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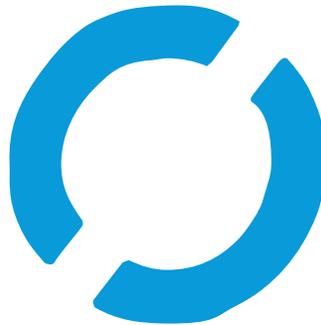
## GLOBAL ZERO NATO-RUSSIA COMMISSION REPORT

*Removing U.S. and Russian Tactical Nuclear  
Weapons from European Combat Bases*

PREPARED FOR THE 48<sup>TH</sup> MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE

# GLOBAL ZERO NATO-RUSSIA COMMISSION REPORT

## *Removing U.S. and Russian Tactical Nuclear Weapons from European Combat Bases*



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**GLOBAL ZERO** is the international movement for the elimination of all nuclear weapons. It has grown to 300 leaders and more than 450,000 citizens worldwide, developed a step-by-step plan to eliminate nuclear weapons, built an international student movement with 100 campus chapters in ten countries, and produced an acclaimed documentary film, *Countdown to Zero*. President Barack Obama, President Dmitry Medvedev, Prime Minister David Cameron, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon have endorsed Global Zero, with Obama declaring, “Global Zero will always have a partner in me and my administration.” Leading newspapers have backed Global Zero’s plan, the *Financial Times* concluding that, “Global Zero’s plan has shown the direction to be travelled; the world’s leaders must now start moving.”

CO-FOUNDERS: DR. BRUCE BLAIR AND MR. MATT BROWN

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*The Global Zero NATO-Russia Commission Report benefited greatly from Amb. Steven Pifer’s “NATO, Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control,” Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, July 2011.*

# GLOBAL ZERO NATO-RUSSIA COMMISSION REPORT

## *Removing U.S. and Russian Tactical Nuclear Weapons from European Combat Bases*

### Global Zero Proposal

**F**ollowing on the New START treaty recently brought into force, Global Zero calls for the United States and Russia to begin comprehensive nuclear arms negotiations in early 2013 to reduce their arsenals to as low as 1,000 total weapons each, and, as part of these negotiations, to pursue the expedited removal of all of their tactical nuclear weapons from combat bases on the European continent to national storage facilities in the United States and Russia.

These comprehensive negotiations would, for the first time in history, include all non-strategic nuclear weapons (commonly referred to as tactical or sub-strategic nuclear weapons) and all non-deployed strategic weapons ('reserve' strategic vehicles and warheads in storage) in addition to the deployed strategic warheads and delivery vehicles that are constrained by New START.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Another category of weapons – the U.S. and Russian non-strategic delivery vehicles composed of land-based ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5500 kilometers – are already banned by the INF Treaty.

Including all types of nuclear weapons that have previously escaped limitation in arms negotiations would facilitate broad reductions, especially if each party is free to mix its holdings of strategic and tactical weapons in any proportion it desires. For example, one party may prefer to reduce strategic weapons, while the other prefers to reduce tactical weapons.

Once the United States and Russia commit to and begin these comprehensive bilateral talks for deep reductions in their stockpiles of tactical and strategic weapons, negotiators should, as part of these negotiations, pursue agreement on the expedited removal of all American tactical nuclear weapons from operational combat bases in Europe to national storage facilities on U.S. territory, and all Russian tactical weapons from their European combat bases to their national storage facilities (so-called 'S' sites), and on further constraints on the operational status of the weapons. These weapons have virtually no military utility and incur financial costs and security risks, including terrorist capture, as well as creating political friction between NATO and Russia.

The reductions to 1,000 total weapons each would create the conditions for the next critical step: bringing China and other nuclear weapons countries into the first in history multilateral nuclear arms negotiations. Under the Global Zero plan, preparatory multilateral discussions that increase transparency of weapons numbers, types and locations should be conducted in 2012-13, with the goal of launching formal multilateral negotiations in 2014.<sup>2</sup> In conducting the bilateral negotiations, the United States and Russia should consult with other key nuclear countries to determine what level of cuts, changes in force posture, and confidence-building steps would facilitate others joining the multilateral negotiations to follow.

In preparation for the comprehensive bilateral negotiations, we recommend that the United States and Russia take measures to reduce the role and threat projected by tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, including increasing transparency and codifying existing operational practices in which tactical nuclear weapons are normally kept in storage (national- or service-level storage) and de-mated from their delivery vehicles. A standing consultative commission modeled after the Special Consultative Group during the INF negotiations in the 1980s would be established for the United States to brief and

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<sup>2</sup> Multilateral discussions to increase transparency and facilitate negotiations to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons would need to cover the many thousands of inactive nuclear weapons slated for disassembly, and the tens of thousands of plutonium pits and secondary assemblies that are stored on each side and are available for re-building nuclear weapons.

consult with members of the NATO Alliance as the talks progressed.

The United States and Russia would exchange information about the numbers, location and types of tactical nuclear weapons – and share this data with others (e.g., NATO and Russia’s Collective Security Treaty allies) as allowed by their transparency agreement. Mutual verification of these declarations, as well as confirmation that the weapons remained off of their delivery vehicles, should be allowed through visits and inspections at the military bases associated with nuclear deployments, as well as to the storage facilities. The United States and Russia would also exchange data about the implementation of the reductions announced in the 1991 presidential nuclear initiatives, including data on when those weapons were eliminated. These steps would help to prepare the United States and Russia for bilateral and follow-on multilateral nuclear arms negotiations.

## The Case for Removing Tactical Nuclear Weapons from Combat Bases in Europe: Lack of Military Utility

The basic justification for removing tactical nuclear weapons from operational combat bases in Europe is that these weapons have virtually no military utility. The emergence of mutual military threats between NATO and Russia is practically impossible, and the weapons no longer play any role in exerting

political pressure on either side, as they once did during the Cold War.

For NATO, the threat of Russian attack is “extremely remote,” to quote the consensus view within the NATO alliance. U.S. NATO nuclear forces – approximately 200 B61 aircraft-delivered gravity bombs stored in underground vaults at six air bases – have no pre-assigned targets and their delivery without re-fueling in the air is not possible in most cases. NATO regards their primary role as political, to symbolize the link between the United States (and U.S. strategic nuclear forces) and NATO allies. They may be considered political bargaining tools but they lack any strategic war fighting value and should not be considered as an element of any security strategy. Furthermore, modern conventional forces provide ample capability to perform any plausible military mission in defense of NATO.<sup>3</sup>

For Russia, whose conventional forces have limited capacity, nuclear weapons, including tactical weapons, retain significance in Europe as a deterrent factor. Conservative Russian planners must heed the fact that the conventional balance in Europe favors NATO and plan accordingly – thus Russian military doctrine still places significant reliance on nuclear forces to compensate for Russian conventional shortfalls. But that concern is

diminishing in the context of a politically remote and decreasing NATO threat to Russia and of growing military and technical cooperation between NATO and Russia.

For both Russia and the United States, the continued existence of their tactical weapons in Europe incurs a real cost and security risk. The monetary savings of tactical weapons cuts could be used for constructive purposes instead of wasted on a Cold War anachronism. The risk of terrorist capture and employment of tactical nuclear weapons is also cause for concern.

Furthermore, despite their lack of military utility, the tactical nuclear arms at military combat bases on both sides create uncertainty and concern about possible intentional use under unforeseen circumstances. They are unconstrained by any arms regulations, and nuclear warheads technically can be loaded and delivered on fairly short notice – easily within 24 hours. Detection, warning and decision times are too short for comfort. Removing the tactical nuclear weapons from military combat bases and relocating them to national storage facilities would provide a many-fold increase in early warning and decision time and therefore reduce concern of a sudden nuclear attack.

In sum, their lack of military utility combined with a multitude of liabilities and costs make U.S. and Russian tactical nuclear weapons in Europe a prime candidate for withdrawal, reduction and elimination. Removing this source of friction in political relations between NATO and Russia is difficult to oppose.

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<sup>3</sup> For a rigorous analytical assessment of the capabilities of modern conventional weapons to perform missions once assigned to nuclear forces, see *Conventional Forces for Extended Deterrence*, Global Zero Technical Report, forthcoming.

## Forging Political Consensus for the Global Zero Proposal

The Global Zero approach to tactical nuclear arms control – reducing their number and imposing geographical and operational constraints as part of a broader comprehensive agreement covering all classes of nuclear weapons – should garner political consensus within the NATO alliance. The current NATO consensus (April 2010, Tallinn; Nov 2010, Lisbon) and our approach are congruent and harmonious. The former states that NATO will remain a nuclear alliance as long as nuclear weapons exist in the world but that NATO should seek to “create the conditions” for reducing its reliance on such weapons, reducing their number and moving toward a world without them.<sup>4</sup>

At Lisbon, NATO leaders reiterated the

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<sup>4</sup>The drawdown of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in NATO territory has been dramatic since the end of the Cold War. In the early 1990s the United States withdrew about 3,000 such weapons from Europe, leaving fewer than 1,000, and subsequently drew down its arsenal to the approximately 200 which remain today. Around that time, Britain removed its tactical nuclear weapons entirely from Germany, and has since eliminated all of them. During the past decade, the United States removed its nuclear weapons entirely from Greece and Britain. Today, the remaining 200 U.S. weapons – B61 gravity bombs earmarked for dual-capable aircraft flown by American and allied pilots – are stored at six bases in five countries: the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Turkey and Germany. The NATO tactical nuclear weapon site closest to Russian territory is about 500 miles away in Turkey. An additional 300 such weapons are stored on U.S. territory. These total 500 tactical bombs will represent the entirety of the U.S. tactical nuclear arsenal as soon as the United States finishes retiring its 260 nuclear warheads for sea-launched cruise missiles as called for by the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review.

importance of maintaining a nuclear alliance indefinitely and of ensuring broad participation of the Allies in collective nuclear planning and in the basing of tactical nuclear weapons. But for the first time it also opened the door for tactical nuclear arms control with Russia. At this summit and at a previous preparatory meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Tallinn, special emphasis was placed on seeking Russian agreement to increase transparency on its tactical weapons in European Russia, to relocate them away from the territory of NATO members, and to include them in future U.S.-Russian arms control negotiations alongside deployed and non-deployed strategic nuclear weapons.

Despite the convergence of the Global Zero approach and the broad current consensus within NATO, the Alliance is far from unanimous in its support for the complete withdrawal of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from Europe. There is strong sentiment within many NATO countries – particularly Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands (backed substantially by Denmark, Luxembourg and Norway, and to some extent by Spain, Portugal and Greece) – that these weapons have virtually no military utility and should be removed, even unilaterally without Russian reciprocity, from European soil. In their view this move would de-legitimize tactical nuclear weapons, strengthen the Non-Proliferation Treaty and better align NATO’s defense posture with a post-Cold War security architecture based as much on security cooperation with Russia as on deterrence.

These pro-removal NATO allies agree, however, that any such action must be based on a NATO-wide consensus, and there exists significant opposition by other countries to removing the U.S. nuclear weapons. Central European NATO countries such as Poland and Hungary, the Baltic members, and France (backed substantially by Turkey, Italy and the United Kingdom) regard these weapons as serving their security interests in protecting them from Russian intimidation (or Iran in the case of Turkey) and argue for their retention. France, Britain and the United States certainly reject any move to unilaterally remove the tactical nuclear weapons from Europe.

The opposition to removing the weapons may be bolstered by the argument that without tactical U.S. nuclear weapons based in certain NATO countries, Europe (apart from the United Kingdom and France) would make no contribution, either political or financial, to the nuclear umbrella that they would continue to enjoy from the United States. At a time when the United States is already critical of declining European defense spending, this could, in the view of some NATO commentators, weaken the U.S. commitment to Europe's defense.

Historically, however, the United States has not viewed its forward-based nuclear deployments as an exercise in burden-sharing or of spreading the risk of nuclear attack to its allies in Europe. Furthermore, it does have a strong interest in keeping the "nuclear threshold" as high as possible. Therefore, the United States' concerns about sufficient

European investment in maintaining capable conventional forces is more important than any concerns it may have about continued European investment in hosting American nuclear weapons.

While the NATO Alliance remains split over the fate of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe, the core underlying issue is not so much about deterring Russia from aggressive actions inimical to NATO welfare as it is about assuring allies who are nervous about Russia, Iran or chaos to NATO's south. In an effort to shore up NATO cohesion on nuclear and other issues, NATO's position is currently undergoing a major official review – the Deterrence and Defense Posture Review, or DDPR, which will be unveiled at a NATO summit in Chicago in May 2012.

Russia similarly does not expect NATO to act aggressively to exploit Russian military weakness, but it also seeks some reassurance about NATO intentions and capabilities. NATO-Russian security cooperation, particularly in the area of missile defense, is key to helping allay Russian concerns.

Russia's longstanding position is that negotiations that would shrink tactical nuclear arsenals in the European region (or elsewhere for that matter) can only begin after all nuclear weapons have been removed to the national territory of their owners. This would impose a one-sided obligation on the United States to withdraw its remaining 200 tactical nuclear weapons from Europe. (Russia withdrew all of its nuclear weapons from

Eastern Europe and former Soviet republics during the 1990s.)<sup>5</sup> It would also represent a unilateral NATO concession to relinquish NATO's European nuclear status, although the United States would still retain some tactical weapons that could be re-deployed to Europe and NATO members France and Great Britain would remain nuclear-armed states committed under the NATO charter to defend the NATO Alliance in the event of an attack on any of its members. As stated by the Alliance in November 2010, U.S. strategic nuclear forces remain the ultimate guarantor of NATO security.

The United States and some NATO allies reject this pre-condition (withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe) for negotiations. (Indeed some NATO members categorically oppose the complete removal of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from Europe.) That said, U.S. officials privately indicated in

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<sup>5</sup> Russia's tactical weapons stockpile has declined dramatically since the end of the Cold War, declining from over 20,000 in the early 1990s to less than 4,000 today. The actual size is uncertain; the most credible estimates give a range of 2,000 to 4,000, although the high end of the range may be closer to 5,500 if inactive weapons are included. Their locations are also uncertain; the best available public information is that all or almost all the weapons are stored in "central storage" on Russian territory (all tactical nuclear weapons previously deployed to other former Soviet states were withdrawn to Russia by 1993) under the supervision of the 12<sup>th</sup> GUMO. An estimated two-thirds of Russia's tactical nuclear stockpile are stored in Western Russia for European conflict contingencies with many located in close proximity to NATO countries – notably, Eastern/Central European and Baltic NATO members as well as Norway. With few or no exceptions, they are not mated to delivery systems such as aircraft, missiles, and submarines in peacetime.

spring 2011 that Washington might accept as a treaty outcome a requirement that nuclear weapons be based on national territory (thus requiring withdrawal of B61 bombs from Europe), depending on the other provisions of the treaty.

This impasse impedes the start of new comprehensive U.S.-Russian nuclear arms negotiations that would cut strategic as well as tactical weapons. (There are other disagreements between the two sides, such as differing views on missile defense cooperation, and the parties' failure to bring into force the Adapted Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which are also impeding the start of the next round of nuclear arms negotiations.) It also thwarts the desires of some NATO members who favor the complete withdrawal, either unilaterally or in the context of an agreement with Russia, of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from European NATO countries.

In our view, the solution to the current impasse is for the United States and Russia to negotiate the removal of all of their tactical nuclear weapons from operational combat bases in Europe to national storage facilities on their national territories as part of comprehensive bilateral talks on deep reductions in their stockpiles of tactical and strategic nuclear weapons. This solution has the added benefit of substantially increasing early warning and decision times.

Many if not the bulk of these tactical weapons on both sides would eventually be eliminated

under the comprehensive agreement. The remaining U.S. tactical weapons could be earmarked for undefined theater contingencies in Europe or Asia as a means of reassuring NATO allies as well as allies in Asia.<sup>6</sup>

We further recommend that the NATO Alliance when it meets in Chicago in May, 2012, delegate negotiating responsibility for U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe to U.S. nuclear arms negotiators. As outlined above, the United States would consult with NATO members on a regular and organized basis as those negotiations proceeded.

## Conclusion

U.S. and Russian tactical nuclear weapons in Europe have lost their military utility. There is no plausible scenario for their use. There exists only the political symbolism of NATO Alliance cohesion along with risks and costs associated with their deployment. Their liabilities greatly outweigh any putative benefits.

These weapons can and should be substantially reduced under a new comprehensive bilateral agreement between the United States and Russia that covers all categories of nuclear weapons without exception and sets an overall ceiling on their numbers. Such an

agreement would include qualitative as well as numerical limits, and contain verifiable provisions for the re-location of U.S. and Russian tactical nuclear weapons from their operational combat bases to national storage facilities on their national territories.

The Global Zero proposal to link the withdrawal of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from Europe to this comprehensive bilateral agreement with Russia on nuclear arms to be negotiated beginning in early 2013 would well serve the security interests of both NATO and Russia. It would reduce security risks, promote new security architecture for Europe based on cooperation and transparency, and accelerate the bilateral and multilateral nuclear arms negotiations needed to achieve a nuclear-free world.

Global Zero seeks the support of NATO member states and Russia to back our proposal and adopt it as the central organizing principle for the next stage of nuclear arms control. Discussions designed to increase the transparency of their arsenals size, types of weapons and location should begin immediately to lay the groundwork for negotiations.

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<sup>6</sup> For two decades, the United States kept a sizable stockpile of nuclear-tipped sea-launched cruise missiles in storage on its national territory, earmarked for possible contingencies in Asia to reassure Japan of the reliability of the U.S. nuclear umbrella of extended deterrence.

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