



Secret document reveals how NATO became a nuclear alliance

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Introduction

In January this year, the US National Declassification Center and the CIA hosted a [symposium](#) on Berlin in the Cold War, which was accompanied by the release of 11,000 pages of [newly declassified records](#). Among the documents released was this document: [Draft Four Power Position Paper, 29 November 1961, "Proposal to Prohibit Further Diffusion of Nuclear Weapons"](#).

This document clearly details how the United States would deploy its nuclear weapons at bases in NATO Member States in Europe and how the servicemen of those Member States would deliver them, if authorised to do so. This policy remained in place after each of the NATO 'nuclear sharing' countries signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968, and it does so to this day.

The Document

The document opens with the wording of the United States' draft Disarmament Declaration of September 25, 1961:

States owning nuclear weapons shall not relinquish control of such weapons to any nation not owning them and shall not transit to any other nation information or material necessary for their manufacture. States not owning nuclear weapons shall not manufacture such weapons, attempt to obtain control of such weapons belonging to other

states, or seek or receive information or materials necessary for their manufacture.

It would appear that this 1961 US Draft Declaration became the basis of Articles I and II of the 1968 UN [Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons](#) (NPT) which state:

Article I

Each nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly; and not in any way to assist, encourage, or induce any non-nuclear-weapon State to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, or control over such weapons or explosive devices.

Article II

Each non-nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to receive the transfer from any transferor whatsoever of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or of control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly; not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; and not to seek or receive any assistance in the manufacture of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

While the 'Proposal to Prohibit Further Diffusion of Nuclear Weapons' is reflected in UN resolutions calling for "the conclusion of an agreement on the prevention of wider dissemination of nuclear weapons", it contained no mention of the key statement agreed in the

UN Treaty, which urged all States Parties to declare “their intention to achieve at the earliest possible date the cessation of the nuclear arms race and to undertake effective measures in the direction of nuclear disarmament”.

The reality is that while the United States was seemingly in favour of curtailing the spread of nuclear weapons capability it was definitely not in favour of nuclear disarmament. Despite significant reductions in nuclear weapon numbers since the end of the Cold War, the United States retains a belief that the country’s security is significantly enhanced by the indefinite possession of a nuclear stockpile.

Moreover, the 1961 US draft proposal clearly lays the foundation to legitimize the basing of its nuclear weapons in Europe, and their use, under the guise of a treaty arrangement with NATO Member States. The first US nuclear weapons arrived in the [UK in September 1954](#) and were subsequently also deployed in Germany, Italy, France, Turkey, the Netherlands, Greece and Belgium over the next ten years.

Although US nuclear weapons were almost certainly withdrawn from RAF Lakenheath by the summer of 2008 (just as their arrival was shrouded in secrecy so was their removal), the UK’s Trident system continues to be ‘assigned’ to NATO for collective security.

This understanding on 'nuclear sharing' is clearly stated in the following wording in the 1961 document:

*The Four Powers should support the **US interpretation** of the no-transfer proposal in the US September 25 draft Declaration in such a way as not to inhibit the United States in: (1) its ability to station its nuclear capable weapons systems and the attendant nuclear components with US forces; (2) its present practice of equipping and training Allied forces with nuclear-capable weapons, the nuclear component of which remains in US custody; and (3) its freedom to participate in the creation of a multilateral NATO nuclear capability usable in certain circumstances on NATO authorization.*

Interpretation is everything

The 1961 draft proposal states that the agreed position on interpretation of ‘**relinquish control**’ will not inhibit the US stationing nuclear weapons

abroad; that interpretation of ‘**nation**’ will only encompass individual countries and not apply to a collective arrangement within NATO; and that interpretation of ‘**nuclear weapon**’ will exclude any consideration of delivery systems. Once again, a clear indication of intent to enmesh nations without nuclear weapons into active participation in their basing and training to use the delivery systems, without which the nuclear weapons are effectively useless. The document goes on to state:

We believe it would be in Soviet interests to have an agreement under which individual NATO nations would not acquire nuclear weapons which they could use independently. In other words, the USSR should prefer a controlled to uncontrolled spread of nuclear weapons.

This statement is breathtaking in its audacity. Indeed, the 1961 ‘Proposal to Prohibit Further Diffusion of Nuclear Weapons’ turns out to be a charter to do just the opposite, albeit restricted to Alliance members under a collective agreement and, apparently, an arrangement the Soviets would acquiesce to.

Relevance to 2014

This secret document from 1961 is revealing in its content, contextually helpful and prescient to this day. It is an important precursor to the later 1968 NPT, but what comes across most starkly is how the US policy on possession, basing and potential use of nuclear weapons became entrenched in NATO policy.

Moreover, that NATO policy was later deemed to take precedence over an international or universal policy of the United Nations. Hence, individual NATO nations knowingly signed up to the NPT as Non-Nuclear Weapon States while already actively colluding with a Declared Nuclear Weapon State and therefore in breach of their obligations under Articles I and II not to engage in acts of nuclear proliferation.

Over the years NATO has fashioned two less than credible explanations to justify this sleight of hand. The first is that the European servicemen trained to deliver the US nuclear weapons never have control over them until an order to use them has been given. The second explanation is that the NPT falls by the wayside once NATO has

been attacked by another Declared Nuclear Weapon State – presumed to be the USSR in 1961 and Russia in 2014.

Modernisation or removal: the contemporary dilemma



(The U.S. B-61 nuclear gravity bomb's 'Mod 12' variant. - US National Nuclear Security Administration photo)

At the recent Munich Security Conference NATO Secretary

General Rasmussen [said](#):

We need to see progress on reductions in sub-strategic nuclear weapons. At NATO, we are prepared to talk about the transparency of these weapons. And I call on Russia to engage in talks with us. But Russia has to be ready to discuss these issues without preconditions. The Russian demand for NATO to remove all nuclear weapons in Europe, before we even start negotiations, will lead nowhere.

But NATO's own inflexible approach to continuing with the nuclear sharing arrangement is certainly leading somewhere: to loads more taxpayer's money being invested in newer bombs and very expensive planes, as we described in an earlier [briefing paper](#).

The nuclear bombs being refurbished under the US B-61 life-extension programme will have new detonation features and components to increase their accuracy, according to the latest [analysis](#) by Hans Kristensen, director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists.

Ivo Daalder, former US ambassador to NATO, has [argued](#) that these upgrades make little sense:

Our spending on nuclear weapons probably isn't the smartest spending we can think about when it comes to the future of this alliance. These are weapons that are not likely to have any role in anything we do in 99.999999% of the time and perhaps even 100% of the time. But they take resources away from capabilities and forces that are necessary for 99.99999% and even 100% of the time.

... it is possible under the right circumstances not only to reduce our reliance but in fact eliminate our reliance on US nuclear weapons in Europe..... And I would argue that over the last four years we have substantially addressed the key deterrence issues of our time.

So why is NATO stuck in the status quo? [Wilbert van der Zeijden](#) has recently reviewed developments in Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands that may affect the basing of US nuclear weapons in Europe. He concludes that the increasing effort to open up national debates with a view to requesting their removal can no longer be stifled by resort to NATO's Strategic Concept and Deterrence and Defence Posture Review (DDPR), which states no change is possible without a consensus being reached by all Member States. He believes that "NATO runs the risk of losing control of the process of discussing the terms for withdrawal if it continues to sideline the demands and concerns of the host states in favour of the concerns and demands of some non-host states".

NATO's 2014 Summit, which will be held in Newport, Wales in September, is the first in the UK since 1990. Afghanistan post-2014, greater efficiency and cooperation in defence spending, working collaboratively with non-member states in out-of- area operations, missile and cyber defence for Europe – these are all issues that are likely to be discussed at the Summit.

What may also be discussed, but is unlikely to be reported upon as it will be conducted behind closed doors at the Celtic Manor Resort and not covered in press conferences, is NATO's plans for modernising its nuclear weapons and delivery systems, and the costs involved, under its 'nuclear sharing' arrangement.

Can we hope for some open debate and transparency on this subject in the run up to, and during the 2014 Summit?