more and more countries would allow their allies to have nuclear weapons or, in the worst case, seek to acquire their own.

Peace organizations demand:

- that Finland is genuinely committed to international agreements against nuclear weapons.
- that the section of the Nuclear Energy Act that prohibits the transport and placement of nuclear weapons on Finnish territory will not be amended.
- that security policy decision-making is kept in Finland's own hands and is not transferred to foreign powers.
- that a broader societal and parliamentary debate be held to assess Finland's security policy position.

Finland: Nuclear weapons cannot be a matter of petty politics

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Last week, the Orpo government and its Minister of Defense Antti Häkkänen (Kokk) announced their intention to completely remove the restrictions under the Nuclear Energy Act on the use, placement and transport of nuclear weapons in Finland. All that would remain would be the restrictions under the Criminal Code to prevent, among other things, terrorist purposes. The change is shockingly large, and its preparation by the government alone, without involving the opposition, does not in any way meet the requirements for dealing with such a key security policy issue. The Orpo government's response, expressed only afterwards, to present a political declaration to replace the legal ban on peacetime, is not enough to eliminate the risks of the change. Removing the restrictions is a major risk to Finland's security policy position and creates an unnecessary risk of escalation of nuclear weapons in Finland's neighboring regions. Maintaining Finland as a nuclear-weapon-free zone based on the law will mitigate the risk of nuclear weapons use. Therefore, the Greens do not support such a large-scale change.

Finland's historical position on nuclear weapons has been to contribute to reducing the risk of nuclear weapons use. Finland has promoted nuclear disarmament and provided related expert knowledge and supervision in international negotiations between states and in organizations. During the Cold War, the risks of nuclear weapons use and escalation were well known, and Finland also had a lot of related expertise in universities and authorities. Now, research and expertise on the risks associated with nuclear weapons have received little attention in recent decades, which is reflected in Finland's current discussion on the subject.

Nuclear weapons cannot be discussed in the same way as the risks of traditional military armament or other military weapons. The eagerness of Finnish politicians to correct the mistakes of previous decades in relation to the security policy risk posed by Russia has led to a rather one-sided discussion, in which armament is always a good thing. The Greens, led by Heidi Hautala, have been warning about the risks of Russia's aggressive military policy for decades. Still, we must now keep our cool when it comes to nuclear weapons, and not let emotions lead us into a risky arms race. The discussion requires a deeper perspective, and in addition to soldiers, politicians, security experts and defense authorities, the discussion must also include broader expertise, such as peace researchers and international policy researchers.

Nuclear weapons are doomsday weapons that kill civilians on a large scale. The life-threatening destructive effect of nuclear weapons extends hundreds of kilometers from the target and the harm is significant for decades. Even a single, even accidental, nuclear explosion has catastrophic consequences for civilians, which is why the use of nuclear weapons can already be considered illegal under international law. The comprehensive treaty banning nuclear weapons has also received significant support at the UN, although NATO countries and nuclear-weapon states have understandably remained outside it.

Even tactical nuclear weapons are not without such wider risks, and their use carries an immediate threat of escalating nuclear conflict. The nuclear arsenals of Russia and NATO countries are sufficient to destroy the societies of both parties in practice, and a large-scale nuclear war involves a significant risk of nuclear winter – that is, practically endangering the entire viability of the Earth for humanity. Finland's position is particularly dangerous. Finland's location right next to Russia's strategic targets (the St. Petersburg metropolitan area and the Murmansk strategic nuclear base) means that any use of nuclear weapons in which Russia is a party poses an absolutely enormous risk to Finland's security. If even one bomb explodes, Finland is in existential danger, regardless of whether the bomb explodes in Russia or in a NATO country.

Nuclear arms control and disarmament agreements were key instruments in easing the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States. These agreements have been extended between the United States and Russia in recent decades, but in recent years they have begun to be abandoned. This is bad for Finland's security. Finland's own actions should not be accelerating the cycle of nuclear arms buildup.

Only after this overall picture does one reach the narrow perspective that has been mainly presented in Finland. Finland is a member of the NATO military alliance, and therefore also within the protection of the NATO nuclear umbrella. The concrete goal of the NATO nuclear umbrella is to eliminate the risk of Russia (or any other adversary) using nuclear weapons against allied countries. The secondary goal is the threat of a first strike to prevent a conventional military attack by Russia. However, the first strike doctrine is more essential from the perspective of the militarily weaker party: in relation to the NATO countries and the United States, Russia is the weaker party. A unified NATO does not even need it.

Just because we are within the NATO nuclear umbrella, we are within this protection. The nuclear weapons defined as common by NATO and deployed in Central Europe under the control of the United States are only part of the nuclear weapons system, and they are not even the most central to the deterrence and performance of NATO countries. The intercontinental missiles launched from US submarines are its strongest deterrent. The

nuclear weapons of France and Great Britain are also outside the NATO system. Bringing nuclear weapons to Finland would not make sense from the perspective of the nuclear weapons doctrine of NATO countries, but would be risky, because their destruction would be easier for the opposing side due to their close location.

It is true that in this tense world situation it is justified to also assess the credibility and operational capability of NATO's nuclear umbrella in relation to Russia. It is also necessary to take into account the growing uncertainty regarding the reliability of the US line. However, it does not provide grounds for the use, placement or transport of nuclear weapons in Finnish territory. Finnish legislation is of course stricter than in other Nordic countries with the exception of Iceland. Some interpret Finnish legislation as prohibiting, in addition to the transport of nuclear weapons, the passage of the firing trajectory of allied nuclear weapons through Finnish territory, even in a war situation. This is an unusually strict restriction from a member country of a military alliance. It is therefore justified to reconsider this wartime restriction as a NATO ally from the perspective of the credibility of deterrence.

However, this assessment must be made in accordance with game theory, ensuring that one's own actions do not cause a nuclear escalation and force the other side to take its own escalating countermeasure in accordance with game theory. This means that Finnish legislation should be changed as little as necessary to improve the security of Finland and our allies in the event of a war. At the same time, it must be ensured that it does not oblige the other side to react to the change in a way that endangers Finland's security situation. Finland's interest is not growing tension related to nuclear weapons in our own region or in its vicinity.

Only now do we get to what would have been a sensible course of action for the Orpo government. Instead of Minister of Defence Häkkänen unilaterally declaring a huge and fundamental legislative change as a decision of the Orpo government alone, such a fundamental change should be prepared by a parliamentary committee before conclusions are drawn. This would have made it possible to start preparing a possible change in order to gain the broadest possible parliamentary support and ensure the long-term sustainability of the security policy line. At the same time, the risk of international nuclear escalation caused by a possible change in Finland's line would have been minimised.

This preparation could also have ensured that Finland's line is anchored close to that of the other Nordic countries. Iceland has a strict legislative ban on the use and deployment of nuclear weapons in the country, so it resembles the current situation in Finland. Norway, Denmark and Sweden have either directly imposed a restriction on the deployment of nuclear weapons in NATO agreements or have included a restriction on the

deployment of nuclear weapons in national parliamentary positions in peacetime. However, this assessment should consider that changing existing legislation to facilitate the use of nuclear weapons is in itself a risky and potentially escalating action.

Therefore, it would be most sensible to change the law as little as necessary: it is justified to keep the current ban on placing or transporting nuclear weapons in Finland in peacetime in the law. At the same time, it must be emphasized that the goal of any possible change should be to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used – not to lower the threshold for use.

Now the government and Minister of Defense Häkkänen did not act in this way, and there is no way to see that this government's approach is compatible with the unifying line represented by President Alexander Stubb. Häkkänen fell into petty politics because he wanted to appear to be the driver of change. Instead, he caused a chaotic situation for our security policy line, which is only detrimental to Finland. It could have been avoided.

It is now up to Parliament to ensure that the bill is considered from the perspective of Finland's overall interest. Finland must remain a nuclear-weapon-free zone, at least in peacetime, and this must still be enshrined in Finnish legislation.

Ville Niinisto, Finnish Greens, 13 March 2026

Finland, NATO and Nuclear Weapons

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Statement by Nuclear Weapons Monitoring Group (Finland), 17 March 2023

Pugwash, together with several Finnish NGOs (Peace Union of Finland, ICAN Finland, Physicians for Social Responsibility and Technology for Life Finland) have set up a Nuclear Weapons Monitoring Group (Finland) whose task is to provide timely analysis on issues relating to nuclear weapons and NATO.

On 16 March 2023 the Nuclear Weapons Monitoring Group Finland released a statement. The full text is below, followed by the list of participating experts.

FINLAND, NATO AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS

When Finland joins the North Atlantic Alliance it becomes part of a defensive coalition in which nuclear weapons are included in NATO´s

deterrence and collective defense capabilities. The North Atlantic Treaty does not have provisions on nuclear weapons nor does NATO have nuclear weapons of its own. Yet, as a NATO member, Finland needs to form an explicit nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament policy.

In principle, Finland´s NATO membership does not restrict the exercise of policies aimed at nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war. On the contrary, nuclear disarmament is one of NATO´s long-term objectives. Also, as a member of a defensive alliance, Finland can continue to apply its foreign and security policy tradition of enhancing the rule-based world order, calling for the peaceful resolution disputes, pursuing nuclear disarmament, as well as the conclusion and respect of nuclear arms control treaties.

As nuclear disarmament is one of NATO´s long-term objectives, Finland can continue its foreign and security policy tradition of enhancing the rule-based world order, calling for the peaceful resolution disputes, pursuing nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war as well as the conclusion and respect of nuclear arms control treaties.

Introduction

Nine countries maintain nuclear arsenals, which at present contain approximately a total of 13,000 nuclear warheads. Nuclear weapon states´ doctrines aim primarily at preventing other nuclear states´ first strike by maintaining a credible counterstrike deterrent. Most nuclear weapon states reserve the right to the first use of nuclear weapons against nuclear weapon states as well as non-nuclear weapon states. As Russia´s recent actions in Ukraine demonstrate, nuclear deterrent may also be used as a policy tool to support wars of aggression.

Due to nuclear weapons´ enormous destructive power, their existence is already a considerable risk factor. The stockpiling and disposal of nuclear explosives, as well as the decision-making and exercises involving such explosives, cannot leave any room for technical or humane mistakes. Even a limited nuclear war would lead to regional annihilation, in addition to causing long-term global effects on the climate, food production chains and the well-being of all living organisms.

Nuclear disarmament has stalled. Instead, nuclear arsenals are being modernized with new launchers, nuclear warheads, and command systems. The most important arms control treaty, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear weapons (NPT), which came into force in 1970, strives to prevent the acquisition, proliferation and deployment of nuclear weapons. As a contracting party, Finland is committed not to acquire nuclear weapons. Bilateral nuclear arms control treaties between Russia and the United States have collapsed; recently, Russia declared it will suspend its participation in the New START Treaty. No single nuclear weapon state has signed the

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)., which came into force in 2021. However, NATO membership as such is not an obstacle for signing the TPNW.

US nuclear weapons are currently stored at five airbases in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey. The decision to use these weapons is made by the US President; theoretically, also a confirmation by the British Prime Minister and a political decision by NATO´s Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) is required. All members of the Alliance are part of the NPG, except for France. The NPG reviews NATO´s nuclear policy, such as technical security of nuclear weapons stationed in Europe as well as the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Through participation in the NPG´s work and information sharing, NATO allies have more possibilities to influence US nuclear policy than other US allies.

In addition to five countries hosting US nuclear weapons, other NATO allies participate in yearly *Steadfast Noon* –military exercises in which nuclear strikes are simulated. In these exercises, non-nuclear weapon states rehearse protecting bombers carrying nuclear weapons, destroying the opponent´s air defenses, as well as aerial refueling of bombers. Nuclear weapon use is not rehearsed in NATO´s conventional exercises.

All NATO members accept nuclear weapons as part of the Alliance´s deterrence policy. Of the Nordic countries, Norway and Sweden strive to promote nuclear arms control and nuclear disarmament especially in the context of the NPT. The stationing of nuclear weapons on another state´s territory is not a precondition for NATO membership. For example, nuclear weapons have not been stationed in those Nordic countries, which are NATO members.

Recommendations

As a NATO member Finland is to reinforce the rule-based world order and peaceful resolution of disputes. Finland is committed to these aims as a member of the United Nations and on the basis of Article 1 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

Nuclear weapons are not to be imported, stockpiled, or deployed in Finland in peacetime or in war. This principle has its legal basis both in the NPT and the Finnish When amending this act, particular attention needs to be paid not to abolish the prohibition on importing nuclear explosives to Finland, as well as the prohibition to manufacture, possess and detonate nuclear explosives. There are no operative grounds to import nuclear weapons to Finland. If any NATO functions or arms depots bilaterally agreed with the US are positioned in Finland, attention needs to be paid to relevant laws and treaties so that these regulations include already existing prohibitions on the import to Finland of prohibited weapons systems such as nuclear weapons or anti-personnel land mines.

Finland is to ensure that if foreign troops or NATO functions are positioned in Finland, these decisions are based on its own sovereign decision; Finland is to emphasize NATO´s purely defensive character.

Finland is to promote nuclear disarmament and arms control in different fora. In addition to its support for the full implementation of the NPT, Finland is to continue its participation as an observer to the Meetings of State Parties to the TPNW. Furthermore, Finland can participate in providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to those affected by nuclear weapon use and testing.

Finland should aim to reduce the importance of nuclear weapons in international and military security. Attention needs to be paid to the reduction of nuclear weapons, especially tactical nuclear weapons, as well as the verification and implementation of treaties. Finland should enhance No-First-Use policy in NATO and globally.

Finland´s participation in the NPG is appropriate for purposes of influencing NATO´s nuclear policy and in order to acquire information for national decision-making. It is not necessary that Finland participates in NATOs yearly nuclear exercises, except as an eventual observer.

Nuclear Weapons Monitoring Group is a group of independent experts. Its mandate is to evaluate the role of nuclear weapons and risks caused by nuclear weapons to Finland in the context of NATO membership and to carry out analyses on how Finland, as a NATO member, deals with, positions itself and acts in nuclear weapons-related questions.

GROUP OF EXPERTS

- Tarja Cronberg, Dr. techn, dr. merc, Distinguished Associate Fellow SIPRI
- Jaakko Ellisaari, M.soc.sc, Peace Union Board member
- Tytti Erästö / PhD, Senior Researcher, SIPRI
- Kati Juva, MD PhD, ICAN Finland coordinator, IPPNW (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War) member of the Board
- Mika Kerttunen, D.Soc.Sc., Adjunct Professor Military Strategy FI NDU; Visiting Researcher German Institute for International and Security Affairs
- Claus Montonen, PhD, docent of theoretical physics, co-coordinator ICAN Finland, board member International Network of Engineers and Scientists for Global Responsibility and Technology for Life Finland
- Juha Pyykönen, Licentiate in International Politics, Brigadier General (ret.), Security Analyst, Chair of the Finnish Society of Military Sciences.
- Erkki Tuomioja, former Minister for Foreign Affairs, MP and vicechairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Chairman Historians without Borders
- Katariina Simonen, Pugwash Council, Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs
- Juha A. Vuori, PhD, Professor of International Politics, Tampere University
- Raimo Väyrynen, professor emeritus

Trump and Greenland

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At time of writing, the biennial NATO military exercise 'Cold Response 26' is taking place from March 9 to 19. It is being led from the Norwegian-US headquarters in Reitan, near Bodø, Norway. About 32,500 personnel are participating, including around 11,800 in Norway and 7,500 in Finland. The rest are at sea and in the air. Military from 14 countries are involved - Norway, the USA, the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Canada, Spain, Turkey, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Belgium. It is basically a NATO show of force against Russia and the High North is being used by an expanding NATO as a military practice ground in which to rehearse future war fighting strategies and to test and develop new military technologies.

According to the official website of the Norwegian Armed Forces: "*The main purpose of the exercises is to contribute to deterrence, strengthen defense, calm the population*". But how is the presence of the US military in Scandinavia expected to "calm" people, given Donald Trump's flagrant disregard for international law and his wish to own Greenland?

What is that about? Greenland, the world's largest island, is home to more than 56,000 people. A former Danish colony and now an autonomous territory of Denmark. Its capital city Nuuk is closer to New York than it is to Copenhagen and the US already has an active military base there.

Pituffik Space base, formerly known as Thule Air Base, is on the northwest coast of Greenland, 1,126 kms north of the Arctic Circle. In the 1950s aircraft made surveillance flights from there, over the pole, to inspect Soviet defences. In 1957 four Nike Missile sites were constructed around the base and in 1961 a Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS) radar was built to give the US warning of a missile attack from Russia.

On 21 January 1968 a US bomber from an Air Force Base in New York state carrying 4 nuclear weapons, crashed just outside the base. Luckily the failsafe mechanisms prevented a nuclear explosion but there was widespread radioactive contamination. In 2007 a BBC reporter claimed that one of the nuclear weapons was unaccounted for, but this was denied by the US and Denmark. Some details of the incident remain classified, however.

In June 1987, the BMEWS mechanically steered radar was upgraded to a two-sided, solid-state phased-array electronically steered radar system, similar to the one at Fylingdales in North Yorkshire. It then became a missile warning and tracking component of the US National Missile Defense System. After the US Space Force was established by Trump in 2019, the base was transferred to Space Delta 4, under the command of Buckley Space Force Base in Colorado. Thule Air Base was renamed Pituffik Space Base

in April 2023 in recognition of the former Inuit settlement. Pituffik Space Base plays a key role in missile defence and satellite tracking and targeting. The recent retaliatory attacks by Iran on US missile defence radars is a dire warning to people who live on or near the base in Greenland and elsewhere (including Fylingdales!).

There is also a Pituffik Tracking Station, about 5.6 km southeast of the main base, which tracks and commands high-priority government satellites. It provides telemetry, tracking and command data for satellites that are used for surveillance, communication, navigation and weather. The Space Force says the base helps enable "space superiority."

The 1951 Defence of Greenland Treaty with Denmark grants the US broad military rights, including the establishment of bases, provided Denmark and Greenland are notified**,** and unrestricted movement for defence purposes. However, Danish sovereignty over the territory is also recognised as part of the treaty which remains in effect as long as NATO does.

Trump has said that Greenland is needed for the 'Golden Dome' missile defence project, but the Pituffik radar is there already and part of US national Missile Defense, so what else might be needed? Perhaps the siting of anti-ballistic missiles there?

But there's more - in January, Trump claimed the Arctic was covered in Russian and Chinese warships to justify his push for control of Greenland. Russia does have a nuclear submarine base in the Arctic, on the Kola peninsula, the other side of Finland and Russia and China have increased joint naval and air patrols in the North Pacific and near Alaska but there has been no evidence of "swarms" of Russian or Chinese military ships near Greenland as Trump claims.

Greenland is however, at a very strategic location. The GIUK (Greenland, Iceland, and the UK) gap is a critical maritime choke point in the North Atlantic, separating the Norwegian/North Seas from the open Atlantic Ocean. It is an important strategic, monitoring, and anti-submarine corridor that NATO uses to track Russian naval activity. The position of Faslane, guarding the GIUK gap, is also of great strategic importance to NATO.

There are also important commercial considerations. As global warming shrinks the arctic ice cap it allows more maritime traffic, mining and other commercial activity to take place in the high north. During the summer, shipping routes can operate for longer periods in the Arctic region. Shipping has risen by nearly 40% in the region over the last 12 years, according to the Arctic Council (a kind of common security organisation whose primary purpose is to advance sustainable development and environmental protection in the region, including of indigenous peoples).

These routes are particularly important for Russia and China. Russia has over 53% of the total Arctic coastline and controls most of the resources there, while China identifies as a 'Near Arctic State' with the opening-up of

its 'Polar Silk Road' as a trade route, reducing travel time to Europe by 40%. The expanding China footprint in the Arctic is seen as a security challenge by the US.

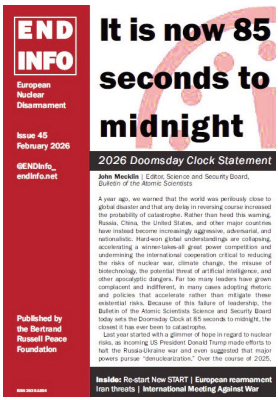
Then there are the resources becoming newly available. The US Geological Survey estimates that over 87% of the Arctic's oil and natural gas resource (about 360 billion barrels oil equivalent) is in seven key Arctic basin provinces including two to the east and west of Greenland. There are also rare earth metals present which are in high demand for electric cars and the manufacture of military equipment. A 2023 survey showed that 25 of 34 minerals considered "critical raw materials" by the European Commission were to be found in Greenland. China currently dominates global rare earth production and Trump does not like that, so controlling Greenland and its resources could really be about keeping China out.

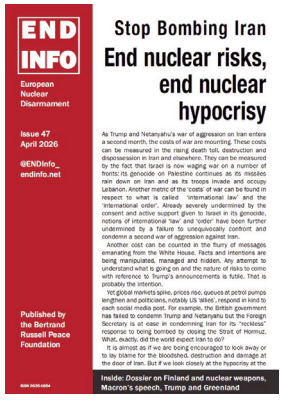
However, the extraction of oil and gas is banned in Greenland for environmental regions, and investment in mining faces challenges - perhaps a new arrangement with Denmark could allow the US to build without planning permission and expand into mineral-rich areas?

The full details of the "framework of the future deal with respect to Greenland" announced by Trump remain unavailable and Greenlanders are concerned that they are being left out of talks between the US and Denmark. Trump seems to insist on "owning" Greenland and although there is a constitutional ban on the sale of land, Trump's recent actions show that he has no respect for law or any other state's sovereignty.

Dave Webb

European Nuclear Disarmament | *END Info*





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