

UK Hosts US Nuclear Weapons in England for First Time Since 2008

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For the first time since 2008, the United States has reportedly redeployed nuclear weapons to the United Kingdom, signalling a shift in NATO deterrence policy and reinforcing the longstanding defence partnership between London and Washington. According to multiple defence sources, B61-12 thermonuclear gravity bombs have now arrived at Royal Air Force Station Lakenheath in Suffolk.

Open-source intelligence indicates that specialised storage vaults at RAF Lakenheath were upgraded in recent years to accommodate these weapons. The B61-12 bomb combines precision guidance with variable yield options ranging from 0.3 to 50 kilotons, offering flexible deterrence capabilities that reflect NATO's evolving operational posture.

This deployment coincides with the United Kingdom's decision to acquire a squadron of F-35A Lightning II fighter jets capable of delivering these air-launched nuclear weapons. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer announced the move during the NATO summit in June. The aircraft are to be based at Royal Air Force Marham in Norfolk under NATO's dual-capable aircraft initiative, which enables conventional and nuclear capabilities to operate from a single platform.

Strategic analysts suggest the redeployment is part of a broader effort to counter Russian aggression and strengthen the Western alliance's tactical deterrence posture. It complements Britain's submarine-based Trident system and reintroduces an air-delivered nuclear option for the first time since the retirement of the WE177 free-fall bomb in the late 1990s.

Predictably, the decision has sparked criticism from anti-nuclear campaigners, including the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and Campaign Against Arms Trade. Both organisations have called for public protests at RAF Marham, citing a lack of parliamentary scrutiny and the financial implications of hosting foreign nuclear assets.

Supporters argue that the move restores a critical component of NATO's nuclear triad and enhances the credibility of the United Kingdom's defence policy. With the UK targeting defence spending increases to

reach 5 per cent of gross domestic product by 2035, the return of US nuclear weapons fits within a broader centre-right agenda of strategic deterrence, force modernisation, and alliance cohesion.

While the reintroduction of American nuclear arms onto British soil is bound to remain contentious, it underscores the government's focus on bolstering national security in an increasingly unstable geopolitical environment. Whether seen as a necessary step toward peace through strength or a provocative gamble, the deployment marks a decisive moment in Britain's modern defence doctrine.