

POLITICO. – 13.10.2022

By Clea Caulcutt

Macron under fire for saying France wouldn't respond in kind if Russia launched nuclear attack on Ukraine

E. Макрона критикують за те, що він заявив, що Франція не відповість тим же, якщо Росія завдастъ ядерного удара по Україні

Нешодавні коментарі Емманюеля Макрона щодо відповіді Франції на випадок ядерного нападу росії на Україну викликали критику з боку спостерігачів і політичних опонентів вдома. Під час інтерв'ю французькому телеканалу France 2 президент Франції заявив, що Париж "очевидно" не буде застосовувати ядерну зброю у відповідь на ядерний удар росії по Україні. «Франція має ядерну доктрину, яка базується на життєво важливих інтересах країни і які чітко визначені. Вони б не були під загрозою, якби в Україні або в регіоні була ядерна атака», – сказав президент Франції. Відтоді президент Франції критикували за те, що він порушив звичай залишатися невизначенним щодо теми ядерного переконування в той час, коли російський лідер володимир путін погрожував ядерною зброєю.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/france-emmanuel-macron-nuclear-attack-russia-ukraine/>

Emmanuel Macron's recent comments on the French response in case of a Russian nuclear attack on Ukraine have drawn fire from observers and political opponents at home.

During an interview with French TV channel France 2, the French president said on Wednesday that Paris would "evidently" not use nuclear weapons in response to a Russian nuclear attack on Ukraine.

"France has a nuclear doctrine, that is based on the vital interests of the country and which are clearly defined. These would not be at stake if there was a nuclear ballistic attack in Ukraine or in the region," the French president said.

The French president has since been criticized for breaking the usage of remaining vague on the topic of nuclear dissuasion, at a time when Russian leader Vladimir Putin has made nuclear threats. "[Nuclear] dissuasion's credibility relies on not saying anything about what we would have to do," former French President François Hollande said on FranceInfo radio, adding one needed to "say as little as possible and be prepared to do as much as possible."

As the leader of the EU's only nuclear power, Macron's comments that he would not respond to a nuclear attack in Ukraine "or in the region" are unlikely to reassure EU member states belonging to NATO such as Poland, Romania or Slovakia. Article 5 of the NATO treaty states that members should come to the defense of other members in case of attack.

Putin raised the specter of a nuclear war in a major escalation last month, threatening to use "all weapon resources" at his disposal to win.

While the U.S. has remained vague on how it would respond to a Russian nuclear attack on Ukraine, it has however made it clear that Russia would face a response of conventional forces on a massive scale.

Bruno Tertrais, deputy director for the think tank Foundation for Strategic Research, questioned Macron's "curious" decision to spell out the limits of France nuclear doctrine, and the timing of the statement.

"In my opinion, the right answer should have been: I won't play this game ... and anyway Mr. Putin must be aware that he would lose," he tweeted.

During the interview on Wednesday, the French president said the less dissuasion was discussed "the better," but he then went on to clarify what would happen in case of an attack against Ukraine. Asked by the France 2 journalist if France would refrain from deploying nuclear bombs in response to a Russian nuclear attack on Ukrainian soil, Macron said "evidently."

"When I heard him speak, I almost fell off my chair," said the conservative MP Jean-Louis Thériot, vice president of the National Assembly's armed forces committee.

“It’s a political mistake. One of the principles of nuclear dissuasion is that there’s an uncertainty as to what is considered a vital interest,” he said.

Thiériot believes Macron’s message may have been meant for voters at home, who are worried about France’s military support for Ukraine and the possibility of a nuclear war.

The French president did not make any statements on what France’s conventional response might be if Russia used nuclear weapons. On Monday, the G7 countries released a statement that warned that Russia would face “grave consequences” if it did.

The comments risk further undermining France’s push for strategic autonomy and a Europe that defends itself and does not rely solely on the U.S. for protection.