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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

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PAUL ARCANGELI, STAFF DIRECTOR

December 7, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Reid and McConnell:

We are troubled by the Administration's push to ratify the New START Treaty amid outstanding concerns regarding Russian intentions, missile defense limitations, and nuclear modernization. Given the security implications associated with this treaty and the importance of such a treaty enjoying bipartisan support, we believe the Senate should not be rushed in its deliberations. Therefore, we urge the Senate not to vote on the New START Treaty in the lame duck congressional session and certainly not until these important security issues are resolved.

There remains a significant divide between Russia and the U.S. on whether New START affects our ability to deploy missile defenses, particularly long-range missile defenses in Europe. Despite testimony from Administration officials that New START does not limit U.S. missile defenses, Moscow seems to believe it will. Russian officials have declared they would withdraw from the treaty if U.S. missile defense systems are upgraded quantitatively or qualitatively.

Russia also warns that it will build up offensive forces should its "terms" for a missile defense agreement not be met; all while the Administration seeks to reduce our

nuclear forces. We have no insight on what these terms are, nor do we know the exact nature and scope of the missile defense negotiations reportedly occurring between Undersecretary of State Ellen Tauscher and her Russian counterpart, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov.

We reject the notion that Russia can set terms for our missile defenses. Iranian and North Korean missile and nuclear programs continue unabated as highlighted by recent events. Given these threats, upgrades to our homeland missile defense capabilities and funding for missile defenses in Europe will remain top priorities for the House Armed Services Committee.

However, our principal concern is that the Administration might cede to Russian demands and allow Moscow to shape U.S. missile defense plans in exchange for its adherence to New START. This concern is exacerbated by a lack of transparency by the Administration in providing information on the nature of these secretive missile defense discussions. One way to alleviate this concern is for the Administration to provide Congress with the treaty negotiating record—which Senators have requested on numerous occasions—so that members can see firsthand how missile defense was discussed within the context of the treaty, as well as documents related to the Tauscher-Ryabkov discussions. In the meantime, we think it unwise to vote on New START until the Congress gains this additional insight and better understands how the impasse on missile defense will affect our long-term security.

We are also deeply concerned about the state of our nation's nuclear enterprise, and whether the Administration will remain committed to nuclear modernization and our nation's nuclear triad. Reversing the erosion of our nation's nuclear infrastructure—which the bipartisan U.S. Strategic Posture Commission called “decrepit”—will require a comprehensive plan and long-term political and financial support from the Administration and both chambers of Congress.

Our committee recently received an updated “1251 Report” on nuclear modernization. The report provides glimpses of the Administration's revised funding requirements based on its Nuclear Posture Review released last spring. However, it is unclear exactly how these additional funds contribute to modernization. For example, over one-third of these funds appear to go towards employee pension plans—not modernization of the infrastructure or stockpile. Members of the House have yet to be briefed on the updated 1251 Report, and therefore we cannot assess the adequacy of these revised plans and funding requirements. We would hope the Senate would allow for the same due diligence in its oversight of this matter prior to a vote on New START.

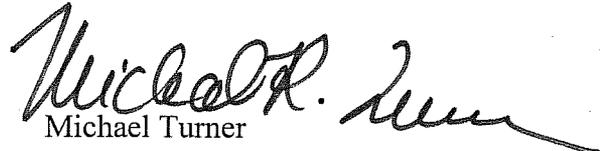
As members of the House we will not have the opportunity to vote on the New START Treaty. However, the outcome of the treaty will undoubtedly impact national security policy and investment decisions within our jurisdiction as authorizers of the annual defense bill, and we will be responsible for overseeing its implementation. Because of these roles, we feel compelled to express our concerns.

We are in complete agreement with Senator Kerry who recently told the press, "The American people want to see Republicans and Democrats working together on behalf of national security." We believe bipartisanship is possible with good faith and sufficient cooperation among both political parties and the executive and legislative branches of the federal government. The security concerns associated with the New START Treaty are significant and must be addressed. This requires thorough and thoughtful deliberation. The American people expect this of their government and we owe them nothing less.

Sincerely,



Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Ranking Member



Michael Turner
Ranking Member
Strategic Forces Subcommittee

Kent Starks

W. Carl Chi

Jay Wilson

Mike Ben (etc)

Max Ty

Doug Lamborn

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