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Illegal US Nuclear Weapons Handouts



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The US military practice of placing nuclear weapons in five other countries (no other nuclear power does this) is a legal and political embarrassment for US diplomacy. That's why all the governments involved refuse to "confirm or deny" the practice of "nuclear sharing" or the locations of the B61 free-fall gravity bombs in question.

Expert analysts and observers agree that the United States currently deploys 150-to-180 of these nuclear weapons at bases in Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Turkey and Belgium.

The authors of the January 2018 report “Building a Safe, Secure, and Credible NATO Nuclear Posture” take for granted the open secret that nuclear sharing is ongoing even though all six countries are signatory parties to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

In a paper for the journal *Science for Democratic Action*, German weapons expert Otfried Nassauer, director of Berlin’s Information Center for Transatlantic Security, concluded, “NATO’s program of ‘nuclear sharing’ with five European countries probably violates Articles I and II of the Treaty.”

Article I prohibits nuclear weapon states that are parties to the NPT from sharing their weapons. It says: “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....” Article II, the corollary commitment, states says: “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 ... or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices....”

What nuclear sharing means in practice

The five NATO countries currently hosting US H-bombs on their air bases are officially “non-nuclear weapons states.” But as Nassauer reports, “Under NATO nuclear sharing in times of war, the US would hand control of these nuclear weapons over to the non-nuclear weapon states’ pilots for use with aircraft from non-nuclear weapon states. Once the bomb is loaded aboard, once the correct Permissive Action Link code has been entered by the US soldiers guarding the weapons, and once the aircraft begins its mission, control over the respective weapon(s) has been transferred. That is the operational, technical part of what is called ‘nuclear sharing.’”

This flaunting of the NPT is what peace activists on both sides of the Atlantic refer to when calling the US bombs in Europe “illegal.” Nassauer notes, “The pilots for these aircraft are provided with training specific to use nuclear weapons. The air force units to which these pilots and aircraft belong have the capability to play a part in NATO nuclear planning, including assigning a target, selecting the yield of the warhead for the target, and planning a specific mission for the use of the bombs.”

“NATO nuclear sharing,” Nassauer writes, “was described in 1964 by one member of the US National Security Council ... as meaning that ‘the non-nuclear NATO-partners in

effect become nuclear powers in time of war.’ The concern is that, at the moment the aircraft loaded with the bomb is on the runway ready to start, the control of the weapon is turned over from the US, a nuclear weapon state, to non-nuclear weapon states. ... To my understanding, this is in violation of the spirit if not the text of Articles I and II of the NPT.”

How Do the US and its Allies Explain their Lawlessness?

An undated, 1960s-era letter from then-US Secretary of State Rusk explained the US ‘interpretation’ of the NPT. The pretext for ignoring the treaty’s plain language, the Rusk letter “argues that the NPT does not specify what is allowed, but only what is forbidden. In this view, everything that is not forbidden by the NPT is allowed,” Nassaure explained.

In its most absurd section, Rusk simply denies the treaty’s obvious purpose and intent. “Since the treaty doesn’t explicitly talk about the deployment of nuclear warheads in countries that are non-nuclear weapon states,” Nassaure writes, “such deployments are considered legal under the NPT.”

It is so easy to show that the United States and its nuclear sharing partners are in violation of the NPT, the governments involved work hard pretending there are nothing to worry about, no lawbreaking underway, no reason to demand answers. This is why so many activists across Europe have become nonviolently disobedient at the air bases involved.

The transparent unlawfulness of NATO’s nuclear war planning is also the reason why prosecutors in Germany don’t dare bring serious charges against civil resisters; even those who have cut fences and occupied hot weapons bunkers in broad daylight. Some Air Force witness might testify at trial that US nuclear weapons are on base.