



DIRECTOR OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S PRIVATE OFFICE
LE DIRECTEUR DU CABINET DU SÉCRÉTARIAT GÉNÉRAL

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Dear Dr Davis,

Thank you for your letter of 6 June requesting that the Secretary General facilitate a dialogue within the Alliance concerning the withdrawal of all sub-strategic nuclear weapons from Europe.

As you are aware from your study of NATO's public statements over many years, NATO allies have maintained a long-standing commitment to nuclear arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation as an integral part of their security policy. Indeed, in reducing by over 85% the number of sub-strategic weapons available for its forces in Europe, including the total elimination of entire weapon categories, the Alliance has taken very positive steps since the end of the Cold War to move to a "diminishing role for nuclear weapons in its security policies" and to demonstrate – both individually and collectively – the Allies' commitment to the NPT.

As part of its commitment to the safety and security of its nuclear weapons, NATO does not provide information on their precise number and location in Europe.

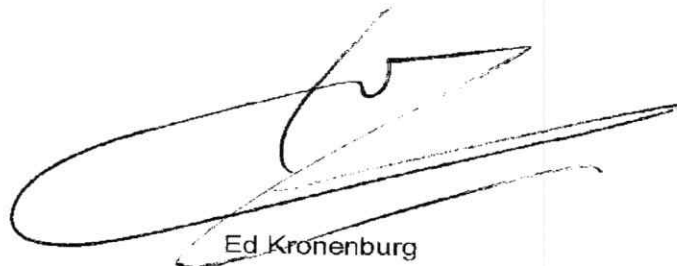
At the heart of the Alliance's broad approach to security lies the aim of a just and lasting peaceful order in Europe, with NATO's dominant security objective being not to fight wars but to prevent them. This objective is supported by all elements of its security policies, including nuclear policy which has also been, and continues to be, the subject of regular review. However, whilst overall developments in the evolving strategic environment have been generally positive, uncertainties and risks remain which could develop into acute crises and present new security challenges. In this context, Allies believe that the Alliance's long-term security continues to require an appropriate mix of conventional and nuclear forces for the foreseeable future to sustain deterrence which, together with collective defence, is one of the fundamental security tasks of the Alliance.

-1-

Whilst not directed against any country, NATO's nuclear policy must serve a long-term perspective in order to preserve peace and security against a wide range of future challenges, which cannot be predicted with certainty. The Alliance's strategic and sub-strategic forces provide an indivisible whole, with the latter providing an enduring political and military link between the European and North American members of the Alliance, whilst permitting collective sharing of nuclear risks and responsibilities – thereby demonstrating the common commitment of all Allies to deterrence and collective defence.

Concurrently, Allies seek to enhance stability and security by lowering arms levels and increasing military transparency and mutual confidence and co-operation. Allies see nuclear reductions as a continuing step-by-step process which must be achieved in a prudent, graduated manner. Whilst NATO has significantly reduced its stockpile of sub-strategic weapons in Europe, there is no evidence of equivalent reductions in the Russian non-strategic nuclear weapons stockpile. Under the auspices of the NATO-Russia Council, NATO continues to work with Russia to progress the development of nuclear confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) with the ultimate aim of improving security in the Euro-Atlantic area. CSBMs are intended to enhance mutual trust and promote greater openness and transparency between NATO and Russia. As these develop, the Alliance hopes that Russia will feel able to respond positively to its commitments under the Presidential Initiatives of 1991 and 1992.

Yours sincerely,



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