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NATO's Nuclear Forces: The Way Ahead

Authors: [Brian S. Veit](#); [ARMY WAR COLL CARLISLE BARRACKS PA](#)

Abstract: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has maintained nuclear forces in Europe for over 40 years. These forces, consisting of U.S. nuclear gravity bombs, UK submarine-launched warheads mounted on Trident missiles, and allied dual capable aircraft (DCA) squadrons, exist to support the alliance's Strategic Concept. Concurrent with the effort to transform the military forces of the United States, NATO also is undergoing a transformation effort--the streamlining of its command structure and the activation of Allied Command Transformation are but two examples. The author argues that, in light of current reform efforts, the United States and its alliance partners also should examine the strategic role of nuclear weapons within NATO with a view towards updating the current nuclear force structure and operational methodology. This paper examines three force structure options: a reduction in nuclear weapons stockpiles and the activation of a European-based multinational DCA wing; retention of the current NATO nuclear operational methodology, but adjusting the basing concept to take into account potential threats from the alliance's Southern Region; and, the removal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe and the establishment of a CONUS-based NATO nuclear capability that leverages U.S. global strike capabilities, but still satisfies NATO's Strategic Concept and its requirements for burden sharing across the alliance. (19 refs.)

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