4 June 2012: Arab Spring redefines conflict; 'fewer but newer' nuclear weapons; peacekeeping numbers plateau - new SIPRI Yearbook out now

(Stockholm, 4 June 2012) Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) today launches the findings of SIPRI Yearbook 2012, which assesses the current state of international security, armaments and disarmament. Read the Press Release in French, Spanish and Swedish. Download a summary of the yearbook.

Watch the video with SIPRI Export Neil Melvin on how the Arab spring redefines conflict.

Key findings include:

- Upheavals in the Middle East and North Africa in 2011 highlighted the changing character of contemporary armed conflict
- Major powers continued to reduce stockpiles of nuclear weapons, while pursuing weapon modernization programmes
- Peacekeeping operations in 2011 illustrated a growing acceptance of the concept of protection of civilians

Arab Spring highlights new conflict challenges for international community

*SIPRI Yearbook 2012* documents the range of international responses to the upheavals in the Middle East and North Africa, including the United Nations-mandated and NATO-led intervention in Libya; a number of UN Security Council resolutions, sanctions and arms embargoes; and the Arab League’s first ever peace mission, to Syria.

Taken together, the events of the Arab Spring demonstrate the growing complexity of armed conflict. While the various uprisings shared a number of traits—including large demonstrations, non-violent actions, the absence of single leaders and the use of central squares in major cities—they also differed in certain respects. The extent of the demands made by the protesters varied, ranging from improved economic situations to regime change, as did the level of violence.
‘The events of last year were not isolated in terms of contemporary conflict trends. In fact, they echoed changes that have been occurring in armed conflict for decades. Taken together, these changes suggest that there’s a new kind of conflict environment emerging, one in which international interventions become far more difficult to carry out,’ stated Dr Neil Melvin, Director of the SIPRI Armed Conflict programme.

World nuclear forces—‘fewer but newer’ nuclear weapons

At the start of 2012 eight states—the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan and Israel—possessed approximately 4400 operational nuclear weapons. Nearly 2000 of these are kept in a state of high operational alert. If all nuclear warheads are counted, these states together possess a total of approximately 19 000 nuclear weapons (see table), as compared with 20 530 at the beginning of 2011.

The decrease is due mainly to Russia and the USA further reducing their inventories of strategic nuclear weapons under the terms of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START) as well as retiring ageing and obsolescent weapons.

At the same time, all five legally recognized nuclear weapon states—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States—are either deploying new nuclear weapon delivery systems or have announced programmes to do so, and appear determined to retain their nuclear arsenals indefinitely. Meanwhile, India and Pakistan continue to develop new systems capable of delivering nuclear weapons and are expanding their capacities to produce fissile material for military purposes.

‘In spite of the world’s revived interest in disarmament efforts, none of the nuclear weapon-possessing states shows more than a rhetorical willingness to give up their nuclear arsenals just yet. While the overall number of nuclear warheads may be decreasing, the long-term modernization programmes under way in these states suggest that nuclear weapons are still a currency of international status and power,’ says SIPRI Senior Researcher Shannon Kile.

World nuclear forces, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Deployed warheads</th>
<th>Other warheads</th>
<th>Total 2012</th>
<th>Total 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2150</td>
<td>5850</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>8500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>8200</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>11000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>240</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>80-100</td>
<td>80-100</td>
<td>80-100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>90-110</td>
<td>90-110</td>
<td>90-110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4400</td>
<td>14600</td>
<td>19000</td>
<td>20530</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SIPRI Yearbook 2012 * “Deployed” means warheads placed on missiles or located on bases with operational forces
Peacekeeping numbers plateau—protection of civilians becoming the norm

After a decade of increases in both the number of operations and personnel deployed, peacekeeping numbers plateaued in 2011 with 52 operations in total, the same as in 2010. In addition, the number of peacekeepers deployed worldwide in 2011 remained virtually constant, at 262,129, just 700 fewer than in 2010.

Despite the levelling out of both mission and peacekeeper numbers, new operations launched in 2011—particularly those in Côte d’Ivoire, Libya and Syria—appeared to signal the beginnings of a commitment on the part of the international community to the concepts of the responsibility to protect (R2P) and the protection of civilians (POC) in armed conflict, but illustrated the lack of consensus on the appropriate form of implementation.

‘The UN’s 2012–2013 budget for peacekeeping is expected to be substantially cut. This could have consequences for already deployed operations and the UN’s ability to take on new missions, and might even lead to a slow-down in UN activities in the future,’ stated Senior Researcher Sharon Wiharta, Head of the SIPRI project on Peace Operations.

For editors

The SIPRI Yearbook is a compendium of cutting-edge information and analysis on developments in armaments, disarmament and international security. SIPRI Yearbook 2012 features a special essay on the new geopolitics of intervention by former Australian foreign minister Gareth Evans. It also includes sections on patterns of organized violence and the interactions between peace operations and conflict management alongside authoritative data and analysis on military spending, arms transfers, arms production, nuclear forces, nuclear non-proliferation and arms control, and chemical and biological weapon arms control. Three major Yearbook data sets were pre-launched earlier this year: the Top 100 arms producing companies (27 February), international arms transfers (19 March) and world military expenditure data (17 April). The SIPRI conflict data will be launched at an event timed to coincide with the United Nations General Assembly meeting in September. See the earlier releasess at HYPERLINK "http://www.sipri.org/media/pressreleases" www.sipri.org/media/pressreleases.

For information and interview requests contact Stephanie Blenckner (blenckner@sipri.org, +46 8 655 97 47) or Claire Fanchini (fanchini@sipri.org, +46 8 655 97 83).

SIPRI in the media

SIPRI : 30 May -