



THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS

Lord Hannay of Chiswick
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

23 November 2010

During the debate on the NATO Summit on 22 November, you asked whether the Government would support work towards the removal of tactical nuclear weapons from Europe in the NATO committee that has been set up to look at the issue. I would like to take the opportunity to respond to your question.

As NATO's new Strategic Concept has made clear, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance to meet current and future threats, whilst recognising the role that the Alliance can play in supporting wider disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. Nuclear weapons based in mainland Europe and assigned to NATO are owned and maintained by the US; we have been clear that any changes in NATO's nuclear posture should only be taken after a thorough review within – and decision by – the Alliance as a whole. The disparity in short-range nuclear weapons between the US and Russia will need to be addressed as we work to create the conditions where further reductions are possible, towards our long term goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

The declaration agreed by Heads of State at Lisbon tasked the North Atlantic Council to look at how NATO implements the principles agreed in the Strategic Concept. The review will examine the strategic threats facing the Alliance and the capabilities NATO needs to meet those threats in the future – including nuclear deterrence and missile defence.

In the run-up to the Lisbon Summit, the UK advocated this review as the appropriate forum to look at NATO's approach to deterrence and reassurance, including discussions on the future of short-range nuclear weapons. The details of the review have not yet been confirmed. The UK will be closely involved in this review and in forthcoming NATO-Russia Council discussions on short-range nuclear weapons.

I hope you find this information helpful. A copy of this letter will be put in the library of the House.

James
Strathclyde

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