

The Honorable Ed Pastor
The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen

United States House Of Representatives
2465 Rayburn House Office Building
Washing, D.C. 20515-0304

and

The Honorable Byron Dorgan
The Honorable Bob Bennett

United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-3405

Brussels, September 22th 2009

Dear Senator/Representative,

We have learnt through press reports that there is currently a debate in the US Congress on modernizing the B-61 nuclear weapon, as described in the B-61 Phase 6.2/2A `Refurbishment' Study. We also note that it is being argued that such a modernization is needed in order to fulfil US obligations of "extended deterrence" for its European allies. However, we believe that this argument does not reflect the political opinions presently existing in those European countries where US nuclear weapons are deployed.

In its 1999 Strategic Concept, NATO already stated: "the circumstances in which any use of nuclear weapons might have to be contemplated by them are therefore extremely remote." In fact, most European politicians and the general public see continued deployment of B-61 nuclear bombs as having no military value whatsoever, and as being a relict of the Cold War. Any deterrence roles assigned to the B-61 tactical nuclear weapon in actual circumstances could be accomplished by conventional military means. Therefore, the continued deployment of the B-61 is perceived as a waste of resources for both the US and the allied air forces involved. Those politicians who do not question the deployment of the B61 in Europe do this out of loyalty to the US and to keep transatlantic relations strong, or in order to retain a perceived strengthened position in internal NATO discussions. If the US were therefore to decide it no longer needs the B-61, or at least no longer needs to base B-61 nuclear weapons in Europe, the governments concerned will almost certainly not object to a withdrawal.

This opinion is founded on strong documentary evidence which we wish to share with you:

A. Belgium: There is a broad cross-party political consensus that it would be best to end the deployment of B-61 nuclear weapons. This opinion was expressed in resolutions of the Belgian Senate of 21 April 2005 and the Belgian Chambre of 13 July 2005, and has been confirmed in several later resolutions, such as the Senate resolution of 29 January 2009. These resolutions demanded that the Belgian government propose initiatives within NATO concerning the review of the strategic doctrine on nuclear weapons and the gradual withdrawal of the US tactical nuclear weapons from Europe as a fulfilment of art. VI of the NPT. These resolutions were adopted unanimously.

B. Germany: Four of the five political parties in the parliament have spoken out against the further deployment of the B61 nuclear weapons:

1. Social Democratic Party (SPD)

“Our goal remains a world without nuclear and mass destruction weapons. We advocate a fresh start in nuclear disarmament. We want all substrategic nuclear weapons to be completely withdrawn from Europe. That also applies to the remaining nuclear weapons in Germany. They are a relict of the Cold War and are militarily obsolete today. We will do all we can for this to be discussed within the context of the US-Russian disarmament talks.”

Source: “Sozial und demokratisch. Anpacken. Für Deutschland. Das Regierungsprogramm der SPD”, p.90,

http://www.spd.de/de/pdf/parteiprogramme/Regierungsprogramm2009_LF_navi.pdf

2. Liberal Party (FDP)

“As a country that has renounced weapons of mass destruction under international law, Germany should once again take the lead for states that consistently advocate a credible policy of disarmament and arms control. For this reason, the FDP works for a revival of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, including the goal of complete nuclear disarmament, the rapid ratification of an amended CSE Treaty, binding European regulations for weapons exports, and the withdrawal of the remaining American nuclear weapons from Germany.”

Source: “Die Mitte stärken. Deutschlandprogramm 2009”, p.67,

http://www.deutschlandprogramm.de/files/653/Deutschlandprogramm09_Endfassung.PDF

3. Green Party (Bündnis 90/Die GRÜNEN)

„We want the remaining nuclear weapons in Germany and Europe to be finally withdrawn and nuclear sharing to end. Our goal is the denuclearisation of the NATO strategy. (...) Germany and Europe have to pursue the nuclear disarmament process also through unilateral disarmament measures that will help to make the upcoming 2010 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty a success. We urge that a Convention on banning nuclear weapons be concluded. Our vision is and remains a world without nuclear weapons.”

Source: “Der grüne neue Gesellschaftsvertrag”, p.218, http://www.gruene-partei.de/cms/files/dokbin/295/295495.wahlprogramm_komplett_2009.pdf

4. The Left Party (DIE LINKE)

“The Left party calls for the closure of all foreign military bases in Germany and the elimination of all nuclear weapons.”

Source: “Konsequent sozial. Für Demokratie und Frieden. Bundestagswahlprogramm 2009“, p.55,

http://die-linke.de/fileadmin/download/wahlen/pdf/485516_LinkePV_LWP_BTW09.pdf

5. Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU)

The CDU/CSU has not spoken out against the further deployment of the B61. They mention neither nuclear weapons in Germany or Europe nor extended nuclear deterrence in their election manifesto and remain very general in their statement:

“We will support any fair initiative for the reduction of nuclear weapons and the limitation of conventional forces that serve international security. An agreement on a drastic reduction of nuclear capabilities would open the possibility of strengthening the non-proliferation regime and hinder the ambitions of further states to join the circle of nuclear powers.”

Source: „Wir haben die Kraft gemeinsam für unser Land. Regierungsprogramm 2009-2013“, p.86-87, <http://www.cdu.de/doc/pdfc/090628-beschluss-regierungsprogramm-cducsu.pdf>

C. The Netherlands:

In a recent parliamentary debate on 10 September the PVDA (social democrats), one of the parties in government called for the withdrawal of the US nuclear weapons from Europe.

Source: <http://pvda.nl/nieuws/nieuws/2009/09/Kernwapens+weg+uit+Nederland.html>

This call is supported by several opposition parties, such as the Socialist Party Netherlands, Groen-Links and D-66.

The elder statesman Ruud Lubbers, former Christian Democratic Prime Minister, who was responsible for the deployment of Pershing II-missiles in the 80's in the Netherlands, has also called for the withdrawal of the tactical nuclear weapons from Europe.

D. Italy:

The Chamber of Deputies unanimously approved Resolution 1-00174, submitted by Mogherini Rebesani et al., on 23 June 2009, to urge the Government "to foster, within Nato, a discussion on the need to rethink the role and importance assigned to nuclear weapons; to promote constructive dialogue with all nuclear weapon States to further the creation of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (in accordance with Article VII of the NPT), including the proposal that Western Europe actively work towards that end, in the more general perspective of the "zero nuclear weapons option" already contained in Article VI of the NPT.

Source:

http://www.camera.it/resoconti/resoconto_allegato.asp?idSeduta=191&resoconto=allegato_a.mozioni.01¶m=sed0191.allegato_a.mozioni#sed0191.allegato_a.mozioni

E. Turkey:

There is a rising sentiment amongst the population for the removal of US nuclear weapons from Turkish territory. In a survey conducted in 2004, about half the respondents stated that they are against nuclear weapons being stationed in Turkey. 57% of the Turkish population would support a government request to remove the nuclear weapons from their country, and 72% said they would support an initiative to make Turkey a nuclear-free zone.

Sources: Aslıhan Tümer, 'NATO's Nuclear Sharing and Incirlik.' Bulletin 26 - Dual Use: Nuclear Power and Nuclear Weapons

http://www.inesap.org/sites/default/files/inesap_old/bulletin26/art11.htm

(November 2006)

<http://www.greenpeace.org/turkey/press/reports/public-opinion-survey-on-nucle>

We sincerely hope that this letter will help you to make an informed decision on this very important matter.

Sincerely,

Uta Zapf, MP, Co-Chair, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), German Bundestag

Patrik Vankrunkelsven, Senator, Co-Chair, PNND Belgium

Federica Mogherini, MP, PNND Council Member for Italy, Secretary of Defence Committee, Chamber of Deputies, Italy