

November 7, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW

Dear Mr. President:

As national security professionals and public servants who have spent their careers working for and with Republican and Democratic presidents to protect our nation's national security, we urge you to ensure that we sustain meaningful, verifiable limits on the world's two largest nuclear arsenals in order to provide more predictability, transparency, and stability in our nuclear relationship with Russia.

We have been deeply troubled by the unresolved problem of Russia's noncompliance with the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. In July, NATO members, including the United States, affirmed their commitment to the INF Treaty, stating that it was "crucial to Euro-Atlantic security." We agree. The INF Treaty has prevented the unchecked deployment of nuclear missiles in Europe, significantly reducing the risk of rapid escalation towards nuclear war.

Rather than move to terminate the INF Treaty, however, we urge you to direct your team to redouble efforts to negotiate technical solutions to U.S. (and Russian) INF compliance concerns. Russia's deployment of a prohibited ground-launched cruise missile must be addressed; Moscow is concerned that launchers at the U.S. Aegis Ashore missile defense sites in Romania (and the planned site in Poland) are capable of firing offensive missiles. A senior adviser to President Putin has said that Russia is still ready to address "mutual grievances" related to the treaty. We urge you to pursue this option.

In the absence of the INF Treaty, the only remaining agreement regulating our nuclear stockpiles will be the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), which limits the two sides' long-range missiles and bombers, and caps the warheads they carry to no more than 1,550 each. U.S. military leaders continue to see value in New START. Gen. John Hyten, commander of U.S. Strategic Command, told Congress last March that "bilateral, verifiable arms control agreements are essential to our ability to provide an effective deterrent."

New START is due to expire on February 5, 2021 unless you and President Putin agree to extend it by up to five years (to 2026), as allowed for in Article XIV of the treaty. We urge you to take up Russia's offer to engage in talks on the extension of New START. These talks should begin immediately to address any outstanding treaty compliance concerns before the treaty expires.

With your decision to extend New START, the two sides would have the time necessary to work together on a new deal that addresses obstacles that prevented your predecessors in the White House from achieving further limits and deeper reductions in the two countries' nuclear arsenals.

Every American president since John F. Kennedy has successfully concluded at least one agreement with Russia to reduce nuclear dangers. Without New START, there would be no legally-binding, verifiable limits on the U.S. or Russian nuclear arsenals for the first time since 1972.

In March of this year, you said you wanted to work with Russian President Vladimir Putin “to discuss the arms race, which is getting out of control.” We respectfully urge you to do so.

Sincerely,

Susan Burk, former Special Representative of the President for Nuclear Nonproliferation, and head of the U.S. delegation to the 2010 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference

Richard R. Burt, former Ambassador to Germany and chief negotiator for the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

Thomas Countryman, former acting Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, and Chairman of the Arms Control Association

Thomas Graham Jr., Special Representative of the President for Arms Control, Nonproliferation, Disarmament

Jill Hruby, former Director, Sandia National Laboratories

Lt. Gen. Arlen D. Jameson, (USAF, Ret.), former Deputy Commander, U.S. Strategic Command

Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, (R-Kansas) 1978-1997

Laura E. Kennedy, former U.S. Representative to the Conference on Disarmament and former Ambassador to Turkmenistan

Sen. Richard Lugar, (R-Ind.) former Chairman, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Sen. Sam Nunn, (D-Ga.) former Chairman, U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee

William J. Perry, former Secretary of Defense

Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering, former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, and former Ambassador to the United Nations, to Russia, India, Israel, Nigeria, Jordan and El Salvador

Joan Rohlfing, President and COO of the Nuclear Threat Initiative

George P. Shultz, former Secretary of State