

## **Statement by the VDW Study Group "Peace and European Security" on the stationing of conventional "Long-Range Fire Deployments" in Germany**

August 19, 2024

On the fringes of the NATO summit in Washington on July 10, 2024, the U.S. and German governments announced in a bilateral declaration that from 2026, ground-based US missiles and cruise missiles (LRF, *Long-Range Fire Deployments*) with different ranges (460 to 3,000 km) will be stationed in Germany, initially temporarily and later permanently. This is to take place as part of one of five US *Multi-Domain Task Forces* (MDTF) available worldwide, which consists of a mix of land-based SM-6 missiles, Tomahawk cruise missiles and hypersonic missiles LRHW (Long-Range Hypersonic Weapons). They are primarily intended to break through China's ability (Anti-access/Area Denial; A2/AD) to restrict US access in the Indo-Pacific, but also to strengthen NATO's "integrated deterrence" against Russia. <sup>1</sup>

The bilateral deployment of these systems was prepared and decided by the US and German governments without public discussion. This gave the impression that the German government wanted to avoid scrutiny of strategy in the political and public spheres. The mere reference to a capability gap in the deterrence spectrum is not a sufficient justification for the German government to respond to the US intention to station these missile systems in Germany. This is because these conventionally equipped systems imply far-reaching consequences for Europe's security and global nuclear strategic stability and increase the nuclear risks to the German population.

For many years, Russia has had dual-capable land-, sea- and air-launched short- and medium-range missile systems, which are also being used with conventional payloads in the war in Ukraine. Although the INF Treaty expired in August 2019, its definition of range limits for land-based cruise missiles and ballistic missiles remained a conceptual basis for bilateral discussions between the USA and Russia on an INF deployment moratorium until 2023. The NATO states also have a large arsenal of air- and sea-based conventional precision missiles for attacks deep into Russian territory, but not deployed land-based cruise missiles or ballistic missiles with ranges beyond 300 km. Modified ATACMS missiles will, however, reach a range of 500 km in the foreseeable future and thus mirror that of the Iskander missile. While the German government's justification to date has focused on numerical inferiority with regard to Russian missile systems, the US Army is concerned with implementing options based on the concept "The U.S. Arms in Multi-Domain Operations 2018," published in 2018, with the aim of destroying targets in the depths of enemy space in the event of war with

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<sup>1</sup> See the detailed analysis by VDW Study Group member Wolfgang Richter: Stationing U.S. medium-range missiles in Germany. Conceptual background and consequences for European security Vienna, 2024 . <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/wien/21371.pdf>

Russia or China. In doing so, the USA is creating an additional deterrent and warfare option in Europe to neutralize Russian strategic bases in western Russia, with serious consequences for global strategic stability, on which Europe's security also depends. This is because the systems also threaten strategic targets in Russia from Germany, including missile bases, using conventional means, sometimes with very short flight times. Strategic crisis stability will be reduced in this way because Russian fears of losing strategic nuclear assets through surprise attacks from Europe will increase the risk of Russian misperceptions and thus pre-emptive false reactions in crisis situations.

Moscow is likely to interpret the new American missile units in Germany as a threat to its strategic nuclear potential and significantly increase the number of its nuclear-capable missile systems in Belarus and on its western borders, including Kaliningrad. Russian target planning for nuclear-capable medium-range systems is likely to focus even more than before on Germany with its new missile launch bases. As a result, there could then be calls for the medium-range systems in Germany to be "upgraded" with nuclear weapons. This raises the question of whether the deployment is associated with a concrete security gain for Germany or whether the risks far exceed the claimed operational gain. The urgency of this question is exacerbated by the fact that deployment exclusively in Germany contradicts the NATO principle of risk and burden sharing and singles out Germany. The new deployment intention was not mentioned in the NATO summit declaration in Washington on July 10, 2024 and calls into question the shared responsibility for strategic decisions whose consequences affect all allies.

## **Conclusions**

1. the Federal Government and Parliament should engage in a substantive and open-ended dialogue and explain in greater depth why it has accepted the US intention to deploy new missile systems. A hearing in parliament or commissioned analyses can help here. These include, in particular, a realistic threat analysis with a comparison of existing capabilities, questions of burden- and risk-sharing within NATO, a convincing explanation of the strategic purpose and operational concept of the deployment and an assessment of the risks for Germany in the context of scenario analyses.
2. the assessment that Germany was already threatened by Russian missile systems due to its role as a central hub for the defense of NATO's eastern flank will initially be taken into account by an expanded integrated air and missile defense and in the future by the European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI), among other things. As the MDTF plans for the deployment of new ground-based missiles can go beyond deterrence and, depending on the number, range and payload of the missile systems, include a strategic attack capability, the relationship between offensive and defensive systems must be conceptually revised. In particular, any operational gains from LRF deployment must be weighed against the strategic risks for Germany and Europe in an escalating crisis. This applies in particular to the intention to pre-emptively destroy Russian missile bases.

3. despite the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine, it is in Germany's interest to explore arms control policy options in order to prevent an escalating “tit-for-tat”-missile arms race. The German government should seek talks with Washington and Moscow in order to find a way out of the now imminent deployment race.

4. Despite this decision, the USA and Russia should strive for and negotiate an INF successor agreement (INF, Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces) that excludes the deployment of land-based medium-range systems in the future. An agreement that can be verified through inspections and notifications remains a key interest for the European states and Russia. The INF regulations agreed in 1987 and terminated in 2019 can be used as a basis for this.

5. the German government should make a sustained effort vis-à-vis Washington and Moscow to resume formal bilateral talks in order to extend the New START Treaty once again or to agree on an interim arrangement.

**Prof. Dr. Götz Neuneck**, Chairman of the Association of German Scientists for the VDW Study Group "European Security and Peace", <https://vdw-ev.de/ueber-uns/studiengruppen/europ-sicherheit-frieden/>. The authors of the study group differ in a few individual statements and the declaration is therefore not a fully authorized consensus.

**About the VDW and the "European Security and Peace" study group**

The Federation of German Scientists (VDW) brings together scientists from all disciplines who critically reflect on their responsibility for the consequences of scientific research and technical development and actively participate in the social debate with their differentiated expertise. Since its foundation in 1959, the association has always expressed its views on central issues of European security. The study group, whose members include K.-H. Bläsius, L. Brock, M. Brzoska, H.-G. Ehrhart, U. Finckh-Krämer, H. Ganser, R. Lüdeking, J. Luhmann, H. Misselwitz, K. Raiser, W. Richter, J. Scheffran and M. Staack, has been working on the central contexts and challenges of European and global security since 2017. In doing so, it is building on the VDW's tradition in the field of cooperative security and peace policy, in which science played a special role. When the VDW was founded, the focus was on issues of nuclear disarmament and arms control, which is reflected in particular in the Göttingen Declaration of 1957 on nuclear armament and participation in the international Pugwash network.