

Germany: US Nuclear Weapons Shamed in Broad Nationwide Debate

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The 20 US nuclear bombs that are stationed at Germany's Büchel Air Base have become so unpopular, that mainstream politicians and religious leaders have joined anti-war organizations in demanding their ouster and have promised to make the weapons a campaign issue in next year's national elections.

Today's public debate in Germany may have been prompted by Belgium's Parliament, which in January came close to expelling the US weapons stationed at its Kleine Brogel airbase. By a vote of 74 to 66, the members barely defeated a measure that directed the government "to draw up, as soon as possible, a roadmap aiming at the withdrawal of nuclear weapons on Belgian territory." The debate came after the parliament's foreign affairs committee adopted a motion calling for the weapons' removal from Belgium, and for Belgium's ratification



Commemorating the 75th anniversary of US atomic attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Greenpeace Germany inflated its message balloon near the Büchel Air Force Base, whose jetfighter runway control tower is in the background in this Greenpeace photo.

of the new International Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Belgium's lawmakers were prompted to reconsider the government's "nuclear sharing," when in February 2019 three members of the European Parliament were arrested on Belgium's Kleine Brogel base, after they boldly scaled a fence and carried a banner directly onto the runway ("Europe Free of Nuclear Weapons").

Replacement Fighter Jets Set to Carry US Bombs

Back in Germany, defense minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer raised an uproar April 19 after a report in *Der Spiegel* said she had emailed Pentagon boss Mark Esper saying that Germany planned to buy 45 Boeing Corporation F-18 Super Hornets. Her comments brought howls from the Bundestag and the minister walked back her claim, telling reporters April 22, "No decision has been taken (on which planes will be chosen) and, in any case, the ministry can't make that decision—only parliament can."

Nine days later, in an interview with daily *Tagesspiegel* published May 3, Rolf Mützenich, Germany's parliamentary leader of the Social Democratic Party's (SPD)—a member of Angela Merkel's governing coalition—made a clear denunciation.

"Nuclear weapons on German territory do not heighten our security, just the opposite," they undermine it, and should be removed, Mützenich said, adding that he was opposed to both "prolonging nuclear participation" and to "replacing the tactical US nuclear weapons stored in Büchel with new nuclear warheads."

Mützenich's mention of "new" warheads is a reference to US construction of hundreds of the new, first-ever "guided" nuclear bombs—the "B61-12s"—set to be delivered to five NATO states in the coming years, replacing the B61-3s, 4s, and 11s reportedly stationed in Europe now.

The SPD's co-president Norbert Walter-Borjahn quickly endorsed Mützenich's statement, agreeing that the US bombs should be withdrawn.

Mützenich and Walter-Borjahn were immediately criticized by Foreign Minister Heiko Mass, by US diplomats in Europe, and by NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg directly.

Anticipating the backlash, Mützenich published a detailed defense of his position May 7 in the *Journal for International Politics and Society*, [1] where he called for a "debate about the future of nuclear sharing and the question of whether the US tactical nuclear weapons stationed in Germany and Europe increase the level of safety for Germany and Europe, or whether they have perhaps become obsolete now from a military and security policy perspective."

"We need a broad public debate ... about the sense and nonsense of nuclear deterrence," Mützenich wrote.

NATO's Stoltenberg hastily penned a rebuttal for the May 11 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, using 50-year-old yarns about "Russian aggression" and claiming that nuclear sharing means "allies, like Germany, make joint decisions on nuclear policy and planning ... , and "give[s] allies a voice on nuclear matters that they would not otherwise have."

This is flatly untrue, as Mützenich made clear in his paper, calling it a "fiction" that the Pentagon nuclear strategy is influenced by US allies. "There is no influence or even a say by non-nuclear powers on the nuclear strategy or even the possible uses of nuclear [weapons]. This is nothing more than a long-held pious wish," he wrote.

Most of the attacks on the SPD leader sounded like the one May 14 from then US Ambassador to

Nukewatch Welcomes New Staff Member Christine Manwiler

Hello everyone, I am thrilled to join the team at Nukewatch! I am from Northwestern WI, and grew up less than 15 miles from the Nukewatch office. My first love is art, and I have been pursuing the rather obscure field of art conservation for about 11 years now. I received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art History from the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, and a Master of Fine Arts in Book Arts from the University of Iowa. I am currently a third-year candidate in Library and Archives Conservation at the Art Conservation Department at SUNY Buffalo State College. In September 2020 I will begin a 12-month internship at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., and will receive my MFA in Art Conservation in 2021.



This year I found myself back home as summer internship plans were cancelled due to Covid-19. My mom has been volunteering for a time at Nukewatch and my curiosity led me to volunteer as well.

The concepts of nonviolence, social responsibility, anti-nuclear direct action, and the importance of living in harmony with our environment were instilled in me at a young age. My artwork always reflects the beauty of nature, using natural dyes and plants for prints. The rape and destruction some seem determined to inflict on our natural environment is a source of great concern for me. Therefore, I am excited to join Nukewatch and assist in increasing awareness of the environmental and social concerns surrounding the use of nuclear weapons and power. —Christine

Germany Richard Grenell, whose op/ed in *De Welt* urged Germany to keep the US "deterrent" and claimed that withdrawing the bombs would be a "betrayal" of Berlin's NATO commitments.

Then US Ambassador to Poland Georgette Mosbacher went round the bend with a May 15 Twitter post, writing that "if Germany wants to reduce its nuclear sharing potential ... , maybe Poland, which honestly fulfills its obligations ... could use this potential at home."

Mosbacher's suggestion was broadly ridiculed as preposterous because the Nonproliferation Treaty forbids such nuclear weapons transfers, and because stationing US nuclear bombs on the Russia border would be a dangerously destabilizing provocation.

On May 30, the National Security Archive in Washington, DC, confirmed Mützenich's position and put the lie to Stoltenberg's disinformation, releasing a formerly "top secret" State Department memo affirming that the US will alone decide whether to use its nuclear weapons based in Holland, Germany, Italy, Turkey and Belgium.

Moral and ethical shaming of the nuclear weapons in Büchel has recently come from high-ranking church leaders. In the deeply religious Rhine-land-Pfalz region of the airbase, bishops have begun demanding that the bombs be withdrawn. Catholic Bishop Stephan Ackermann from Trier spoke out for nuclear abolition near the base in 2017; the Peace Appointee of the Lutheran Church of Germany,

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Forest Fires Are Setting Chernobyl's Radiation Free

Quotations excerpted from the report by Jane Braxton in the *The Atlantic's* Aug. 10, 2020 edition.

In the 1,000-square-mile exclusion zone around the Chernobyl nuclear reactors in Ukraine...

"... wildfires ... have grown larger and more frequent. Each fire releases radionuclides, just as [Vasyl Yoschenko, a Ukrainian radio-ecologist] and his colleagues documented.... But none has incinerated the landscape at the scale of the fires that burned this past April. They were far larger than any since the 1986 disaster, burning for weeks and scorching nearly 165,600 acres.... [See Summer 2020 Nukewatch *Quarterly*, p. 6]

"Monitors in Norway, 2,000 miles away, detected increased levels of cesium in the atmosphere. Kyiv was smothered in smoke. Press reports estimated that the level of radiation near the fires was 16 times higher than normal, but we may never know how much was actually released: Yoschenko, [Sergiy] Zibtsev [a forestry professor at the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine], and others impatient to take on-the-ground measurements were confined to their homes by the coronavirus pandemic....

"When Chernobyl's trees burn, they send their stored radionuclides aloft as inhalable aerosols. Instead of blasting from a single source, as it did in 1986, the contamination now comes from the trees that cover some 660 square miles around the nuclear power plant.... If Chernobyl forests burn, contaminants will migrate outside the immediate area," says Zibtsev. "We know that."

[Beginning in 1993, Zibtsev] "spent the next five summers collecting soil and vegetation samples that were later analyzed for traces of radionuclides. The radiation he found there was higher than it had been in the period immediately following the explosions, a surprising observation until Yoschenko's 2003 experimental burn explained it: Fires had burned 12,500 acres in 1992....

"In 2015, a rash of fires in Chernobyl brought international attention to their dangers. From April to August 37,066 acres burned within the exclusion zone.... "April's fires ... scorched 23 percent of the exclusion zone... nearly four and a half times the size of fires in 2015...."