

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 20, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our strong desire that your administration extend the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) with Russia before it expires in fewer than four months. Renewing this treaty – the last standing arms control agreement limiting the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals – will further our national security and that of our allies. We thus urge you to extend New START, which may be complemented by a mutual freeze on current warhead stockpiles, without delay.

The case for extending New START is overwhelming. First, the treaty imposes caps on Russia's deployed strategic warheads and deployed and non-deployed long-range delivery vehicles. Maintaining these caps is increasingly important as Russia nears completion of its current nuclear modernization cycle, enhancing its capacity to rapidly deploy nuclear forces that threaten the U.S. homeland. Second, New START establishes a verification regime of on-site inspections and data exchanges, which provides not only the means to verify Russian treaty compliance, but also critical insight into Russia's nuclear capabilities. Third, the treaty fosters a stable and predictable environment in which the U.S. can confidently shape and size its own nuclear forces. And because our nuclear modernization plans fall within the parameters of New START, the U.S. denies itself nothing by extending the treaty while continuing to enjoy the strategic benefits of the treaty. Finally, preserving New START will secure the breathing room needed to negotiate follow-on accords that achieve deeper cuts in strategic offensive arms and verifiably limit Russian systems not covered under New START limits.

It is not only our view that New START continues to underpin strategic stability with Russia. Top U.S. military officials, as well as our allies, agree. Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Hyten, testified while serving as Commander of U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM): "I am a big supporter of the New START agreement."¹ Likewise, STRATCOM Commander Admiral Charles Richard recently voiced support for the treaty, stating that "the New START Treaty has been an important transparency mechanism for maintaining U.S.-Russian stability."² As your State Department acknowledged in a July 2020 report to Congress,

¹ U.S. Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Hearings to Receive Testimony on United States Strategic Command and United States Northern Command in Review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2020 and the Future Years Defense Program, February 26, 2019.

² U.S. Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Advance Policy Questions for VADM Charles Richard, U.S. Navy Nominee for Appointment to the Position of Commander, United States Strategic Command, October 24, 2019.

our allies and partners endorse renewing New START, viewing it as a boon to strategic stability.³

By containing the military capabilities of our adversaries, effective arms control helps lower the risk of nuclear conflict and avert costly arms races. We therefore urge you to take the necessary steps to extend New START and safeguard U.S. national security.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Todd Young
United States Senator

³ Jack Detsch and Robbie Gramer, “U.S. Allies Worry Trump Administration Might Let Key Nuclear Treaty With Russia Die,” *Foreign Policy*, September 24, 2020.