

U.S. Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons

While no consensus definition exists, non-strategic nuclear weapons, otherwise known as **tactical nuclear weapons**, are generally low-yield nuclear weapons designed for use on the battlefield. They can also [be defined](#) as weapons not covered by strategic arms control treaties, such as New START, which encompass nuclear weapons delivered via intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), or heavy bombers.

Nuclear mines, artillery, torpedoes, and some gravity bombs are considered tactical nuclear weapons.

Since the peak of the Cold War, both the U.S. and Russia have significantly cut their arsenals of tactical and strategic nuclear weapons. Nonetheless, the United States deploys hundreds of tactical nuclear weapons [in Europe](#) and estimates of Russia's non-strategic nuclear arsenal range from about [1,000 to 4000](#) weapons.

U.S. Tactical Nuclear Arsenal

The current U.S. tactical nuclear arsenal is comprised of approximate 500 [B61 gravity bombs](#), which have three tactical versions (the B61-3, -4, and -10). Dual-capable NATO-designated [F-15, F-16, and Tornado fighter planes](#) are the current systems capable of delivering the B-61, while the [F-35A](#) is slated to deliver the future US arsenal.

The U.S. Air Force [deploys 150-200](#) B61's at [six NATO air bases in five countries](#). The [remaining nuclear weapons](#) are stored in the U.S. for possible overseas deployment.

While the tactical nuclear arsenal could once be deployed on NATO-designated aircraft within minutes, today the readiness level is [measured in months](#).

Costs and Upgrades

The U.S. is planning to spend [up to \\$1 trillion](#) to modernize and maintain [its entire nuclear arsenal](#) over the next 30 years. Included in this plan is the consolidation of four versions of the B61 bomb ([B61-3, -4, -7, -10](#)) into [400 B61-12 bombs](#), a newly designed version intended for both strategic and tactical delivery. The B61-12 will have variable yield capability – ranging from [98 percent smaller](#) to three times greater than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima – and a new tail kit to increase accuracy.



The Davy Crockett Nuclear Bomb, at just 51 pounds, was one of the smallest and lightest nuclear weapons ever deployed by the United States.

U.S. Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Europe		
Country	Base	Nuclear Weapons
Turkey	Incirlik Air Base	50
Belgium	Kleine Brogel Air Base	20
Netherlands	Volkel Air Base	20
Germany	Büchel Air Base	20
Italy	Aviano & Ghedi Torre Air Base	50

*Sources: Department of Defense, Federation of American Scientist, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Royal United Services Institute, Strategic Studies Institute, Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, and NATO