B61-12:
NATO’s New
Guided Standoff Nuclear Bomb

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Dutch and Belgian Parliament Committees
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B61 Numbers

- 180 B61 bombs in Europe
- Cold War deployment peaked at 7,300 in 1971
- Post-Cold War deployment reduced by more than half since 2004 – unilaterally

The number of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe has declined dramatically since the Cold War. The Bush W administration unilaterally cut the stockpile by more than half.

Hans M. Kristensen, Federation of American Scientists, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Vaults</th>
<th>B61s</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Kleine Brogel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Buchel</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Aviano</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ghedi Torre</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Volkel</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Incirlik</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>180</td>
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- Current deployment at six bases in five countries
- 4 national bases for delivery by national aircraft; 2 US bases for delivery by US aircraft
- 87 underground storage vaults (348 capacity); additional vaults at other bases in caretaker status
- Despite reduced readiness compared with Cold War, weapons are stored near delivery aircraft
- Additional weapons stored in the United States
B61 Locations

Strategic Bomber Bases
- Minot AFB (ND): B-52H and B61-7
- Whiteman AFB (MO): B-2A and B61-7/B61-11
- Barksdale AFB (LA): B-52H

Tactical Fighter Bases
- Volkel AB: B61s for Dutch F-16s
- Kleine Brogel AB: B61s for Belgian F-16s
- Buchel AB: B61s for German Tornados
- Ghedi Torre AB: B61s for Italian Tornados
- Aviano AB: B61s for US F-16s
- Incirlik AB: B61s for US and Turkish F-16s (no aircraft on base)
- Lakenheath AB: US F-15Es (no bombs on base)
- Seymour-Johnson AFB: F-15Es (no bombs on base)

- B61 bombs estimated at 10 locations in Europe and United States:
  - 6 bases in 5 NATO countries
  - 4 bases in United States

- 8 other facilities have no B61s present but nuclear-capable aircraft or storage vaults in caretaker status
B61-12: The Concept

- Consolidate four existing B61 versions into one type
- Retain nuclear bombs for U.S. strategic bombers and fighter-bombers deployed in NATO.
- Add new safety and security features
- Use smaller warhead (B61-4) to reduce HEU available to theft
- Reduce total stockpile
- Save money

[Diagram showing the consolidation of B61-3, B61-4, B61-7, and B61-10 into B61-12]

Graphics: Hans M. Kristensen/FAS 2012
B61-12: Claims

**Official Explanation:**

- Not a new nuclear bomb but simply a life-extension of an existing version
- No new military capabilities
- Will result in cost savings
- Will result in reduction of stockpile
- Needed to improve nuclear surety
- Full LEP urgently needed

**But in Reality:**

- It is a new “new” nuclear bomb type that is not currently in the nuclear stockpile
- It has improved military capabilities
- It is the most expensive nuclear bomb project ever; many costs are still unknown
- Yes it will reduce stockpile some, but those reductions could be made anyway
- It is already one of the most secure warheads in the stockpile
- A simpler LEP can fix urgent aging issues at a lower cost
B61-12: Improved Military Capabilities

- B61-12 will be more accurate and capable than the B61s currently deployed in Europe
- First guided standoff nuclear bomb
- New guided tail kit “will provide a modest standoff capability, for safe aircraft escape, and sufficient delivery accuracy so that the lower yield of the B61-12 can achieve the same military effect as the original B61.”
- Lower yield options can be used against targets that today require higher yield
- Lower yield means less radioactive fallout and more “useable” weapon

**Question:** Will improved accuracy and lower yield affect the way the military thinks about the use of the B61 bomb?

**Answer:** Without a doubt. Improved accuracy and lower yield is a desired military capability.

**Question:** Will that result in a different target set or just make the existing weapon better?

**Answer:** It would have both effects.

*General Norton Schwartz, USAF (Ret.), 16 Jan. 2014*
B61-12: Integration

- Integration on six different platforms: B-2A, B-52H (?), F-15E, F-16, F-35A, Tornado
- From late-2020s, also integration on the next-generation bomber (LRS-B)
- F-35A will replace F-16 and Tornado in NATO nuclear mission
  - Initially, B71-12 tail kit will be “locked” on NATO F-16 and Tornado
  - Increased military capability will become available with transition to F-35

Why does NATO and the United States need to deliver a nuclear bomb from so many platforms?
B61-12: Cost

- NNSA B61 LEP cost estimate doubled between 2010 and 2012 from $4 billion to $8 billion
- DOD CAPE study in 2012 projected $10.4 billion
- Guided tail kit assembly estimated at $1.4 billion
- Plan for nearly 500 B61-12s makes this the most expensive bomb project ever: each bomb will cost more than its own weight in solid gold
- Add to that the cost of integrating the B61-12 on bombers and fighter-bombers; $350 million for F-35 alone
- European deployment: $100 million per year

Is this the best way for NATO and the United States to spend their defense money?
Conclusions

• B61-12 program is in excess of national and international needs and fiscal realities; simpler and cheaper life-extension can meet short-term needs
• Improved military capabilities contradict Nuclear Posture Review promise not to add military capabilities during LEPs and DDPR conclusion that current posture already meets NATO needs
• Improved capabilities of B61-12 bomb and F-35 stealth fighter undercuts efforts to make Russia reduce its non-strategic nuclear weapons; signals that it is acceptable for Russia to modernize its non-strategic nuclear weapons as well
• Conditioning further NATO reductions on Russian reciprocity surrenders initiative to hardliners in the Kremlin; Russian non-strategic nuclear posture not determined by NATO’s non-strategic nuclear posture but by Russia’s inferior conventional forces
• European deployment is fake reassurance: least likely to ever be used for Allies’ security needs; stealing scarce resources from real-world non-nuclear capabilities
• Phase-out of deployment would realign NATO’s nuclear posture with nuclear arms control policy