

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 16, 2019

The Honorable Joseph Maguire  
Acting Director  
Office of the Director of National Intelligence  
Washington, DC 20511

Dear Acting Director Maguire:

We write to you regarding the impact of New START on Russian and Chinese nuclear forces. This letter arises following the hearing the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 on the future of U.S. policy toward Russia.

As you are aware, the New START Treaty will expire, if it is not extended, in fifteen months. If New START is allowed to dissolve and no replacement agreement arises, the United States will find itself in an environment in which Russia's nuclear arsenal is entirely unconstrained. We believe the negative consequences for the United States abandoning New START, when Russia is in compliance with the treaty and is seeking to extend it, would be grave in the short-term and long-term.

The United States and Russia have been engaged in strategic arms control since the early 1970s. These interactions have profoundly affected the nuclear relations and overall relations between the two states. If the United States decided to completely abandon strategic arms agreements/treaties it would be a pivotal moment in U.S.-Russian relations. We are concerned that Moscow would interpret such a decision as a signal the United States was abandoning its nuclear calculus principle of strategic stability and instead was seeking a permanent strategic nuclear advantage over Russia. The Russian government will not accept this situation and the result could be open strategic nuclear competition between the United States and Russia. This has the potential to create a situation very much like the one that occurred during the Cold War which was characterized by a costly arms race and a series of nuclear showdowns.


We are also concerned about how China will be interpret a decision to abandon strategic arms control. China's nuclear forces have remained a great deal smaller than U.S. and Russian forces despite the industrial capacity of China to build a much larger nuclear arsenal. In addition, U.S.-China relations have never been defined, as was the case with Russia, by nuclear competition. It is unclear to us if this current status-quo would continue if the arms control process between the United States and Russia completely broke down.

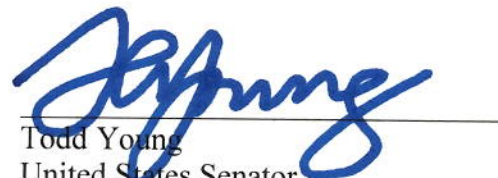
Considering the important issues surrounding international security in an unconstrained nuclear environment, we ask the DNI to provide a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on what would occur if New START was not extended. Specifically we would like a NIE to answer these specific questions:

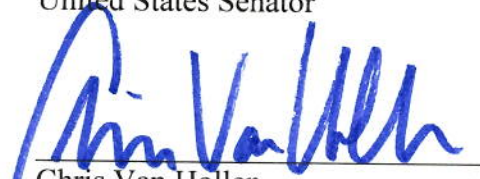
- What changes in the short and long term will Russia make to its nuclear forces if New START expires in February 2021?
- In the DNI's estimation, what conclusions about U.S. strategy will the Russian government and military draw from a decision by the United States not to extend New START?
- How will these conclusions shape Russian thinking about its nuclear forces and doctrine? How will they shape Russian thinking about overall U.S.-Russian relations?
- What impact will the abandonment of strategic arms have on Chinese nuclear forces and doctrine? How will this shape Chinese thinking about overall U.S.-Chinese relations?
- Is a future arms control agreement with China more or less likely if the United States fails to extend the New START agreement?

We look forward to your speedy response to the questions posed.

Sincerely,

  
Robert Menendez  
United States Senator

  
Todd Young  
United States Senator

  
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator