

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 20, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you consider additional measures to advance the nuclear weapons agenda you laid out in your April 2009 Prague address, we urge you to take bold steps to strengthen strategic stability and reduce the dangers posed by nuclear weapons. In Hiroshima a few weeks ago, you reminded us that, “among nations like [our] own that hold nuclear stockpiles, we must have the courage to escape the logic of fear and pursue a world without them.” We agree that progress toward this goal is essential, and that Presidential leadership is crucial if we are to further reduce the risk of an accidental or unintentional nuclear conflagration.

We commend you for your accomplishments in this area: successfully negotiating the New START nuclear reductions agreement, retiring submarine-launched nuclear cruise missiles, convening four international summits that helped stem the spread of nuclear weapons and materials, and curbing Iran’s nuclear program through the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Additional steps can be taken to increase strategic stability, and we support policy options that would reduce the risk of miscalculation in a crisis, increase Presidential decision time, and decrease the likelihood of nuclear war. We encourage you to adopt options such as a no-first-use of nuclear weapons declaratory policy and elimination of launch-on-warning nuclear posture — both steps that could avoid an unintentional or hasty start to unprecedented and catastrophic nuclear devastation.

Your administration has also proposed an overhaul of the entire nuclear weapons enterprise over the next three decades. We are concerned that this plan increases nuclear weapons production capacity, could add new military nuclear capabilities, and is divorced from the current reality of budget constraints, having been promised in 2010 when the budget environment was radically different. We agree that our nation must retain a robust nuclear arsenal to deter a nuclear attack on the United States and its allies. However, we believe that this modernization plan, which has been independently estimated to cost \$1 trillion, may be neither affordable, executable, nor advisable.

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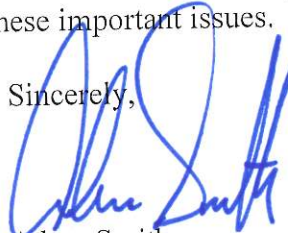
At a time when the United States is facing an extremely complex threat environment and Congress shows no indication that it will eliminate its budget caps, this plan risks squandering hundreds of billions of dollars on certain weapons programs that will likely be either delayed or cancelled, and it will plunder much-needed funds for conventional military forces in the process. Now is the time to prioritize requirements that will help us retain a robust nuclear arsenal that is appropriate to our needs in the 21st Century, rather than committing to this array of new nuclear weapons investments. As former Defense Secretary William Perry stated at a Senate hearing last week, "I do not believe we should simply modernize all systems that we built during the Cold War." As part of this effort, we should continue to reduce the number of warheads we hold in reserve, since the United States does not need to retain nearly 5,000 nuclear weapons in order to possess a strong, reliable, and effective nuclear deterrent. We urge you to consider reshaping this plan to overhaul the nuclear enterprise.

We stand ready to support you in such decisions and to work with you and the next administration to make further progress on these important issues.

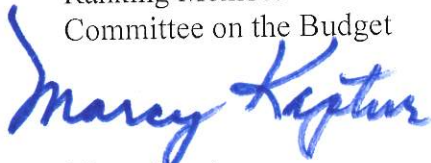
Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget



Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services



Marcy Kaptur
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations



Loretta Sanchez
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces
Committee on Armed Services



Jackie Speier
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Committee on Armed Services