

“DE-ALERTING” NUCLEAR FORCES

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In the interest of increased nuclear safety and stability, and as a means to advance toward the broader goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, the Committee recommends that the Government of Canada endorse the concept of de-alerting all nuclear forces, subject to reciprocity and verification — including the arsenals of the permanent members of the UN Security Council and the three nuclear-weapons-capable States — and encourage their governments to pursue this option.

Response

The Government supports the concept of de-alerting and other measures which contribute to the safety and security of nuclear arsenals and the stability of U.S.-Russian strategic nuclear relations. Verifiable de-alerting measures, undertaken in a reciprocal fashion, can increase both safety and stability. The Government also supports de-mating (separating warheads and/or guidance systems from their delivery vehicles) which provides an even larger measure of safety and stability. Together, de-alerting and de-mating could help reduce the "use or lose" pressure on nuclear forces, increase the margin of safety against unauthorized or accidental use of nuclear weapons by all NWS and avoid the danger that ballistic missiles might be launched on the basis of false warnings. Canada calls on both Russia and the U.S. to negotiate to de-alert and de-mate their nuclear arsenals to the maximum extent possible. Reliable verification would be critical to the success of such negotiations.

The nuclear forces attributed to NATO consist of dual (nuclear/conventional) capable aircraft and a very small number of nuclear gravity weapons remaining in Europe. NATO has reduced the size of its nuclear forces and the level of readiness of its aircraft significantly over the past decade. These forces are essentially de-alerted.