
BELGIUM DEBATES PHASE-OUT OF US NUCLEAR WEAPONS ON ITS SOIL

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Its one of Belgiums worst kept secrets. Lawmakers on Thursday (16 January) narrowly rejected a resolution asking for the removal of US nuclear weapons stationed in the country and joining the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

66 MPs voted in favour of the resolution while 74 rejected it.

Those in favour included the Socialists, Greens, centrists (cdH), the workers party (PVDA) and the francophone party DéFI. The 74 that voted against included the nationalist Flemish party N-VA, the Flemish Christian Democrats (CD&V), the far-right Vlaams Belang and both Flemish and francophone Liberals.

Just before the Christmas recess, the parliaments Foreign Affairs Committee approved a motion calling for the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Belgian territory and the accession of Belgium to the International Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The resolution was led by Flemish socialist John Crombez (sp.a).

With this resolution, the chamber requested the Belgian government to draw up, as soon as possible, a roadmap aiming at the withdrawal of nuclear weapons on Belgian territory.

The December resolution was voted in the absence of two liberal MPs, even though the text was already watered down.

According to Flemish daily De Morgen, the American ambassador to Belgium was particularly worried about the resolution before Thursdays vote and a number of MPs were approached by the US embassy for a discussion.

The controversy was sparked by a debate to replace the US-made F-16 fighter aircraft in the Belgian army with American F-35s, a more advanced plane capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

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