



## Speech by Sophie Bolt

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#### Nuclear weapons in Europe

It's a real privilege to be joining women from across the world as we descend on Brussels and NATO's headquarters to challenge the most powerful nuclear-armed military alliance in the world.

We all know that it's women and children who are the biggest casualties of war. Millions of women are now refugees because of the Ukraine war. Women are also the most affected by catastrophic climate change. And we are the hardest hit by the global cost of living crisis.

So it's no wonder we're at the heart of the peace and anti-nuclear movements, that we're leading the calls for peace, a halt to NATO expansion and an end to the war drive.

It's clear the escalation in Ukraine could lead to a nuclear confrontation between the nuclear-armed NATO – the most powerful military alliance in the world - and nuclear-armed Russia.

This will do nothing to protect the people in Ukraine, instead putting them at the heart of a nuclear conflict that could destroy the entire world.

We know that over the last three years there has been a decisive gear-change in NATO's aggressive militarism, the threat to host US nuclear weapons in Poland, the expansion to include Finland, and attempts to secure Swedish membership.

And we've seen the continued calls by the US and NATO General Secretary Stoltenberg to secure NATO membership for Ukraine, as well as Georgia.

Across Europe, country after country has been massively increasing their military budgets and pouring billions of euros and dollars worth of lethal weaponry into Ukraine.

But, the nuclear upgrading and re-arming by the US has been taking place for decades. In fact, for the last twenty years the US has been accelerating the development of weaponry to launch a new generation of nuclear weapons. This includes the F35a jet, which has been designed to carry and launch the new satellite guided nuclear bombs, the B61-12s.

These bombs are described by 'experts' as 'the most dangerous nuclear weapon in America's arsenal'. Why? They argue it's because they are so 'small' and 'targeted', and this makes them really 'useable'. In reality, of course we know that the radioactive fallout from nuclear bombs means they are totally indiscriminate: killing and poisoning people from miles around. And one of these B61-12 bombs could kill over half a million people.

Since 2018, across Europe, NATO states Turkey, Belgium, the Netherlands, Britain and eventually now Germany all put in their orders for the F35as. Paying billions of euros to US arms companies like Lockheed Martin. And during this time, the US has been spending over 380 million dollars expanding the NATO nuclear weapons storage sites in these countries.



And in November last year, 9 months into the Ukraine War, the US authorised the delivery of these B61-12 nuclear bombs to these NATO bases.

It was after that, in March this year, that Russia announced that Belarus will station Russian tactical nuclear weapons in that country. The first time Russia has sited nuclear weapons outside its own country's boundaries since the Cold War.

Now Poland is again calling for it to host US nuclear weapons. Right on Russia's border.

People may remember, back in 2020 US ambassador to Poland sort of threatened Germany – saying if it can't meet NATO's 2% target for defence spending, maybe the US should site our nuclear weapons in Poland. Incredibly reckless, provocative. Way to bring Germany to heel by threatening nuclear confrontation with Russia back in 2020.

Poland is now also calling for all NATO states to become bases for US nuclear bombs, as part of NATO's Nuclear Sharing programme.

And, any day now, these new B61-12 US nuclear bombs could arrive in Europe. So it's an incredibly dangerous time.

It's clear that NATO's decades-long expansion has massively destabilised Eastern Europe and provoked the conflict in Ukraine. We've all seen the video clip of Biden in 1995 boasting that the way to provoke Russia is to expand NATO to its borders.

Far from protecting people from a nuclear attack, hosting these NATO bases and US nuclear weapons puts our populations on the frontline of any nuclear conflict between US and Russia.

Here in Britain, we've had sightings of the F35a jets involved in military exercises with Dutch F35as being readied for war. In March, the US aircraft authorised to carry nuclear weapons was spotted landing at Lakenheath US airbase. Using our contact in the United States, we were able to clarify that nuclear weapons weren't onboard that flight. That's good – we want it to stay that way. But all of this is cloaked in secrecy.

NATO membership also takes away countries' sovereignty and subordinates them to US military interests.

We had no vote in the British parliament to agree to host these new nuclear weapons. There was no announcement about them. In fact the British government refuses to confirm any information about what is happening at Lakenheath. Even the Council – who have a legal duty to assess risks and emergencies in case of an accident at the base - have been forced to write to the Ministry of Defence requesting information!



NATO membership also completely undermines our democratic rights. As we've seen in Germany – sure people better placed to talk about this – but for decades the people of Germany have tried, unsuccessfully, to remove US nuclear weapons from their country. In 2021, in the elections the SPD and Greens – who now form Germany's coalition government – called for their removal. The US response? It flew in a high level diplomat to make sure the demand was dropped.

And since then we've seen further coercion to send more weaponry and now Germany will be spending 10 billion euros on the F35a fighter jets.

NATO membership also determines sovereign countries' public spending priorities, funnelling investment away from climate action and essential public services. Using the Ukraine War, the US is driving military spending across Europe. Last year in Western and Central Europe it soared to €316 billion.

We know that this year's NATO summit will be used to push for even higher levels of military spending.

NATO aggressive expansion and nuclear presence is a key driver in the conflict in Ukraine and global instability. We need positive steps to bring peace to Ukraine and to reduce global tensions. Our demand is for NATO to halt its expansion in Europe and globally and rule out Ukraine membership.

It is vital that steps are taken to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons being used in Ukraine war. We are calling for NATO to:

- Cancel delivery of B61-12s across Europe
- End its nuclear sharing programs and withdraw all US nukes from Europe

The devastating impact of sanctions on Russia are worsening the global financial crisis and damaging the living standards of ordinary people across Europe.

It is no surprise then that we are seeing such huge protests taking place across Europe, especially Italy and Germany with 50,000 in Berlin earlier this year.

These big mobilisations calling for peace and against the economic crisis are an indication that public opinion is shifting in NATO states – in countries whose political leaderships are just going along with the US.

In Britain, despite the attacks on freedom of speech, hundreds of thousands of working people are protesting against the wrong priorities of our government, which is increasing military spending to £50bn per year whilst refusing public sector workers decent wages. CND's message of 'wages not weapons' is resonating strongly with them.



Events here in Brussels show that we are increasingly coordinating our actions, reaching out to wider layers of people who are want an alternative to war, austerity and climate chaos.

There is a huge political shift taking place in the world – a shift away from a world order dominated by the US, which is driving war, global injustice, austerity and climate chaos. Which threatens us all with nuclear annihilation.

Nuclear weapons have no place in this world. They are the problem not the answer. Just as NATO is the problem not the solution.

We can take inspiration from the large sections of the world’s population – and their leaderships, like, Lula in Brazil - that are refusing to line up with the US and NATO.

Instead, they are offering ways to end the conflict in Ukraine, promoting global cooperation to tackle climate change and end global injustice.

It would be great to discuss how, from this weekend of events, we can do more to coordinate the peace movement against the threat of nuclear war both across Europe and globally – where we can take such hope and inspiration.