

UK Nuclear Warhead Increase Media Backgrounder

UK to increase nuclear warhead cap in integrated review of defence and foreign policy

By [International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons](#)

Global Research, March 17, 2021

[ICANW](#) 15 March 2021

Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

All Global Research articles **can be read in 27 languages by activating the “Translate Website”** drop down menu on the top banner of our home page (Desktop version).

Beatrice Fihn, Executive Director of ICAN, said about the decision:

“A decision by the United Kingdom to increase its stockpile of weapons of mass destruction in the middle of a pandemic is irresponsible, dangerous and violates international law. While the British people are struggling to cope with the pandemic, an economic crisis, violence against women, and racism, the government chooses to increase insecurity and threats in the world. This is toxic masculinity on display.”

“While the majority of the world’s nations are leading the way to a safer future without nuclear weapons by joining the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the United Kingdom is pushing for a dangerous new nuclear arms race.”

Current UK Nuclear Arsenal

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [estimates](#) that as of January 2020, the United Kingdom possessed 215 nuclear warheads. UK nuclear warheads are launched from missiles on submarines. The UK has four submarines that can carry nuclear-warhead equipped missiles. When not on patrol, the submarines are docked off the coast of Scotland.

The UK is currently building new nuclear-capable submarines to replace its current fleet, which it states could cost up to [£41 billion](#), although including all associated costs the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament puts the nuclear upgrade at [£205 billion](#). [ICAN research](#) released May 2020 showed that the United Kingdom spent \$8.9 billion to maintain and modernize its nuclear weapons in 2019 alone. The UK leases its nuclear-capable missiles from the United States and its nuclear warheads are very similar to the U.S. W-76 warheads placed on the same missile.

UK Public Opinion on Nuclear Weapons

More than 60 members of the House of Commons, along with dozens of members of the Scottish parliament and the Welsh assembly, have [pledged](#) to work for the United Kingdom’s

signature and ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Many [cities](#) across the country, including Manchester, Brighton, Oxford, and Edinburgh, have also called on the government to join the treaty. In July 2020, the first minister of Scotland, **Nicola Sturgeon**, [wrote](#) that “the Scottish government is firmly opposed to the possession, threat, and use of nuclear weapons” and “I have called on the UK government to sign and ratify the treaty”.

A public opinion [poll](#) conducted in January 2021 by Survation on behalf of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) found that 59 per cent of Britons believe that their country should join the treaty, with just 19 per cent opposed to joining.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

The [1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty](#) has 191 states-parties, and at its core, prohibits most of the world’s countries from acquiring nuclear weapons and commits five nuclear-armed states, including the United Kingdom, to pursue disarmament negotiations (Article VI).

Every five years, NPT states-parties meet to review progress on commitments and to adopt a consensus final document with additional commitments for treaty implementation. Past Review Conference documents in 2000 and 2010 have been [sparsely implemented](#).

The 2020 NPT Review Conference [has been postponed](#). At this conference, the five nuclear-armed states party to the treaty, including the United Kingdom, will answer to many non-nuclear-weapon states who argue they have [not fully implemented](#) the treaty, more than 75 years after its adoption.

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

The [2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#), which currently has [86 signatories and 54 states parties](#), includes prohibitions of the use, testing, production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons, as well as positive obligations for states parties to provide assistance to victims of nuclear use and testing and environmental remediation for land contaminated by nuclear use and testing. It entered into force on 22 January 2021.

The treaty articulates two pathways for nuclear-armed states to join (Article 4). A nuclear-armed state may either join the treaty and the negotiate a time-bound plan for complete nuclear disarmament, or it may complete nuclear disarmament first and then join the treaty and cooperate with the designated international authorities to verify the “irreversible elimination of its nuclear-weapon programme.”

The United Kingdom has not yet joined the TPNW. States-parties to the treaty will meet late this year or early next year to advance the treaty’s implementation and universalization.

*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above or below. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

Featured image is from Pete Linforth/Pixabay

The original source of this article is [ICANW](#)

Copyright © [International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons](#), [ICANW](#), 2021

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca