

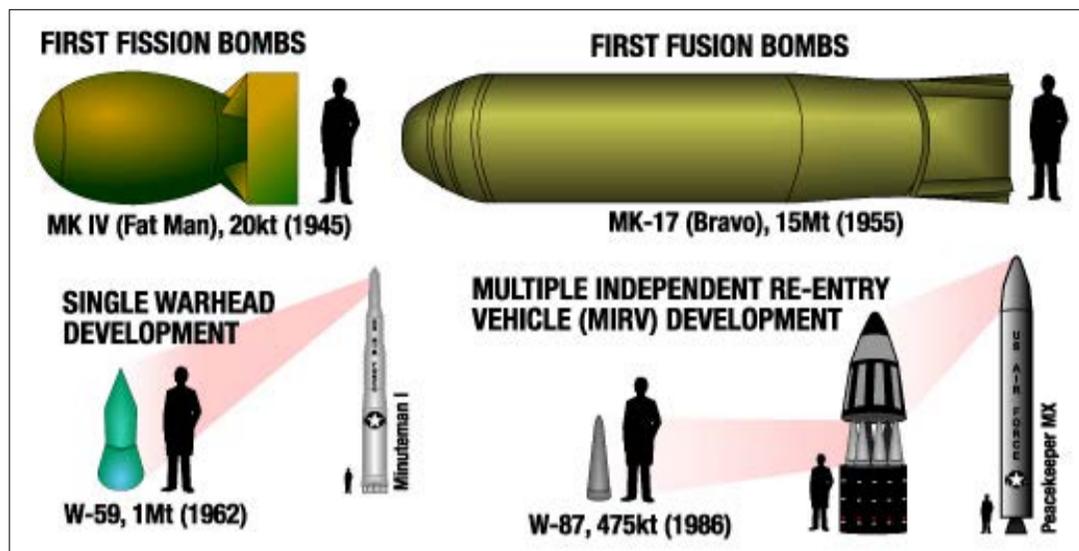


Turkish Rhetoric On Acquiring Nuclear Warheads

OE Watch Commentary: Speaking to Turkish business leaders at an economic forum, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan floated the idea of Turkey acquiring a nuclear warhead even though Turkey is a signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The accompanying excerpt from Erdoğan's speech and a Turkish article provide insight into this development.

In his speech, the Turkish president questioned nuclear arms-control agreements and asked why Turkey was not allowed to have missiles with nuclear warheads. “[S]ome countries have missiles with nuclear warheads, not just one or two. But I don’t have missiles with nuclear heads. This I cannot accept. There is almost no developed country in the world that does not have nuclear warheads.” He continued to say that “We are currently conducting our studies.”

The second excerpt from an article written by a veteran Turkish journalist pontificates on the issue and raises some questions. The author claims that Turkey might be sending a message to its western allies that it might develop nuclear weapons with Russia if Turkey's requests are not accepted. He points out the fact that Turkey signed a contract with Russia to build the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant, and claims that this might lead to developing a nuclear warhead jointly with Russia. (The Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant is a joint Russian-Turkish project and Turkey's first nuclear power plant constructed by Russian energy company Rosatom.) The author states that while there is the possibility of using Akkuyu as a site for nuclear weapon development, for Turkey to take on such a project depends on reactions from the international community. Furthermore, he notes that it is not clear whether these comments reflect a decision made at the National Security Council meeting on 30 July 2019, or a tactical move by the President himself. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**



Nuclear Weapons Size Chart.

Source: Fastfission via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nuclear_weapon_size_chart.jpg, Public domain

“...Some countries have missiles with nuclear warheads, not just one or two. But I don’t have missiles with nuclear heads. This I cannot accept.” -Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Source: The Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, “Orta Anadolu Ekonomi Forumu’nda Yaptıkları Konuşma (Speech at the Central Anatolian Economic Forum),” *The Website of the Turkish Presidency*, 4 September 2019. <https://tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/109521/orta-anadolu-ekonomi-forumu-nda-yaptiklari-konusma>

“It’s all fine and well, yet some countries have missiles with nuclear warheads, not just one or two. But I don’t have missiles with nuclear heads. This I cannot accept.” There is almost no developed country in the world that does not have nuclear warheads.” ... “Look at them. Look at what they are competing over. But when it comes to us, they say, ‘Don’t do it!’”...

“We are currently conducting our studies...”

Source: Fikret Bila, “Türkiye yalnız ülkeler arasına girmemeli (Turkey should not be among the lonely countries),” T24.com, 6 September 2019. <https://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/fikret-bila/turkiye-yalniz-ulkeler-arasina-girmemeli,23670>

President [Recep] Tayyip Erdoğan ... makes statements on defense and foreign policy issues that forms the agenda...

In an unexpected move, Erdogan said that Turkey should have nuclear weapons... “We have them next to us,” pointing at Israel.

Is it a Turkish pressure tactic [to say] “If you do not accept my request, I will develop a nuclear weapons project with Russia?”

...the question comes to mind considering Turkey is building a nuclear power plant in Akkuyu with Russia.

...

Does the statement of the President represent a strategic decision of the NSC [National Security Council] or a tactical move [by him]?

We will see this in the coming days.