

Toward a Meaningful NATO Deterrence and Defense Posture Review

July 12, 2011

Anders Fogh Rasmussen
Secretary General, North Atlantic Treaty Organization
Brussels, Belgium
c/o Fabrice Pothier, Head of the NATO Policy Planning Unit

Dear Mr. Secretary General:

We are writing to offer several recommendations for NATO's Deterrence and Defense Posture Review (DDPR) that would advance the Alliance's goal of reducing reliance upon nuclear weapons in military strategy and updating the Alliance's mix of capabilities to respond to 21st century challenges.

The DDPR provides NATO with a unique opportunity to strengthen global nonproliferation and disarmament efforts by sending a strong signal that the Alliance is serious about creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. If NATO fails to change its existing nuclear and military posture, it will have missed an important opportunity to strengthen the Alliance and resolve differences over NATO's current nuclear posture that will otherwise undermine Alliance unity in the years to come. It will also undermine member states attempts to strengthen non-proliferation norms in international fora.

Today, NATO's nuclear weapons no longer serve the deterrence or war-fighting role they were intended for during the Cold War. NATO members, along with Russia, share a common interest in preventing proliferation and reducing the risks posed by excess strategic and tactical nuclear weapons stockpiles. Nuclear weapons are useless in dealing with the main challenges facing the alliance, including extremism beyond NATO's borders, terrorism, and cyber threats. The maintenance of obsolete NATO nuclear capabilities diverts resources from investments in more essential capabilities.

Although allies have agreed that as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance, it is in NATO's interest to declare a more limited role for its nuclear capabilities that would help open the way for overdue changes to its Cold War-era policy of forward-basing U.S. tactical nuclear weapons. This would help facilitate another, post-New START round of reductions, which should involve of all types of Russian and U.S. nuclear weapons.

With these realities and objectives in mind, we believe that NATO's DDPR report should:

- **Clarify that the fundamental purpose of nuclear weapons for the alliance is to deter a nuclear attack** by a potential adversary and that NATO pledges not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear members of the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. This policy would bring NATO into alignment with the 2010 U.S. *Nuclear Posture Review Report* and signal that NATO is reducing the role and salience of nuclear weapons. This policy would demonstrate that NATO recognizes that the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear

threats or adversaries would be disproportionate, inappropriate, and inconsistent with the values of NATO member states.

- **Acknowledge that U.S. non-strategic nuclear forces deployed in Europe and assigned to NATO do not serve a deterrence or retaliatory function that cannot be provided by the strategic nuclear forces or conventional military assets of Alliance members.** This reality is implied in the *Strategic Concept*, which notes that “The supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance” Senior U.S. officials, including the Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and White House WMD Coordinator Gary Samore, have stated that “whatever military mission they serve could of course also be accomplished through the use of systems that are not tactical systems based in Europe.”[\[1\]](#)
- **Endorse further, verifiable reductions of all types of U.S. and Russian nuclear forces—strategic and nonstrategic, deployed and nondeployed—as well as nuclear weapons delivery systems.** We support the goal, as expressed in the 2010 *Strategic Concept*, to “seek Russian agreement to increase transparency on its nuclear weapons in Europe and relocate these weapons away from the territory of NATO members.” In order to leverage action by Russia, however, it is essential for NATO to communicate that forward-deployed tactical nuclear weapons are not necessary to deter external threats (including those from Russia) and the alliance is prepared to withdraw the weapons from Europe if Russia takes reciprocal actions. NATO’s new WMD Control and Disarmament Committee could ensure close consultation between the United States and European allies during future nuclear risk reduction negotiations with Russia.
- **Not call for the modernization of the B61 nuclear warheads stationed in Europe and the dual-capable aircraft designated to carry them.** NATO member states can and should avoid costly and unnecessary investments in nuclear weapons systems that are to be phased out through arms control and that do not provide military utility for the 21st century challenges facing the Alliance. A NATO-wide mandate to maintain obsolete and costly nuclear weapons capabilities would likely lead to rifts within the alliance.
- **Reiterate NATO’s assurance that its current and future missile defense capabilities are not "targeted" at Russia’s strategic forces** and that NATO member state missile interceptor deployments will be designed and configured to address third party missile threats as they emerge. Combined with an agreement to share missile-launch early-warning information, such a written assurance could form the basis of a missile defense cooperation framework. It is in the national security interests of both NATO and Russia to transform strategic missile defense from a topic of confrontation to cooperation.

These policies would enable the Alliance to further the *Strategic Concept* goal to “ensure the broadest possible participation of Allies in collective defence planning on nuclear roles ... and in command, control and consultation arrangements,” under a more appropriate and pragmatic strategy for peacetime basing of nuclear forces, reducing some of the unintended negative consequences of NATO deployments for unity within the Alliance, and for members states’ non-proliferation diplomacy.

We urge NATO leaders to conduct all stages of its deliberations on the DDPR report in an open manner that is consistent with the democratic values of Alliance members. This should involve consultation with key stakeholders such as Parliaments, the expert community, and the broader

public. Such an inclusive process is important to increase the legitimacy of NATO's nuclear weapons policy and we look forward to contributing to that process.

Sincerely,

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* Organization listed for identification purposes only.

[1] "Pursuing the Prague Agenda: An Interview With White House Coordinator Gary Samore" *Arms Control Today*, May 2011, http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2011_05/Samore

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