

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 4, 2019

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our deep concern at the current direction of your Administration's arms control agenda. Nuclear arms control has been a critical element of our national security policies for decades under both Democratic and Republican administrations and is integral in shaping our nuclear force capabilities and posture. When the United States initiated its nuclear modernization program ten years ago, Congress made it clear that these investments would go hand-in-hand with sensible arms control measures such as the New START Treaty.

The United States pursues verifiable arms control measures as part of our nuclear strategy because they enhance U.S. national security. New START is a fundamental aspect of this arms control architecture. The treaty limits Russia's strategic nuclear arsenal and provides U.S. military planners with critically important transparency and predictability. Unfortunately, by reducing State Department staffing and funding for treaty implementation and withdrawing from other arms controls agreements that have retained bipartisan support in Congress, your Administration has undermined the important role arms control measures play in enhancing U.S. security. New START in particular strengthens our security through robust verification measures and legally binding numerical limitations on strategic delivery systems and warheads. We believe that a decision to forego the benefits of New START by failing to extend the agreement would be a serious mistake for strategic stability and U.S. security, and urge you to negotiate the full extension of New START through 2026, as permitted by the Treaty.

A failure to extend New START will have lasting consequences on the United States' ability to contain the Russian nuclear threat and properly shape U.S. nuclear forces. The U.S. strategic deterrent, as stated in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), envisions the United States staying within the Treaty's central limits. Without the limitations imposed by New START, Russia will be able to rapidly increase the size of its nuclear arsenal, forcing the United States to undertake a costly and unnecessary expansion of our own nuclear triad in order to maintain strategic stability. Certainly, we are clear-eyed about the threat posed by Russia as it continues to modernize its military, pursue primacy on its periphery and beyond, and operate in unpredictable ways, including the development of new types of nuclear systems that fall outside the purview of the treaty. That is why we believe it is critical to maintain New START's limits

The President
Page Two
June 4, 2019

on Russia's nuclear forces to help avoid a costly and unnecessary arms race.

Failing to extend the Treaty will also prevent U.S. inspectors, military professionals, and intelligence analysts from having current, accurate information on Russia's nuclear forces. Attempting to collect this information without the Treaty's data exchanges, notifications, and inspection rights will be extremely costly and inevitably less precise. At a recent Senate hearing, the Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, General Hyten, described the insight that the Treaty provides him as "unbelievably important to me."

Failure to extend New START will also close off one of the last mutually beneficial avenues of cooperation between the two countries which hold 90% of the world's nuclear weapons. In addition, our closest allies have stated that New START's restrictions on the Russian nuclear arsenal are important for their security. If we expect allies to spend more on defense and contribute to U.S. deterrence planning, a prudent arms control agenda is vital. NATO's position, in the wake of INF withdrawal, is clear: "Allies are firmly committed to the preservation of effective international arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation."

In recent testimony, Administration officials have noted that the New START Treaty does not cover all potential Russian nuclear weapons. We are also aware of recent reporting stating the Administration is initiating an effort aimed at bringing both China and Russia into new arms control talks. Such engagement, if true, is a positive development and we ask that the Administration provide regular and full briefings on both the deliberations and what such an agreement might contain. If you believe a "better deal" than the New START Treaty is possible, we ask that the Administration provide details to Congress on what such an agreement might involve, why you believe Russia would agree to it, and why the Senate should ratify it.

We are well aware of the difficulties other administrations have faced in expanding the scope of arms control negotiations with Russia and inducing China to join strategic arms control talks. Given that China's arsenal is about a tenth the size of the United States and Russia's, China's leaders have consistently expressed little interest in arms control discussions, and Russia since Putin came into office has resisted including additional issues such as its non-strategic nuclear systems in new agreements. Furthermore, we are aware that Russia has its own set of strategic goals, such as placing limitations on U.S. regional and national missile defense systems, which it will seek to include in any new accord.

Given the challenges inherent to reaching new agreements with Russia and China, we strongly believe the limitations and verification measures of New START must remain in place while any such negotiation occurs. Any new agreements the United States is able to reach

The President
Page Three
June 4, 2019

should add onto our existing arms control architecture, not subtract from it.

Maintaining a safe, strong, and reliable nuclear deterrent is a job for both the legislative and executive branches of government. Pursuing this goal while managing risks through a meaningful arms control agenda is vital. We look forward to working with you on one of the Nation's top defense priorities.

To help us move forward together, we respectfully request responses to the questions below by June 17, 2019:

1. Is the Administration currently negotiating a new arms control agreement with the Russian Federation? Have Administration officials discussed New START Treaty extension with Russia? If so, when and at what levels have these discussions occurred?
2. Is the Administration engaging with China on joining a multilateral arms control regime with the United States and Russia?
3. How does the Administration predict Russia will react, in terms of military actions, new missile deployments, warhead uploads, or other actions, in the event that New START expires?
4. If Russia were to increase the size of its strategic nuclear arsenal, how would the United States respond?
5. What is the assessment regarding the potential loss of insights into Russia's nuclear forces if New START expires? Is the U.S. Intelligence Community capable of duplicating the detailed information derived from the Treaty's verification regime through other means? At what additional monetary cost?
6. What resources will be diverted by the U.S. Intelligence Community to fulfill this mission? From what other collection priorities will these resources be diverted?
7. What would be the effect on our alliances around the world, especially NATO, of letting the Treaty lapse?

Sincerely,



ELIOT L. ENGEL
Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs



ROBERT MENENDEZ
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations



ADAM SMITH
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services



JACK REED
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services



ADAM SCHIFF
Chairman
House Permanent Select Committee on
Intelligence



MARK WARNER
Vice Chairman
Senate Select Committee on Intelligence



PETE VISCLOSKY
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Defense



RICHARD DURBIN
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations