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*Short summary of an event held on March 19, 2010 in Washington, DC - in cooperation with the Atlantic Council of the United States*

## **The Future of Nuclear Weapons in NATO**

Since its inception the NATO alliance has contained a robust nuclear aspect that served to deter potential adversaries while at the same time assuring the Allies of NATO. However, the role of nuclear weapons within the Alliance is now under debate in the wake of President Obama's Prague speech outlining his vision for a nuclear free world. Also Great Britain as an alliance member took up the position of the "Global Zero". But France and other member states are opposed – internal divisions within the Alliance will complicate decision-making on nuclear issues as well as the development of a new Strategic Concept. NATO foreign ministers will debate nuclear policy at their next meeting in Estonia in April. But what are the core points?

The allies continue to see a role for nuclear weapons as one part of a mix of capabilities that are needed to guarantee their security in an uncertain and fragmented international environment. If nuclear weapons in the 21<sup>st</sup> century were rather political symbols than military relevant it would be a poor reason for a strategy.

Currently there are serious problems related to the nuclear policy, which NATO has to address. Some aircrafts began to leave service and the enlargement of the Alliance is tied to conflict potential because there exist political limits who can be an ally.

According to Ian Anthony, NATO needs an open-minded discussion about its nuclear policy and the rationalization of the debate. That includes the decision to identify enemies in a new environment as well as questions of the relationship towards Russia. NATO emphasizes that its nuclear forces must be credible and flexible in order to achieve effective deterrence, which is still a core element of the strategy.

And instead of considering nuclear weapons as symbols, NATO should focus on deterrence of nuclear attacks. Therefore the Alliance inevitable doesn't need its old nuclear weapons, which are stationed in Europe. Nobody could imagine that NATO uses nuclear weapons in a conventional war and if they remove their weapons from Europe it will increase the pressure on Russia. Further NATO should support the reduction in both strategic and theater nuclear arsenals and pledge robust resistance to nuclear proliferation.