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Alain Juppé, the Minister of Defense, replies to the president of ACDN

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Below is the letter that ACDN sent to Monsieur Alain Juppé, Minister of State and Minister of Defense, on 15 November 2010, the day when he assumed these offices, followed by the Minister's reply, dated 15 December 2010.

Saintes, 15 November 2010

Monsieur le Ministre,

Recalling the "[Point of View](#)" [published in Le Monde on 14 October 2009](#), which you co-signed with Michel Rocard, Alain Richard and General Norlain, our association is delighted to know that, in your view, *"the five nuclear powers recognised by the 1968 Treaty [NPT] need to embark on a process leading in a well-planned manner to complete disarmament, and to fully associate the three de facto nuclear states with that, and to rule out all projects for developing new weapons."*

However, we know that President Sarkozy, according to his letters to ACDN dated 26 March and 18 April 2007 ([English translation here](#)) clarifying his future defense programme, considers France's nuclear strike force to be *"the Nation's life-insurance"*, a conviction that he repeated on 10 June 2010 on board the aircraft-carrier Charles de Gaulle : *"Deterrence remains an absolute imperative for France. Nuclear deterrence is for us the Nation's life-insurance policy". ?*

This contradiction, real or apparent, causes perplexity to mere citizens and readers such as us. What policies will you be following as Minister of Defense? Permit us to put to you a few questions on this subject:

1. How do you propose to associate France with the *"process leading in a well-planned manner to complete disarmament"* which already exists on the international level? And how will the shelving of *"all projects for developing new weapons"* affect France's current programmes to develop new nuclear weapons: the 4th SNLE-NG (new-generation nuclear sub); the M51 missile; the ASMP-A (air-to-surface missile); the new nuclear warhead; the squadrons of nuclear-armed Rafales; the Laser MégaJoule facility devoted to military research and intended for the production of a new generation of "battlefield" thermonuclear weapons?
2. In a few days the UN General Assembly will examine a resolution calling for transparency in the use of depleted uranium weapons. This resolution was adopted by an overwhelming majority by the UN's First Committee (disarmament matters). Do you agree, Monsieur le Ministre, that France should vote for this resolution now, after having rejected it in the committee stage with only three other nations (USA, UK and Israel)?
3. Are you in favour of France supporting at the UN the demand for an impartial [inquiry into the use of radioactive weapons in the Gaza Strip during "Operation Cast Lead" \(27 Dec. 2008- 18 Jan 2009\)](#)? ACDN was one of three NGOs that wrote to the UN Secretary-General as early as 18 January 2008 saying that [the UN must investigate the possible use of depleted uranium in Gaza](#).

At the same time in Vienna (Austria) the ambassadors of the Arab nations made a similar request on the IAEA. The IAEA promptly promised to conduct an inquiry, but either failed to do so or never revealed the results. This inquiry has been made even more urgent by an increase in birth deformities and a strong rise in cancers in the Gaza Strip. What is France, the "homeland of Human Rights" going to do to interrupt what could well be a concealed genocide?

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4. Will France finally, without stinting or shillyshallying, make just reparation to all the victims, military and civilian, of her nuclear testing, of the "Gulf War", and of her *"humanitarian interventions"* in the Balkans and in Afghanistan?

5. Will you see fit, in the best Gaullist traditions, to propose to the PM, the Government and the President, and to support the organising of a referendum on the following question:

"Do you wish France to propose to all nations that she will renounce her nuclear strike-force and dismantle all its component parts in the framework of nuclear, biological and chemical disarmament - disarmament that is comprehensive, universal and verified - and of a genuine system of international security?"

In order to know your positions on these various questions and perhaps to explain our own, we would like to meet you. Accordingly we make the respectful request for an audience with you, as soon as your new responsibilities permit.

Please accept, Monsieur le Ministre d'Etat, the expression of our high esteem.

Sincerely,

for ACDN

Jean-Marie Matagne, President

THE MINISTER'S REPLY

From Alain Juppé, Ministre d'Etat, Ministre de la défense et des anciens combattants

To Monsieur Jean-Marie Matagne, President d'ACDN

Paris, 15 December 2010

In your letter of 15 November, you stated you wish to meet with me and to discuss France's policies on disarmament matters.

Be assured that I was very interested to read your letter. Unfortunately my particularly heavy timetable does not permit me to make a positive reply to your request.

Yours respectfully,

Alain Juppé

COMMENTARIES

Although very polite in its form, this outright refusal can obviously not satisfy us.

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[-] Concerning the first question, Monsieur Juppé's reply was given subsequently, first in Paris and then in New York.

In Paris, on November 26, speaking in the Senate about the Defense Budget, Alain Juppé declared: *"I dream of a world without nuclear weapons, of course, but I have never said that France should set an example before other nations! As long as progress has not been made on the global level, France must not lower her guard."*

"Defense remains a priority: its credits will rise by 3% between now and 2013 while other French budgets will remain stable. The UK is reducing by 8%, Germany by 14%..."

(Source : [Journal officiel du Sénat](#))

And all of the programmes for new nuclear weapons mentioned in our above letter will continue.

In New York, France voted at the UN General Assembly against the resolution for a Nuclear Disarmament Convention.

[-] Concerning the second question, the reply came also in New York: on December 8, 2010, the GA adopted Resolution 65/55 "on the effects of weapons containing Depleted Uranium" by 148 votes for, 30 abstentions, and four votes against. 10 states did not vote, including China. One of the abstainers was the Russian Federation. **The 4 states voting against transparency on the use of DU weapons were: the USA, the UK, France -three well known producers of such weaponry- and... -not very surprisingly- Israel.**

[-] Concerning the other three questions: nothing new, no change.

[-] On 15 December 2010, the very day when Defense Minister Alain Juppé told us that his *"very busy timetable"* prevented him from receiving us and *"discussing France's policies on disarmament"*, he spoke on France-Inter justifying France's nuclear policies.

Good bye nuclear disarmament! *"A Cabinet Seat is worth a retraction."*

One recalls how Duke Henri de Bourbon turned Catholic in the 1590s, saying *"Paris is worth a Mass."* But not everyone gets to be a great king like Henri IV.

Concerning Nicolas Sarkozy's speech on board the "Charles de Gaulle", SEE [this short article](#) and [the video \(10 seconds\)](#)

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