

Nuclear Weapons Made in America under German Air Force Command

By [RT](#)

Global Research, September 07, 2012
Russia Today

Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

Berlin has decided to drop plans to remove remaining American nuclear weapons from German soil, local media say. The bombs and the German aircraft that can deploy them will be instead upgraded.

The plans would go against the promises Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle made in 2009, when the coalition government was being formed, the report in the Frankfurter Rundschau newspaper says. At the time he pledged to seek the removal of the nuclear stockpile from Germany.

Germany is one of the European NATO members hosting US nuclear weapons as part of the nuclear sharing agreement. It is thought to have between 10 and 20 B61 nuclear bombs stored at the Büchel Air Base. They are a fraction of some 200 American nuclear weapons that were deployed in the country in the Cold War era.

The bombs are meant to be dropped by German Panavia Tornado IDS fighter-bomber jets in case of war. The Bundeswehr is expected to spend around 250 million euro to keep the fleet in service until 2024, the report says.

The bombs themselves are currently undergoing a multibillion refurbishment program. Initially priced at \$2 billion, the upgrade is expected to be closer to \$6 billion, Spiegel reported online in May. The Pentagon wants to replace the four existing modifications of B61 with a single new one.

One of the key features of the new version is a new tail kit with controllable flaps, which would dramatically increase the bomb's precision and options for use. Currently the bombs are meant to be parachuted from a speeding aircraft. The change would make the bomb a strategic weapon instead of a tactical one, some military experts say.

The German government gave up plans to get rid of the stockpile at the NATO summit in Chicago in May, the Berliner Zeitung newspaper reported.

Chancellor Angela Merkel and Westerwelle both assented to a joint declaration, which among other things stated that tactical nuclear weapons were a crucial component of the alliance's capabilities and that the current deployment of the arsenal corresponds to NATO's deterrence goals.

The move reportedly was taken under pressure from other NATO members concerned with Russia's stockpile of tactical nuclear weapons and unwilling to give up their arsenals unilaterally.

Russian generals see the nuclear tactical weapons as part of deterrence against possible conventional attack. NATO currently has overwhelming conventional capabilities, while Russia has downsized its non-nuclear armed forces and sees them as a tool to address possible regional conflict rather than a defense against a full-scale war.

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