

# Nuclear disarmament – still waiting

*Mayors for Peace*

*The United States maintains hundreds of nuclear weapons outside its own territory, many at bases in Europe. It conducts regular exercises with these weapons. Mayors for Peace, the international organisation led by the Mayor of Hiroshima, Dr. Tadatoshi Akiba, recently published this appeal against their deployment.*

On 8 December 2007, we marked the twentieth anniversary of the historic Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The Treaty, an agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, was signed in Washington DC on 8 December 1987 by President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev. The treaty eliminated nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometres (300 to 3,400 miles). By the Treaty's 1 June 1991 deadline, a total of 2,692 such weapons had been destroyed, 846 by the United States and 1,846 by the Soviet Union.

The Treaty was concluded after years of high tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. It put an end to the deployment of mid-range nuclear weapons in five Nato member states: Belgium (at Florennes), Germany (at Mutlangen), Italy (at Comiso), The Netherlands (at Woensdrecht), and the United Kingdom (at Greenham Common and Molesworth).

These deployments had inspired, in the streets of western capitals, some of the largest demonstrations in human history, as the spectre of nuclear annihilation loomed over humanity. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty marked the start of an era of détente between the Soviet Union and the West. In December 1989, Gorbachev and George H.W. Bush declared the Cold War officially over, at a summit in Malta.

During the Cold War, Europe was divided between the transatlantic military alliances of Nato and the Warsaw Pact, made up of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania. The Warsaw Pact was officially dissolved on 1 July 1991, soon after the end of the Cold War. The Soviet Union withdrew its nuclear weapons from Ukraine and Belarus, now independent states.

Unfortunately, Nato didn't follow Russia's actions, and US tactical nuclear weapons

remained in Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, and the UK. Today, the United States is the only nuclear weapon state to deploy its nuclear weapons on the territories of non-nuclear weapon states. This, for many, violates the spirit of Articles I and II of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Many of these nuclear weapon deployments have become militarily obsolete. Because of their short range, they can only reach targets within new European Union member states. Indeed, wherever based or targeted, their use would not be politically viable. It would appear that the main purpose of these deployments is political not military, i.e. to signal allegiance to the use of nuclear force, *per se*.

These deployments continue to be characterised by a high level of secrecy and lack of transparency. Questions by members of national parliaments in the countries where the weapons are deployed are always met with a ‘neither confirm nor deny’ response, reflecting official Nato policy. This makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to have an honest democratic debate.

A Greenpeace International survey, in 2006, showed that the public in the six concerned countries are not aware of the deployment of nuclear weapons on their territories. Yet they are regularly provided alarming media reports of nuclear dangers in Iraq, North Korea or Iran. We all know today that the current war in Iraq was started over non-existent weapons of mass destruction. What is supposed to be a well-informed Western audience is living in ignorance of thousands of potential Hiroshimas stored in their own backyards. The same survey showed that, once informed about the presence of US nuclear weapons on their territory, a large majority of the public wants them to be withdrawn.

On 8 July 1996, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague ruled: ‘There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects.’ Here the Court was clearly referring to Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Treaty, signed by 188 states, does not deal only with the proliferation of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapon states such as Iran. When signed in 1968, the Treaty also imposed an obligation on the nuclear weapon states to move swiftly and in good faith towards complete nuclear disarmament.

The unwillingness of the nuclear weapon states to negotiate a global treaty banning all nuclear weapons has been frustrating for most governments. For decades, the United Nations General Assembly has been adopting nuclear disarmament resolutions, with large majorities. The United States, Israel, France and the United Kingdom have been champions in resisting substantial progress towards complete nuclear disarmament. In 2006, the United States announced plans to produce new so-called ‘Reliable Replacement Warheads’. In 2007, the UK announced the replacement of its nuclear Trident system, while France is testing a new nuclear M-51 missile.

During one of his last speeches as UN Secretary General, on 22 November 2006, Kofi Annan said: ‘While governments are coming together to address many global threats, the one area where there is a total lack of any common strategy is the one that may well present the greatest danger of all — the area of nuclear

weapons’. Annan added, during a lecture at Princeton University: ‘We are asleep at the controls of a fast-moving aircraft ... An aircraft, of course, can remain airborne only if both wings are in working order. We cannot choose between non-proliferation and disarmament. We must tackle both tasks with the urgency they demand.’

Even during the height of the Cold War there were already calls for a nuclear-weapon-free world. On 15 January 1986, Gorbachev announced a Soviet proposal for a ban on all nuclear weapons by 2000, including intermediate-range nuclear force missiles in Europe. This was dismissed by the United States.

Twenty years later, however, on 4 January 2007, Henry Kissinger, Sam Nunn, William Perry and George Schultz made a remarkable call for complete nuclear disarmament in the *Wall Street Journal*. Warning that in the post-Cold War world, reliance on nuclear weapons is becoming ‘increasingly hazardous’, they asked: ‘can the promise of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the possibilities envisioned at Reykjavik be brought to fruition?’ We believe that a major effort should be launched by the United States to produce a positive answer through concrete stages.’

On the twentieth anniversary of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, our task is to develop practical steps to advance the 2020 Vision campaign launched by Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba of Hiroshima, and now supported by over 1800 mayors worldwide, to rid the world of nuclear weapons by the year 2020.

Nato members Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey and the United Kingdom have, to date, accepted deployment of US nuclear weapons on their territories. But, membership of NATO does not require any state to accept nuclear deployments. For example, Greece stopped hosting US nuclear weapons in 2001. Let us take control of this fast-moving aircraft and, as an important step, remove the last foreign deployed nuclear weapons from the territory of another state. That would also be a step towards a new Nato defence policy not reliant on nuclear weapons.

Submitted by the Executive Committee of Mayors for Peace, representing network of 1,937 mayors in 126 countries

Dr. Tadatoshi Akiba, Mayor of Hiroshima, Japan

Mr. Tomihisa Taue, Mayor of Nagasaki, Japan

Mr. Donald L. Plusquellic, Mayor of Akron, Ohio, USA; past President,  
U.S. Conference of Mayors

Mr. Leonardo Domenici, Mayor of Firenze, Italy

Mr. Bernd Strauch, Deputy Mayor of Hannover, Germany

Mr. Patrik Vankrunkelsven, Senator; former Mayor of Laakdal, Belgium

Ms. Catherine Margate, Mayor of Malakoff, France

Mr. Glynn Evans, Deputy Mayor of Manchester, UK

Mr. Luc Deheane, Mayor of Ypres, Belgium

and Mayors of cities near to European military bases where US nuclear weapons are deployed:

Mr. Stefano Del Cont, Mayor of Aviano, Italy

Ms. Anna Giulia Guarneri, Mayor of Ghedi, Italy

Mr. Theo Kelchtermans, Mayor of Peer, Belgium

Ms. Dr. Joke W. Kersten, Mayor of Uden, The Netherlands

Mr. Heinz Onnertz, District Administrator, Kreis Vulkaneiffel, Germany

Mr. Vedat Karadag, Mayor of Incirlik, Turkey

*More information about Mayors for Peace is available online  
([www.2020visioncampaign.org](http://www.2020visioncampaign.org)).*

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