

Nuclear Weapons Monitoring Group (Finland) “FINLAND, NATO AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS”

16 March 2023

When Finland joins the North Atlantic Alliance it becomes part of a defensive coalition in which nuclear weapons are included in NATO's deterrence and collective defense capabilities. The North Atlantic Treaty does not have provisions on nuclear weapons nor does NATO have nuclear weapons of its own. Yet, as a NATO member, Finland needs to form an explicit nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament policy.

In principle, Finland's NATO membership does not restrict the exercise of policies aimed at nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war. On the contrary, nuclear disarmament is one of NATO's long-term objectives. Also, as a member of a defensive alliance, Finland can continue to apply its foreign and security policy tradition of enhancing the rule-based world order, calling for the peaceful resolution disputes, pursuing nuclear disarmament, as well as the conclusion and respect of nuclear arms control treaties.

As nuclear disarmament is one of NATO's long-term objectives, Finland can continue its foreign and security policy tradition of enhancing the rule-based world order, calling for the peaceful resolution disputes, pursuing nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war as well as the conclusion and respect of nuclear arms control treaties.

Introduction

Nine countries maintain nuclear arsenals, which at present contain approximately a total of 13,000 nuclear warheads. Nuclear weapon states' doctrines aim primarily at preventing other nuclear states' first strike by maintaining a credible counterstrike deterrent. Most nuclear weapon states reserve the right to the first use of nuclear weapons against nuclear weapon states as well as non-nuclear weapon states. As Russia's recent actions in Ukraine demonstrate, nuclear deterrent may also be used as a policy tool to support wars of aggression.

Due to nuclear weapons' enormous destructive power, their existence is already a considerable risk factor. The stockpiling and disposal of nuclear explosives, as well as the decision-making and exercises involving such explosives, cannot leave any room for technical or humane mistakes. Even a limited nuclear war would lead to regional annihilation, in addition to causing [long-term global effects on the climate, food production chains and the well-being of all living organisms](#).

Nuclear disarmament has stalled. Instead, nuclear arsenals are being modernized with new launchers, nuclear warheads, and command systems. The most important arms control treaty, [the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear weapons \(NPT\)](#), which came into force in 1970, strives to prevent the acquisition, proliferation and deployment of nuclear weapons. As a contracting party, Finland is committed not to acquire nuclear weapons. Bilateral nuclear arms control treaties between Russia and the United States have collapsed; recently, Russia declared it will suspend its participation in the [New START Treaty](#). No single nuclear weapon state has signed the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons \(TPNW\)](#), which came into force in 2021. However, NATO membership as such is not an obstacle for signing the TPNW.

US nuclear weapons are currently stored at five airbases in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey. The decision to use these weapons is made by the US President; theoretically, also a confirmation by the British Prime Minister and a political decision by NATO's [Nuclear Planning Group \(NPG\)](#) is required. All members of the Alliance are part of the NPG, except for France. The NPG reviews NATO's nuclear policy, such as technical security of nuclear weapons stationed in Europe as well as the non-proliferation of nuclear

weapons. Through participation in the NPG's work and information sharing, NATO allies have more possibilities to influence US nuclear policy than other US allies.

In addition to five countries hosting US nuclear weapons, other NATO allies participate in yearly *Steadfast Noon* –military exercises in which nuclear strikes are simulated. In these exercises, non-nuclear weapon states rehearse protecting bombers carrying nuclear weapons, destroying the opponent's air defenses, as well as aerial refueling of bombers. Nuclear weapon use is not rehearsed in NATO's conventional exercises.

All NATO members accept nuclear weapons as part of the Alliance's deterrence policy. Of the Nordic countries, Norway and Sweden strive to promote nuclear arms control and nuclear disarmament especially in the context of the NPT. The stationing of nuclear weapons on another state's territory is not a precondition for NATO membership. For example, nuclear weapons have not been stationed in those Nordic countries, which are NATO members.

Recommendations for the basic outlines of Finland's nuclear weapon policy

As a NATO member Finland is to reinforce the rule-based world order and peaceful resolution of disputes. Finland is committed to these aims as a member of the United Nations and on the basis of Article 1 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

Nuclear weapons are not to be imported, stockpiled, or deployed in Finland in peacetime or in war. This principle has its legal basis both in the NPT and the Finnish [nuclear energy act](#). When amending this act, particular attention needs to be paid not to abolish the prohibition on importing nuclear explosives to Finland, as well as the prohibition to manufacture, possess and detonate nuclear explosives. There are no operative grounds to import nuclear weapons to Finland. If any NATO functions or arms depots bilaterally agreed with the US are positioned in Finland, attention needs to be paid to relevant laws and treaties so that these regulations include already existing prohibitions on the import to Finland of prohibited weapons systems such as nuclear weapons or anti-personnel land mines.

Finland is to ensure that if foreign troops or NATO functions are positioned in Finland, these decisions are based on its own sovereign decision; Finland is to emphasize NATO's purely defensive character. Finland is to promote nuclear disarmament and arms control in different fora. In addition to its support for the full implementation of the NPT, Finland is to continue its participation as an observer to the Meetings of State Parties to the TPNW. Furthermore, Finland can participate in providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to those affected by nuclear weapon use and testing.

Finland should aim to reduce the importance of nuclear weapons in international and military security. Attention needs to be paid to the reduction of nuclear weapons, especially tactical nuclear weapons, as well as the verification and implementation of treaties. Finland should enhance No-First-Use policy in NATO and globally.

Finland's participation in the NPG is appropriate for purposes of influencing NATO's nuclear policy and in order to acquire information for national decision-making. It is not necessary that Finland participates in NATO's yearly nuclear exercises, except as an eventual observer.

Nuclear Weapons Monitoring Group is a group of independent experts. Its mandate is to evaluate the role of nuclear weapons and risks caused by nuclear weapons to Finland in the context of NATO membership and to carry out analyses on how Finland, as a NATO member, deals with, positions itself and acts in nuclear weapons-related questions.

GROUP OF EXPERTS

- **Tarja Cronberg**, Dr. techn, dr. merc, Distinguished Associate Fellow SIPRI, Executive Director of Board European Leadership Network, Visiting Professor University of Helsinki/Aleksanteri Institute, Chair Finnish Peace Union
- **Jaakko Ellisaari**, M.soc.sc, Peace Union Board member
- **Tytti Erästö** / PhD, Senior Researcher, SIPRI
- **Kati Juva**, MD PhD, ICAN Finland (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) coordinator, IPPNW (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War) member of the Board
- **Mika Kerttunen**, D.Soc.Sc., Adjunct Professor Military Strategy FI NDU; Visiting Researcher (Cyber Warfare) German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP)
- **Claus Montonen**, PhD, docent of theoretical physics, co-coordinator ICAN Finland, board member International Network of Engineers and Scientists for Global Responsibility and Technology for Life Finland
- **Juha Pyykönen**, Licentiate in International Politics, Brigadier General (ret.), Security Analyst, Chair of the Finnish Society of Military Sciences.
- **Erkki Tuomioja**, Ph.D., docent in political history, former Minister for Foreign Affairs, MP and vicechairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Chairman Historians without Borders
- **Katariina Simonen**, LL.D., docent in international law (National Defence University), Pugwash Council, Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs
- **Juha A. Vuori**, PhD, Professor of International Politics, Tampere University
- **Raimo Väyrynen**, professor emeritus