150 US Nuclear Weapons in Europe but Moscow Holds more Atomic Warheads in the World and the New Powerful Russian Sarmat ICBM

Description

A few months ago the superb President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky spread the word that Russian President Valdimir Putin had run out of missiles. Between Monday and Tuesday, the retaliation of the Russian aviation with hundreds of missiles on the capital Kiev and other Ukrainian cities, in response to the explosive attack on the Kerch bridge for whom was blamed the Kiev intelligence, has severely denied him.

But for weeks now there has been talk of the nuclear nightmare due to a decree signed two years ago by Putin which provides for the use of tactical atomic weapons also in response to attacks with conventional weapons on Russian territory, already hit several times by rockets from Kiev in the border areas. The issue has become even more alarming after the annexation to the Russian Federation of the Ukrainian regions of Donetzk, Lugansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia as, logically, the same justification to use nuclear weapons could apply to these territories as well.

Well, according to the Federation of American Scientists, Moscow, contrary to what the habitual liar Zelensky says, possesses 5,977 nuclear warheads: 549 more than the US according these official sources, 2thousand according the unofficial ones.

According to Martin Armstrong of Statista, nine countries are thought to now have close to 13,000 nuclear warheads.

The United States and Russia are at the top of the list, as compiled by the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), with a combined arsenal of nearly 11,000 weapons. “Instead of planning for nuclear disarmament, the nuclear-armed states appear to plan to retain large arsenals for the indefinite future,” the FAS said in late 2021. “All continue to modernise their remaining nuclear forces… and all appear committed to retaining nuclear weapons for the indefinite future.”

A nuclear war “cannot be won and must never be fought,” the United States, Russia, China, the UK, and France unanimously agreed in January, in a rare instance of agreement on a matter of international security. A senior U.S. State Department official at the time described the vow, the

outcome of months of negotiations, as “an acknowledgement that it is something that we want to avoid.”

US NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN EUROPE

«Nuclear weapons owned by the United States have been deployed in Europe since the mid-1950s, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower authorized their storage at allied North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bases on the continent for use against the Soviet Union. Though NATO officially declares itself a “nuclear alliance,” it does not own any nuclear weapons. Instead, a small number of bombs are reportedly kept under U.S. Air Force guard at six airbases in five European countries, ready to be delivered by respective national fighter planes».

Thus was explained by a report of Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation

Today, under NATO’s nuclear sharing program, the bombs complement the alliance’s collective security deterrent against threats, principally Russia. Alongside NATO member the United Kingdom’s arsenal, U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe are consistent with Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty. Fellow member France, who re-joined the alliance in 2009, does not commit its own nuclear arsenal to the alliance’s extended deterrent.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. NATO declaratory policy consistently states that a credible defence and deterrence posture includes a combination of nuclear, conventional, and missile-defence capabilities. As a result, nuclear weapons remain central to NATO policy. Still, while a critical element of NATO deterrence, the Alliance's nuclear weapons posture and management have long been issues largely left on the margins of discussion and debate about NATO's defence and deterrence adaptation.

2. However, technological developments and concerns about a deteriorating global arms control regime have recently brought debates about Allied nuclear weapons and the Alliance's nuclear posture to the forefront of policy discussions in Brussels and across Allied capitals.

3. In the context of this renewed focus on nuclear capabilities both in the Alliance and across the globe, this draft general report will review NATO's current nuclear posture and highlight the debate surrounding its future. To this end, the draft report will underscore the challenges of maintaining an effective global nonproliferation regime in an era where all nuclear powers across the globe are investing in the modernisation, and in some cases the expansion, of their nuclear capabilities.

II. NATO'S NUCLEAR POSTURE

4. NATO's nuclear pillar is strongly reliant on the strategic forces of the United States, as well as the strategic forces of both France and the United Kingdom. Both the United States and the United Kingdom make nuclear weapons available to the Alliance as part of their national nuclear policies[1]. The United States remains committed to an extended deterrence posture, which provides allies protection under its nuclear 'umbrella'. To achieve this extended posture, the United States maintains its nuclear triad[2] of delivery systems, forward-deployed non-strategic weapons, and readily deployable US-based nuclear weapons (US DoD, 2018). The United Kingdom's sea-based nuclear deterrent is committed to UK and NATO security[3].

5. Within the NATO context, the United States forward-deploys approximately 150 nuclear weapons[4], specifically B61 gravity bombs, to Europe for use on both US and Allied dual-capable aircraft. These bombs are stored at six US and European bases – Kleine Brogel in Belgium, Büchel in Germany, Aviano and Ghedi-Torre in Italy, Volkel in The Netherlands, and Incirlik in Turkey. In the hypothetical scenario they are needed, the B61 bombs can be delivered by US or European dual-capable aircraft[5]. The decision to maintain the non-strategic gravity nuclear bombs in Europe is principally due to Russia's maintenance of a large number of tactical nuclear weapons in its arsenal[6] (IISS, 2019; Andreasen et al., 2018). The Alliance also maintains weapons across bases in Europe and Anatolia to ensure broad Allied involvement in NATO's nuclear mission and as a concrete reminder of US nuclear commitment to the security of NATO's European Allies (Lunn, 2019).

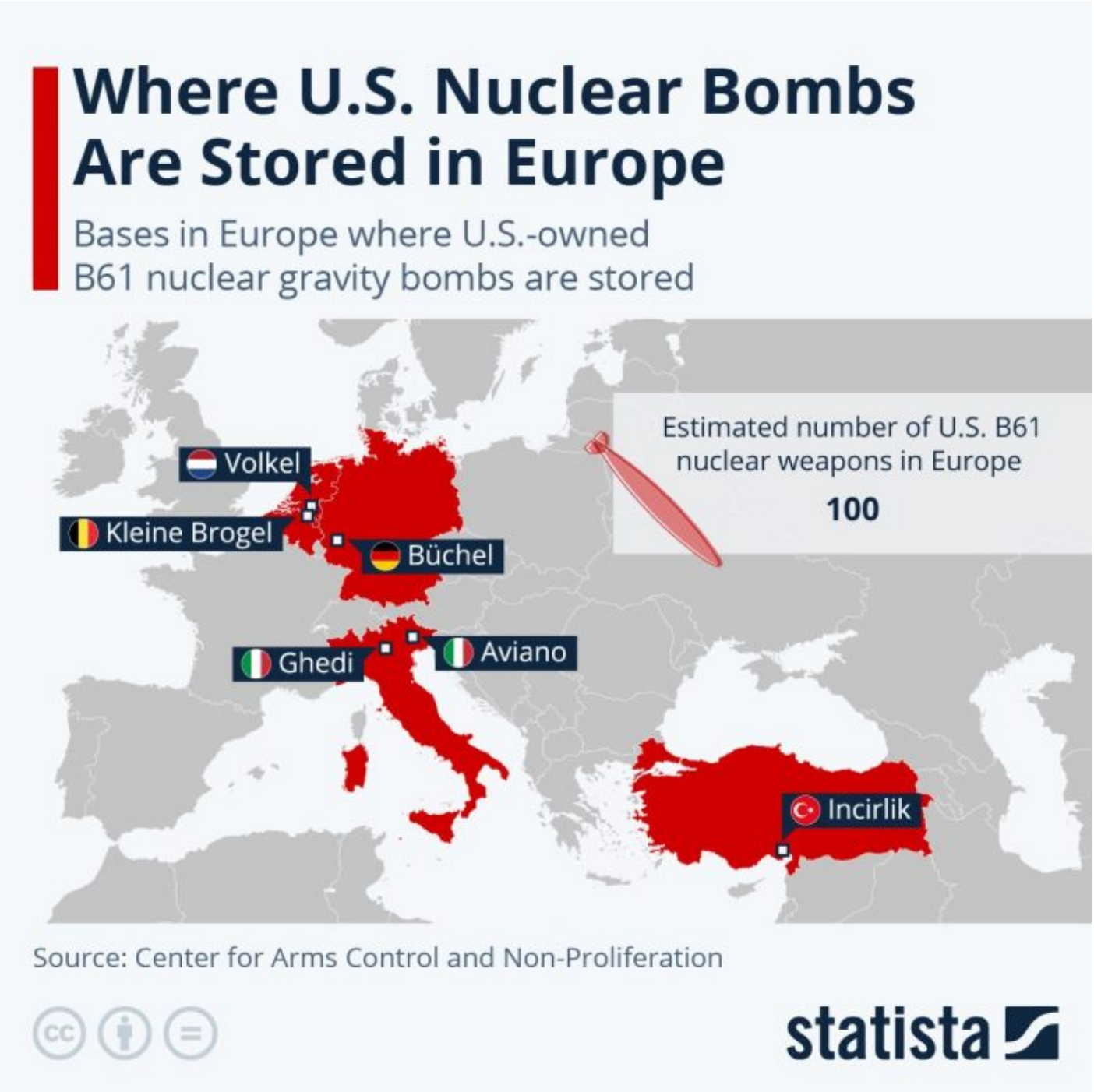
1 Both the United States and the United Kingdom retain ownership and command and control over their nuclear forces. France's sea and air-based strategic forces remain independent, but French national security policy allows the Alliance to consider that France's strategic forces 'contribute' to the Alliance's deterrence posture (NATO, 2010).
2 Meaning air, land, and sea-capable delivery systems for nuclear warheads.
3 While committed to NATO security, any use of UK nuclear weapons for Alliance purposes would have to have authority from the UK prime minister.
4 This is down from a Cold War peak of 7,300 US nuclear warheads stored in Europe in 1971 (Andreasen et al., 2018).
5 B61 bombs assigned to US and European aircraft at the bases are under US control and are only useable with presidential authority. Those weapons assigned to Allied aircraft may only be used after the US president has released them to NATO (Andreasen et al. 2018).
6 Estimates are that Russia maintains approximately 2,000 non-strategic (tactical) nuclear weapons in its arsenal (IISS, 2019).

> ‘A new era for nuclear deterrence? Modernization, arms control and allied nuclear forces “, an official document of the NATO published by Belgian Newspaper DeMorgen

«Beyond the alliance’s three nuclear powers, five others participate in U.S. nuclear sharing: **Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey**. Seven more participate in the Support of Nuclear Operations With Conventional Air Tactics (SNOWCAT), providing assistance in nuclear missions through conventional air support: Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Norway, Poland and Romania. All 30 members of the alliance excluding France are also a part of the Nuclear Planning Group, which discusses policy issues. The North Atlantic Council remains NATO’s ultimate authority, and member states retain control over their own nuclear forces» Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation wrote.

HOW MANY

«The United States and its NATO allies do not disclose exact figures for its European-deployed stockpiles. In 2021, it is estimated that there are 100 U.S.-owned nuclear weapons stored in five NATO member states across six bases: **Kleine Brogel in Belgium, Büchel Air Base in Germany, Aviano and Ghedi Air Bases in Italy, Volkel Air Base in the Netherlands, and Incirlik in Turkey»** according the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation that quoted Federation of American Scientists. But the Nato paper show that they are almost 150.



US Nuclear weapons in Europe

The weapons are not armed or deployed on aircraft; they are instead kept in WS3 underground vaults in national airbases, and the Permissive Action Link (PAL) codes used to arm them remain in American hands. To be used, the bombs would be loaded onto dual-capable NATO-designated fighters. Each country is in the process of modernizing its nuclear- capable fighters to either the F-35A, the F-18 Super Hornet, or the Eurofighter Typhoon.

The total number of nuclear weapons based in Europe reached an all-time peak of 7,300 during the height of Cold War tensions in 1971. The 98% reduction to today's stockpile reflects the end of

Cold War hostilities as well as shifting American defense priorities. The weapons are an important symbol of the U.S.' longstanding security commitments to Europe, but questions have been raised about the desire of European countries to continue hosting WMDs.

U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe consist entirely of B61-3 and -4 gravity bombs deployed by dual-capable aircraft. Now undergoing modernization under the NNSA's B61-12 Life Extension Plan, updated warheads are scheduled for deployment by 2024 alongside delivery vehicle modernization programs of host nations. This B61-12 variant will include a new tail kit to improve both efficiency and accuracy. It will also allow variable yield capability, with a yield ranging from 0.3 KT to 170 KT and allow for both strategic and tactical use.

THE OTHER NUCLEAR COUNTRIES IN EUROPE

Two other NATO members, France and the United Kingdom, also possess their own nuclear arsenals. They have several hundred nuclear weapons each – far fewer than the nuclear superpowers. France has both submarine-launched nuclear missiles and airplane-launched nuclear cruise missiles; the United Kingdom has only submarine-launched nuclear weapons. Both countries have publicly disclosed the size and nature of their arsenals, but neither country is or has been a party to U.S.-Russian arms control agreements.

The U.S., U.K. and France protect other NATO allies under their "nuclear umbrellas" in line with the NATO commitment that an attack on any one ally will be viewed as an attack on the entire alliance.

«Both Russia and the U.S. have thousands of nuclear weapons, most of which are five or more times more powerful than the atomic bombs that leveled Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. These include about 1,600 weapons on standby on each side that are capable of hitting targets across the globe» according to an article of Laura Hood for The Conversation (Academic rigour, journalistic flair).

Those numbers are near the limits permitted under the 2011 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, often called "New START," which is the only currently active nuclear arms control treaty between Russia and the U.S. Their arsenals include intercontinental ballistic missiles, better known as ICBMs, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles, as well as missiles launched from specialized aircraft. Many of those missiles can be equipped with multiple nuclear warheads that can independently hit different locations.

To ensure that countries follow the limits on warheads and missiles, the treaty includes methods for both sides to monitor and verify compliance. By 2018, both Russia and the U.S. had met their obligations under the New START, and in early 2021 the treaty was extended for five more years.

«Both nations' nuclear arsenals also include hundreds of shorter-range nuclear weapons, which are not covered by any treaty. Currently, Russia has nearly 2,000 of those, about 10 times as many as the United States, according to the most widely cited nongovernmental estimates» Laura Hood wrote.

China's nuclear arsenal is currently similar in size to the U.K. and French arsenals. But it's growing rapidly, and some U.S. officials fear China is seeking parity with the United States. China, France and the U.K. are not subject to any arms control treaties.

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